

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Bloomberg via Getty Images

Marco Rubio, America's secretary of state, said that the Trump administration would “respond accordingly” to the “witch hunt” against **Jair Bolsonaro**. Brazil's supreme court sentenced Mr Bolsonaro, a former president and a Trump ally, to more than 27 years in prison for [plotting a coup](#) after he lost the 2022 election. [Alexandre de Moraes](#), the judge leading the case, accused Mr Bolsonaro of trying to return Brazil to dictatorship.

The FBI released a video of a “college-age” man it suspects of murdering **Charlie Kirk**, a right-wing activist who was [shot at a university event](#) in Utah on Wednesday. It also recovered a rifle. Donald Trump blamed the rhetoric of the “radical left” for Mr Kirk's killing. J.D. Vance, the vice-president, flew on Air Force Two to Salt Lake City to collect Mr Kirk's casket.

**Venezuela's** interior minister said that none of the 11 people killed by an American strike on a boat in the Caribbean last week were members of **Tren de Aragua**. After the attack Mr Trump claimed the boat was full of drugs and “narco-terrorists” from the Venezuelan gang. The legality of [killing drug suspects at sea is dubious](#).

**Paramount Skydance**, which owns CBS, is reportedly preparing a mainly cash bid for **Warner Bros Discovery**, home of CNN, HBO and a film studio. David Ellison, the [new head of Paramount](#), is the son of Larry Ellison, a billionaire who may be backing the bid. WBD had planned to split into two companies. A combined Paramount and WBD might draw the attention of antitrust authorities.

The Trump administration asked an American appeals court to allow the president to sack **Lisa Cook**, a Federal Reserve governor, before the bank's meeting next week. The Justice Department is attempting to overturn a lower court's temporary halt on Mr Trump's attempt to fire [Ms Cook](#). The president has for months insisted that the Fed should cut rates; on September 17th it is expected to.

**Nepal's** army held talks with representatives from the **protest** movement that toppled the government this week. The discussions focused on the formation of an interim government. Youngsters took to the streets after the government banned social-media platforms, but the demonstrations quickly escalated, forcing the prime minister to flee. The army has restored order, but [huge political uncertainty remains](#).

**Albania** appointed an artificial-intelligence bot to handle government procurement. The new "cabinet member", Diella, which means "sun" in Albanian, will manage and award all public tenders. [Edi Rama](#), the prime minister, has said that Diella will make Albania "a country where public tenders are 100% free of corruption". In July he mused about one day having an AI prime minister.

**Figure of the day:** 17, the age of Gout Gout, the sprinter who may be athletics' new mega-star. [Read the full story](#).

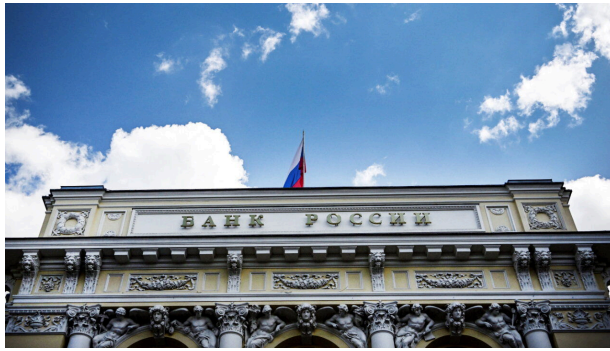


Photograph: Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

## War games put NATO on edge

NATO members, [especially Poland](#), will be on alert on Friday as Russia launches its *Zapad* (“West”) military exercise in Belarus. Officially, some 13,000 troops are meant to take part in the drills, which are scheduled to end on Tuesday. The actual number is expected to be much higher.

The manoeuvres had Poland on edge even before 19 Russian drones [breached the country’s airspace](#) on Tuesday night. It was the biggest such incursion into NATO skies since the alliance formed in 1949. Hours before the drones appeared, Poland announced it would close its border with Belarus ahead of the *Zapad* drills. Following the incursion, which Poland described as an act of aggression, the country announced it would deploy 40,000 soldiers to its eastern border. The *Zapad* exercises are defensive in name only. The last ones took place in the autumn of 2021. Russia invaded Ukraine five months later.



Photograph: AFP via Getty Images

## The convictions of Russia's central bank

On Friday Russia's central bank will make an interest-rate decision. In 2023 and 2024 it raised its benchmark rate as high as 21% as it tried to quell surging inflation, linked to labour shortages and the enormous fiscal stimulus provided by government war spending. That made the bank unpopular in some quarters. Russia's economy minister recently blamed high borrowing costs for [the slowing economy](#). Consumer confidence has dropped in recent months.

Yet while in most autocracies the central bank is in the pocket of politicians, in Russia it is a different story. President Vladimir Putin delegates monetary management to experts. For a long time the rate-setters held off on cutting, hoping for inflation to fall first. That is now happening: the annual inflation rate has fallen from a recent peak of more than 10% to 8.8%. The bank's mandarins have lowered rates by three percentage points since the spring. Don't be surprised if they cut again.



Photograph: AFP via Getty Images

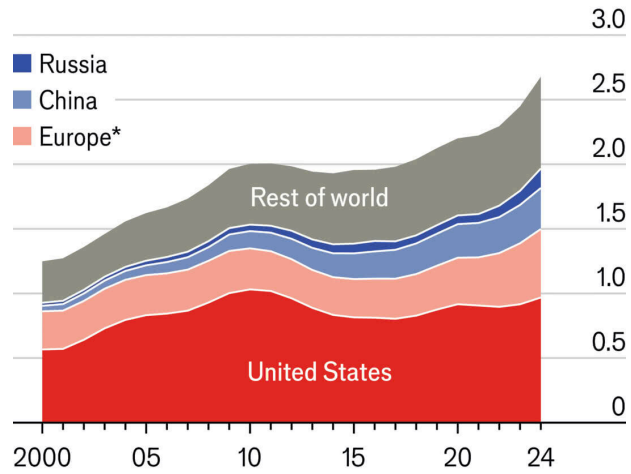
## Britain's bombs bazaar

On Friday DSEI UK, a giant arms show, wraps up in London. More than 1,600 exhibitors are attending. Weapons dealers are prospering: global military spending rose by nearly 10% last year, to a record \$2.7trn. With that growth comes controversy. Protest groups such as “Shut the System” have thrown red paint, cut internet cables and scuffled with police. Much of their ire is aimed at Israeli arms makers. (Britain's government banned Israeli officials from the show because of the war in Gaza.)

Another big subject at the expo is Europe's vulnerability. Despite Russia's growing bellicosity, Europe still relies for protection on an increasingly hesitant America. [European armies](#) are especially short of air defences, longer-range strike systems, reconnaissance aircraft and satellites. European countries have launched fewer satellite-bearing rockets in the past decade than SpaceX, an American firm, put up in the first half of this year alone.

## Here comes the boom

World, military spending, 2023 prices, \$trn



Source: SIPRI

\*Excluding Russia



Photograph: Rory Mulvey / FOCUS FEATURES

## A final chapter for Downton Abbey

Hugh Bonneville, Laura Carmichael, Jim Carter and other original “Downton Abbey” actors close out their characters’ stories in the final film of the trilogy spun off from the hit television show. “Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale”, out on Friday, follows the Crawley family and their staff as they enter the 1930s and cope with divorce, financial trouble and social disgrace.

Studios reckon that remakes, spin-offs and sequels are a more certain path to commercial success than work based on new ideas. The Downton trilogy shows that the tactic doesn’t always work. The first spin-off film, “Downton Abbey”, released in 2019, grossed \$195m. Its sequel, “Downton Abbey: A New Era”, which came out in 2022, took in less than half as much, perhaps in part because of the covid-19 pandemic. Still, fans of the franchise will no doubt enjoy the final instalment. As an astute chronicler of class in England, [Julian Fellowes](#), Downton’s creator, deftly balances upstairs and downstairs plots with historical events and the challenges of everyday life.





Illustration: The Economist

## Daily quiz

We will serve you a new question each day this week. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and, as important, tell us the connecting theme. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 BST on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

**Friday:** Which New York congresswoman was nominated by President Donald Trump to be ambassador to the United Nations, only for her nomination to be withdrawn?

**Thursday:** Which film was really awarded the Oscar for best movie in 2017, after the presenters mistakenly announced the winner as La La Land?





Illustration: The Economist

## The winners of this week's crossword

Thank you to everyone who took part in our weekly crossword, published in the weekend edition of Espresso. The winners, chosen at random, were:

**Caron O'Hara**, Harare, Zimbabwe

**Kariem Abdellatif**, Uebersyren, Luxembourg

**Sonja Horte**, London, Britain

They all gave the correct answers of Xanadu, Nordic, growth and [Xi Jinping](#).

*It all goes so fast, and character  
makes the difference when it's  
close.*

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***Jesse Owens***