

Doping Feud
Nearly Foiled
Salt Lake Bid

Olympic Officials Told
U.S. to Stop Inquiry

By MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT
and TARIQ PANJA

In late June, federal agents working on a complex investigation were secretly positioned at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport, tracking a potentially key witness — a top international swimming official involved in the Olympics.

The official, Brent Nowicki, was returning to Europe after attending the U.S. Olympic swimming trials in Indianapolis.

Before he could board, the agents presented a startled Mr. Nowicki with a grand jury subpoena, demanding that he testify in a federal investigation into whether global sports authorities covered up positive tests by elite Chinese swimmers for a banned performance-enhancing drug.

Even before the encounter, the Chinese positive tests had already become an Olympics controversy. But approaching Mr. Nowicki, only weeks before the start of the Summer Games in Paris, escalated the situation into a broader confrontation over the power to police global sports, with consequences possibly extending to who is allowed to host an Olympic Games.

Soon after the subpoena was delivered, officials with the International Olympic Committee and the World Anti-Doping Agency began a pressure campaign to shut down the federal investigation.

Olympic officials threatened to hold up two things considered shoo-ins — the awarding of the 2034 Winter Games to Salt Lake City and the elevation of the top U.S. Olympics official, Gene Sykes, to the powerful International Olympic Committee.

This all burst into view in late July, days before the opening ceremony in Paris: In an extraordinary public spectacle, Olympic officials staged a dramatic power play, pressing Mr. Sykes and other American officials to help end the federal inquiries as a condition for receiving the bid.

Mr. Sykes and the other Americans capitulated. The governor of Utah, Spencer J. Cox, pledged to enlist the president of the United States to help the Olympic officials, even though political intervention in federal investigations rarely, if ever, deters prosecutors and F.B.I. agents.

The I.O.C. then awarded the 2034 Games to Salt Lake City. Later that day, Mr. Sykes was elected as a member of the International Olympic Committee.

Sports and law enforcement officials say they have rarely, if ever, seen such a raw exercise of power politics.

An examination by The New
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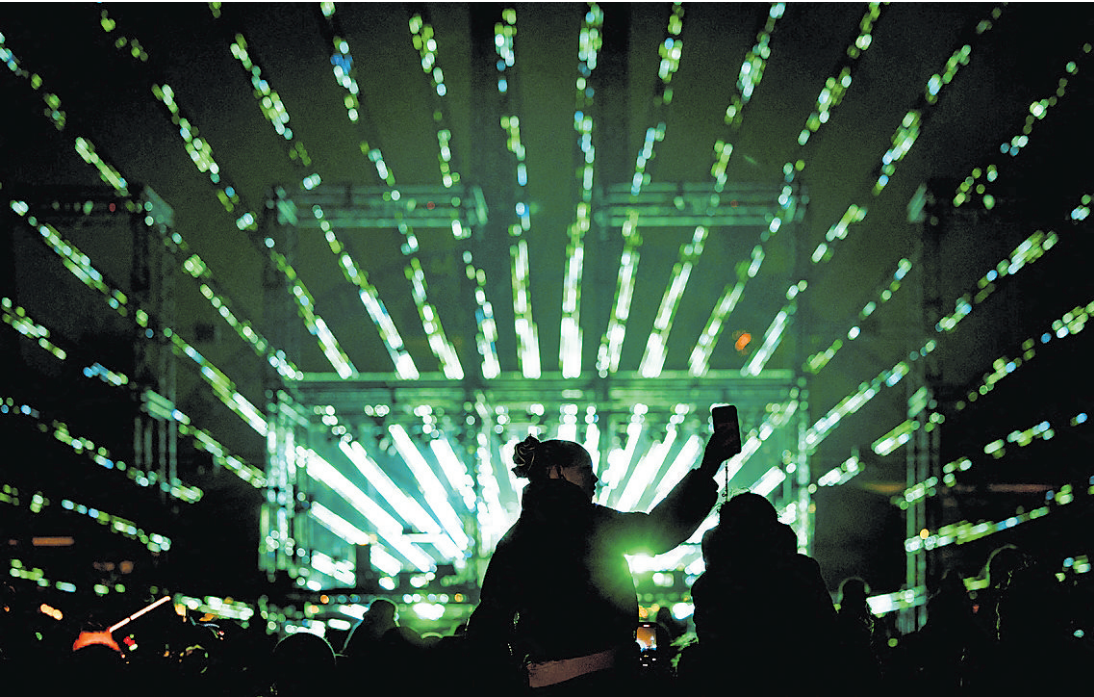
Ringling In 2025, Around the World



DAMASCUS, SYRIA Face painting, balloons and smiles were part of a neighborhood celebration.



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA Fireworks exploded over the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House.



AMSTERDAM For children, a stunning spectacle of lights and eco-fireworks at the Museumplein.

Lengthy Vigil
Closes at Last
In Hometown

Mourning and Exalting
a Former President

This article is by Rick Rojas,
Christina Morales and Christian Boone.

PLAINS, Ga. — The Georgia town known first and foremost as the home of Jimmy Carter had steeled itself time and again for an existence without him. First, there was his cancer diagnosis in 2015, and then the fall that broke a hip, and the disclosure almost two years ago that he had entered hospice care.

But sure enough, every time, he held on.

And so, Plains, a speck of a community tied to the 39th president for the better part of a century, awoke on Monday to a reality that, strangely enough, seemed almost as inconceivable as it was inevitable. Mr. Carter, 100, was gone. He died on Sunday at his home, the modest ranch house hidden behind the security fencing and guard stations in the center of town.

“Honestly, it doesn’t seem real,” said Philip Kurland, the owner of the Plains Trading Post, an over-stuffed emporium of political memorabilia in the strip of businesses that makes up downtown. “It was inevitable, but there’s still sadness. There’s also a feeling of: Let’s celebrate a life well lived.”

In a serendipitous twist, Mr. Kurland said, he made the purple button that he was wearing to memorialize Mr. Carter just last week. “I can’t tell you why,” he said. Perhaps it was a premonition, he added. It was also a reflection of how the 500 or so residents of Plains went about life for years knowing this moment would come, sooner or later.

The red, white and blue bows that replaced the town’s holiday decorations on Monday were made months ago. “It’s been something the town has been preparing for,” said Kelly Kight, who owns a floral shop.

Mr. Carter’s longevity, resilience and prominence might have been unique, but his death came with a runway of grief that is familiar to many who have been the caregivers and loved ones of those whose demise came after a long decline.

“It did kind of soften the blow,” said Marvin Laster, former chief executive of the local Boys and Girls Club, which named its Plains outpost after the Carters to the chagrin of the former president who found the recognition excessive.

But only so much, he added. “This kind of hits like an iron fist in a velvet glove,” Mr. Laster said. “The velvet glove was: You knew
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THE WEATHER
Today, cloudy, windy, a shower in spots, high 50. Tonight, breezy, becoming clear, low 36. Tomorrow, windy, chillier, partly cloudy, high 40. Weather map is on Page A16.

WHITE HOUSE MEMO
BIDEN CONFRONTS
PARALLELS TO END
OF CARTER’S TERM

Inflation and Hostage
Crises, and Hope for
History’s Verdict

By PETER BAKER

WASHINGTON — When President Biden appeared on camera to pay tribute to former President Jimmy Carter, he sounded almost as if he were thinking of himself in these final days in office.

“In today’s world, some look at Jimmy Carter and see a man of a bygone era — with honesty and character, faith and humility,” Mr. Biden said in breaking away from his Caribbean vacation on Sunday after the former president’s death. “It mattered. But I don’t believe it’s a bygone era.”

Mr. Biden, too, has been dismissed as a man of a bygone era, an old-school politician in a new-school world, an octogenarian president playing by rules he learned in the 1970s when he served in the Senate and Mr. Carter was in the White House, rules that did not help him in today’s fast-paced, smash-mouth political arena. He is, in this view,



BARRY THUMMA/ASSOCIATED PRESS
President Jimmy Carter and Joseph R. Biden Jr. in 1978.

a man out of time — Mr. Carter’s time.

As he said, Mr. Biden does not accept that and believes that “the fundamental human values” his generation brought to the table still apply. Yet when he spoke of Mr. Carter’s “honesty and character,” he left no doubt that he meant that in contrast to his predecessor and soon-to-be successor, Donald J. Trump, the first former president ever convicted of felony crimes and found liable for sexual abuse and business fraud.

That Mr. Carter would depart the scene at this particular stage of Mr. Biden’s presidency, however, evokes a certain sense of déjà vu: another one-term Democratic president whose aspirations for another term were damaged
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CARTER’S TV PERSONA As president, he reflected the confessional and dressed-down spirit of the 1970s. Critic’s Notebook. PAGE C1

Trump’s Eye Is on Greenland,
A Key Place in a Hotter Future

By LISA FRIEDMAN

To imagine the kind of future a hotter, dryer climate may bring, and the geopolitical challenges it will create, look no further than two parts of the world that President-elect Donald J. Trump wants America to control: Greenland and the Panama Canal.

The president-elect in recent days has insisted that both places are critical to United States national security. He’s called to reclaim control the Panama Canal from Panama and acquire Greenland from Denmark, both sovereign territories with their own governments.

They have something else in common as well: Both are signifi-

Focus on Panama Canal
Also Tied to Climate

cantly affected by climate change in ways that present looming challenges to global shipping and trade.

Because of warming temperatures, an estimated 11,000 square miles of Greenland’s ice sheets and glaciers have melted over the past three decades, an area roughly equivalent to the size of Massachusetts. That has huge implications for the entire world. If the ice melts completely, Greenland could cause sea levels to rise
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Syria Refugees in Germany Fear
Having to Leave Home Yet Again

By MELISSA EDDY

GROSS SCHÖNEBECK, Germany — Upon learning that Syria’s dynastic dictatorship had fallen, Iman Mohammed, a Syrian refugee living in Germany, felt a surge of elation at the idea that she could return to her homeland.

But that joy quickly faltered as another thought occurred to her: Going back to Syria could mean giving up everything that she and her family had built in Germany since making the dangerous trek to arrive there nearly a decade ago.

“In the cold light of day, when we really looked at everything that had happened, we realized, not just yet,” Ms. Mohammed, 41,

E.U. Countries Floating
Repatriation Ideas

said of the idea that her family might permanently return to Syria.

The decision may not be hers. After rebel groups toppled President Bashar al-Assad’s government on Dec. 8, the prospect of returning home opened for the first time in more than a decade for the many Syrians who fled during the civil war that ravaged the country, including 1.3 million in Germany.

Many of them worked hard and
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Inside the Instagram Network
That Grooms Child Influencers

By JENNIFER VALENTINO-DEVRIES
and MICHAEL H. KELLER

Everyone had an idea about how the 12-year-old girl should pose in a G-string bikini as they assembled in an Airbnb rental home in a small Louisiana town.

The photographer was new to the business of shooting child influencers, so he welcomed suggestions, he later explained in an interview.

The girl’s mother, swiping through images of women from men’s magazines on her phone, recommended that she stand with one leg raised provocatively on a bed, he recalled. The girl, he said, proposed imitating a scene from

Predators Pay Parents
for Explicit Images

an erotic film she had watched — she would lie on her back with her hands grasping for the bedposts.

In the end, several shots positioned her “head on a pillow and her buttocks raised in the air” and in one, the camera focused on her “barely covered” genitals. That was the description in court documents, written by federal authorities who charged the photographer and mother with crimes related to child sexual abuse material.

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Grief-Stricken in South Korea
To avoid worrying his son, Oh Jaemin’s father hadn’t said he was flying. He died when the plane crashed. PAGE A9

Moscow’s Relentless Campaign
Russia has stepped up its attacks in Ukraine, countering assumptions that its offensive would slow. PAGE A6

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Rallying Cry: ‘Health Freedom’
For decades, vaccine skeptics were a vocal protest movement against public health measures. Now, they find themselves much closer to power. PAGE A11

Victim of Fire Attack Named
Debrina Kawam of Toms River, N.J., was burned alive on a subway car in a killing that shocked New York. PAGE A15

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Those We Lost
Among figures who died in a polarizing 2024, many championed justice, equal rights and political freedom. PAGE A18

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The 2024 Good Tech Awards
In a year of A.I. progress, “founder mode” drama and a Trump election win, some tech projects stood out for their clear benefits to humanity. PAGE B1

Setback for Film Originality
Moviegoers preferred the predictable in 2024, with sequels filling nine of the top 10 box office slots. PAGE B1

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A Positively Lyrical Coach
Kenny Dillingham, who has led Arizona State to the College Football Playoff, creates songs via A.I. PAGE B5



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Times Insider editors scour the paper for the most interesting facts. They’ve collected their favorites. PAGE A4-5

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Michelle Cottle PAGE A20

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In the year ahead, “Severance” is finally back for its second season, three New York art museums are set to reopen, and ballet goes extreme. PAGE C5

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Some Tasty Resolutions
If you’ve decided to get great at meal prep, waste less food or just eat breakfast, we have some ideas. PAGE D4



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