

Catch up: US to send jets to Middle East; Trump proposes to debate Harris



The **Pentagon** said it would deploy more fighter jets and warships to the Middle East, as concerns grew about **Iran's** response to the assassination of [Ismail Haniyeh](#), Hamas's political leader, on its territory on Wednesday. Israel is widely assumed to have carried out the airstrike that killed Mr Haniyeh in Tehran. Iran's promise to "take vengeance" has stoked fears of a [regional war](#).

To Lam, **Vietnam's** president, was named general secretary of the Communist Party, the most powerful position in the country. He had taken the role on an unofficial basis upon the death of [Nguyen Phu Trong](#) last month. One job in his in-tray will be responding to the rejection on Friday of his country's bid to be categorised by America as a "market economy", which would have seen tariffs reduced and exports increased.

Lloyd Austin, America's defence secretary, revoked a plea deal that was reached on Wednesday with five men who are accused of masterminding the **September 11th terrorist attacks**. The defendants, including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged

ringleader, reportedly agreed to plead guilty in return for being spared execution. Mr Austin also revoked the authority of the woman overseeing the war court in [Guantánamo Bay](#), where the men are being held.

Donald Trump agreed to debate **Kamala Harris** on September 4th, proposing that Fox News should moderate it. Mr Trump had previously gone head to head with Joe Biden but had complained that Ms Harris wasn't the official candidate. She had dared him to meet her on stage, though, telling a recent rally, "As the saying goes, you got something to say, say it to my face."

Ukraine claimed to have sunk a **Russian submarine** in the Crimean port of Sevastopol and damaged an S-400 air-defence system. It added that the Kilo-class Russian vessel had been struck before, in 2023. This time, though, the work was more thorough. "The Black Sea fish will enjoy their new home," tweeted the defence ministry.

A combined attack by a suicide-bomber and gunmen on a beachside spot in Mogadishu, the capital of **Somalia**, killed at least 32 people and wounded at least 60 more. The attack was attributed to **al-Shabab**, a large jihadist group affiliated to al-Qaeda that is conducting a vicious fight for control of Somalia. Last month five people in the capital were killed when a car bomb exploded by a café.

There were further disturbances across **Britain** as protesters inspired by a combination of factors, including the fatal [stabbing of three children](#) earlier in the week, the spread of misinformation on social media and far-right animus, fought against police. Demonstrations, and in some cases counter-demonstrations, were seen in Liverpool, Hull, Belfast and several other towns. Keir Starmer, the prime minister, said police had his "full support" to act against "extremists".

Word of the week: *Actas*, a Spanish word that refers to the voting receipts which Venezuela's opposition says show that it won last week's election. [Read the full story](#).

In the run-up to America's presidential election, we've launched [The US in brief](#)—a daily update to help you keep on top of the political stories that matter. [Sign up here](#) to receive it as a newsletter, each weekday, in your inbox.

J.D. Vance's awkward debut



On Saturday Donald Trump and [J.D. Vance](#), his running-mate, hold a rally in Atlanta, Georgia. Mr Vance's launch has not gone to plan. Clips went viral showing how in 2021 he called prominent Democrats, including Kamala Harris, "childless cat ladies who are miserable in their own lives". He once advocated for parents to get more votes than non-parents, who had less of "an investment in the future" of America. (Mr Vance voted against recent legislation [protecting IVF](#), a fertility treatment.)

Mr Trump has had to defend Mr Vance, saying he "loves family". But in other comments he seemed to distance himself from his pick, claiming that the choice of VP "has virtually no impact". Mr Vance's selection was intended to [play to the MAGA base](#), not broaden Mr Trump's appeal. At the time of the announcement on July 15th, it projected bold confidence. Now, with Joe Biden out of the race and [Democrats energised](#) by Ms Harris, it looks more like cockiness.

Patience wears thin with Venezuela's regime



Almost a week after Venezuela's presidential election, Nicolás Maduro's government keeps promising, [and failing](#), to provide evidence that it won. Doing so should be easy—if such evidence existed. Venezuela's voting machines print out *actas*, or receipts, before transmitting their data to the electoral council's headquarters. The tally of those receipts should match the results announced. But, complicating things for the regime, the opposition has its own copies of at least 80% of those *actas*, which it has published. They show that its candidate, Edmundo González, easily won the vote with around 70% support.

The regime is resorting to a well-worn strategy: play for time and make vague excuses for why the data are missing (it has cited a cyberattack). The millions of Venezuelans who turned out last week to boot Mr Maduro out of office aren't buying it, and neither is the Biden administration in America. Even sympathetic governments, such as Brazil and Colombia, are ramping up pressure on Mr Maduro to show the world the receipts.

Sprinting for gold at the Olympics



The blue-ribbon events of the Olympic athletics programme—the men's and women's 100m sprint—will probably be a race between America and Jamaica. In the women's competition, America's team looks stronger. Sha'Carri Richardson, who was ousted from the [Tokyo games](#) in 2021 after testing positive for marijuana, has both the fastest time this year and a point to prove. Her compatriot, Melissa Jefferson, is another medal contender. The Jamaicans have lost their star sprinter, Shericka Jackson, to injury; Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, who won gold in Beijing and London, has excellent pedigree but her season's best time is 0.2 seconds behind Ms Richardson's.

Among the men, Jamaica's Kishane Thompson and Oblique Seville have each run under 9.85 seconds three times this year. America's Noah Lyles and Kenny Bednarek are aiming for victory in both the 100m and 200m races, but both are stronger in the second. These tight races are ones to watch—favourites aside, surprise winners may yet emerge.

Chronicling Elizabeth Taylor's rise to stardom



Much is still written about Elizabeth Taylor, even 13 years after her death. The actress is a character in “The Motive and the Cue”, a play which debuted last year at the National Theatre in London. Two recent books have examined her tumultuous life and fabled career: “Erotic Vagrancy”, about her passionate relationship with [Richard Burton](#), and “Cocktails with George and Martha”, about the filming of “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” (in which the pair starred). Now it is the turn of “Elizabeth Taylor: The Lost Tapes”, a documentary, to chronicle her rise to star power. The film-makers, using audio from some forgotten interviews conducted in 1964, have Taylor narrate her own story.

Taylor led an overexposed life, so much of the film’s content—her many marriages, her then-unheard-of \$1m wage for “Cleopatra”, her AIDS activism—may be familiar. But the recordings reveal her wit and, above all, her candour and perceptiveness. On screen and off, she laments, she was typecast as an ingénue.

Weekend profile: Simone Biles, the most decorated gymnast in history



Simone Biles is widely considered the best gymnast of all time. The 1.4-metre (four-foot, eight-inch) tall American has won 30 World Championship medals. She had seven [Olympic medals](#) when she arrived in Paris and has added three more golds since, including the individual all-around and vault titles.

Ms Biles honed her love of tumbling on the swing in her foster parents' home in Ohio, at the age of three. In 2000 her biological grandfather and his wife brought her to live with them in Texas. When one of her brothers took her to a gymnastics facility nearby, the coaches there soon spotted that she had a natural talent. Ronnie Boorman, her first coach, later said she “just had a sense” about Ms Biles.

In 2013 Ms Biles had her first big win at the World Championships and then continued to dominate her sport, developing skills that had never been seen before. At 16 she first performed what has become known as “The Biles”—a double layout with a half-twist in the

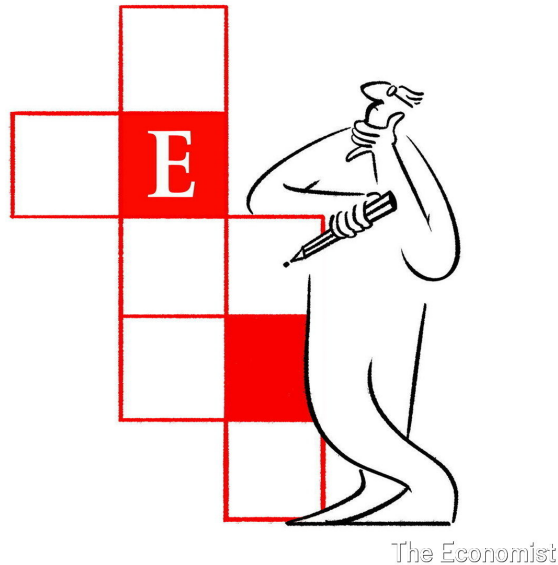
second flip, or, in layman's terms, a mind-blowing number of turns in the air.

In between the podiums, there were darker moments. In 2018 Ms Biles revealed that she was one of hundreds of gymnasts to have been sexually abused by Larry Nassar, a former Team USA doctor. In 2021 Ms Biles and three others testified about their experiences and the FBI's poor handling of the case.

When Ms Biles stepped up to perform in the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, the skills that she had honed to perfection appeared to elude her—as did her feeling of where she was in the air. After struggling to complete a vault, she pulled out. Upon reflection Ms Biles said it was a “trauma response”, a belated reaction to the abuse that Mr Nassar had subjected her to.

Ms Biles took time to focus on life outside of work. But in 2023 she decided she would compete in the Paris Olympics. She upped her difficulty levels and worked towards completing a new skill: the “Biles II”, on the vault. She springs into a backflip in which she rotates 1,080 degrees—three full circles—before landing. It ranks as the most difficult vault in women's gymnastics. She says that the seconds-long move is scary every time. For the rest of the world, it is a marvel to behold.

Weekly crossword



Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

Cryptic clues

1 down Creaking band, surprisingly, leads to energetic style of movement (12)

1 across We're told estuary next to foundation for city (6)

2 across Not even dork urges rum and coke, for example (5)

3 across The instruction manual for all living things found in item one gave back (6)

Factual clues

1 down The only new sport at this year's Olympics (12)

1 across Somewhere hit by an Israeli airstrike this week (6)

2 across How Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel made much of its money (5)

3 across What a growing class of medicines can edit (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to crossword@economist.com. We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

The winners of this week's quiz



The Economist

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Vincas Smalenskas, Krosna, Lithuania

Sharon Valentino, Elverson, Pennsylvania, America

Peter Nicklin, Naivasha, Kenya

They all gave the correct answers of Usain Bolt, Key West, Georg Friedrich Handel, Janet Frame and a lock. The theme is doors: bolt, key, handle, frame and lock.

The questions were:

Monday: Who is the only man to win 100m and 200m gold medals at three consecutive Olympics?

Tuesday: In which Florida resort did Ernest Hemingway own a house, which is now a museum to his memory?

Wednesday: Zadok the Priest, an anthem performed at British coronations, is the work of which composer?

Thursday: “An Angel at my Table”, a 1990 film directed by Jane Campion, is based on the autobiographies of which New Zealand author?

Friday: What is the name for a chamber used for raising and lowering boats, often found on canals?

Actas

*A Spanish word that refers to the voting receipts which Venezuela's opposition says show that it won last week's election.
Read the full story.*

**The battleline between good and evil runs
through the heart of every man.**

Alexander Solzhenitsyn