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POLITICS

How DOGE may have improperly used Social Security data to push voter fraud narratives

APRIL 11, 2025 · 5:00 AM ET

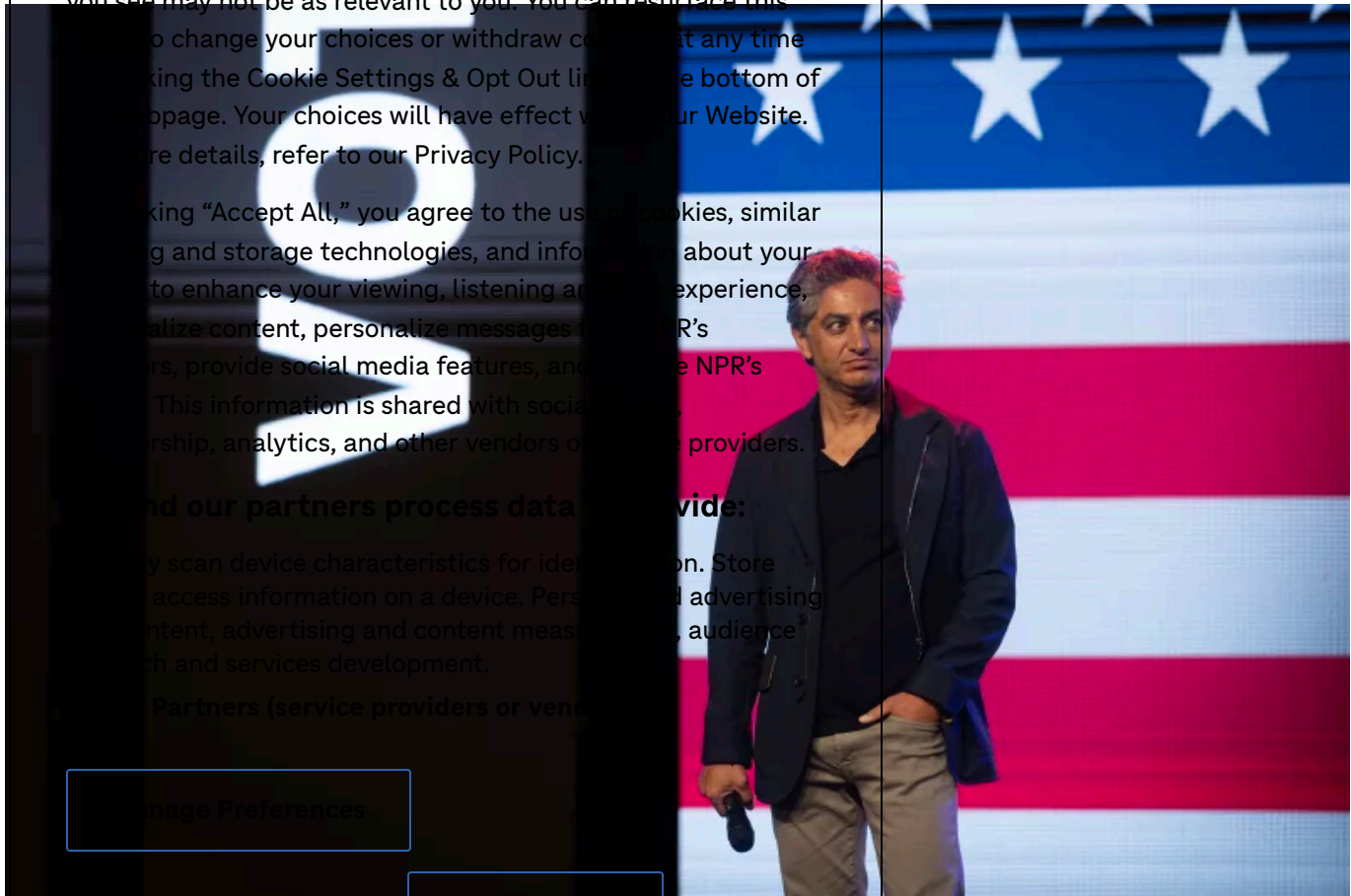
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By [Stephen Fowler](#), [Jude Joffe-Block](#)

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5-Minute Listen

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Investor Antonio Gracias at a town hall rally held by Elon Musk in Green Bay, Wis., on March 30. Gracias, who is part of Musk's Department of Government Efficiency team, has been working at the Social Security Administration.

Scott Olson/Getty Images

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One of Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency lieutenants working in the Social Security Administration has been pushing dubious claims about noncitizens voting, apparently using access to data that court records suggest DOGE isn't supposed to have.

The staffer, Antonio Gracias, made the claims as part of larger misleading statements about the SSA's enumeration-beyond-entry, or EBE program, which streamlines the process for granting Social Security cards to certain categories of eligible immigrants.

Gracias said in an April 2 appearance on *Fox and Friends* that "5-plus million" noncitizens who "came to the country as illegals" received Social Security numbers "through an automatic system and proceeded to get into our benefit systems."

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"And just because we were a device, we then looked to see if they were on the voter rolls. And we found in a handful of cooperative states that there were thousands of them on the voter rolls and that many of them had voted," Gracias said.

State-level audits of voter data have found few examples of noncitizens voting, which is a federal crime punishable with prison and deportation.

Later that week, Gracias furthered his claims on a podcast. "I think this was a move to import voters," he said, echoing a conspiracy theory that Donald Trump

and Musk elevated during the 2024 campaign season and Republican lawmakers are invoking to push for stricter voting policies.



ELECTIONS

The House has passed the Trump-backed SAVE Act. Here are 8 things to know

While Musk and some Republican lawmakers are now amplifying Gracias' claims online, experts familiar with Social Security say Gracias is mischaracterizing the program, and voter registration experts say they doubt the accuracy of his claims about noncitizens voting.

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From "no access granted" to data shared by Musk

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Using Social Security data to imply that noncitizens are breaking the law also could have violated a court order that prevents DOGE staffers from handling sensitive SSA systems. It's the latest example of concerns among privacy activists that DOGE's sweeping access to personal and financial information of millions of Americans may violate privacy laws and may be used for inappropriate purposes.

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POLITICS



DOGE says it needs to know the government's most sensitive data, but can't say why

Gracias, the billionaire chief executive officer and chief investment officer of Valor Equity Partners, is one of 10 DOGE staffers embedded in the Social Security Administration. That description matches "Employee 4" in court records filed Wednesday in a case challenging DOGE access to sensitive SSA systems.

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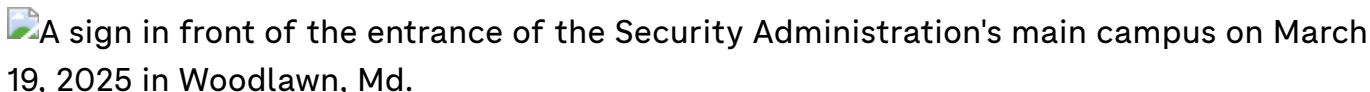
Appointee shall not share any Personally Identifiable Information accessed or obtained through the use of SSA systems or work performed for SSA, with any external entity, organization, or agency federal or state," an addendum to his appointment request reads.

Case 1:25-cv-00596-ELH Document 121-5 Filed 04/09/25 Page 121 of 205

A description of Gracias' scope of work in his role with DOGE notes that he is tasked with work on death data and reducing improper payments and that "security controls will be implemented to prevent detailee from accessing or viewing sensitive data" within the agency's payment files and master Social Security databases. It does not mention his analysis of how noncitizens are given Social Security numbers. Gracias is also not supposed to see or share personally identifiable information, or PII, within agency data, according to earlier court filings.

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Appointee shall not share any Personally Identifiable Information accessed or obtained through the use of SSA systems or work performed for SSA, with any external entity, organization, or agency federal or state," an addendum to his appointment request reads.

A sign in front of the entrance of the Security Administration's main campus on March 19, 2025 in Woodlawn, Md.

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A sign in front of the entrance of the Social Security Administration's main campus in Woodlawn, Md.

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In a March 12 declaration from the SSAs then-Chief Information Officer Michael Russo, Gracias is one of two SSA DOGE employees listed as not having access to sensitive databases or PII.

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"No SSA data or personally identifiable information access, or access to systems containing such information, has been granted to Employee 6 and Employee 4,"

the document reads. Employee 6, listed in the record as a "Growth Equity Vice President," appears to be Jon Kival, an associate of Gracias at his venture capital firm, who is also detailed to DOGE.

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A third Valor employee, Payton Rehling, appears to be the "Senior Associate, Data Engineer" listed as Employee 9 in court records who was given access to a production copy of PII from several SSA databases starting March 4.

On March 20, a federal judge in Maryland issued a temporary restraining order blocking DOGE employees from accessing SSA data. Gracias first publicized his

claims alongside Musk at a rally in Wisconsin on March 30, ahead of the state's special Supreme Court election.

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A federal appeals court dismissed the Trump administration's effort to lift that temporary restraining order April 11. For more details, refer to our Privacy Policy.

A few days after his Fox News interview on April 2, Gracias joined the *All-In* podcast on April 4 and offered more details on the data he says he used and the conclusions he drew, which has been subsequently shared by conservative media outlets and amplified by Musk on his social media site X for several days.

In court documents filed Monday, lawyers for the government reiterated the earlier claim that Gracias never had access to SSA data or personally identifiable information and did not list Gracias — or examination of the EBE program — in its explanation of why DOGE staff should have had access to sensitive data for proposed projects.

Neither Gracias nor a DOGE spokesperson responded to NPR's questions about when and how any Social Security data was accessed and whether it complied with the court order.

NPR reached out to Social Security and initially spoke to acting press officer Nicole Tiggemann. In a subsequent email from a generic press account, the agency declined to answer detailed questions about DOGE's data access. It did confirm that a chart Gracias publicized showing totals of noncitizens with Social

Security numbers through EBE was taken from an SSA dashboard – but claimed that the restraining order prevented them from responding to NPR's request for additional data from the program. The agency did not respond to inquiries asking to confirm who gave the emailed answer.

That leaves many questions still unanswered about the Social Security data behind DOGE's claims. It's possible the analysis was conducted before the March 20 TRO or that Gracias is not the DOGE employee who accessed any personal Social Security information. So far, there has been no evidence provided of any states sharing public or private voter data with the DOGE team at SSA either.

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It's also possible that the data about noncitizens comes from non-DOGE activities.

The ~~We and our partners process data to provide~~ ²¹ that the TRO only applies to "SSA employees working on the DOGE agenda. It has no bearing on ordinary operations at SSA." ~~and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.~~

[Employee 7 asks for access to SAVE data on immigration.](#)

p. 29



One clue about the data's potential provenance comes from this week's court filing: a March 17 email exchange from someone identified as Employee 7 who copied Gracias and Koval on a request for access to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements program, which SSA uses to verify the immigration status of EBE applicants.

"This access is absolutely critical to get detailed immigration status for non-citizen SSNs to detect fraud and improper payments," the email reads.

POLITICS

Member of Elon Musk's DOGE team resigns after racist posts resurface

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Employee 7 appears to be DOGE staffer Marko Elez, who resigned from his post at the Treasury Department over past racist tweets — and who shared a spreadsheet of personal information in violation of data-sharing policies, an audit found —

That includes the Labor Department and Health and Human Services Department, where a different court case revealed Elez was granted access to new hire data through the Office of Child Support Services. The SSA lawsuit documents say Employee 7 is a Labor employee detailed to SSA who obtained access to new hire data through the Office of Child Support Services.

POLITICS

DOGE staffer who shared Treasury data now has more access to government systems

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Questions about DOGE's data on noncitizens

Gracias puts the EBE program at the center of his account about how his team decided to check voter rolls. The program started in 2017 during the first Trump administration but grew dramatically under the Biden administration, which allowed millions of asylum-seekers to enter the U.S. and expanded the categories of immigrants who could stay on a temporary basis.

Until recently, under the EBE program, noncitizens applying for work permits, green cards or naturalization with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services could

apply for Social Security cards without visiting a field office. *The Washington Post* and other outlets reported that the EBE program was paused in mid-March, citing an internal email. NPR has not independently confirmed the reporting.



sponsors, provide social media features, and analyze NPR's traffic. This information is shared with social media, sponsorship, analytics, and other vendors or service providers. large numbers of noncitizens are voting.

Joe Rappa/Getty Images

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Since immigrants in the process of naturalizing could use the EBE program, those individuals need to be removed from voter rolls once they became U.S. citizens.

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Later in the program, he said "well over a thousand voted" in one state. He has said his team has referred those cases for federal prosecution. In the same unsigned email, the unnamed SSA spokesperson declined to respond to NPR's questions about the inquiry into individuals who allegedly were identified as illegal voters using Social Security data, citing "ongoing criminal investigations on this matter."

But voting experts say the data cross-checking Gracias describes raises legal questions and can be prone to many kinds of errors. **We and our partners process data to provide:** Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalized advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience measurement, and analytics. This information is shared with social media, sponsorship, analytics, and other vendors or service providers. **There are huge accuracy questions here,** said Charles Stewart, the director of MIT's Election Data and Science Lab.

Typically, states' public voter rolls would not include Social Security numbers, which would make data matching far less precise. There are known issues with false matches when just using names and birthdays.

Furthermore, it is common for states to find voters who have since naturalized and become citizens when cross-checking databases of noncitizens against their voter rolls.

"DOGE has repeatedly made massive data errors," said David Bier, the director of immigration studies at the libertarian Cato Institute. "I have some doubts that they've discovered anything more than maybe just some poor government data quality tracking or they don't understand the data they're looking at."

It's also not clear if the DOGE effort to combine Social Security data with other sources inside and outside the federal government runs afoul of data sharing and privacy laws that are designed to limit access to sensitive information to those who have a need to use it.

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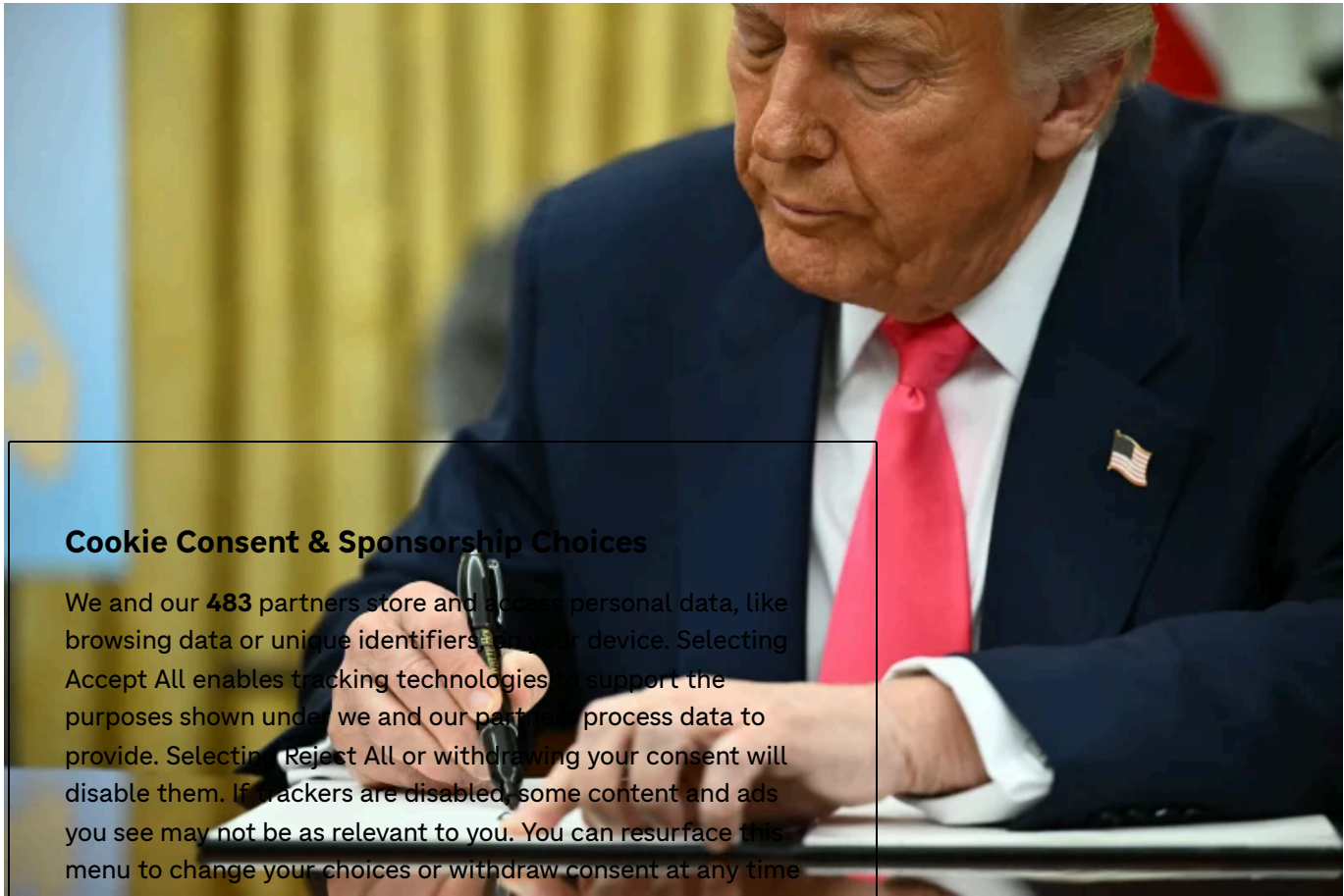
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traffic. This information is consistent with the mission that you're asking for the records in the first place, which has to be consistent with your own agency's mission," said

Justin L. Sizemore, a professor at Loyola University Chicago and a voting policy adviser in the Biden administration. "Because I'm curious is not a thing when the federal

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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. President Trump signs an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, D.C., on March 6. Mandel Ngan/AFP via Getty Images

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traffic. This information is shared with social media, sponsorship, analytics, and other vendors or service providers. "President Trump had the courage to allow us to go across databases, he signed an executive order," he said on Fox News. "It's never been done before where agencies could talk to each other and databases can talk to each other. That allowed us to connect all this data to find these people across the system, across the benefits system, all the way to the voting records."

Another executive order, "Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections," directs the Department of Homeland Security and DOGE to "review each State's publicly available voter registration list" among other requests, similar to Gracias' effort at SSA.

Both presidential actions include the caveat that any sharing must occur "consistent with law."

The latest in DOGE data concerns

Multiple federal judges have found the DOGE effort has likely broken the law in its effort to comb through agencies to find "waste, fraud and abuse." Court records have also shown the Trump administration is unable to account for the scope of DOGE's data access, or the need for a small number of staffers to have virtually unfettered access to sensitive, compartmentalized data across the government.

The claims made by Gracias and Musk about Social Security data underscores growing questions around how DOGE is using the data it has gathered. In a ruling blocking DOGE access to Treasury systems, Judge Jeannette Vargas warned that "a real possibility exists that sensitive information has already been shared outside of the Treasury Department, in potential violation of federal law."

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POLITICS

Federal workers ordered back to office find shortages of desks, Wi-Fi and toilet paper

But Gracias' latest claims about noncitizens voting continue to have an impact on policy in the Trump administration and with the Republican-controlled Congress.

During Thursday's House debate over the SAVE Act, Rep. Aaron Bean, R-Fla., mentioned DOGE's allegations and the claim that the Biden administration had "imported" noncitizens as a reason to pass the bill.

"We have evidence that they're participating in our elections," Bean said. "The DOGE team just announced millions of illegals now have Social Security numbers. It's happening and it ends today when we vote on this SAVE Act."

Have information you want to share about DOGE access to government databases, Social Security, immigration and IT systems? Reach out to these authors through encrypted communication on Signal. Stephen Fowler is at stphnfwlr.25, and Jude Joffe-Block is at judejb.10.

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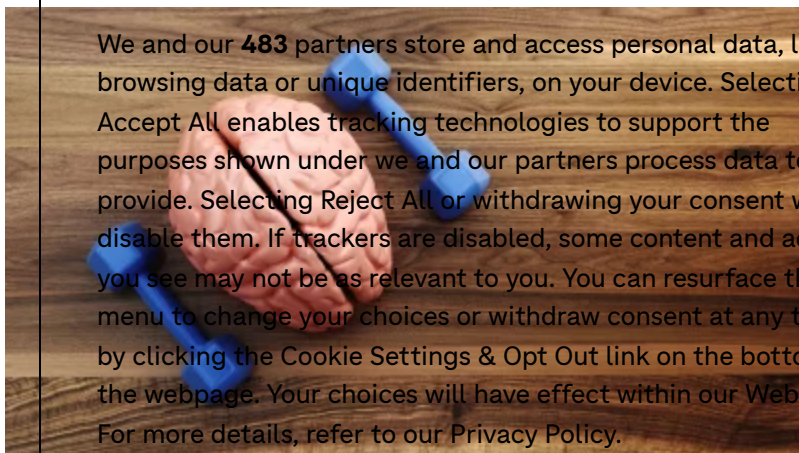
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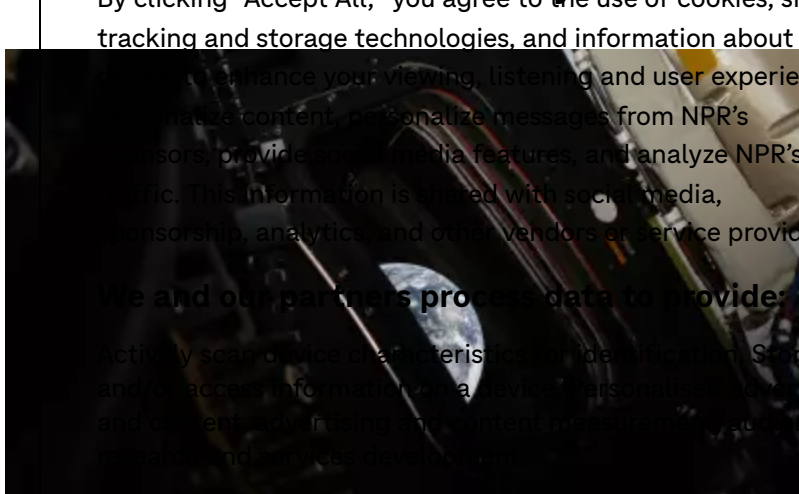
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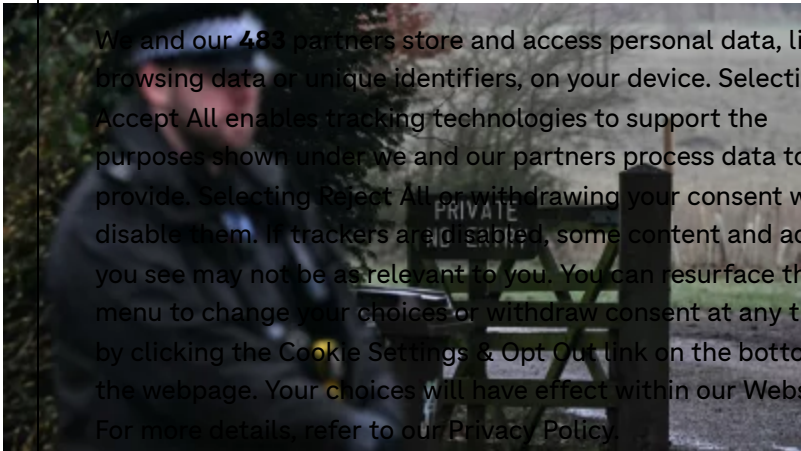
THE PICTURE SHOW

NASA's Artemis II crew are quite the photographers. See what they've snapped so far



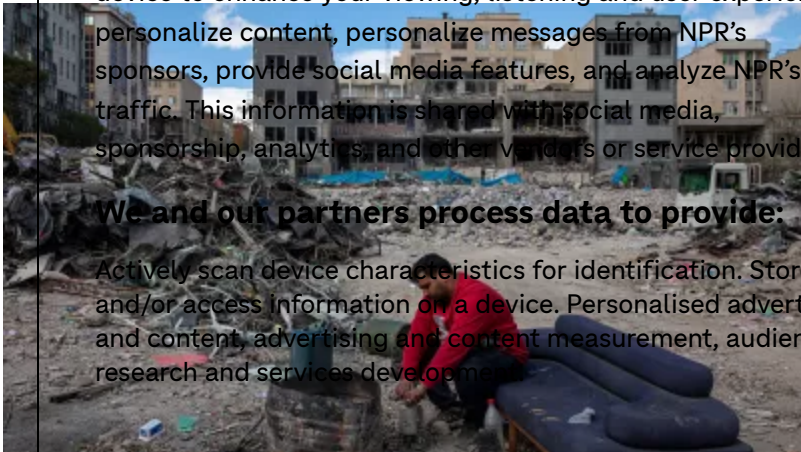
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Trump shared a racist "joke." That humor is an American tradition : Code Switch
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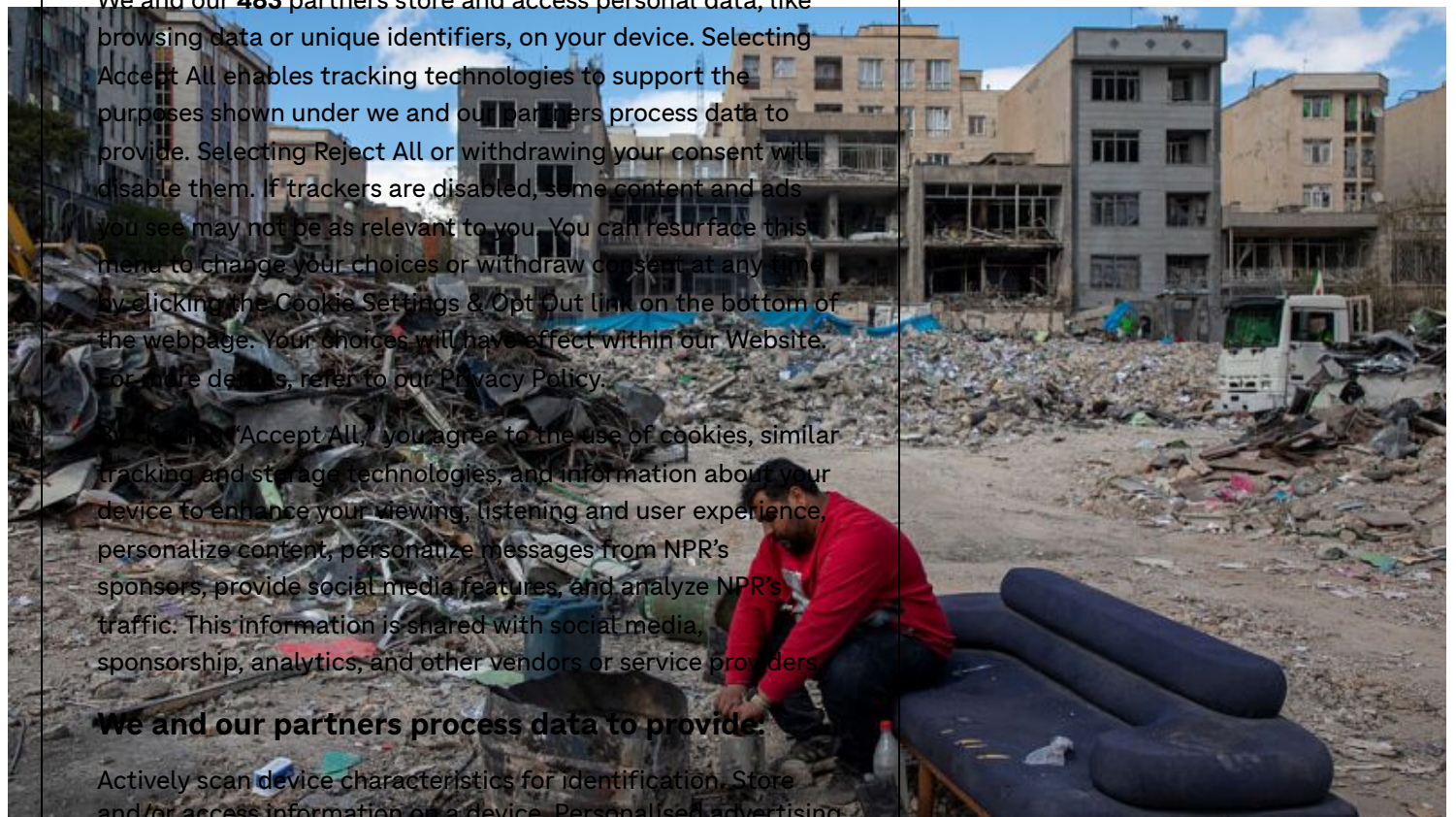
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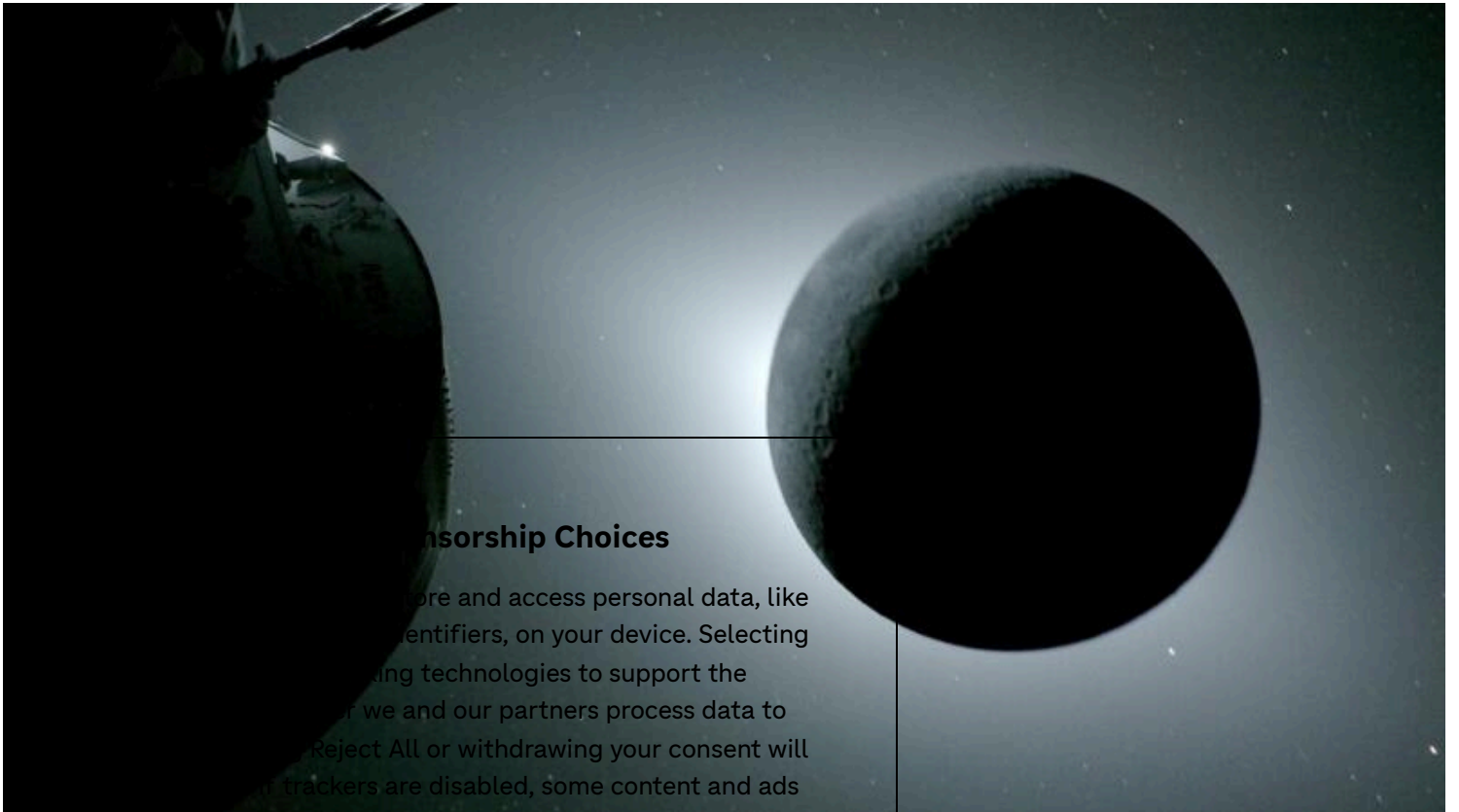
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MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

U.S. and Iran agree to 2-week ceasefire, suspending Trump's threat to annihilate Iran





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The Artemis II crew saw parts of the moon never seen before. Here's what they said

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TECHNOLOGY

ICE acknowledges it is using powerful spyware



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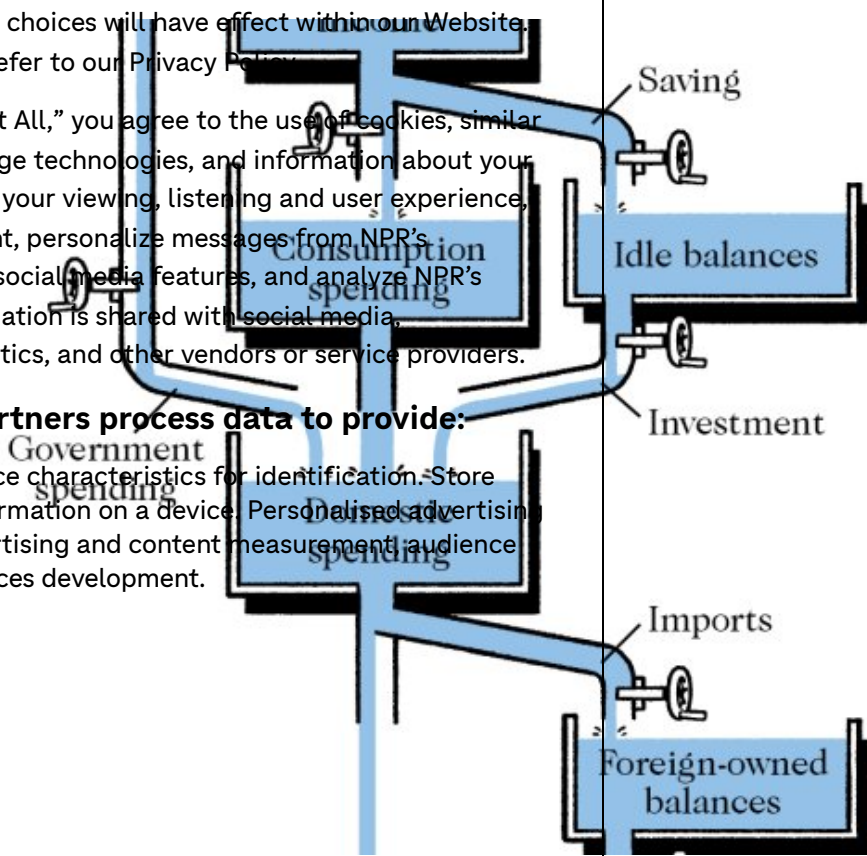
Photos: NASA releases first images from moon flyby

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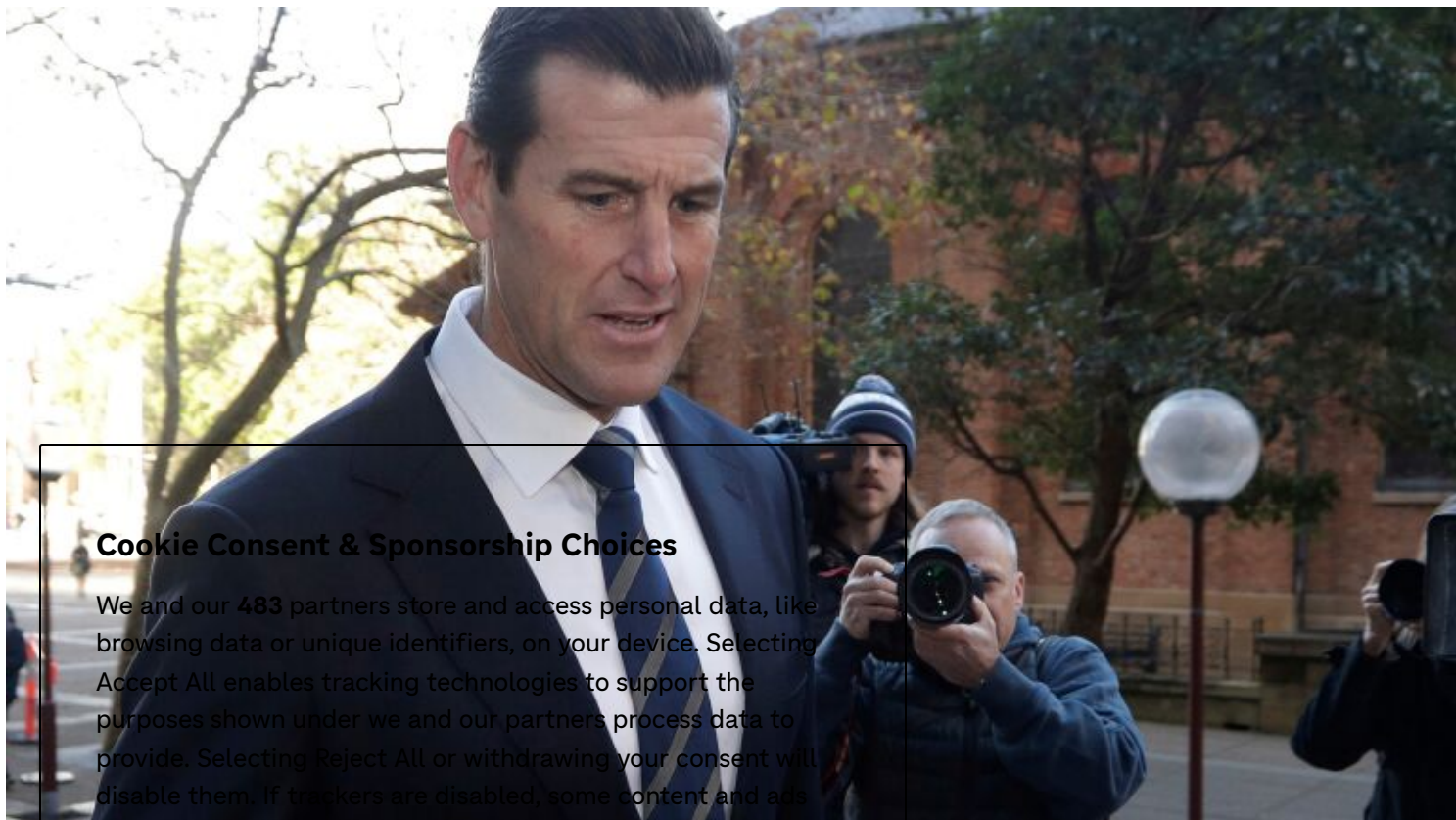
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PLANET MONEY NEWSLETTER

How Bill Phillips used flowing water to model the economy



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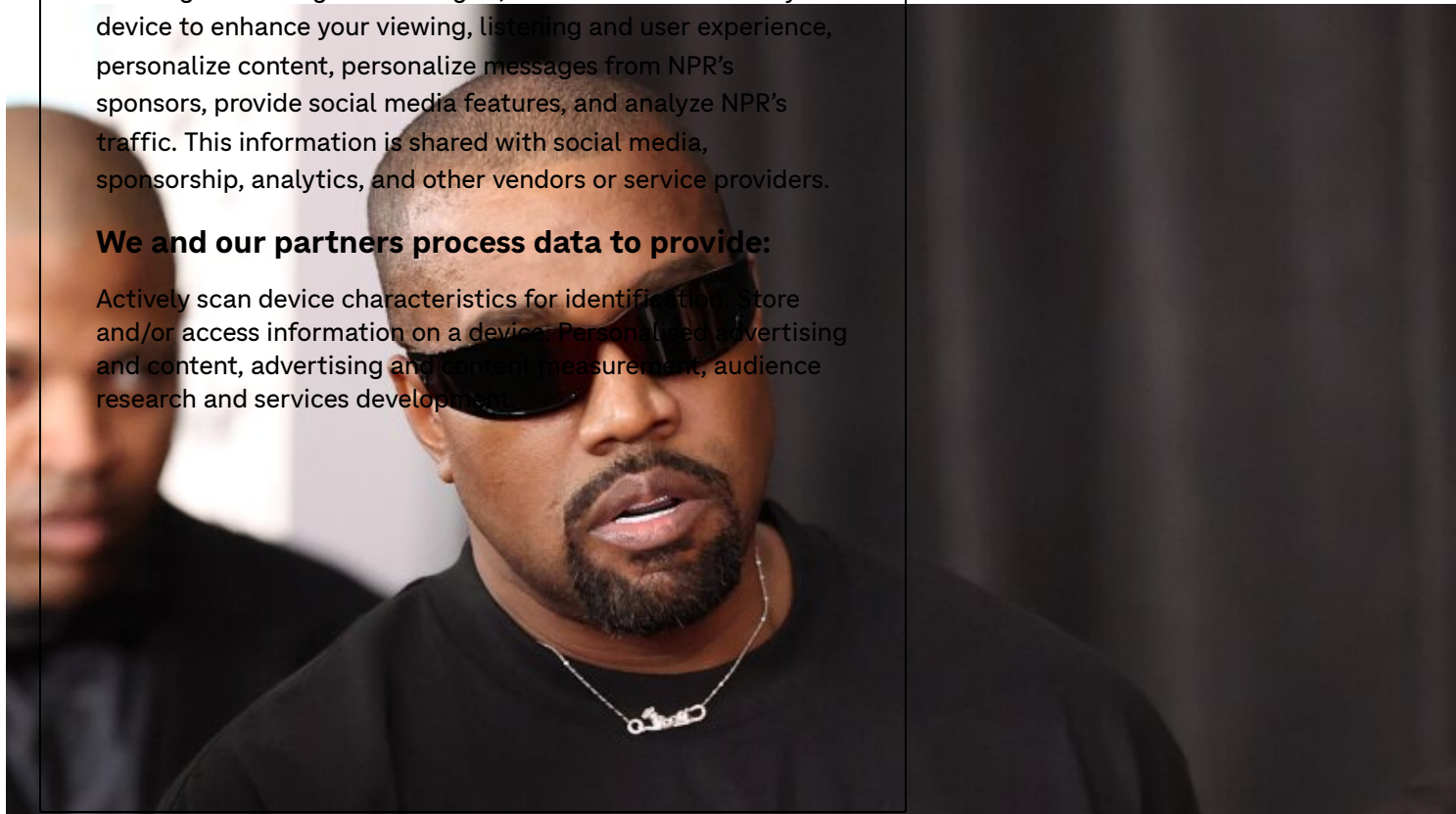
NPR Editors' Picks

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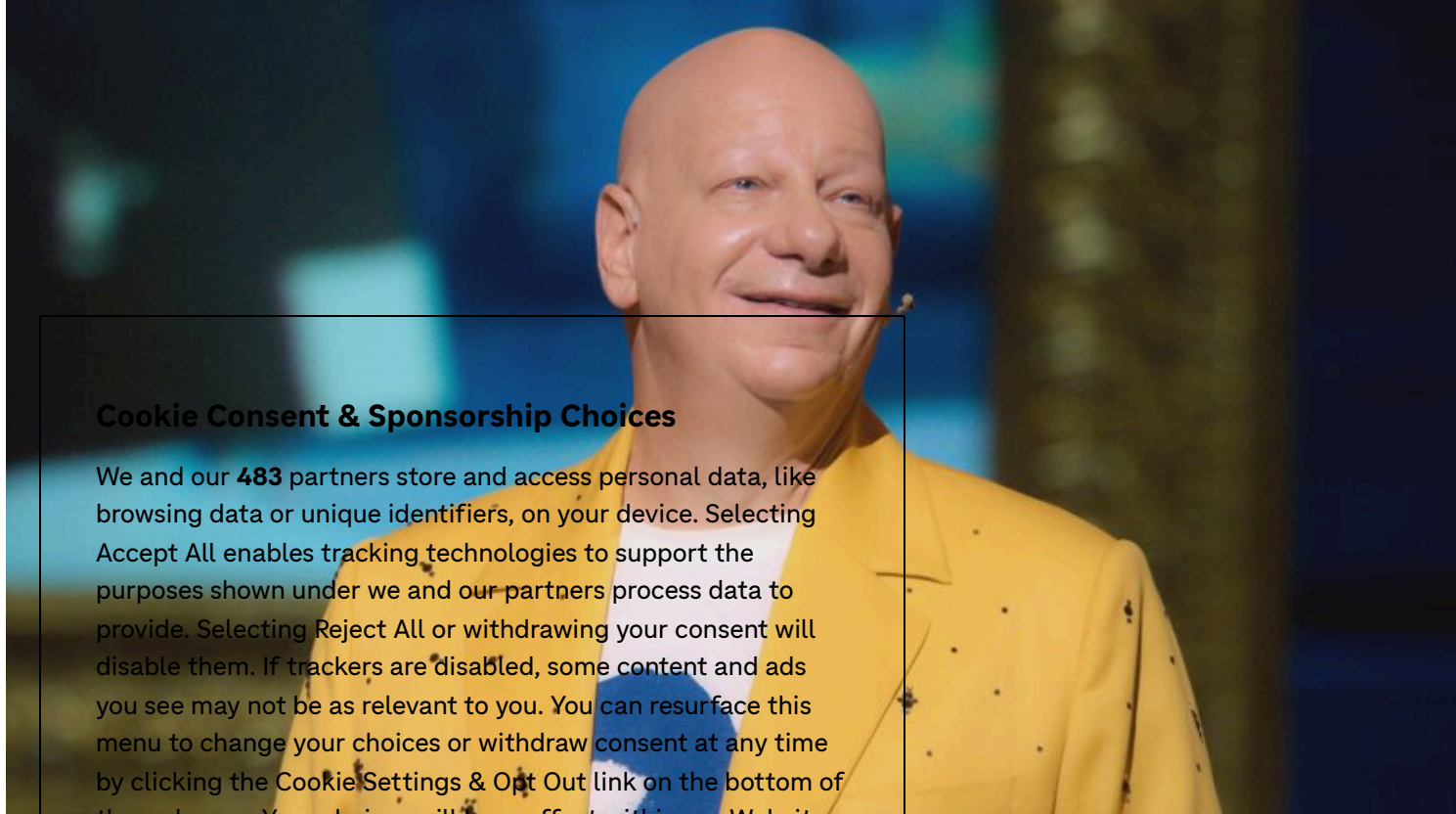
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ASIA Australia charges ex-soldier with 5 war-crime murders in Afghanistan



MUSIC

U.K. issues Ye travel ban over antisemitism, leading to festival cancellation



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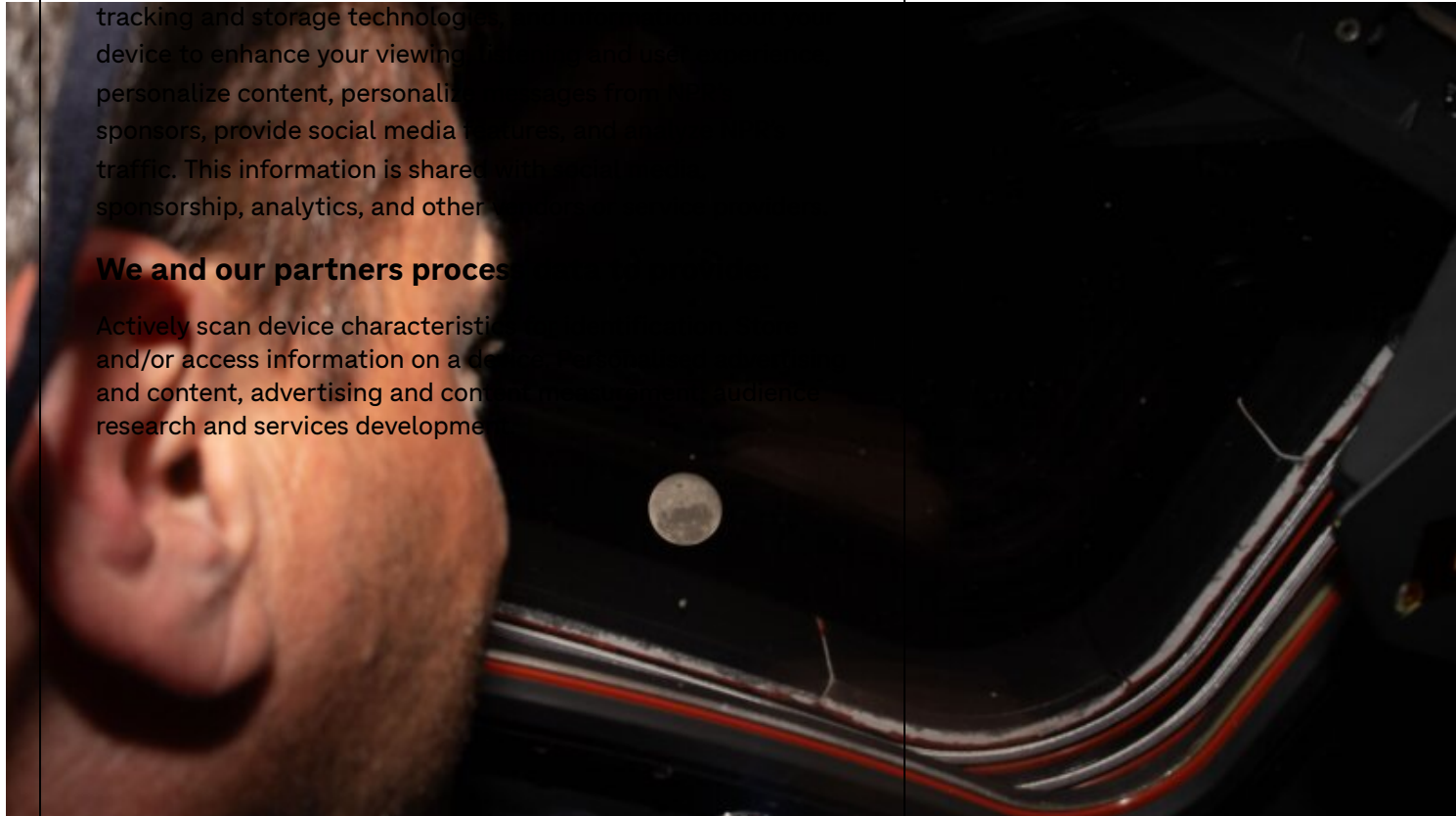
TELEVISION

Now cancer-free, 'Roastmaster' comic Jeff Ross still finds humor in loss

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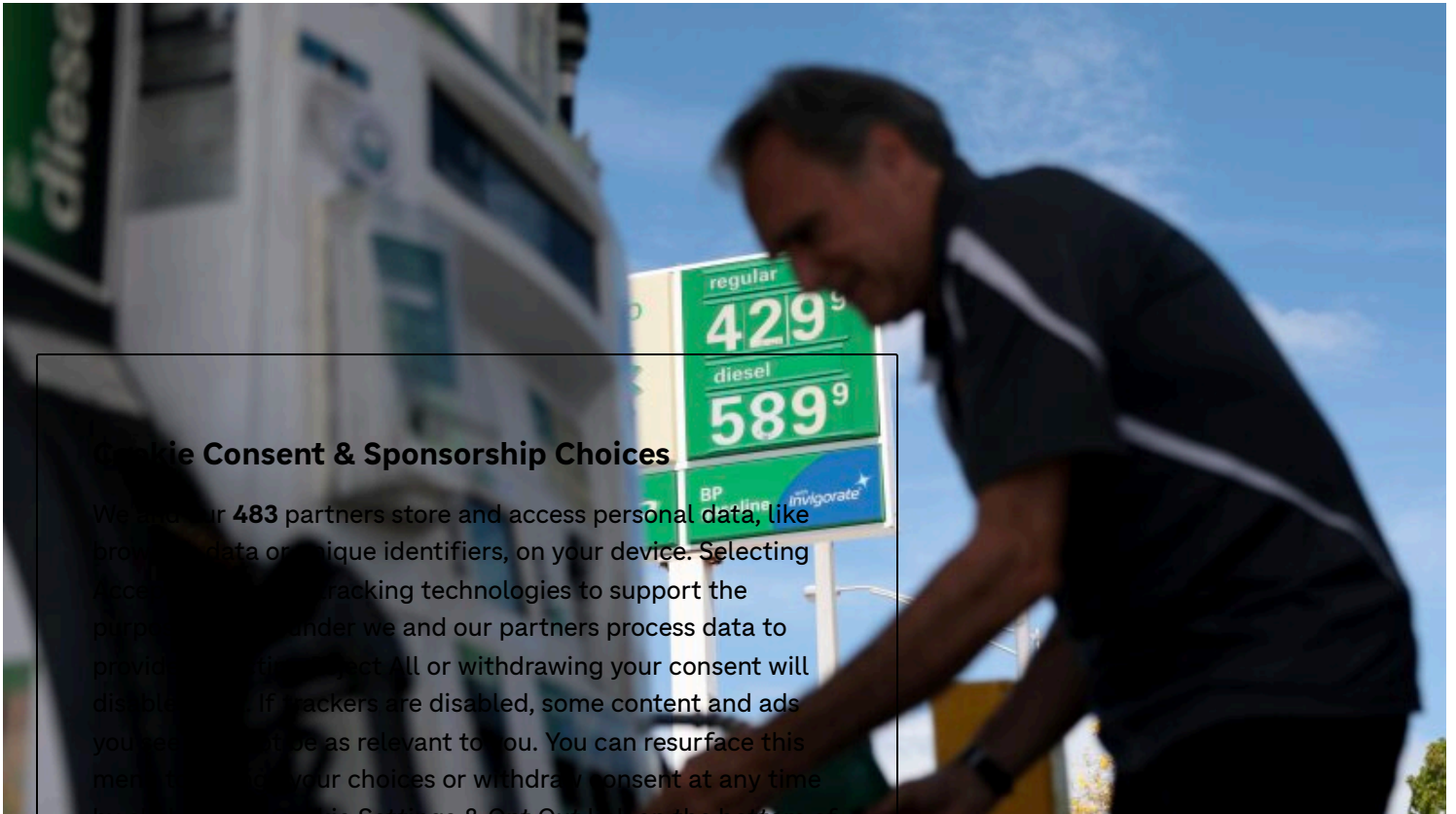
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SPACE

Astronauts suggest naming a moon crater 'Carroll' after their commander's late wife



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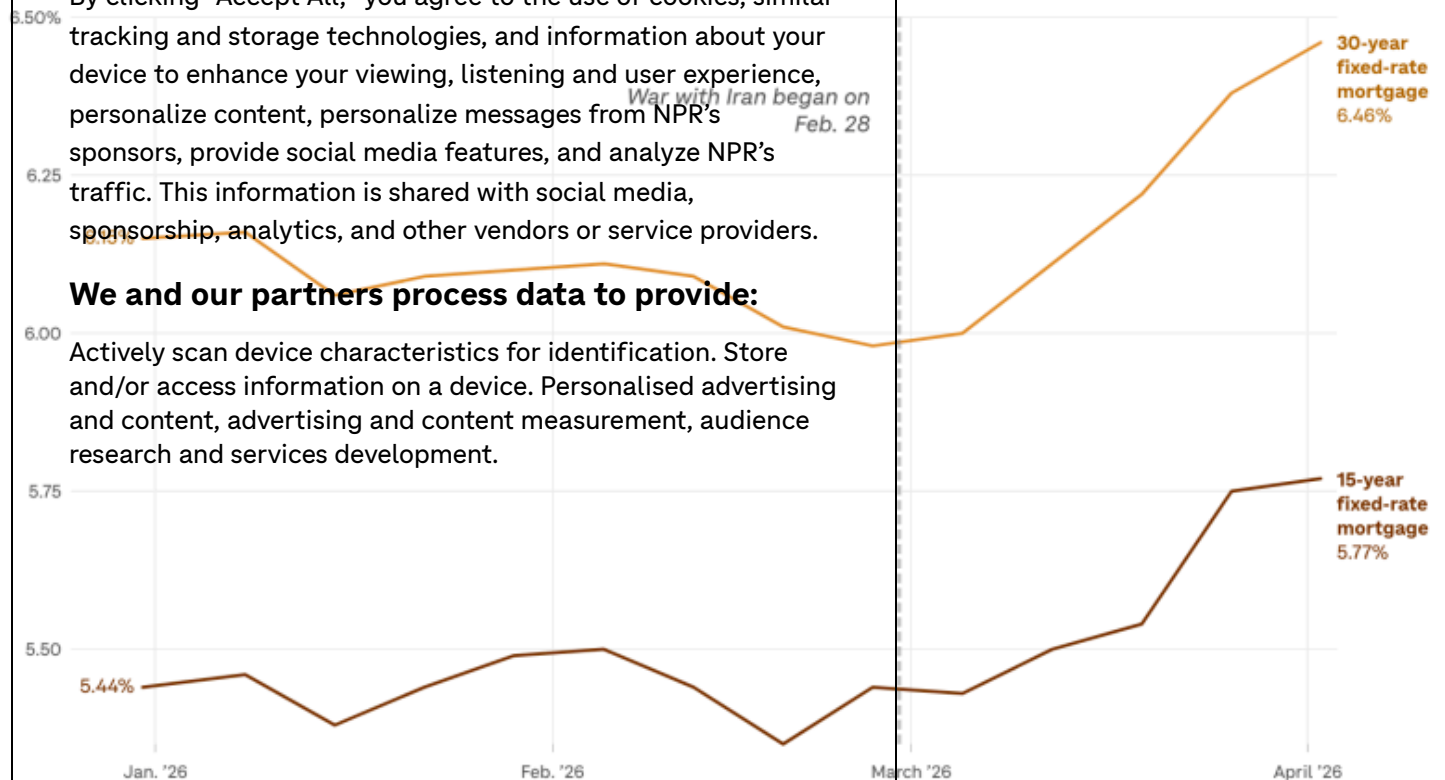
BUSINESS

Drive slower, go electric, don't drive at all? Americans weigh options for saving gas

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ECONOMY

Beer cans, helium balloons and mortgages: An unexpected mix of things affected by war



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ASIA

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Taiwan's opposition leader arrives in China for a 'Journey of Peace'

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