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Middle East conflict

The U.S. military says it will blockade Iranian ports as Iran peace talks collapse

UPDATED APRIL 12, 2026 · 6:48 PM ET

By NPR Staff

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A cargo ship carrying vehicles sails through the Arabian Gulf toward the Strait of Hormuz in the United Arab Emirates on March 22.

AP

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ISLAMABAD — The U.S. military said on Sunday that it will soon block ships from Iranian ports. It comes after the U.S. and Iran failed to reach an agreement in

highly anticipated face-to-face peace talks, according to Vice President Vance, who is serving as Washington's lead negotiator.

"The bad news is that we have not reached an agreement. And I think that's bad news for Iran much more than it's bad news for the U.S. ... They have chosen not to accept our terms," Vance said at a press conference in Islamabad, before boarding Air Force Two to leave the country.

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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 the nuclear weapon, and they will not seek the tools that would enable them to quickly achieve a nuclear weapon."

Also on Sunday, President Trump said on social media that the U.S. would "blockade the Strait of Hormuz, saying that the talks had failed because "IRAN IS UNWILLING TO GIVE UP ITS NUCLEAR AMBITIONS!"

The U.S. military's Central Command, also known as CENTCOM, on Sunday said the blockade would begin at 10 a.m. ET on Monday. However, CENTCOM said ships not using Iranian ports would not be impeded.

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."

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.

The status of the two-week ceasefire 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."

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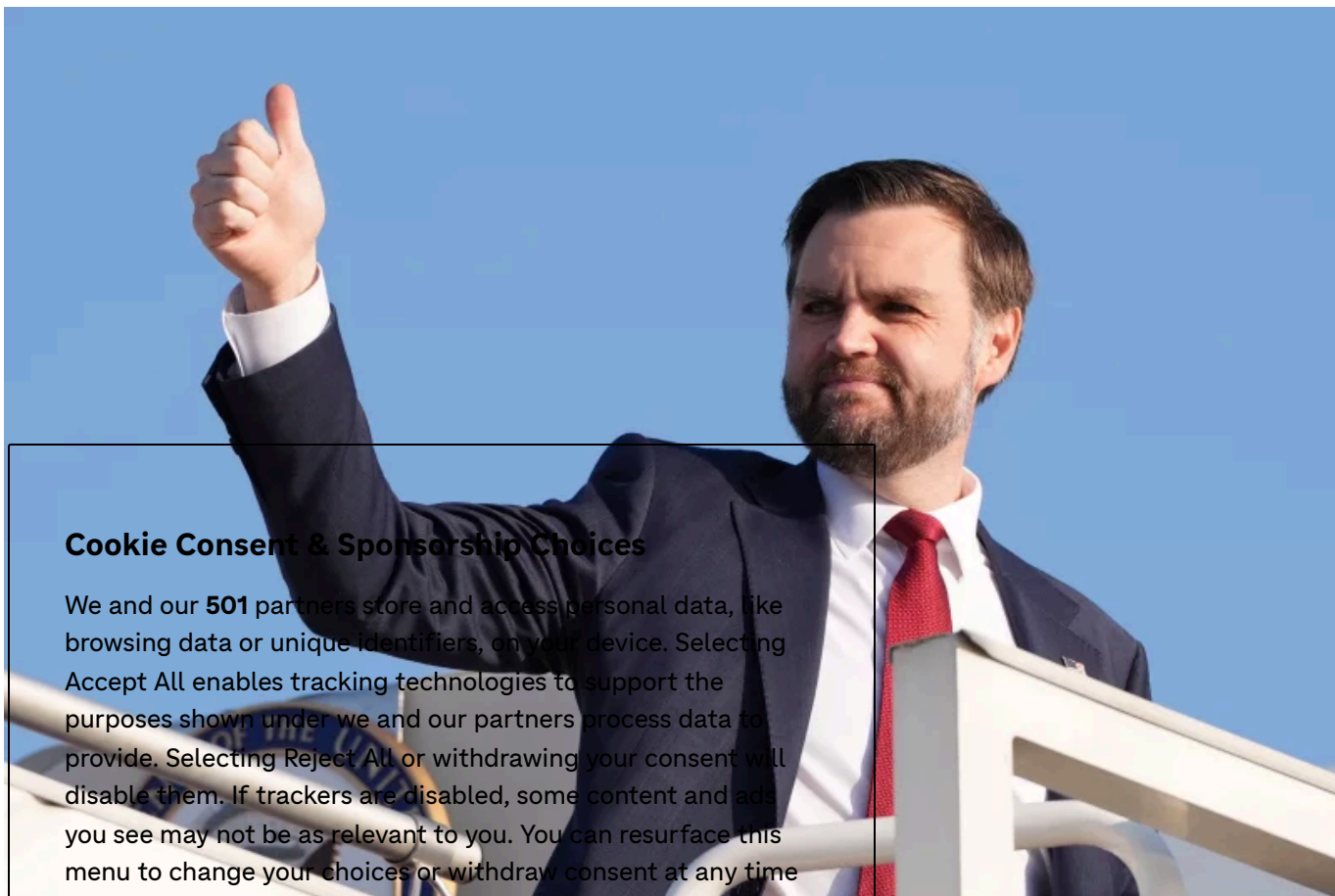
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After negotiations broke down, Pakistan, which has become a key mediator in the war and hosted the talks, said on Sunday that it would continue to play a role in peace efforts. This in Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar urged both sides to continue to uphold the ceasefire.

The talks — which lasted for 21 hours — began in Islamabad on Saturday as the two sides closed in on a deal to end the war that has shaken the Middle East for six weeks.

It was 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.



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Vice President JD Vance gives a thumbs up sign as he boards Air Force Two after attending talks with Iranian representatives in Islamabad, Pakistan, on Sunday.

Jacquelyn Martin/AP

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Trump responds

Early on Sunday in a post on his social media platform Truth Social, Trump wrote: "the meeting went well, most points were agreed to, but the only point that really mattered, NUCLEAR, was not."

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"Effective immediately, the United States Navy, the Finest in the World, will begin the process of BLOCKADING every and all ships trying to enter, or leave, the Strait of Hormuz," the president said.

Trump called Iran's position over the strait "extortion", and said: "I have also instructed our Navy to seek and interdict every vessel in International Waters that has paid a toll to Iran."

He added: "We will also begin destroying the mines the Iranians laid in the Straits. Any Iranian who fires at us, or at peaceful vessels, will be BLOWN TO HELL!"

In a second post on Truth Social, Trump said: "As they promised, they better begin the process of getting this INTERNATIONAL WATERWAY OPEN AND FAST!"

Speaking on Sunday in an interview with Fox News, the president said the blockade "could take a little while, but it'll be effective pretty soon." He also claimed that some NATO countries now "want to help with the strait."

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CENTCOM said the blockade would only apply to ships docking in Iranian ports. Iran had largely shut down the strait to commercial vessels and in some cases demanded steep tolls to ships to pass.

"The blockade will be enforced impartially against vessels of all nations entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas, including all Iranian ports on the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman," CENTCOM posted on social media on Sunday.

CENTCOM for information and investigation for vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz to and from non-Iranian ports.

In the Fox News interview, the president 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 if he will continue to "deconstruct" Iran if they don't give up their 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."

Vance said in his press conference that he'd been in touch with the president "consistently" while in Islamabad.

Iran cites "excessive demands"

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei said in a post on X and in a statement to Iranian state media that the main subjects of talks were the Strait of Hormuz, nuclear issues, sanctions, reparations, and an end to the war against Iran and the region.

He added that issues, such as Iran's demand that it continue to control the Strait of Hormuz, added complexities to the talks and that "we should not have expected to reach an agreement in one meeting from the beginning."


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A billboard of the U.S.-Iran talks is seen near Serena Hotel, the venue for the U.S. and Iran meeting, in Islamabad, Pakistan, on Sunday. Anjum Naveed/AP

However, he also criticized the U.S., saying: "the success of this diplomatic process depends on the seriousness and good faith of the opposing side, refraining from excessive demands."

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Under its multi-point ceasefire negotiation plan, Tehran had demanded an end to Israel's attacks against Hezbollah as part of any permanent agreement. Other demands from the Iranian delegation included the release of \$6 billion in frozen assets, guarantees on a **Cookies Settings & Opt Out** program and the right to charge ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

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Despite the failure of the talks to produce a deal, some analysts noted the optics of the meeting between the Iranians and Americans were still striking, coming just weeks after the U.S. and Israel launched the attack that killed Iran's supreme leader.

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The Iranian delegation had posted photographs of a row of empty seats on the plane and bloodied belongings of school children killed in a U.S. missile strike had been placed.

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Fighting between Israel and Hezbollah continues

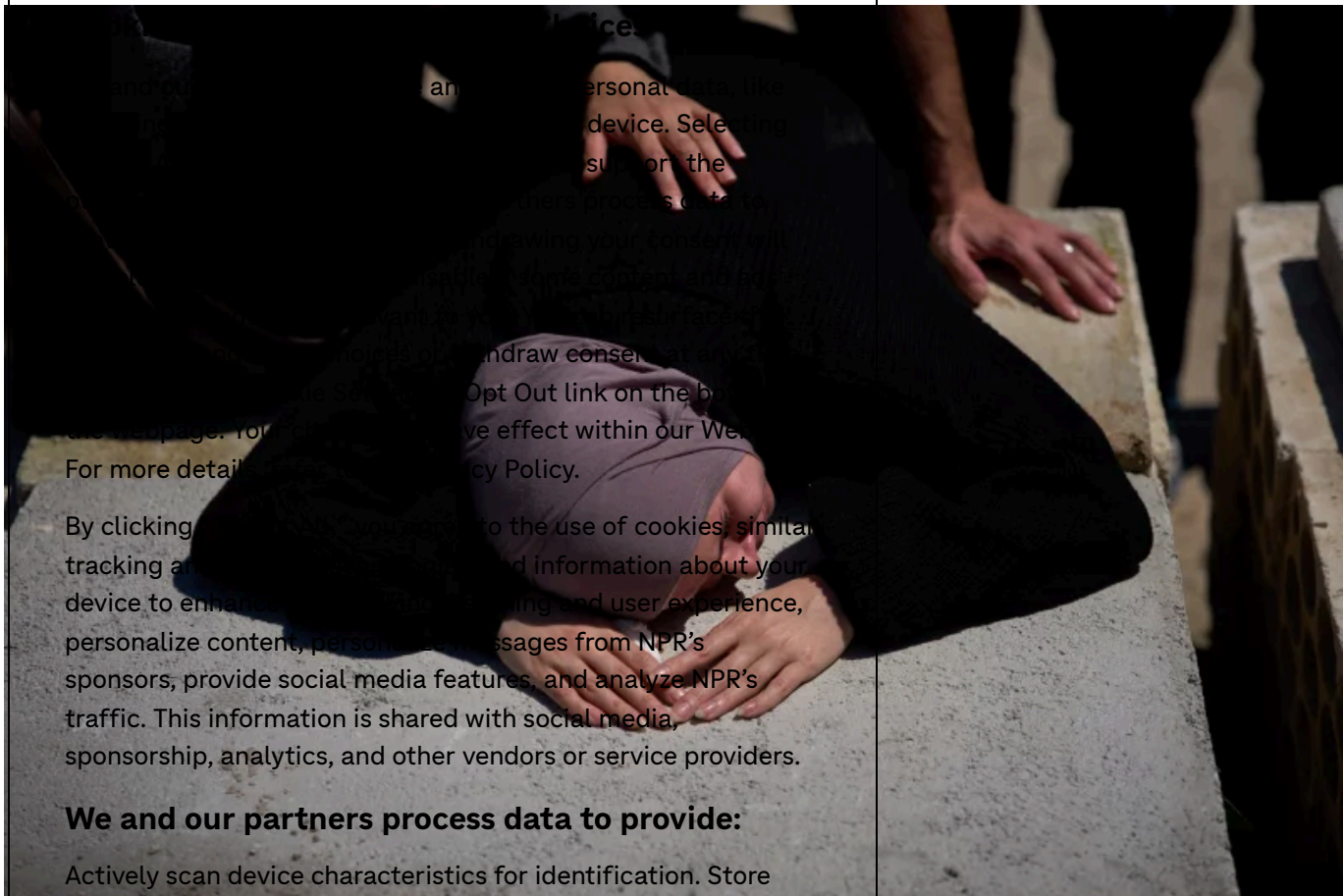
Israel's refusal to stop fighting in Lebanon and abide by the ceasefire with Iran has threatened the truce. Iran threatened quote "strong responses" and President Trump said Israel would reduce its attacks in Lebanon. But attacks continue.

Israel's military says this weekend it struck more than 200 Hezbollah targets. Lebanese authorities say a Red Cross paramedic was among at least 35 people

killed Sunday. Hezbollah said it continued rocket, drone and artillery attacks on Israel and Israeli troops inside Lebanon.

Lebanon says the Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors to Washington will hold their first direct meeting Tuesday at the State Department to discuss a ceasefire and a date for starting negotiations.

In a speech, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed historic accomplishments in Iran and Lebanon – and that his goal in talks is to disarm Hezbollah and reach a peace agreement with Lebanon.



A woman at the grave of her husband during the funeral of 13 state security officers killed in an Israeli strike in Beirut and south of Sidon on Saturday.

Emilio Morenatti/AP

In a post for Orthodox Easter on Sunday, Lebanon's prime minister said he hoped the country would "together overcome the dangers facing us, and so that stability, peace, and prosperity may prevail throughout Lebanon."

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U.S. warships pass through Strait of Hormuz

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The talks came as 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

American warships since the start of the Iran war six weeks ago.

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U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said it had begun setting conditions to clear

Iranian sea lanes planned throughout the waterway to "encourage the free flow of commerce.

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Betsy Joles in Islamabad, D Parvaz in Van, Turkey, Daniel Estrin in Tel Aviv, Kate

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STATE OF THE WORLD FROM NPR

A fraying ceasefire in southern Lebanon with villages destroyed



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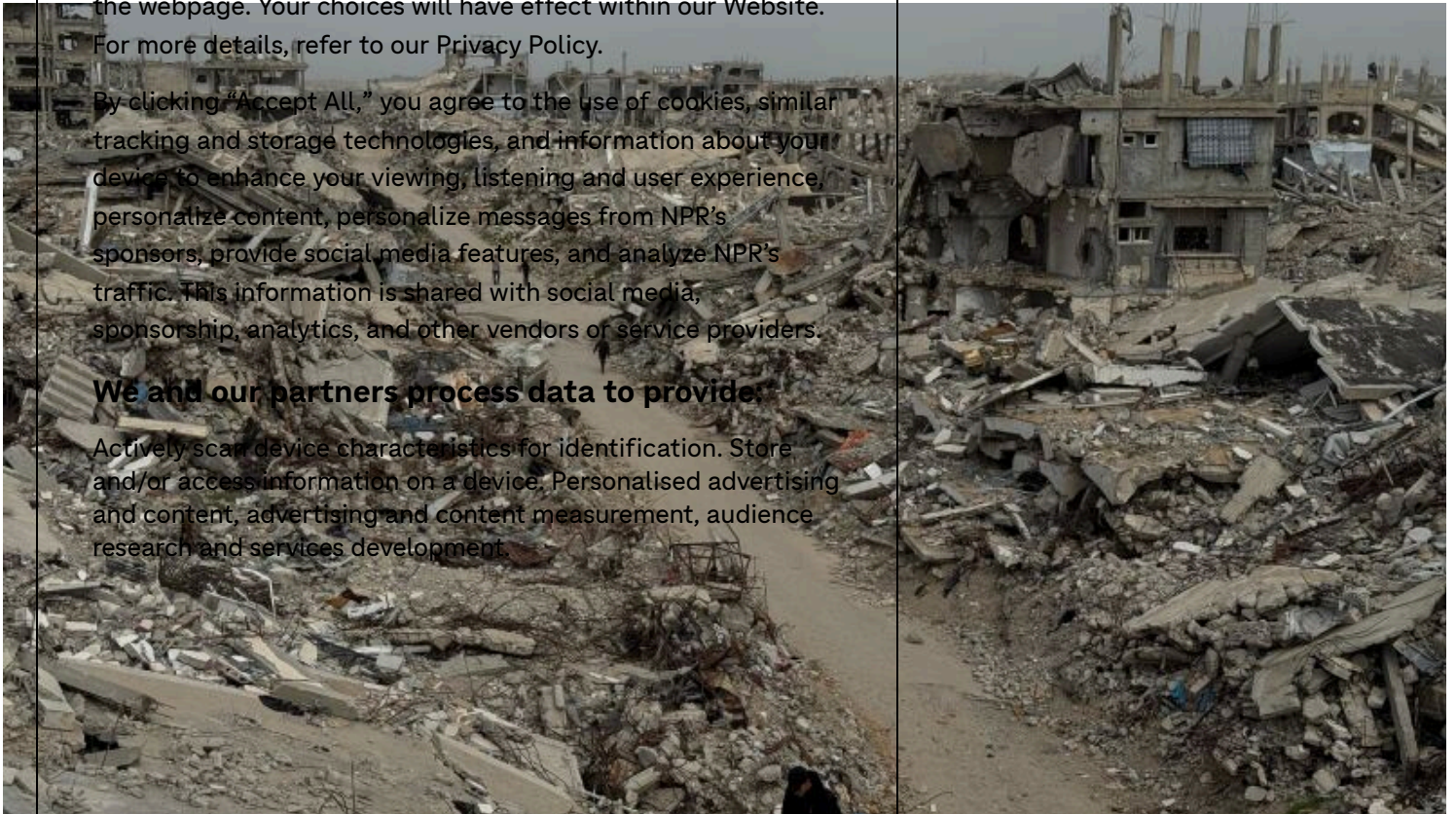
Pakistan says it's hopeful a U.S.-Iran deal can happen soon

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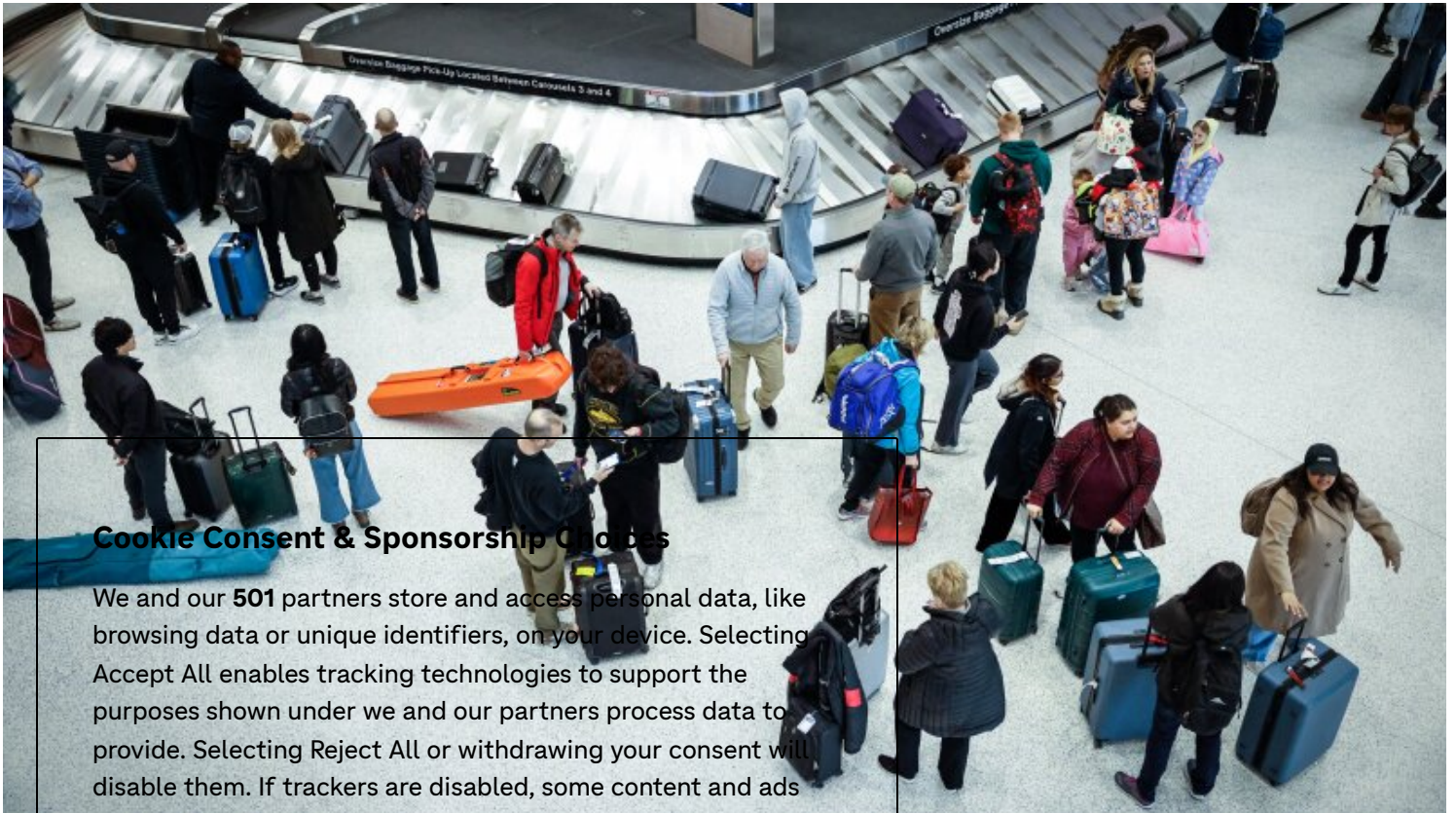
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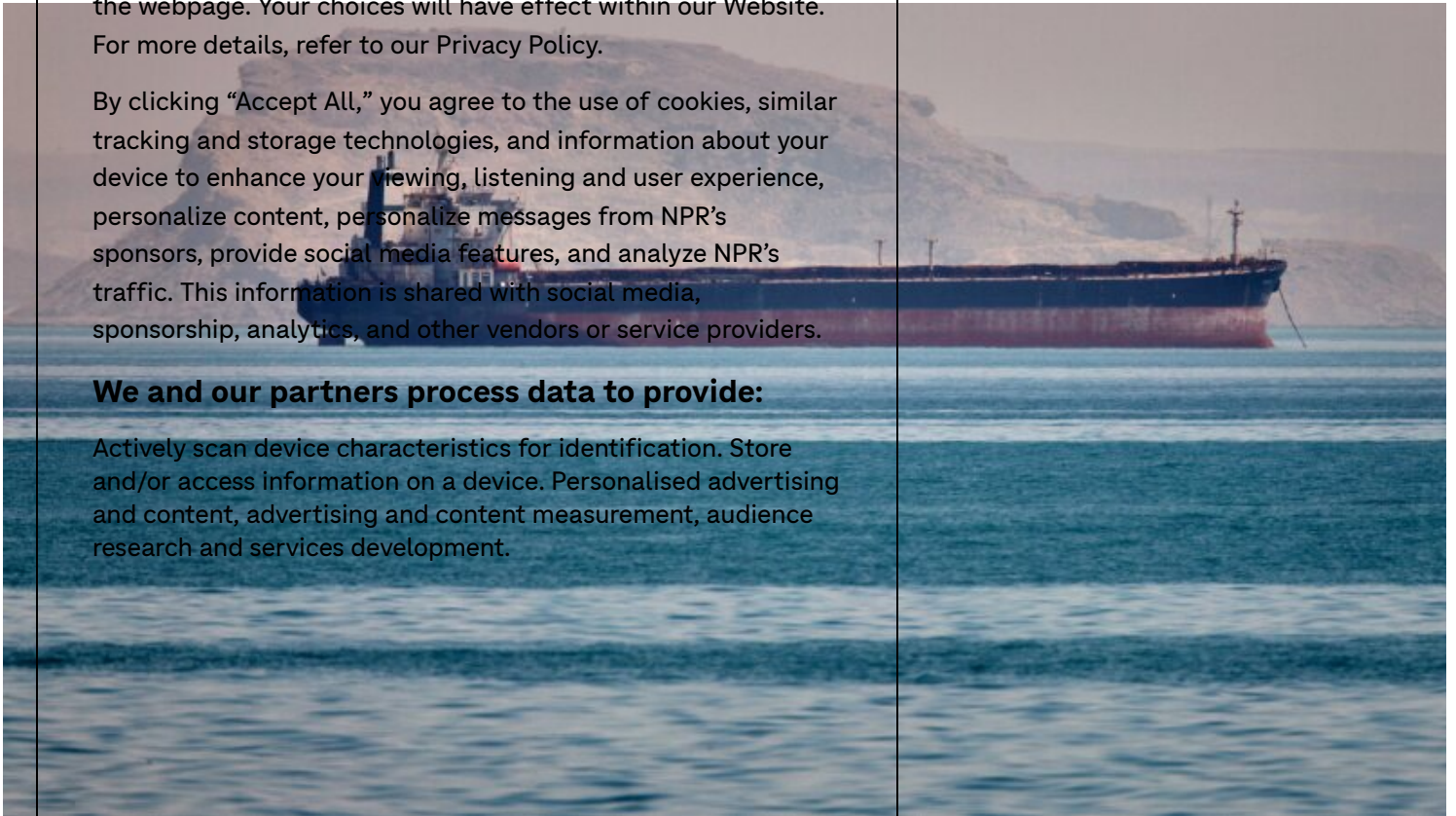
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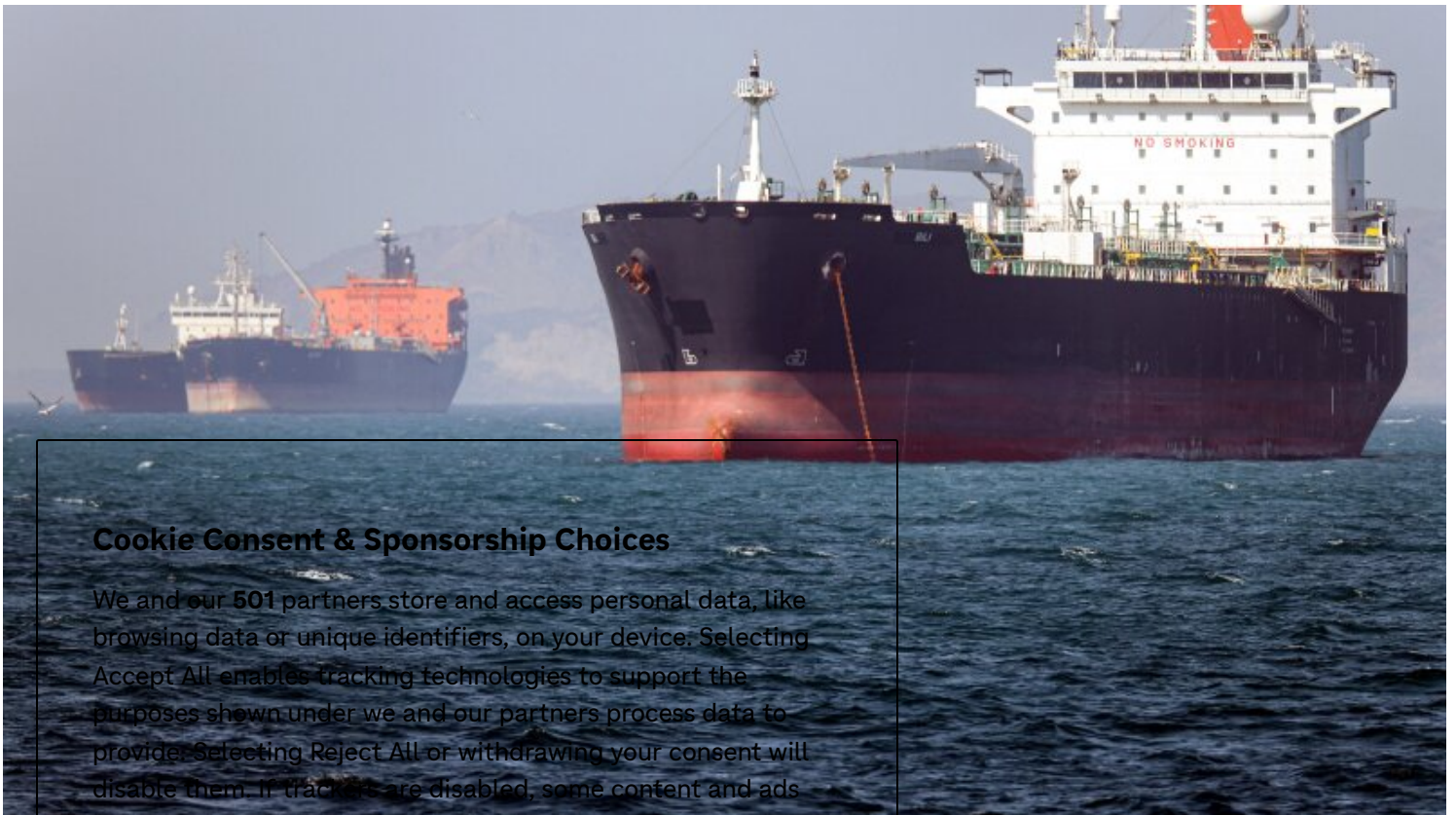
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MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

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





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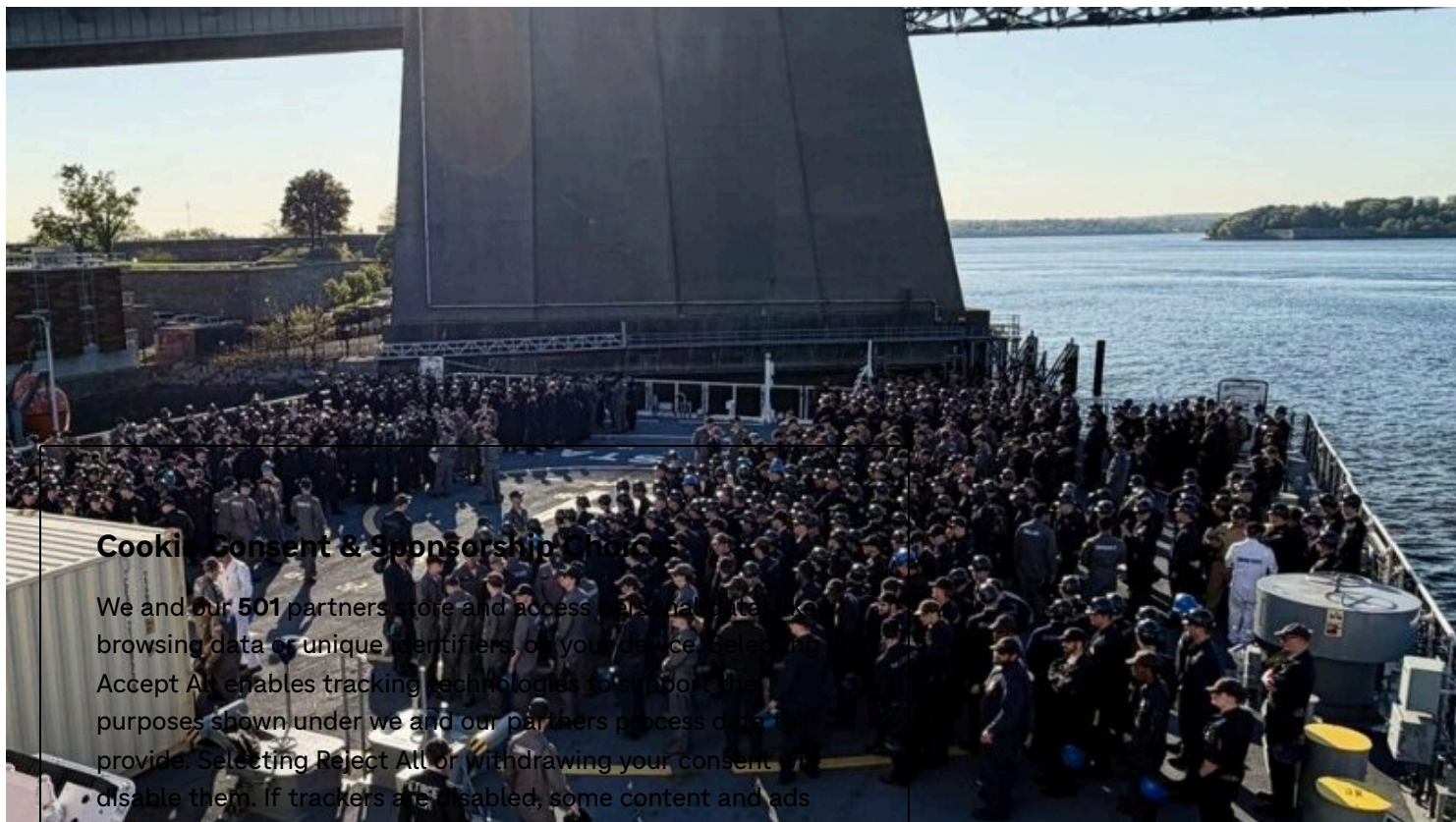
STATE OF THE WORLD FROM NPR
 The standoff in the Strait of Hormuz
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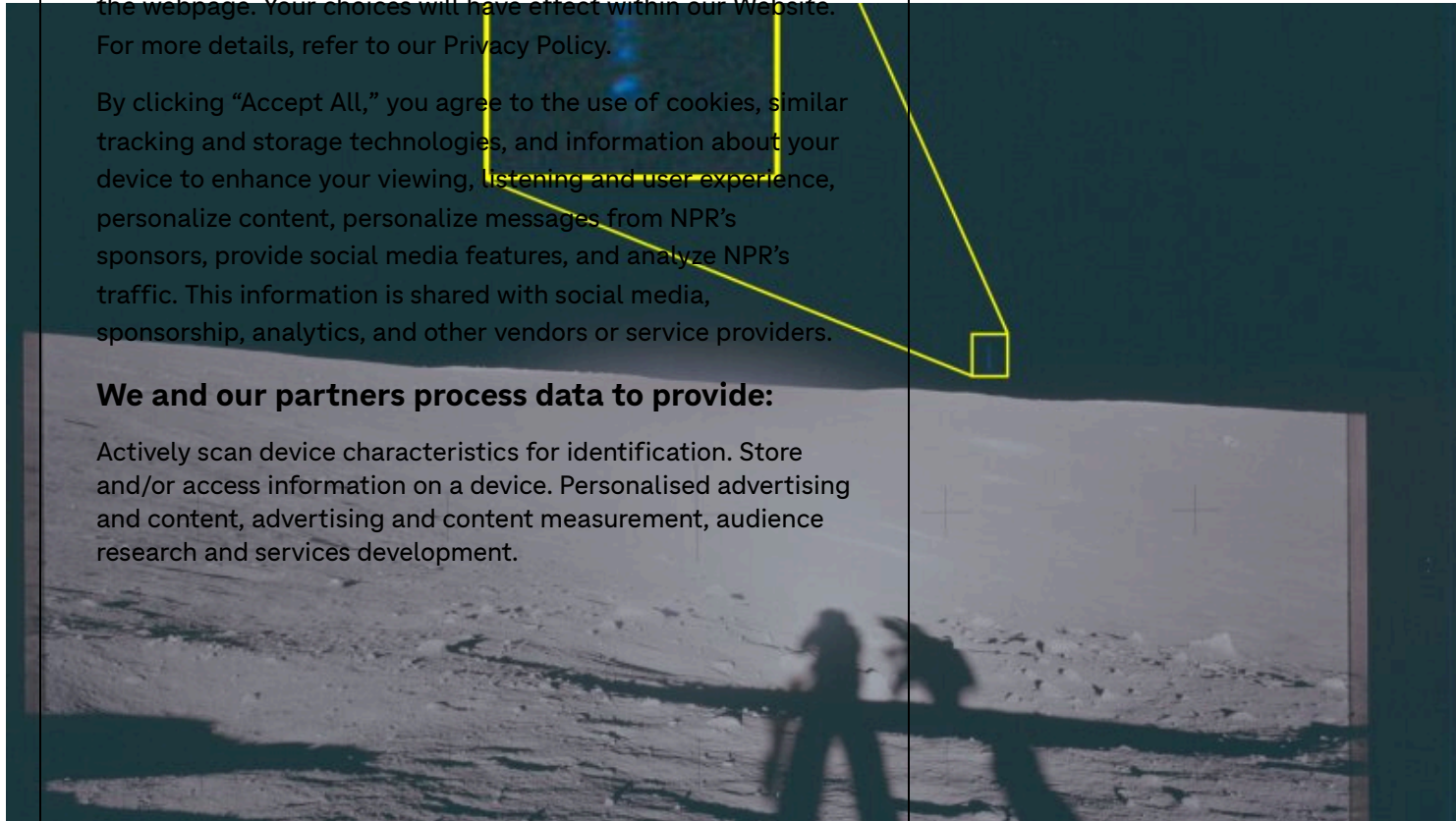
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NATIONAL

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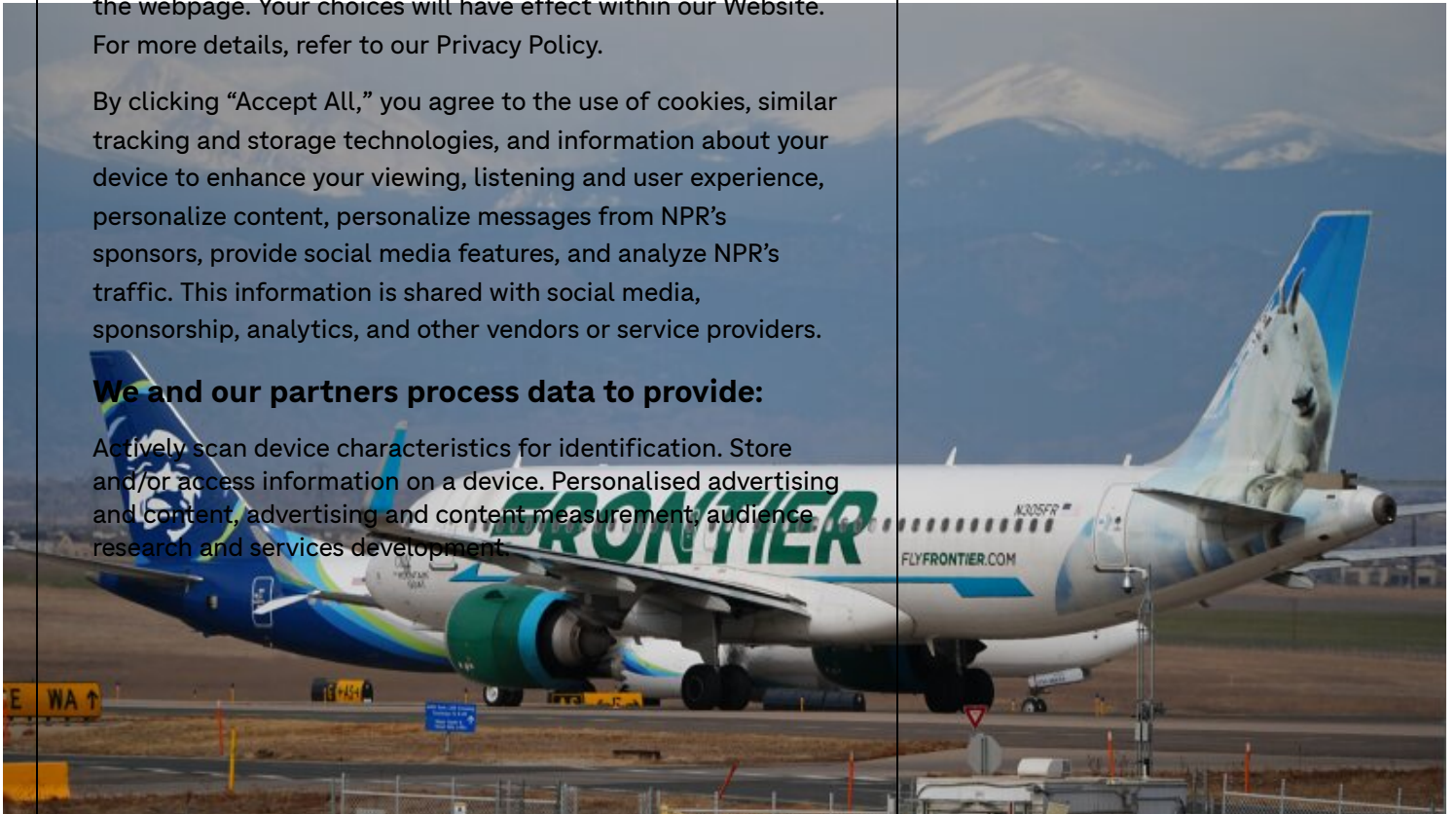
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'Wait Wait' for May 9, 2026. With Not My Job guest Bobby Lopez

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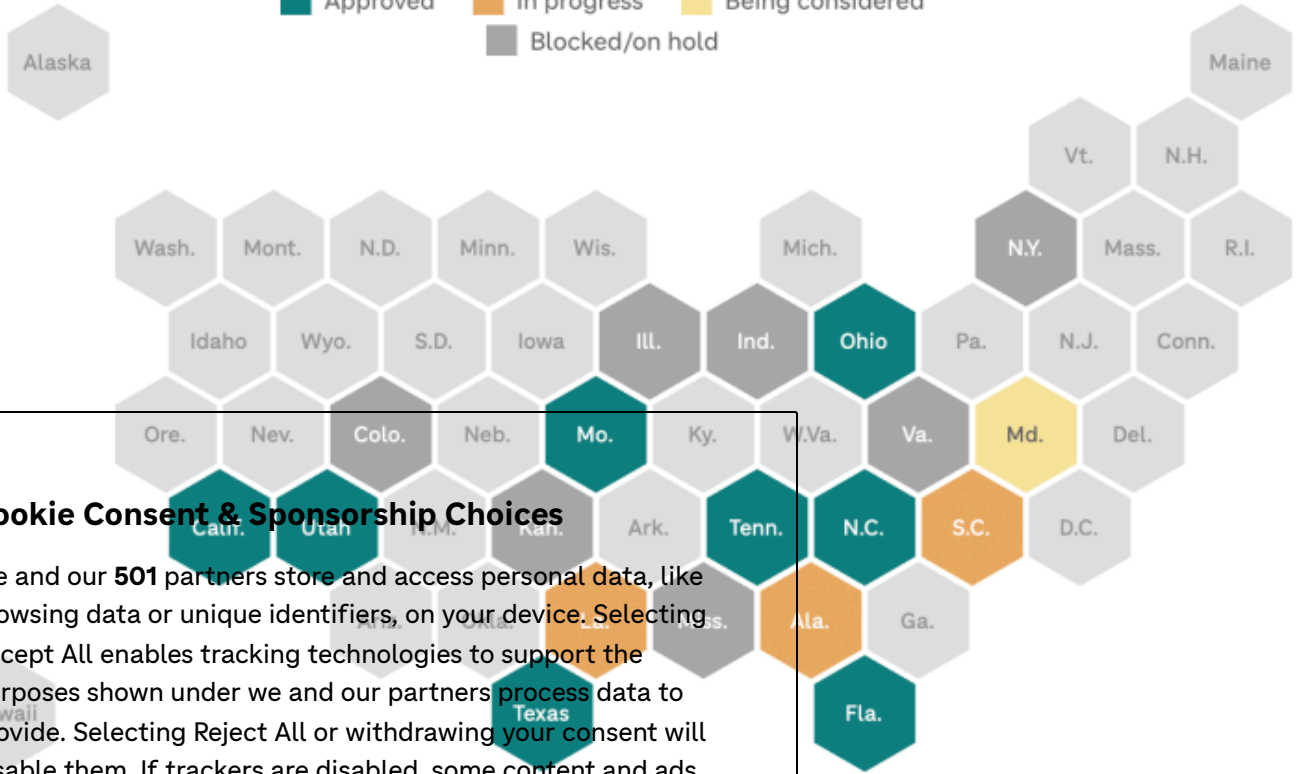
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NEWS
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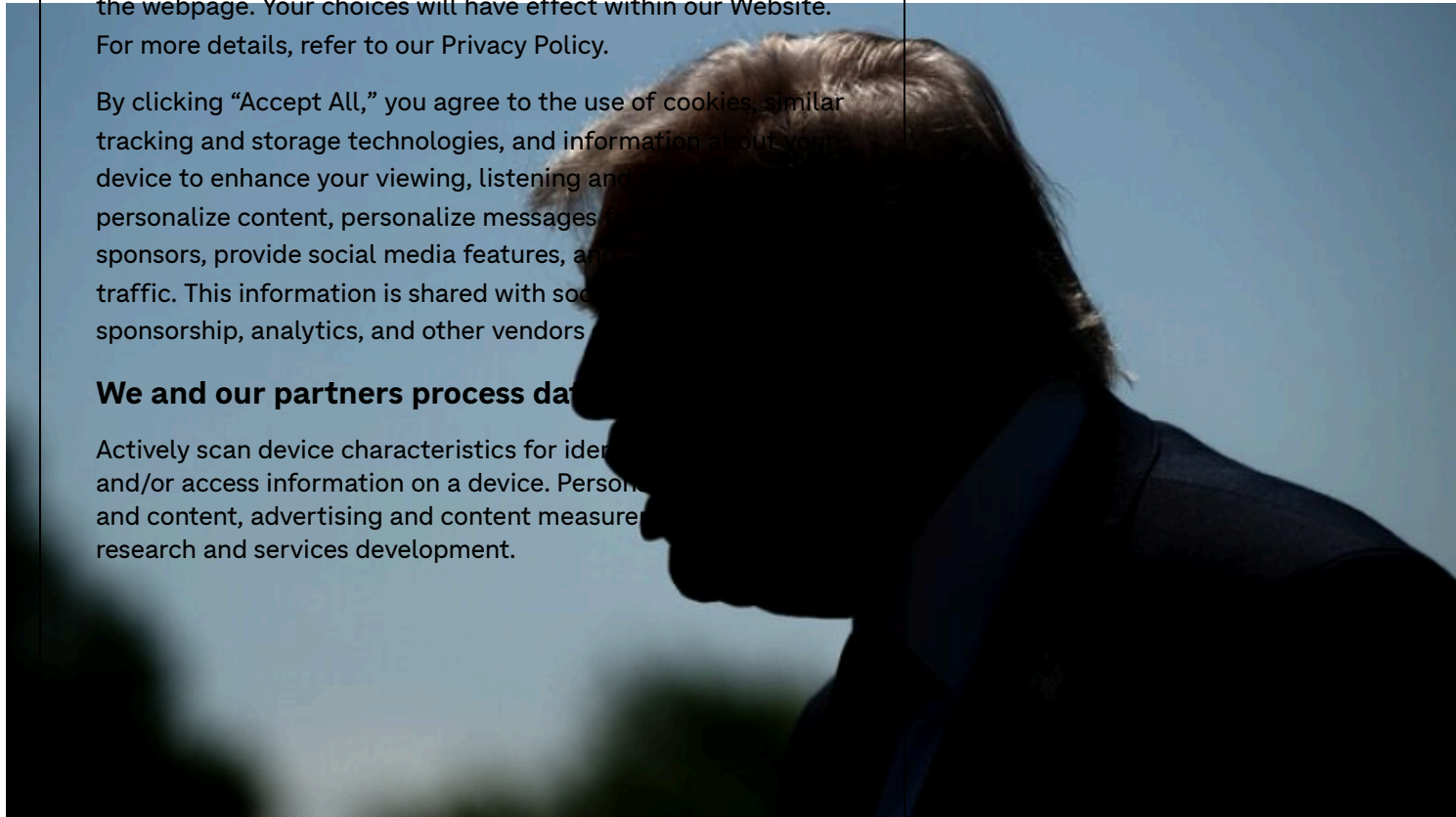
Southern Republicans redistrict after Supreme Court rules, Dems lose big in Virginia

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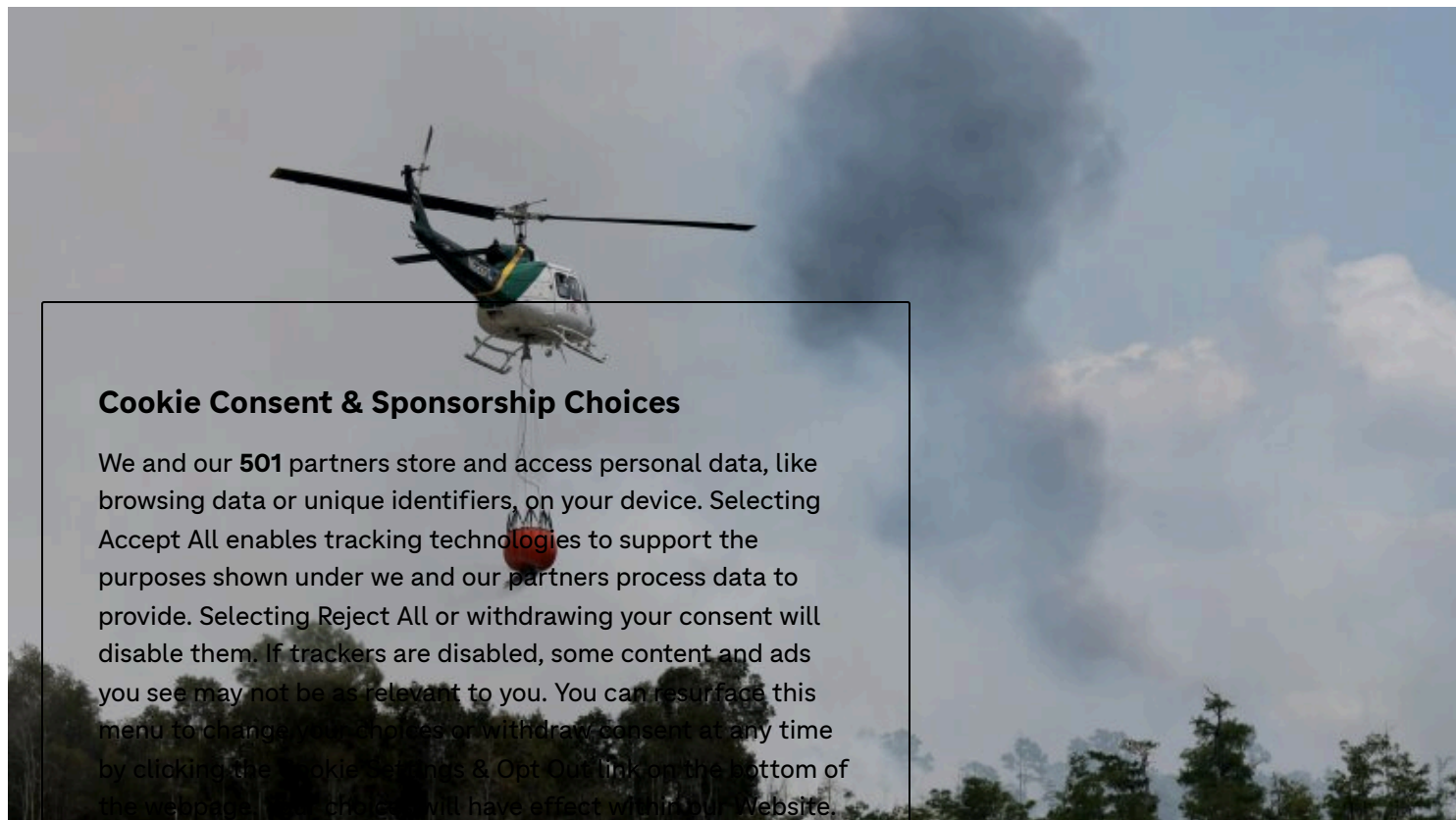
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POLITICS

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

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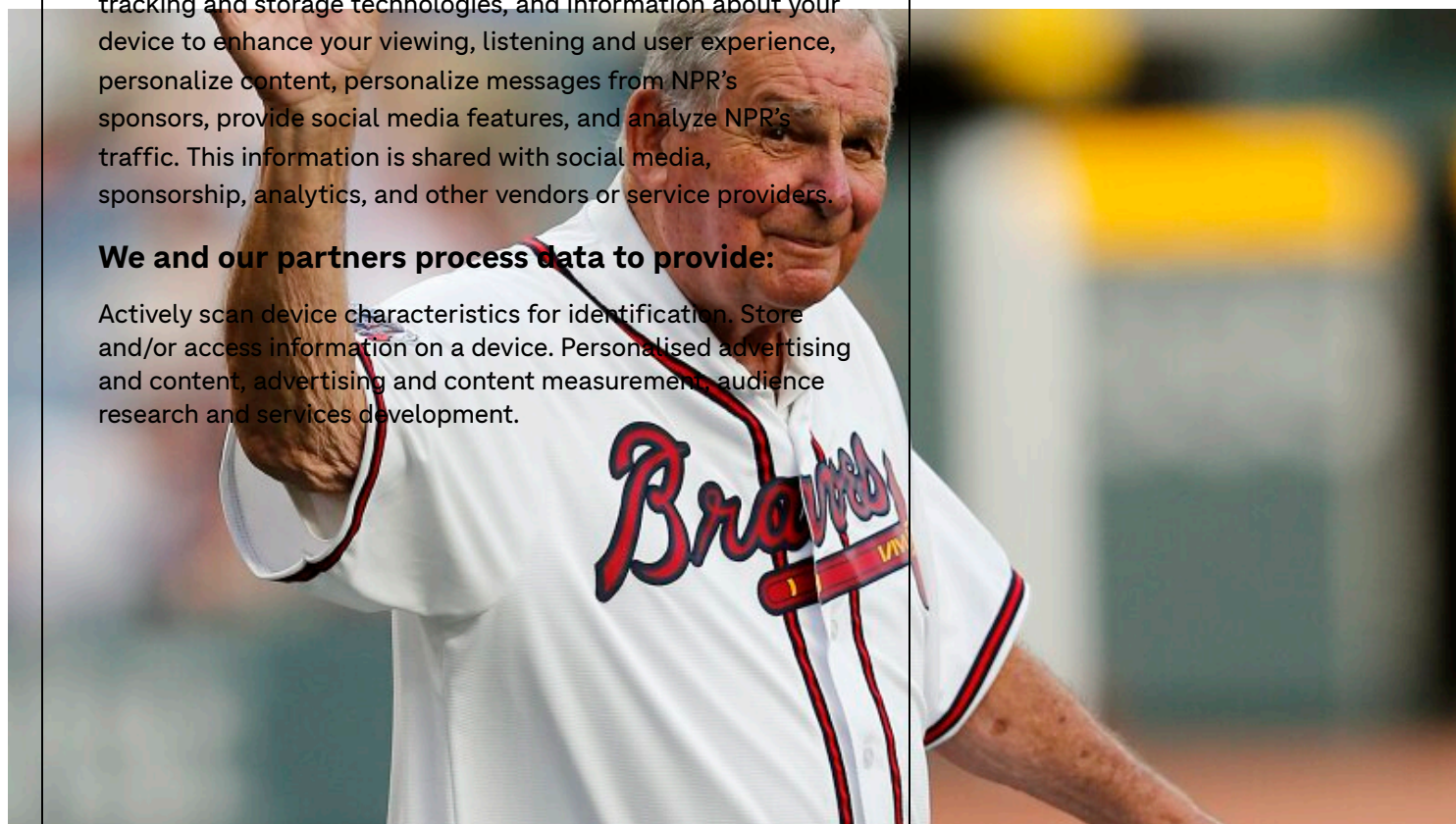
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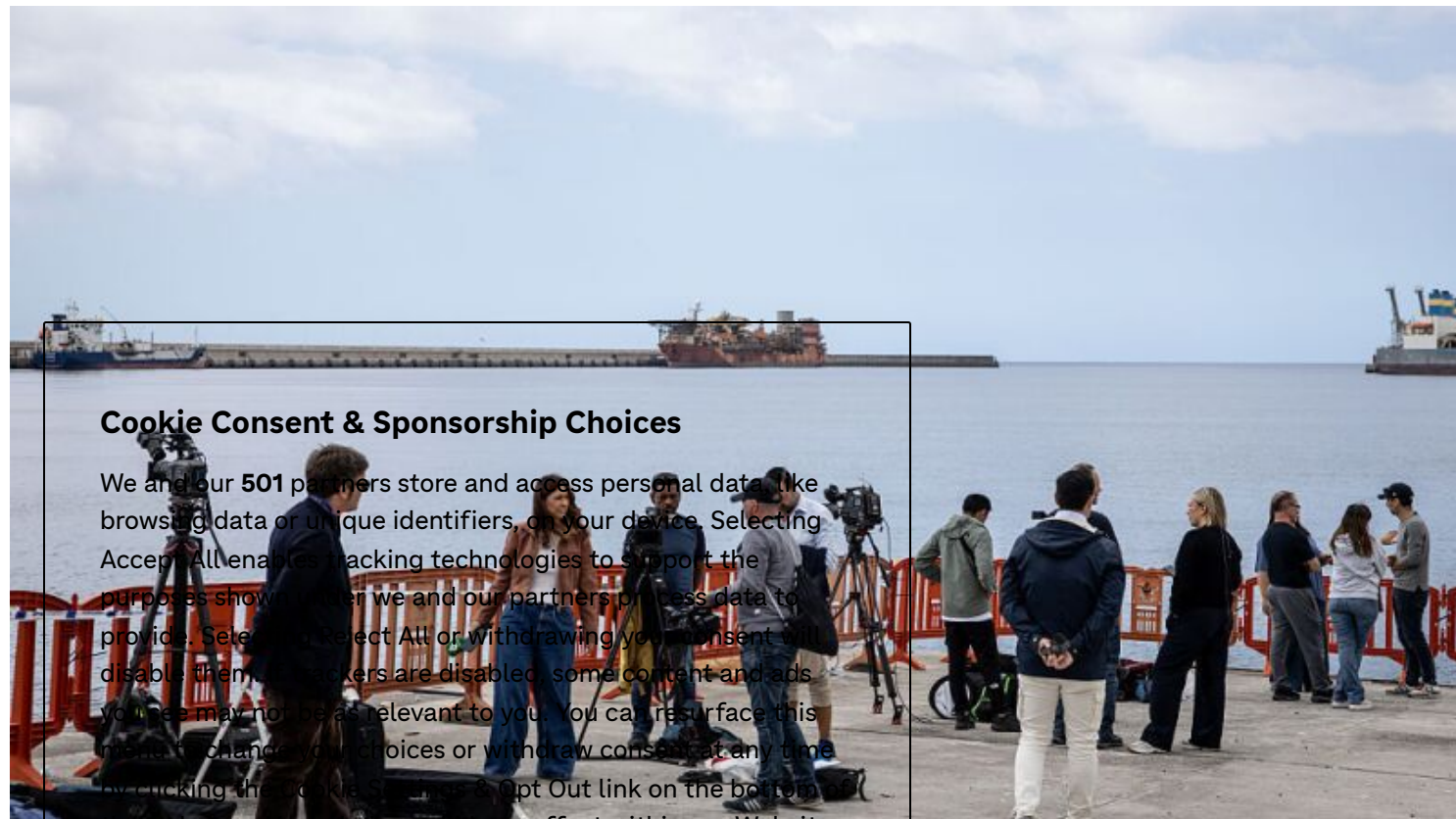
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OBITUARIES

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



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NEWS

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CDC says threat of widespread outbreak of hantavirus remains low

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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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