



Breezy Johnson of the U.S., center, who won the downhill on Sunday, with Emma Aicher of Germany, left, and Sofia Goggia of Italy.

For U.S. Athletes at Olympics, No Escaping American Politics

Wearing a Flag, With Everything It Represents

This article is by **Motoko Rich, Tariq Panja, Heather Knight and Juliet Macur.**

MILAN — The 232 Americans competing at the Winter Games have trained for years, traveled thousands of miles and are ready to give their best on the ice and snow in northern Italy. But politics, perhaps inevitably, is intruding on their Olympic moment.

The competition has opened after a year in which the Trump administration denigrated Europe, threatened allies and began an immigration crackdown at home that incited outrage, including in Italy. That opposition has followed the U.S. team as its members have competed on the Olympic stage, forcing athletes, coaches and American fans to respond to — or sidestep — the backlash.

Hunter Hess, a skier from Bend, Ore., told reporters last week that he had “mixed emotions” about representing the United States at

these Games. “There’s obviously a lot going on that I’m not the biggest fan of,” he said, adding: “Just because I’m wearing the flag doesn’t mean I represent everything that’s going on in the U.S.”

The comments drew a furious response from President Trump, who called Mr. Hess “a real Loser” in a post on his social media site, Truth Social, on Sunday. “If that’s the case, he shouldn’t have tried out for the Team, and it’s too bad he’s on it. Very hard to root for someone like this,” Mr. Trump said.

The president’s remarks came days after the opening ceremony of the Games in Milan on Friday, when jeers and boos rippled through the San Siro stadium in Milan as Vice President JD Vance briefly was shown on huge screens while the U.S. team paraded in, waving American flags.

At first, Phillip DiGuglielmo, who coaches the U.S. figure skater



The U.S. skier Lindsey Vonn crashed in the downhill in Cortina d’Ampezzo, Italy, ending her hopes for another medal. Page D1.

Alysa Liu and was in the stands, thought the boos were for the athletes.

“It was supposed to be the pinnacle of my life to see my athlete walk into the stadium, but it turned into a really sad moment for me,” said Mr. DiGuglielmo, whose grandparents immigrated

to the United States from Italy. “I felt like, hey, the athletes don’t deserve this.”

Later, he learned that the boos were for Mr. Vance. But he said he still worried that some athletes had heard the jeers instead of the applause.

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Minnesota Sheriff Considers a Plan for ICE. It May Cost Her Job.

By ERNESTO LONDOÑO

MINNEAPOLIS — As elected officials in Minnesota have desperately sought to persuade the Trump administration to end an immigration crackdown, Dawanna S. Witt, the sheriff of Hennepin County, finds herself in a pivotal spot.

The jail she runs in Minneapolis is the largest in the state and the only one that refuses, as a matter of policy, to assist in any way with federal immigration enforcement.

The approach is broadly supported by her constituents, Sheriff Witt said in an interview. But the sheriff said she had been agonizing over whether allowing some measure of cooperation with the federal authorities in their push for deportations might serve a broader good.

“I don’t think that Donald Trump or Tom Homan are going to leave without feeling like they have some sort of win,” Sheriff Witt said, referring to the White House border czar, who has been newly assigned to oversee the crackdown in Minnesota. “I don’t ever want to be put in a position that I had the power to make them leave and another one of our citizens gets killed.”

Speaking in her office in down-



Sheriff Dawanna S. Witt of Hennepin County has been buffeted on all sides of the ICE crackdown.

town Minneapolis last week, Sheriff Witt looked weary.

The showdown over immigration enforcement between the Trump administration and elected Democrats in Minnesota has left Sheriff Witt under tremendous pressure from all sides.

Sheriff Witt is a defendant in a lawsuit the Department of Justice filed in September, which argues that policies that restrict sharing of information with immigration officials amount to unlawful obstruction of federal law enforcement functions. The Justice De-

partment argued that her jail’s policy “unlawfully discriminates against the federal government” and violates the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution.

At the same time, Hennepin County residents have flooded the

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Files Disclose Maxwell’s Ties To Clinton Set

Epstein’s Partner Aided Creation of Nonprofit

By DANNY HAKIM

Jeffrey Epstein’s longtime companion, Ghislaine Maxwell, played a substantial role in supporting the creation of the Clinton Global Initiative, one of President Bill Clinton’s signature post-White House endeavors, new documents released by the Justice Department show.

Ms. Maxwell took part in budget discussions related to the first Clinton Global Initiative conference; talked through challenges about it with both Clinton aides and Publicis Groupe, the company that produced the inaugural event; and arranged to wire \$1 million to pay Publicis for its work on “the Clinton project,” according to emails in the massive cache of documents collected as part of the government’s investigations of Mr. Epstein.

The source of the money is unclear, including whether Mr. Epstein provided the funds. However, the emails show that he was aware of the payment.

“Ask him to tell you why i million now and where will it be going,” Mr. Epstein wrote to Ms. Maxwell a few days after she received the wiring instructions from Publicis.

Ms. Maxwell’s involvement in the launch of the Clinton Global Initiative took place in 2004, before Mr. Epstein’s 2006 indictment and 2008 guilty plea for solicitation of prostitution with a minor, and long before Ms. Maxwell, a daughter of the media baron Robert Maxwell, was sentenced in 2022 to two decades in prison for conspiring with Mr. Epstein to sexually exploit underage girls.

The emails support an assertion Ms. Maxwell made last year in an interview with the Justice Department that she played a key role in helping set up the global conference.

Mr. Clinton has said he stopped speaking with Mr. Epstein sometime before his 2006 indictment. In a statement, Angel Ureña, a spokesman for the Clintons, said the former president had “called for the full release of the Epstein files” and “has nothing to hide.”

“He knew nothing about Epstein’s crimes,” Mr. Ureña said. “When it became clear Epstein

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THE WEATHER

Today, not quite as cold, sunshine mixing with some clouds, high 31. Tonight, mostly cloudy, low 19. Tomorrow, clouds and some sun, high 37. Weather map is on Page D10.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Trump Finds A Rare Need To Pull Back

Racist Post Hits Limit of Nation’s Tolerance

By ERICA L. GREEN

PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Trump has seemed immune to the usual rules of politics.

The man who once boasted that he could “stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody” without losing support from voters regularly shatters political and legal norms at home and abroad, with few obvious consequences.

But every once in a while, Mr. Trump runs smack into whatever boundary remains and is forced to pull back, offering a glimpse into the country’s tolerance for his behavior.

The chaotic White House response to a racist video clip of the Obamas that Mr. Trump posted online Thursday was one moment where the administration realized that its usual reactions to criticism — laugh it off, double down, move on — would not work. And while Mr. Trump does not, as a rule, acknowledge wrongdoing — and did not in this case, either — he deleted the clip in the face of widespread outrage in what amounted to a remarkable climbdown.

“It is surprising, in itself, to ever see him take a step back, to do anything other than, in the moment, double down and triple down, so in that sense it is surprising; it feels significant,” said Jeff Shesol, a historian and former speechwriter for President Bill Clinton who now serves as a partner at West Wing Writers, a speechwriting and strategy firm in Washington.

Mr. Trump still enjoys strong support from Republicans. The White House often points to a string of successes as evidence that for all the controversy over the president’s style and his tactics, his strategies are working. European allies are on track to spend more for their own defense, which Mr. Trump demanded, and he has intervened in a number of overseas conflicts, including winning the freedom of the 20 living Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

“President Trump is the un-

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Ocasio-Cortez Widens Imprint On a Party Looking for Leaders

This article is by **Kellen Browning, Reid J. Epstein and Leo Dominguez and McKinnon de Kuyper.**

Seven years after she swept into office as a progressive agitator unafraid to hammer fellow Democrats, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York has emerged as an increasingly sought-after leader within the party she set out to disrupt.

She has positioned herself as a top antagonist of Vice President JD Vance, a potential heir to President Trump’s political movement, sparring with him on social media.

She has stepped up her support of moderate and mainstream Democrats, sending a fund-raising email last month asking her supporters to donate to the Senate campaign of former Representative Mary Peltola of Alaska, a friend whose support for oil drilling and gun rights are at odds with the New York congresswoman’s stances.

And, at a time of tumult around the country and uncertainty within the Democratic Party, her direct and camera-ready speaking style is breaking through. After federal agents killed Alex



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is planning a major trip overseas.

Pretti in Minneapolis, she swiftly appeared on cable news and argued he had been “executed in the street.”

After years of inching closer to mainstream Democrats, Ms. Ocasio-Cortez is more forcefully trying to steer her party toward her populist, working-class message at a moment when economic worries are a top issue. Democrats of all stripes broadly agree that they need a more ambitious vision focused on bringing down the cost of living to win back blue-collar voters.

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Few Leads in Disappearance
The mother of the “Today” show host Savannah Guthrie has not been heard from for more than a week. PAGE A9

A City’s Streets Frozen in Filth
The blanket of snow from last month’s winter storm has turned sooty and treacherous for New Yorkers. PAGE A8



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Finding His Voice Amid Risks
A Communist Party official helped fellow Muslims navigate China as religious minorities, until the official hostility became too great to bear. PAGE B1

Uber Is Found Liable in Rape
In a bellwether federal case, a jury ordered the ride-hailing giant to pay \$8.5 million to a woman who said one of its drivers assaulted her. PAGE B1

Navigating Trump’s Tariffs
Several large American manufacturers are thriving despite the threat of higher costs. Smaller ones are struggling with soaring component costs. PAGE B1

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Decisive Win for Japan’s Leader
Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, who called a snap election soon after taking power, earned a mandate for her economic agenda and tough stances on immigration and China. PAGE A7

Can Cuba’s Government Last?
The Trump administration has cut off Cuba from foreign oil and undermined its tourist industry to try to end the Communist revolution, which started 67 years ago under Fidel Castro. PAGE A4

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Pedro Sánchez PAGE A19

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Removal Sparks History Fight
After the government took down displays about slavery in Philadelphia, signs of protest have emerged. PAGE C1

‘Brat’ Summer Keeps Going
In the film “The Moment,” Charli XCX wraps up the era that started with her album from 2024. PAGE C1



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Shaking Off a Costly Error
Orion Kerkering, the relief pitcher whose miscue in the playoffs ended Philadelphia’s season, is prepared for the challenges that await him. PAGE D3

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General Who Made a Vow
“I will never abandon you,” Philippe Morillon told Srebrenica residents in 1993, before Europe’s worst massacre since World War II. He was 90. PAGE A17

