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Immigration arrests at courts persist

Despite state law, federal agents are in or around county courthouses about twice a week

By Madeline Buckley and Allison Kiehl
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Lucia Vasquez-Gonzalez thought she was doing the right thing when she went to court in March.

Vasquez-Gonzalez migrated to the U.S. in search of a better life but did not have legal permission to live here. In January, she was charged with one count of misdemeanor domestic battery in a confrontation with her roommate, according to court records, but she appeared before a judge hoping to take care of

the matter responsibly — despite the risk posed by continuing immigration activity around Cook County courthouses.

After leaving court, though, Vasquez-Gonzalez said she was stopped by immigration agents a couple of blocks from the building and pulled out of her car.

“I was in complete shock because I didn’t know what was happening,” Vasquez-Gonzalez told the Tribune in Spanish. “I was like, ‘Why are they arresting me if I didn’t do anything bad?’ ... And then they said, ‘No, it is because you missed

the first rule of immigration, which was don’t get into any problems.’

“I said: ‘But this is the problem that I am fixing.’”

In December, Gov. JB Pritzker signed into law a ban on federal agents making certain arrests near courthouses and easing a path for individuals to sue if they think their rights were violated during civil immigration arrests.

The Court Access, Safety and Participation Act, which is being challenged by the Trump administration, followed an order issued by Cook County’s chief judge at the

time, Tim Evans, similarly barring civil immigration enforcement around county courthouses.

Despite the measures, though, the presence of immigration agents around Cook County courthouses is stubbornly persistent, according to a Tribune review of a tracker maintained by the Cook County public defender’s office.

Since the beginning of the year, immigration agents have been in or around county courthouses at least 50 times through June 9 — a rate of

See **COURTS** on Page A6



Lucia Vasquez-Gonzalez poses with her daughter, Luciana. Vasquez-Gonzalez was detained by immigration agents after appearing for a hearing at the domestic violence courthouse at 555. W. Harrison St. on March 10. She has since been deported to Venezuela. **LUCIA VASQUEZ-GONZALEZ**



SNAPPING INTO ACTION

Scientists team up in ‘unparalleled’ effort to protect Illinois’ endangered turtles from increasing threats



Top: Wildlife tech Caitlin Mrowiec uses calipers to measure a Blanding’s turtle as she and others document and collect samples from turtles trapped in nearby wetlands during “Blanding’s Bowl” week on June 22 in Lake County.

Above: Veterinarian Laura Adamovicz swabs the mouth of a Blanding’s turtle during Blanding’s Bowl week on June 22. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS**

By Adriana Pérez | CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Over the squelching and sloshing of waders and the eggy smell of shallow wetland waters, Matt Allender bent down and caught something in his hand. He raised it triumphantly. “Found a turtle!”

It’s a snapping one, and it does just that; it snaps at him, unhappy about being grabbed.

It was in 2015 — when all the equipment he had fit in a tackle box and the only help he had was a part-time vet student — that Allender, now the director of conservation biology at Brookfield Zoo, began heading out to Lake County every year to tend to turtles in the wild. They would do some blood work and test for a few diseases.

In the years since, as science has uncovered more threats, viruses and bacteria affecting turtles, these field visits have become longer and more complex.

This June, Allender was joined by more than 20 people, mostly veterinarians, in a yearly “Blanding’s Bowl” — a friendly competition that splits scientists from multiple institutions, including the Cook and Lake County forest preserves, into several teams to tend to native species such as the painted turtle, the common snapping turtle and the event namesake, the state-endangered Blanding’s turtle, of which fewer than 500 are left in Illinois.

“So now it’s quite the operation,” Allender said. “We’re doing something special, and people want to be a part of that.”

The groups found a total of 50 different Blanding’s turtles over four days.

See **TURTLES** on Page A2

4TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Strong-arm election tactics raise criticisms

Opponents of García’s chosen successor face ballot challenges

By Jake Sheridan
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

As Manny Diaz testified in a fluorescent-lit basement hearing room, he returned time and again to a single response: “I do not recall.”

Pushing to kick a progressive independent Latina off this autumn’s 4th Congressional District election ballot late last month, he said he couldn’t recall if he had ever before challenged a candidate’s signatures. He said he didn’t know if he had ever worked outside regular business hours in his busy job as a political staffer.

Most strikingly, Diaz paused when asked whom he worked for, responding only when the attorney representing him in the hearing gave him the go-ahead.

The answer — and the man now intimately tied to the strong-arm effort to clear the opposition to his preferred candidate off the ballot — was U.S. Rep. Jesús “Chuy” García.



García

The exchange highlighted the charge by García opponents that the outgoing congressman from the Southwest Side is incinerating his long progressive track record by resorting to the kinds of obstructionist Chicago Democratic machine election tactics his outsider movement has railed against for decades.

In his relentless attempts to clear the way for his chosen successor — his former chief of staff, Patty García — to coast to an easy win this November, García is no better, they say, than the political insiders who have long leveraged their deep pockets and control of the election rules to keep themselves in power in the face of challenges from grass-roots political organizations in and around Chicago.

“This will certainly taint his legacy as someone who leaves out the back door, suppressing the voice of the people, anointing a successor,” said one of the two progressive Latino independent candidates García’s organization is trying to boot from the ballot, fire-brand Southwest Side Ald. Byron

See **ELECTION** on Page A10

NATION & WORLD

US says it is striking Iran

Iran said it considers the Strait of Hormuz closed after a vessel was struck by a warning shot. U.S. Central Command said its forces began a third round of strikes against Iran. **Page B5**

SPORTS

Sox pick Cholowsky

There was plenty of debate over which direction the White Sox would go with the No. 1 pick of the MLB draft. In the end, they looked west and selected UCLA shortstop Roch Cholowsky.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

50 years of Rush in Chicago

Rush will play a sold-out four-night stand at United Center beginning July 16, building on a local legacy equaled by few artists. The band has logged upward of four dozen concerts in the area.

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WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY H: 86 L: 65
MON. H: 93 L: 74
TUE. H: 96 L: 75
Complete details on Page A20

INDEX

Almanac A2
Crossword ... In Comics
Editorials B1
Horoscope ... In Comics
Letters B3
Obituaries A18

Rides G7
Success G4
Television E7

179th year No. 193
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Bastille Day carries spirit of revolution



Rick Steves

For the ultimate summer party in France, visit over July 14 — Bastille Day, the country’s national day. This holiday is celebrated with gusto, all-night parties, picnics and fireworks. And the fun permeates the country, from tiny towns to Paris. The day marks the symbolic start of the French Revolution that brought down the monarchy.

In 1789, France was under the tyranny of its king, bishops and nobles. The corrupt monarchy spent lavishly, while the people suffered in poverty. The Bastille, with eight towers and 100-foot-high walls, was an intimidating fortress that had long functioned as a prison — epitomizing the callous oppression of King Louis XVI. In the streets of Paris, a revolution simmered.

On the morning of July 14, an angry mob gathered around the Bastille’s main gates while the king’s troops hunkered down inside. Two citizens scaled the huge wall, cut the chains of the drawbridge and brought it crashing down. The mob poured through and was met with gunfire. Dozens were killed, and hundreds wounded. Nevertheless, revolutionaries stole ammunition, opened dank dungeons, brought prisoners into the light of day, then paraded victoriously through Paris. The Revolution had begun.

Virtually no trace of the original Bastille fortress remains on today’s square; the revolutionaries dismantled it brick by brick. But the spirit of the Revolution lives on in that location, and on that date.

Today, the Revolution is celebrated every year on what we now call Bastille Day — although festivities actually begin the night



France celebrates Bastille Day, the symbolic start of the French Revolution with all-night parties, picnics and fireworks. DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI

before, on July 13.

Paris hosts the biggest and most iconic Bastille celebrations, with a huge open-air block party located on the square where it all began — now called Place de la Bastille — where tens of thousands crowd around the statue of Winged Liberty.

This is the main Parisian celebration, but I prefer the parties that take place on smaller neighborhood squares. Here, bars, cafés and outdoor stages feature acts big and small as food, drink and music spill out into the street.

Most of these are firemen’s balls, sponsored by local fire stations to benefit charities. For a small donation, tourists and locals alike are welcome to join the fun. The last time I celebrated in Paris, the first thing I

thought in the middle of all that chaos and intensity was, “Boy, I hope the fire marshal doesn’t come by.” And then it occurred to me that we were at the fire station ... and he was probably here in the crowd partying.

The next morning, on July 14, festivities take on a more sober and patriotic tone. Thousands line the Champs-Élysées — Europe’s most renowned boulevard — for a grand military parade. The parade route itself is a reminder of the Revolution. It starts at the towering Arc de Triomphe — built to honor the Revolution’s high-water mark, when France’s citizen-army triumphed over Europe’s monarchies — and ends at Place de la Concorde, a grim reminder of the Revolution’s dark-

est days. Here, a tall obelisk pierces the sky, marking the spot where once stood the most gruesome and feared symbol of the Revolution: the guillotine.

The finale of Bastille Day unfolds on the big Champ de Mars, the field where the first Bastille Day anniversary took place in 1790. The Revolutionaries marked the occasion with a festival they called “La Fête de la Fédération.”

They gathered on the Champ de Mars, reflected on the incredible changes of the previous year, and, in jubilation, shouted what had long been kept inside. Members of every social class joined in to mingle as equals, hugging and kissing. Fireworks lit up the night, and once-starving people feasted on rich food and fine wine. That first Bastille Day

was a heady celebration of their newfound freedom: Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!

These days, some 500,000 revelers gather on the lawn at the Champ de Mars park and spend the day picnicking with baguettes and wine at the base of the Eiffel Tower — which was built on this site in part to mark the 100-year anniversary of the French Revolution. When darkness falls, all eyes turn to the tower. The lights come on and it glitters and glows with golden lights. Fireworks sparkle with the French flag’s colors: blue, white and red.

The Storming of the Bastille transformed more than just France. It inspired many other nations to demand liberty — to progress from medie-

val oppression to modern democracy. Anyone with a sense of history can recognize the enormous debt the world owes to those brave Parisians who stormed the Bastille to fight for a government of the people. It’s a cultural rallying point, symbolizing freedom of all kinds.

If you’re in France on Bastille Day, join the proud locals in their sheer joy of personal liberty. In fact, wherever you are on le 14 Juillet, lift a glass to freedom and declare, “Vive la France!”

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

CELEBRITY TRAVEL

Broadway performer haunted by Rome

By Jae-Ha Kim
TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY

Tony nominated singer and actor Melissa Errico said she remembers being unsure at first when she was asked to join the cast of “Les Misérables.”

“I had to drop out of Yale to do it (which) sounds more dramatic than it was,” said the Broadway star. “I was cast as Cosette on the national tour while still a student. Suddenly, I had a choice between the life I was planning and the life that had come knocking at the door. I took a leave of absence, packed a suitcase and joined the company. It was thrilling and terrifying. I was young enough to think adventure was a perfectly reasonable life plan. Looking back, it may have been the moment I learned that sometimes you don’t find your path, the path finds you.”

This interview with Errico — who was visiting London for Wimbledon with her husband, Patrick McEnroe, who provides tennis commentary — has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: What are some must-do things at Wimbledon, outside of watching tennis?
A: The Cannizaro House for tea. Wimbledon Common for a long walk. And the Wimbledon Village Stables, because horses somehow make every place feel more civilized. Everyone should visit this historic place (with) horses tucked into ancient buildings (and) flowerpots beneath the windows. It’s simply enchanting.

Q: What is your favorite



Melissa Errico tries to complete one sightseeing activity in every city where she performs. CHARITY RACHELLE

vacation destination?
A: Greece. The light is different there. The sea feels ancient. The food is simple and perfect. There is history everywhere, but it somehow never feels heavy.

Q: When you tour, do you have free time for sight-seeing?
A: I try to do at least one thing in every city. In Las Vegas I recently visited the Mob Museum, which was unexpectedly fascinating. In Carmel, Indiana, I loved visiting the wonderful Great American Songbook (Foundation that) Michael Feinstein helped create. In Phoenix, I performed at the MIM — the Musical Instrument Museum — and spent an hour wandering through extraordinary collections of instruments from around the world, like a 15th-century guitar or Duke Ellington’s actual piano. Sometimes, the venue itself becomes the destination.

Q: Where have you been to where you wanted to stay longer?
A: Rome. Every time I leave Rome, I feel I’ve only begun to understand it. Rome haunts me for some reason. I have dual citizenship. Maybe I should flip the switch and give in to my Roman nature.

Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?
A: Morocco. I’ve imagined it for years. It feels like a place where stories are still

wandering around looking for listeners. My oldest daughter is planning to go. It’s funny to watch your own fantasies pass down to your children.

Q: What’s the most important thing you’ve learned from your travels?
A: That people are far more alike than different. Audiences may speak different languages or come from different cultures, but everyone responds to beauty, longing, humor, memory, music and love. Travel has made me less certain about stereotypes and more certain about human nature. I’ve also learned that kindness is an international language. Everyone can laugh. Sometimes it’s good to have very little language in common. You look for the fun.

Q: When you go away, what are some of your must-have items?
A: My eyeglasses. At this stage of life, they are less an accessory than a survival strategy. A simple black dress. Sandals that look elegant but can still hike. My ukulele. And scarves. Scarves are my latest discovery. Pack three to six of them and you can transform your look, change your hairstyle, and travel with almost no extra weight. I somehow failed to appreciate scarves until this year.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Ticket to Japan vanishes, forcing couple to pay more for later flight

By Christopher Elliott | KING FEATURES SYNDICATE

I booked two first-class, round-trip tickets through the Hawaiian Airlines app for my wife, Linda, and me to travel from Honolulu to Haneda, Japan. I received written confirmations for both tickets almost immediately. Both were purchased, one after the other, using the same credit card. When we arrived at the airport in Honolulu, an agent told me that I had a ticket, but my wife’s had been voided.

No one could tell us why. Her seat had already been sold to someone else. The agent told us that to get my wife on a later flight, I’d have to buy her a completely new ticket. The new ticket cost \$575 more than the original I’d already paid for. I was assured at the airport that I could contact the customer relations department for a refund.

Hawaiian first insinuated that my credit card was declined. I’ve spoken at length with my credit card issuer, Chase, and it’s adamant that it didn’t decline the charge for my wife’s ticket. (Why would it decline one ticket and not the other when both were purchased on the same card at the same time?) Then Hawaiian tried to deflect blame to a third-party booking channel, even though I booked directly on its app and had the confirmation to prove it. In another email, a representative admitted that our tickets were being treated as a direct booking from Hawaiian.

Since neither I nor Chase took any action to void my wife’s ticket, the fault lies with Hawaiian. I only want reimbursement for the extra amount I was required to pay. Can you help?

— James Phillips, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii

A: Hawaiian should’ve honored your wife’s confirmed ticket. Full stop. When an airline’s system experiences a ticketing error — which this obviously was — it should have two immediate priorities: First, alert the passenger. Second, fix the problem at no cost to the customer. What an airline shouldn’t do is void a confirmed reservation without notice, sell the seat to someone else, then charge you a premium to get her on another flight. The airline’s response to you was even worse. Blaming a nonexistent “third party” or, even more absurdly, your credit card, was a classic runaround.

You did exactly what I always recommend: You kept a meticulous paper trail. Your documenta-

tion was flawless. When a company gives you a nonsensical answer, you must continue to push for a logical one in writing — which you did. When front-line customer service fails, the next step is to appeal to the executives. I publish the executive contacts for Hawaiian on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org. Based on the correspondence that you shared, it looked as if Hawaiian was doubling down on its mistake, so we took a two-pronged approach. My advocacy team and I decided to contact the airline on your behalf. We presented your clear documentation and asked for a review. You also filed a complaint with the Department of Transportation. This worked. I heard back from a senior resolu-

tion coordinator at Hawaiian, who apologized and admitted that the previous agent’s responses “didn’t provide a fair resolution,” adding that the agent was “coached regarding this case.” Hawaiian admitted that its system canceled Linda’s ticket by mistake. It refunded the entire fare difference and issued a \$250 travel voucher to both you and your wife. This is a textbook case of why you should never accept a company’s first “no,” especially when it defies logic.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.