humid, high 88. Tonight, cloudy, hu-

mid, low 70. Tomorrow, sunny, warm, humid, afternoon showers,

VOL. CLXXIII No. 60,248 © 2024 The New York Times Company FRIDAY, AUGUST 16, 2024

Prices in Canada may be higher

high 82. Weather map, Page B12.

\$4.00

Biden Felt He Could Win, But the Cost Was Too Dear

In Final Hours, President Came to See Risk of Tearing Democratic Party Apart

This article is by Michael D. Shear, Katie Rogers and Adam En-

WASHINGTON — In the end, he was alone.

Confined to a spare bedroom in his vacation home and fighting off bouts of coughing from Covid, President Biden was exhausted when he turned in for the night on Saturday, July 20. Whether he slept soundly or fitfully or not at all, people close to him said he took the long hours by himself to mull over the historic decision he was about to make.

He had just been through a brutal two days in Rehoboth Beach, Del., as he huddled with his wife, Jill Biden, and his closest aides, who rotated from a screened-in porch to a sitting area off the dining room.

Steve Ricchetti, the president's eves and ears on Capitol Hill, and Mike Donilon, his chief strategist, had shared internal polling with the president that Saturday that mirrored what Americans had been seeing for weeks: Mr. Biden was falling behind, nationally and in key battleground states.

There was still a path to victory, they advised him, but the fight would be ugly. The president would be pitted against his donors, half of his party in Congress and Democratic voters who had concluded that he was too old to

For more than three weeks, Mr. Biden had insisted he would stay in the race. Only the "Lord Almighty," he said, could get him to

But by that Saturday evening, something had shifted.

It was not just about the polls, people close to Mr. Biden say. Despite everything, Mr. Biden believed he could still claim the Democratic nomination and beat President Donald J. Trump. Aides say that he still believes that.

What began to change the president's mind, people familiar with his thinking say, was the realization that if he stayed in the race, he was in for a lonely battle that would rip apart the Democratic Party, the cause he had served nearly his entire life. Would a man who views himself as the ultimate consensus builder in Washington want to wage an intraparty war that would run counter to the fabric of who he is?

That day, Mr. Biden asked a key question.

"If we were going to do it," Mr. Biden asked his two advisers, "what would we say?"

A statement was drafted, known only to four other people: the first lady and her closest aide, Anthony Bernal; the president's son Hunter; and Annie Tomasini. the gatekeeper at the White House and the president's deputy chief of staff.

But first, he wanted a few hours

At 9 p.m. that evening, the president excused himself. It was time to call it a night.

To many outsiders, it seemed al-Continued on Page A13







More than 200 people on Thitu Island, part of a contested section of the South China Sea, find themselves on the frontier of a possible conflict with China. Top, children play near an old fortification on Thitu; an off-duty soldier with binoculars; and Chinese ships in the Spratly archipelago.

THITU ISLAND DISPATCH

Island Idyll in Shadow of China's Military Might

By CAMILLE ELEMIA

THITU, Spratly Islands — For travelers flying into the tiny island of Thitu, the reality of China's territorial ambition becomes instantly clear. There they are: dozens of Chinese ships surrounding a speck of land that a few hundred Filipinos call

For now though, life is mostly peaceful and slow on the island. Small wooden fishing boats line a white sand beach on the eastern shore. Rough houses pieced together from plywood, scrap lumber and tarps are the main form of shelter. On a recent evening, a few people gathered near the beach to debone fish, while others waded into tide

pools with fishing spears. But the calm belies the fact

It's 'Hunger or Fear' for Filipinos Settling in **Contested Waters**

that Thitu is contested land. Nearby, China has stationed a flotilla of coast guard ships and maritime militia vessels. On a neighboring reef, it has constructed a military base whose lights shimmer at night like a city. The intensifying Chinese presence has startled the Philippines, which has occupied Thitu for nearly half a century. So it is upgrading its crumbling military facilities that lie on the island's southern end.

And it is encouraging more Filipinos to move in, betting more residents will strengthen

its claim to Thitu, which it calls Pag-asa, or hope, and reduce hostilities with China.

These civilians are the only ones in the Spratly Islands — a chain of 100 or so atolls, reefs and cays in the South China Sea that may have significant oil reserves and is claimed by six countries. And they find themselves in the middle of a tense geopolitical dispute.

Marjorie Ganizo and her husband, Junie Antonio Ganizo, moved here with their eight children in November despite what they saw as the risk of a Chinese invasion.

"In the end, we had to ask ourselves: hunger or fear?" Ms. Ganizo, 36, said. "No matter where you are, if it's your time to die, it's your time to die." Tensions have flared between

Continued on Page A6

UKRAINE'S FORAY LIKELY TO STYMIE RUSSIAN ADVANCE

U.S. ASSESSING IMPACT

Morale Surges for Kyiv's Military as Moscow **Redirects Forces**

By JULIAN E. BARNES and ERIC SCHMITT

WASHINGTON — Ukraine's incursion into a sliver of Russia is likely to make it harder for Moscow to mount a major renewed offensive in Ukraine's east and is the kind of surprise operation that could eventually impose real costs on the Kremlin, according to U.S. officials.

The Ukrainian strike, and its continued success, could ultimately have strategic significance, though U.S. officials caution that they will need to see how it plays out to draw firmer conclusions. It could also help rebuild sagging morale among Ukraine's troops and war-weary population, the officials said.

The incursion, into the Kursk region of Russia, stands in stark contrast to Ukraine's failed counteroffensive in southern Ukraine last summer. This offensive was developed in secret, devised to divert Russian troops away from the front lines in Ukraine and seize territory to use as a bargaining chip.

Ukraine's monthslong buildup to the counteroffensive played out in the open. The Ukrainians had sought to retake territory but stumbled when they failed to punch through dug-in Russian defenses, which Moscow reinforced as Ukraine trained for the drive. Ukraine also split its forces during that offensive, against American advice, rather than focusing them as they have this month.

But the incursion into Russia shows how Ukraine's army has improved its mechanized warfare skills, techniques that it failed to master a year ago.

Since then, Ukraine has been looking for ways to rebound.

The operation itself will not drive Russia to the bargaining table, according to U.S. officials. Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin, has pledged not to negotiate while Ukraine occupies Russia, and American officials said he should be taken at his word.

But in public speeches, the C.I.A. director, William J. Burns, has spoken about the need to puncture the hubris of Mr. Putin. Russia will not make any concessions, he has said, until Mr. Putin's

Continued on Page A9

U.S. Shares Prices of First Drugs Picked for Medicare Negotiation

President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday

in Largo, Md., their first rally together since he dropped out.

By NOAH WEILAND and REBECCA ROBBINS

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration on Thursday unveiled the results of landmark drug price negotiations between Medicare and pharmaceutical companies, allowing President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris to cast themselves as confronting the drug industry on behalf of older Americans at a critical moment in the presidential campaign.

The negotiated prices, which take effect in 2026, are expected to save billions of dollars for Medicare, which is funded by taxpayers. But they will lead to direct out-of-pocket savings for only a subset of the millions of older Americans who take the drugs subject to negotiations.

Other provisions of the law that created the drug negotiation program, such as capping patients' expenses for insulin and their

List of 10 Medications Is Expected to Save **Program Billions**

yearly out-of-pocket drug costs, will do more to save older Americans money at the pharmacy

The 10 drugs subject to negotiations include widely used blood thinners and arthritis medications. Had the new prices been in effect last year, administration officials said, Medicare would have saved \$6 billion, which would have reduced its spending on those drugs by 22 percent.

'This is a fight all of us have been fighting for a long time: taking on Big Pharma," Mr. Biden said at an event in Maryland celebrating the announcement, where he and Ms. Harris had their first

Continued on Page A17

Walz's Policy on Guns Shifted In Transition to Governorship

By MIKE McINTIRE

In a tight primary for governor in 2018, Tim Walz, then a congressman from a conservative pro-gun district in Minnesota, was rebuked for his A ratings from the National Rifle Association. After a school shooting in Parkland, Fla., he went on the offensive.

Mr. Walz wrote an opinion piece asserting that he had "repeatedly voted in favor" of tougher background checks, federal gun violence research and firearm bans for people on no-fly lists. He had "voted for universal background checks more than anybody in this race," he told an interviewer. And he posted a video in which he said he had voted "dozens of times" in Congress for stronger gun laws.

Gun advocates, however, had never questioned his loyalty as a legislator. The N.R.A. kept giving him high marks until he ran for governor, and Guns & Ammo magazine in 2016 named him one of its



Gov. Tim Walz signing a gun control bill last year in St. Paul.

top 20 lawmakers.

'While most congressional Democrats have jumped on the gun control train with both feet," the magazine said, "Tim Walz and a few others have stuck to their

Which version of Mr. Walz, now running for vice president, was Continued on Page A13

Cautious Optimism at Columbia As President Departs the Chaos

This article is by Sharon Otterman, Stephanie Saul and Wesley

Columbia University students and faculty confronted a tangle of emotions on Thursday morning after the sudden departure of the school's president, Ñemat Shafik.

Some protesters and politicians who had harried her for months celebrated and claimed victory. Other students and faculty members contemplating her departure were saddened. But there was also cautious optimism that the new interim president, Katrina Armstrong, could better manage a chaotic campus situation that in many ways had become ungovernable for Dr. Shafik.

As a newcomer to Columbia, Dr. Shafik had limited experience to help her navigate tensions among different factions on campus and manage a pro-Palestinian movement undeterred by suspensions, arrests and locked campus gates.



Nemat Shafik resigned her post as Columbia's president.

She was criticized by both those who thought she did too much to crack down on protesters and those who thought she did not do enough.

But Dr. Shafik's departure still left some students and faculty members with a sense of sadness that the university had become so

Continued on Page A19

INTERNATIONAL A4-11

Erasing Sign of Racist Past

Rooms in older apartment buildings for maids, a relic of Brazil's history of slavery, are vanishing.

The Taliban Celebrate

Afghanistan is exulting in the third anniversary of the U.S. pullout with a renewed embrace of jihad. PAGE A5 NATIONAL A12-19, 22

Mar-a-Lago Attracts Far Right

Former President Donald J. Trump's Florida resort has become the center of gravity for the MAGA wing of the Republican Party. PAGE A14

5 Indicted in Actor's Death

Three people are pleading guilty to conspiring to distribute the powerful anesthetic that led to the death of the "Friends" star Matthew Perry. PAGE A19

Bronx Rezoning Moves Ahead

The New York City Council approved a plan to add about 7,000 housing units near four new rail stations, radically PAGE A17 reshaping the East Bronx.

SPORTS B6-9

A Core N.F.L. Workout

Pilates is gaining devoted practitioners in part because of an explosion of video posts featuring athletes' sweating and shaking workouts. PAGE B6

OBITUARIES B10-11

Creator of Famous Amos

With a family recipe and a bit of charisma, Wally Amos, 88, built one of the best-known cookie brands.

Oscar-Nominated Actress

Gena Rowlands often played intoxicated, deranged or otherwise on-theverge characters. She was 94. PAGE B11



BUSINESS B1-5

A Big Move on Housing

Reviving an idea from the '40s, Britain aims to overcome development hurdles and build new towns.

Flagging Fake News Again

The Justice Department set new rules for F.B.I. agents to share tips with Big Tech after dialogue ceased.

WEEKEND ARTS C1-10

A Collaboration With Nature

The ocean plays a big role in a dance celebrating Beach Sessions, a performance series at Rockaway Beach. PAGE C6

Acclaimed on Broadway

Sydney Lemmon has won praise for her role in "Job," about a content moderator having a mental breakdown. PAGE C1

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OPINION A20-21

David Brooks



