

# [***Biden, Trump Agree To Debate June 27 And September 10; New Reaction From Commission On President Debates; Trump Pressed On Potential Vice President Picks; Media Mocks Trump Surrogates For Matching Outfits; Media Slams Mike Johnson For Attending Trump Trial; GOP Surrogates Flock To Trial To Support Trump; US Pauses Israel Bomb Shipment Amid Rafah Rift; Robert Costello Testifies About Michael Cohen***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C1T-D6P1-F072-X000-00000-00&context=1516831)

Fox News THE STORY WITH MARTHA MACCALLUM 3:00 PM EST

May 15, 2024 Wednesday

Copyright 2024 Fox News Network LLC All Rights Reserved

**Section:** NEWS; Domestic

**Length:** 6914 words

**Byline:** Martha MacCallum, James Freeman, Leslie Marshall, Kayleigh McEnany, Clay Travis, Mary Katharine Ham

**Guests:** Frankk Fahrenkopf, Michael McCaul, Alina Habba

**Body**

MARTHA MACCALLUM, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: Thank you both. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Martha MacCallum. And this is THE STORY. So, the gloves are off and there are two presidents, one current, one former, who say they will step into the ring to debate for the American people and their votes. And it'll happen this summer. The sparring seems to be well underway already though, as President Biden started this day with this shot at his opponent, the former president.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Well, make my day, pal. I'll even do it twice. So, let's pick the dates, Donald. I hear you're free on Wednesdays.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: Wednesday, of course, is the day that there's no court. And that will likely the way things are going, it looks like that'll be all wrapped up before these debates begin. President Biden also posted, "Trump says he'll arrange his own transportation. I'll bring my plane too. I plan on keeping it for another four years."

So, former President Trump came a him with this posting on Truth Social, "I am ready and willing to debate crooked Joe, at the two proposed times in June and September. I would strongly recommend more than two debates. And for excitement purposes, a very large venue, although Biden is supposedly afraid of crowds -- that's only because he doesn't get them."

That is a reference to the Biden campaign saying that it skip the face offs organized by the commission on presidential debates, partly because they are "huge spectacles with large audiences." With that, let's bring in the commission's co-chair, Frank Fahrenkopf.

Frank, always good to have you with us thank you for joining us today you have overseen this debate process for many years, since 1987, the Commission has been in effect in order to bring people together for these debates. So, what's your reaction to how this is going and where do you think it's going to go from there?

FRANKK FAHRENKOPF, COMMISSION ON PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES: Well, first of all we were created really back in 1987 to make sure that there's a neutral body who was arranging the debates and the details and so forth. Because there's tremendous difficulty between two campaigns wherever they were to try to agree on things.

It's going to be very interesting to see how this works out with the two exchanges today. But we've gone ahead as we have for 33 years now, preparing for the debates. If they can get together and actually perform debates that are substantive and will help the American people make decisions when they go to the polls, well, God bless them. We wish them well. We are a commission that's made up of volunteers.

We're not paid. We volunteer our time and energy to make sure in a nonpartisan way that debates are held. And so, we're still waiting there. There have been many times, Martha, over the 30 plus years when candidates have refused to debate or weren't going to debate or were going to change the debates, they were going to do it on different television stations and so forth, and they ended up coming back to us. So, we'll be there and we'll see what happens.

MACCALLUM: So, what is the status of your conversation with the two campaigns at this point about the dates that you have set?

FAHRENKOPF: Well, we really haven't had any conversation, which is not unusual. We normally don't have any contact until after the nominating conventions, when we then have candidates who have been nominated, who are on enough state ballots to conceivably get to 270 elector votes and meet the other requirements.

So, it's unusual that we would have any contact. Normally, what happens after the conventions is each candidate will call us and say so-and-so will be our spokesperson. You work with him or her. Historically, for the last 20 years, Ron Klain has represented the Democrats. The last time out with President Trump, it was Rudy Giuliani who was his representative working with us. So, it's not expected that we would have a lot of contact prior to the conventions. That's when everything starts moving.

MACCALLUM: So, you saw the Biden campaign statement on this. They had a few things that they were not happy with in terms of the way the commission handled it. One is that they're too late. You say, you know, post- convention, they're saying all of this needs to happen prior to any voting beginning because so much voting has been pushed back.

Also, they don't like the big spectacle. You heard Donald Trump's comments on that. They don't want to be part of that kind of large spectacle as they say. And let's take a look at the third one. The commission rules they said were broken in 2020 and that the commission failed to enforce the rules in terms of time that each side gets to respond. What do you say to them?

FAHRENKOPF: Well, particularly with the last one, there's no question that the first debate in the last cycle got totally out of hand. The rules are in our debates that for each of the six-minute divisions of the 90 minutes, each candidate gets to speak for two minutes uninterrupted. That didn't take place. Poor Chris Walthus --

MACCALLUM: Yes, I remember. We were there.

FAHRENKOPF: He was going a little crazy trying to get control over it. In the last debate, we made sure that both candidates knew that we would have a mute button and that if any candidate broke the rule, we would just push the button and mute them. It was unnecessary. We never had to do it because both candidates last debate did it, did it correctly.

Now, we don't have a large yelling crowds, and so forth like that primary, or excuse me, the primary debates -- or if you know, you, you've been there. You've moderated some of them. There's clapping, there is yelling, there's sight, we had our debate back the tickets to go to any of our debate say you're not to interrupt in any way for you will be removed from the premises.

And so, we've been very fortunate over the 30 some years that we really haven't had those interruptions. The important thing too is I'm concerned about, I don't know, because I haven't talked to any of the networks, will CNN's coverage be spread out? Will you get it on Fox? Will anybody get it on CBS, ABC? Will it go online? You know, we use the White House pool.

So, when you don't count the Nielsen ratings, these Nielsen ratings don't count C-SPAN, it doesn't count what's going on online. Our estimates are that the first debate four years ago, 120 million people worldwide watched, is it going to be that way? Are the American people and those who are interested get a chance to see it?

I don't know. That's up to the networks, and I'm sure they'll have to, have to deal with that. But our job was to be the neutral person in the middle, and I think we've done a good job we're around for 30 years.

MACCALLUM: So, Frank, last question, do you anticipate that this may blow up when they really start haggling over the details and that they may come back to you?

FAHRENKOPF: You know it's happened before. In the past there's been this sort of thing and they have come back. I don't know. This is unusual. At this point in time. The interesting thing, the first debate I think is scheduled for June 27th.

MACCALLUM: Right.

FAHRENKOPF: On that date only seven states will have completed what their ballot is going to include, whether it's going to include anybody else other than the Republican, Democrat, maybe Jill Stein being with the green party, and we don't what the, what's going to libertarian-wise.

MACCALLUM: Right, exactly.

FAHRENKOPF: They're doing it very, very early, they don't have any vice presidential candidates at that time other than the White House does, but that the Republicans will. So, there's a lot of questions that are unanswered at this point. If they can do it, God bless them. They're helping the American people. That's our goal, to make sure the American people get those debates. If they can do it, we bless them. If they can't, well, we'll be standing around ready to jump in and help.

MACCALLUM: OK. Frank Fahrenkopf, thank you very much. Always good to see you, Frank. Thank you for stopping by today.

FAHRENKOPF: Thanks, Martha.

MACCALLUM: So, moments ago, Peter Doocy pressing the White House on the President's willingness to debate. Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PETER DOOCY, FOX NEWS CHANNEL WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: So, shouldn't we see this sudden offer from the president to debate as a signal that you guys realize you need to change the subject after some really bad polling?

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: You know, we went to, had a back and forth on polling yesterday. And I, you know, it just goes back to very the core of what I said to you, which is, look, this is a president that has had a pretty successful legislative, especially legislative tenure in the first three and a half years and has delivered on many things.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: OK, let's bring in James Freeman, Assistant Editor for The Wall Street Journal's editorial page and a Fox News Contributor; OutKick columnist, Mary Katharine Ham; and Democratic Strategist Leslie Marshall, also a Fox News Contributor. Let's go down the line here, James, let me start with you. What did you think of Karine Jean-Pierre's answer to peter's question there.

JAMES FREEMAN, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: Well, what's to say, it's been the bad polling for months and months, and I think the decision to debate is, if not a last resort, it's a thought that they threw the prosecutions at them, they've done a lot of advertising, and it just hasn't moved the needle. I think, this is, this is a possible way for him to exceed expectations, which are going to be very low.

MACCALLUM: Let's take a look back, Mary Katharine, at some of the greatest hits of the debate in September of 2020 to remind people what they're in for. All of these individuals are four years older at this point, but let's look back.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Why wouldn't you answer that question?

BIDEN: Because the question is, the question -- will you shut up, man?

It's hard to get any word in with this clown.

TRUMP: Don't ever use the word smart with me, don't ever use that word.

BIDEN: Oh, give me a break.

TRUMP: Because you know what, and there's nothing smart about you, Joe.

BIDEN: You're the worst president that America has ever had.

TRUMP: China ate your lunch, Joe.

BIDEN: He's a racist.

TRUMP: You have treated the black community about as bad as anybody in this country.

BIDEN: Everybody knows he's a liar.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: Oh my gosh. Mary Katharine, your thoughts on all of this debate development today?

MARY KATHARINE HAM, OUTKICK COLUMNIST: Well, I hesitate after those clips to say that a debate is good for the American people, but I do think in general having these two guys debate is good for the voters, they're tuning in, they want to see this. They're not all tuned in all the time as many of us are. And so, they get a chance to do this.

Mea Culpa for me because a couple days ago I didn't think this would come to fruition and I said so, it may not still. Frank makes some really good points about how they have to hammer out the details of this before they even get to a stage. But I like the fact that it might be earlier. Voting happens earlier.

I think they both face real challenges here. I didn't find Biden's many cuts in it, like produced short video, convincing about how he'll do on a debate stage, but he often overperforms low expectations. Trump didn't do well last time around. He's out of practice. He didn't debate during the primaries. And so, he faces some challenges himself, although I think it's a less scary prospect for him than for Biden.

MACCALLUM: All right, let's take a look at this from Chuck Todd today over at MSNBC and he brings up the third party candidate, the independent candidate, RFK Jr. who desperately wants to be on that stage too. Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHUCK TODD, MSNBC HOST: I think if you've ever spent a lot of time watching Robert Kennedy Jr. speak, I think if you were Joe Biden, you're going to want him on the debate stage. I think there will be a point in the fall that they will actually see that as an asset. I'm sort of in the minority on this. But I think that --

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Well, let's just face it he has a vocal issue. It's an ailment.

TODD: He does, and I think it will weirdly help Biden look less, you know, any of his issues come across less.

(END VIDEO CLIP) MACCALLUM: Less, you know. Leslie, your thoughts?

LESLIE MARSHALL, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: Well, look, I honestly would like to see RFK Jr. just for voters, a debate. But I want to go to what Mary Katharine said. Love you, girl, agreed the very first thing you said, but then after that I disagree. I predicted this would happen. Sorry, go to Vegas on me occasionally.

I predicted that they would have a debate because this is what they get to, this bravado, you know, who's banging their chest larger than the other one. Sorry to the sound guys, my mic's on that side. But listen, you know, when we look at a Harvard Business Study of 56 televised debates, it doesn't move the needle.

The undecided voters don't decide on one or the other, and the people that love Trump aren't going to jump to Biden and that love Biden aren't going to jump to Trump. So, I do agree, I do agree with Mary Katharine that it's not, it does a disservice to the American people, but I disagree that it's helpful to the voters because the stats, the exit polling, just don't bear that out.

For example, in 2016, Donald Trump lost every debate to Hillary Clinton, yet he was elected president. We also saw that with George Bush against John Kerry. John Kerry was not president. So, it's not always who wins in these debates. And I don't think it really helps the voter because it doesn't always get the issues out there it's become really an attack on one another that gets out there.

MACCALLUM: Well, I think it's an important part of the process and I do you know hope that there are even more than just these two debates and maybe they will end up going back to the Presidential Debate Commission as they start to hammer this out, we'll see. Leslie, Mary Katharine, James, great to have all of you. Thank you so much.

HAM: Thank you.

MARSHALL: Thank you, Martha.

MACCALLUM: So, former President Donald Trump dropping big hints to Hugh Hewitt about who's on his roster because you know what? It's getting pretty close, the summer conventions. So, who will he pick for VP?

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP) HUGH HEWITT, HOST: By the way, does Doug Burgum have this locked up?

TRUMP: No, but he's very good. I tell you, he's really good.

(END VIDEO CLIP) MACCALLUM: Kayleigh McEnany on the revealing new interview and there was more from the former president that will play for you after the break.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MACCALLUM: Well, besides agreeing to do at least two debates today, former President Trump also talking about possible vice president and Cabinet picks. Here he is on Hugh Hewitt's radio show earlier. Listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HUGH HEWITT, SYNDICATED RADIO HOST: Well, if you just listed a half dozen people and I know Grinnell, and I know O'Brian. These are my friends. And I know Waltz is on your list. And I've seen the vice president list. By the way, does Doug Burgum have this locked up?

DONALD TRUMP (R), FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: No, but he is very good. I'll tell you, he is really good.

HEWITT: But we're going to do a massive overhaul at DOD. You know how wasteful it is.

TRUMP: Right.

HEWITT: We need a Waltz. We need a Pompeo. We need a Cotton over there. I'd love to know who's on your list just so we could assure people that there will be reforms at DOD.

TRUMP: Well, all of the people you mentioned are real candidates. I mean, every -- everybody you've mentioned, I mean, generally speaking, the people you like are the people that I like, I mean, to be honest with you, all right? You're not going to see some of the clowns you have right now. That, I can tell you.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: Always interesting. When the former president talks to Hugh Hewitt. So, with me now, "OUTNUMBERED" co-host and former Trump White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany. Kayleigh, Great to have you with us.

KAYLEIGH MCENANY, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: (INAUDIBLE).

MACCALLUM: So, I want to break that into two parts. The first part was this discussion of Doug Burgum, whose star appears to be rising, although, as you know better than anybody, you always have to be a little bit wary of where it looks like the former president's going because he may it may be a head fake, he may be going somewhere else.

MCENANY: It may be. And Doug Burgum, he actually said in that interview, look, he's really good on energy, which immediately, my head went to OK, energy secretary, maybe.

(CROSSTALK)

MACCALLUM: Right.

MCENANY: You know, Doug Burgum, I have no doubt they have a great affinity. They both are successful businessmen. He would complement Trump well. Trump very clearly likes him. But who are you adding to the ticket? And I think that, that is something that should be at the top of the Trump campaigns mind.

Someone like, Marco Rubio. Not only is he fantastic on foreign policy, he's learned hard national lesson -- lessons during the 2016 campaign. One thing not discussed about him often is he has a 10-point plan for helping women and vulnerable pregnancies after Dobbs -- a huge issue on the campaign. Someone like Tim Scott has a great story.

These are the kinds of candidates that I think add to the ticket, maybe bring home suburban women, Latino voters, black voters, that should be top of mind.

MACCALLUM: Well, what about the Florida issue with Marco Rubio, because the Constitution, we all -- you know, sort of learn something this time around, has a -- has a section that says you can't both be from the same state.

Does that really rule him out or is there a way to get around that constitutionally?

MCENANY: There is a way to get around it. I believe even Marco Rubio has suggested, at some point, he could move his residence. So, there is a way to do it. It's been done before. So, I don't think that, that bars him. But that should be a top, top contender in my mind.

I would also add to that, you could bring someone who delivers a state. I know his name is not in the running from any of the articles I've read. But someone like Glenn Youngkin. If I'm Trump and I look, I'm almost winning Virginia.

MACCALLUM: That's right.

MCENANY: Maybe you pick a guy who can bring home a state like Virginia. So, there's a lot of good candidates, a lot of good choices. But, I think, a candidate he has a personal affinity with, but also one who brings in new voters.

MACCALLUM: So, he also talked about cleaning up DOD, the Department of Defense. Named Pompeo, named Cotton, Michael Waltz -- Congressman Michael Waltz, who has always been a favorite, I think of the president, I think it's fair to say, from Florida.

Where do you see that shaking out? You know, there were a lot of -- people who say, oh, all these people left the administration. But there appear to be plenty of people who are lining up down at the courthouse who seem to want to join.

MCENANY: There are a long list of people who want to be in the Trump administration. And that's just one position. You know, that's DOD.

I would think someone like Mike Pompeo. I mean, this is someone who served in the administration for four years, did so successfully, weathered every single storm with the president as secretary of state. I would think would be top of mind if you're wanting someone at DOD. We've also got people to your point.

Tom Cotton on the outside, you could bring in a long list. Ultimately, Trump will decide. But you got to get past these debates. You got to win the election, and then you step up.

MACCALLUM: Yes, exactly. We will see. Thank you so much, Kayleigh.

MCENANY: Thank, Martha.

MACCALLUM: Always good to see you.

MCENANY: Good to see you.

MACCALLUM: So, some of those on the V.P. shortlist, as I mentioned, show up to back former President Trump in court, and the media pounced on them. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LAWRENCE O'DONNELL, HOST, MSNBC: The Republican Party boldly and bravely rose up in spirited defense of adultery with porn stars, secretly paying off porn stars to buy their silence.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: And that was tame compared to the rest of what they said about the crew down there at the courthouse. Clay Travis is next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MACCALLUM: Former President Trump, back in court tomorrow, when Michael Cohen will be on the stand under likely continued weathering cross examination by Trump attorney Todd Blanche if he continues to cross examination, which we expect too well.

So, we're going to see if another round of Republican supporters show-up to back him outside the courthouse as they did earlier this week.

Now, the president's critics have lambasted their sartorial choices on Tuesday. Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RACHEL MADDOW, HOST, MSNBC: They all now dress like him too.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Yes.

MADDOW: They were all wearing the exact same outfit. It was like they were Rockettes.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Yes.

ALEX WAGNER, HOST, MSNBC: The reason they were in the matching outfits, it's a swimsuit competition.

CHRIS HAYES, HOST, MSNBC: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Oh, my God.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Their matching ties.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Oh, no.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: They were wearing matching (INAUDIBLE).

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Look at this.

ANDERSON COOPER, ANCHOR, CNN: Everybody has to dress identically too, and this weirdest thing.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: Let's bring it OutKick founder, Clay Travis.

You know, Clay that each one of them was like, hey, I think I'm going to go with the red tide today. You know, I'm a Republican, I'm going to go down there and support -- I mean, and you just wish that like one of their wives has said, don't you think everyone's probably going to do that? But apparently, they didn't, Clay.

CLAY TRAVIS, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CONTRIBUTOR: Martha, I'm got a photo shoot tomorrow for the Clay and Buck radio show. Guess who picked out every single thing that we are going to be wearing? Buck's wife and my wife. No trusty whatsoever for what be wife otherwise pick.

(CROSSTALK)

MACCALLUM: I am so glad you hear it. Always trust your wife. That's --

TRAVIS: A hundred percent.

I also want to give you credit for the vocabulary workshop SAT, teaser for everybody out there.

MACCALLUM: Thank you.

TRAVIS: Lambasted and sartorial to lead into me.

MACCALLUM: Thank you. Thank you.

TRAVIS: That is a great double combo. But I think really, that's where they are at MSNBC. That's kind of a funny segment and something to point out. But the larger context here is -- and this is kind of a sign of desperation, I think. I think it ties in with Biden suddenly deciding that he needs to have a debate on June 27th?

By the way, Martha, never happened before, the Republic convention and the Democrat convention, because the New York City case is actually working to Trump's favor.

He was on the radio show with us yesterday and said he thinks his poll numbers are way better now than they would have been if they hadn't charged him. I also saw Trump -- I don't know if you've mentioned it on your show yet, perhaps, you, and Bret Baier -- Trump said he wants you and Bret Baier moderating on October 2nd Fox News debate. We'll see if Biden will take that.

MACCALLUM: We'll see.

TRAVIS: But I think this is a sign of desperation from MSNBC, from Biden's advisors. They are losing. Their spending lots of money and it's not helping.

MACCALLUM: You know, I want to play another bit of media take on this. Because a couple of folks went after Mike Johnson for going down there to the -- to the courthouse, and it's interesting what they are -- what they are targeting here.

And I'm not sure it's actually the reason that you see the support that he is getting down there. Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

STEPHEN COLBERT, HOST, THE LATE SHOW WITH STEPHEN COLBERT, CBS: Johnson is a hyper conservative biblical literalist. But today, he took a day off from performative holiness to attend Trump's hush money trial.

CHARLIE SYKES, CONTRIBUTOR, MSNBC: This is who Mike Johnson is. And the hypocrisy is, is almost too obvious to have to mention.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Yes.

SYKES: That here is somebody who has built his entire identity on his Christian morality.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: So, is the content of this trial, what is drawing them there? Or is it a larger question about the judicial system, Clay?

TRAVIS: Martha, this is not a case about whether Trump did or did not have sex with a woman all the way back in 2006. Even the use of the phrase, hush money trial is dishonest.

This is a business record's case. That is typically a misdemeanor that has been elevated to a felony, based on what I think is an illegitimate legal argument. That this business records was used to conceal another crime. So, it's a business record's case.

And I think the reason, Speaker Johnson is there and everybody else, frankly, who has shown up is because they understand that this is an old school show trial. This is about trying to humiliate and embarrassed Donald Trump in a way that would have never occurred if he hadn't come down that escalator in 2015 and decided to get involved in ***politics***.

I challenge anybody out there, I've said this on my show for a while, Martha, find me another 75 years or older, man or woman, who had never been charged with a felony in their entire life. And then after the age of 75 faces four different jurisdiction felony charges, New York City, Atlanta, South Florida and Washington DC in this case. I bet it's never happened in American history.

MACCALLUM: Yes.

TRAVIS: This is a political prosecution, that is frankly blowing up in Joe Biden's Department of Justice face, because I think most Americans see this for what it is, an attempt to rig the election by trying to go after Donald Trump for political reasons in a sham proceeding.

MACCALLUM: Well, Fareed Zakaria agrees with you, at least part of that, about the motivation here. But really, it's going to come down to those 12 people in those chairs who have been hearing all of this, and nobody knows what they will decide. So that's going to be a must see historic moment when we get to that. Clay, thank you so much. Always good to see you.

TRAVIS: By the way, Fareed, I would suggest, would be a good debate moderator. One of the few at CNN, I would suggest, he would be good on June 27th.

MACCALLUM: Okay, we'll see who they pick. Thank you so much. Good to see you, Clay.

TRAVIS: Yes, thank you.

MACCALLUM: So still ahead this hour, Trump attorney Alina Habba previews what comes tomorrow, which is the cross examination of Cohen continued. And then we may find out what the defense team plans to do when the prosecution rests their case.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MACCALLUM: So more than a billion dollars of American weapons could be headed to Israel, but they are not the specific weapons that Israel requested for Rafah, and it could take months or even years for this delivery to arrive. Here's Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU, ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER: Well, I hope it happens soon. We cannot continue into the future. By having Hamas we take Gaza. It's not only would be a tremendous victory for Hamas, it will be a tremendous victory for the Iran terror axis because Iran is trying to envelop us with a noose of death, which Hamas is one component.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: So with that, we bring in House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman, Texas Republican Michael McCaul. Chairman McCaul, good to have you here today.

REP. MICHAEL MCCAUL (R-TX): Yes, Martha.

MACCALLUM: Explain your take on these billion dollars in weapons, why it's being approved at this point right after we saw the pause in some of those larger bombs that were withheld.

MCCAUL: I think it's a bit of a political gimmick to appease all the criticism that he's received, the President, since he made the decision to put an arms embargo on Israel. If they go into Rafah, I mean, the fact is, Martha, as chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee, I approve all four military weapons sales, including the shipments. Congress appropriated with the intent to spend the money on weapons to go to Israel. And yet, this president, without any consultation with Congress, has decided to stop and withhold the shipments.

Now, this new one that he has announced will take probably two years to even get into Israel, and they put the condition that it cannot be used in Rafah. Why is Rafah important, because it's the last piece of the military objective that Israel has. It's for the last four battalions of Hamas are, the 4,000 soldiers of Hamas. Without going into Rafah, Israel cannot complete this war. And so this president, President Biden, is stopping this from happening.

MACCALLUM: I want to play this soundbite. This is from the Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell in terms of what it may reflect about the White House's view on what finishing the job looks like. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KURT CAMPBELL, DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE: We are struggling over what the theory of victory is. And I think sometimes when we listen closely to Israeli leaders, they talked about mostly the idea of some sort of sweeping victory on the battlefield, total victory. I don't think we believe that that is likely or possible.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: So is that an indication that the White House does not believe that eradicating Hamas, which was the original goal after October 7th, and which we supported is actually feasible or will happen, can happen?

MCCAUL: Well, it is goal of Prime Minister Netanyahu. I've spoken with him. His goal is to eradicate Hamas. There -- it's not like some ragtag team of terrorists, these are literally like a military to military operation, military battalions, 4,000 of them. They're out of, you know, they've eradicated 19 already. You have four remaining in Rafah.

And he's going to do with or without us, Martha. And I think it's better that the United States, as we have normally done in the past, support the best ally we have in the Middle East, and that's Israel, to help them complete the last phase of the military operation so that we can get to the next phase, which would be this peaceful resolution, the talks between Saudi, Israel and the Arab nations.

MACCALLUM: Yes. Well, we wouldn't be where we are if it weren't for October 7th, that it weren't for Hamas and a hold that they have over the people of Gaza. We'll see where this goes. Chairman McCaul, thank you very much.

MCCAUL: Thank you, Martha.

MACCALLUM: Good to see you, sir. So, President Trump attorney Alina Habba on what the defense has in store because we're almost at that point where we will hear the defense side. Will they bring witnesses or will they rest their case, and send it to the jury, first after finish with Michael Cohen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHAEL COHEN, FORMER TRUMP ATTORNEY: The other day, Donald once again he comes out, you know, he comes out of the courtroom and goes right into that little cage, which is where he belongs in a cage like an animal.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: So the prosecution could rest tomorrow in former President Trump's criminal trial. The defense says that it has communicated with a potential rebuttal witness. Robert Costello is an attorney who once advised Michael Cohen, who reportedly says that Trump's lawyers have contacted him, Costello.

Today, Costello, who we've interviewed here on "The Story," testified before a House committee about weaponizing the rule of law, the general subject. So he said this while he was there about Michael Cohen, watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ROBERT COSTELLO, LAWYER WHO ONCE ADVISED MICHAEL COHEN: He said, I didn't want to embarrass Melania Trump. He said, that's why I decided to take care of this on my own. I went back to that several times. You did this on your own, on my own. Did Donald Trump have anything to do with it? No.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: With that, we bring in Trump attorney Alina Habba. She has been attending court but he's not representing the former president in this particular case. Alina, great to have you back.

Thank you for joining us today. It's interesting because Costello also said Cohen that explained that the reason that he negotiated a sum of $130,000 for the NDA, when asked if Trump had any knowledge of this, Cohen told him no. Your thoughts on Costello and do you believe that he will be called by the defense to as soon as tomorrow potentially?

ALINA HABBA, FORMER TRUMP'S LEGAL SPOKESWOMAN: Tomorrow, I think will be the cross examination continued by the defense of Michael Cohen. As we've seen, we've just begun that portion of the case. My understanding from the prosecution is this, that this will be their last witness and rest their case. So it's very clear, they have not proven any of the elements of the alleged crime, which we're not even sure what it is. But there's absolutely no intent for any interference in an election other than what I've been seeing currently with the Biden administration.

Costello's testimony today is interesting. It's not inconsistent with things that he said before. I think he, you know, is an attorney. He obviously has inside knowledge, we'll see what the defense team that's handling this case chooses to do. Whether I knew or not, you know me better than to think that I would say so on national television. But, you know, we will have our turn at this ridiculous trial and hopefully get the president back out there and campaigning like he should be.

I thought it was interesting, Todd Blanche came out. His first questioning of Michael Cohen was about himself, about Todd Blanche, the attorney. He said, my name is Todd Blanche, you and I have never spoken before, have we? And Cohen said we have not. Blanche said but you know who I am, don't you? He said I do.

As a matter of fact on April 23rd, so after the trial started in this case, you went on TikTok and called me a crying little S, didn't you? Cohen said, sounds like something I would say.

What was that about? Why would it he start that way? I know the judge said to him, you know, why are you making this about you? What was he trying to -- what point was he making there, Alina?

HABBA: You know, I can't speak about the witness, obviously, at this point, even though I would love to, I assure you, but that, you know, with the unconstitutional gag order, and my ethics, I'm kind of restrained there. Todd is a great lawyer. I think that he is using and will use anything that we have as evidence of any bias period, the end. So I think that's important.

I think there's another point here at, Martha, we have a dual justice system where the gag order applies to one side, us, and only us. There has been no gag order put on their side. They have been free to speak, the prosecution, the prosecution's witnesses. And I can't see how that point could possibly be lost on Americans in an election season six months before an election.

MACCALLUM: Yes.

HABBA: It's so uncanny, it's so unjust. So I think all those things are being relayed. I hope the American people are listening in and understanding that everything is done strategically. This is a great team that we have here. And I really have little doubt that we'll prevail at the end.

MACCALLUM: But as you point out, there are really two audiences here. There's the political American audience who's watching all of this. And then there are the 12 people on the journey, who I know you can talk about, we know who they are, and we only know you know few things about their professions, et cetera. But I thought this was interesting over at CNN, this is Ellie Honig, the legal correspondent there talking about the cross examination. I just want you to hear what he said.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ELLIE HONIG, CNN LEGAL CORRESPONDENT: This should be a bonanza for cross examination, with three federal, former federal prosecutors here. What would you do if you found out the eve of a big trial that your star witness was sellingt t-shirts showing the defendant in prison? You'd have to think hard about dismissing the case. That is a major flaw in the defense.

Laughing about a defendant going to jail is I think it's offensive to the jury, that's not for Michael Cohen to say.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: Yes. We have a picture of one of these t-shirts and I know you have to be careful with anything with regard to the current witness who's being cross examined. But just in terms of the legal theory behind that, do you think that if a witness is selling merchandise against the person who's the defendant, in a general sense, Alina. Would a judge find for a mistrial in that case? And do you think that Merchan, I know you don't feel like he's been, you know, open to the defense side all that much, but do you think that he might?

HABBA: We're going to continue to move for that. Do I think any activity like that generally is advisable by a witness, let alone the key witness for a trial, no. If I was the prosecution and working for the DA, I would definitely try and stop that immediately.

Again, when you're trying any case, you want to prevent bias. You want to prevent any appearance that anybody on your case and being witnesses or attorneys, frankly, show bias, but we've consistently seen is a judge who should recuse who has clear historical biases for things I can't discuss, but the press has reported, for prosecutors, DAs with political motivations, with political funding by, you know, furious Democrat donors.

And all of those things are supposed to be left outside of the court for a very important reason. Number one, it weakens their case. It frankly just does, not that they had one to start with but it does. Number two, it gives the appearance of impropriety, the appearance of selective prosecution we call it, which is a targeting of someone. That is what is in fact happening.

So I'm not surprised by any of this. And you know we're in good shape. By the way, Martha, when CNN, when MSNBC have to start admitting, you've heard Fareed, have to start admitting that there is no case here. The reality of the situation is the Democrats have focused so much on political (inaudible) that they are strengthening President Trump who was already strong, who was already leading. And they're just helping our cause with all of these witch hunts and with all of this nonsense.

The American people I truly believe are sick of it. I think seeing all the police lined up, Martha. I don't know if you've been in the courtroom, but the amount of police power in the city that has fallen apart.

MACCALLUM: Yes. No, it's stunning.

HABBA: It is so sad and such a disgrace.

MACCALLUM: You know, we'll go walk in and out of that building is a real education in what's going on down there. So we will see how long the cross continues with Michael Cohen tomorrow and we'll be watching. Alina, thank you very much, always good to see you.

HABBA: Thank you.

MACCALLUM: So when we comeback, an exclusive preview of a project that I am really proud of, and I think you're going to feel very strongly about as well. This is the new season of "The Final Journey" on Fox Nation, featuring living heroes, living heroes of America's greatest generation. We got their story firsthand and we want to share it with you.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: When you were 16 and Pearl Harbor happened, what did you think about what was happening in your country and the world? And then when you went there, that must have been something to actually see it yourself.

MATT GUTMAN, CHIEF PETTY OFFICER, US ARMY: My sister and I are ready to go to church, and we heard on radio. I couldn't believe it. I'm thinking to myself why -- why are you doing this? And then, when I got to Pearl Harbor and I've seen some of the destructions, and what happened, and I'm still thinking why do they do this? And I was so angry that I was ready to fight those Japanese right away.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: Okay. Before we go, look at my new Fox Nation special, "The Final Journey of the Greatest Generation" which drops today. I was honored to speak with World War II heroes who still have vivid memories of going into battle.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BILL RIDENOUR, WORLD WAR II VETERAN: My name is Bill Ridenour. I was a private first class. I was born August the 20th, 1923 in Muscatine, Iowa. We were prepared to go in fighting.

MACCALLUM: Now 100 years old, then 21-year old army rifleman, Bill Ridenour remembers being part of the land invasion force on Leyte.

RIDENOUR: As we went in, I never had an idea how terrible it could have been. We were in very, very heavy combat. We got on our Higgins March. It was very, very crowded. And when we got close to the shore, they dropped the gates. We all hit the water. And a lot of us just all those rounds before we jumped off that boat. But we made it, we made it to the shore.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: And it was not going to meet them. They are living treasures of American history. And "The Final Journey the Greatest Generation" is available now on Fox Nation, so I really hope that you will go in there and watch this series. It's extraordinary. We have the Pacific and Europe all available to you now and just wonderful stories.

So that is "The Story" for Wednesday, great to have you with us. As always "The Story" goes on. Tomorrow, I'll see you back here at 3:00. Stay Tuned for Your World which starts right about now.

**Load-Date:** May 16, 2024

**End of Document**