

# Trump dials up shooting rhetoric

Stokes ‘inside job’ theory and raises fears of retaliation from backers

BY ISAAC ARNSDORF

On the first night after Donald Trump was injured in an assassination attempt in Butler, Pa., some supporters and allies, including campaign staff, immediately began blaming President Joe Biden and Democrats before any information was available about the shooter or his possible motive. Trump himself didn’t go there. In his first public statements after the July 13 shooting, Trump thanked law enforcement, offered condolences to the rallygoers killed and wounded, and called for unity.

But his tone changed in recent weeks, as the Republican presidential nominee began promoting conspiracy theories such as those that label the assassination attempt an “inside job” by government agencies or make up Democratic ties to lawyers representing the shooter’s parents. Trump and his running mate, Sen. JD Vance (R-Ohio), frequently portray the attempt as part of efforts by political opponents to prevent the former president from returning to power.

“I probably took a bullet to the head because of the things that they say about me,” Trump said at

SEE TRUMP ON A6

**Georgia:** Judge dismisses 2 counts in election interference case. **A5**



ROB DOBI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## A battleground without borders

Iran has built ties with Hells Angels and other criminal gangs to target critics abroad

BY GREG MILLER, SOUAD MEKHENNET AND CATE BROWN

LONDON — In the months before his attackers tracked him down, the exiled Iranian journalist had been moved in and out of safe houses by London’s Metropolitan Police, given a secret way to signal rescue units and had monitoring devices installed in his home.

British authorities had done even

more to protect Iran International, the London-based satellite news channel that airs the weekly program of the journalist, Pouria Zeraati, and has built an audience of millions in Iran despite being outlawed by the Islamic republic.

Police assigned a team of undercover officers to safeguard the channel’s employees, arrested a suspect caught surveilling the station’s entrances, put armored cars outside its headquarters and, for one seven-

month stretch last year, convinced the network to move temporarily to Washington.

None of these measures managed to protect Zeraati from the plot that Iran is suspected of setting in motion this year. On March 29, he was stabbed four times and left bleeding on the sidewalk outside his home in the London suburb of Wimbledon by assailants who were not from Iran and had no discernible connection to

SEE IRAN ON A12

## Harris renews Democrats’ hope of turning North Carolina blue

BY HANNAH KNOWLES AND YASMEEN ABUTALEB

CHARLOTTE — Lawrence Call Jr. didn’t want to vote for Donald Trump again. “As a human being I can’t stand him,” the 57-year-old told a Democratic door-knocker at his front porch. And President Joe Biden was too old, as he saw it. But now Call had another option: Vice President Kamala Harris.

“She’s got a newer outlook,”

Tar Heel state, which Trump can’t afford to lose, is in a dead heat

said Call, who is a registered Republican but votes “independently,” after taking a pro-Harris flier last week. Leaning toward voting for Harris, he agreed to bring it to

a meeting with fellow veterans.

“We’ll be back around,” vowed Aiden Graham, the Democratic organizer, as he left for the next house on Call’s cul-de-sac.

Harris has raised Democratic hopes of winning North Carolina, a populous battleground that has been just beyond their grasp since Barack Obama briefly turned it blue in 2008. The elusive prize represents the party’s best chance of winning a state Biden couldn’t

in 2020, and the race here is a dead heat about eight weeks before Election Day, according to nonpartisan analysts and strategists from both parties. Harris, who was back campaigning in the state Thursday, has energized voters in a way Biden could not, Democratic organizers said, forcing Republicans to expend significant resources here.

The stakes for Trump are especially high: His likeliest paths to

the presidency rest on holding North Carolina and its 16 electoral votes. (Only seven states offer more.) Republicans have nominated polarizing candidates up and down the ballot, especially GOP gubernatorial pick Mark Robinson, whose offensive comments keep drawing scrutiny.

SEE NORTH CAROLINA ON A7

**Rematch:** Trump declines second debate as Harris calls for one. **A7**

## Children in Gaza face another lost year of school

BY KAREEM FAHIM AND HAJAR HARB

Ahed Balousha had a single driving ambition as she approached her senior year of high school in Gaza: “To be among the top students in Palestine.” After that, she dreamed of college.

“I was known among everyone as the persevering person who had a beautiful future,” Balousha said.

Then came the war.

Eleven months later, Balousha, 18, is living in a tent with eight family members, and her only ambition is survival. School is a memory darkened by the deaths of at least three former classmates — Aya, Nada and Farah — among thousands of children killed during the war. The school, in the Jabalya refugee camp in northern Gaza, was damaged in a deadly Israeli strike in November and now functions as a shelter for the displaced. The universities Balousha strove to reach are mangled or destroyed.

SEE GAZA ON A11



HAITHAM IMAD/EPA-EFE/SHUTTERSTOCK

**Palestinian children sit outside a makeshift classroom, surrounded by destroyed buildings, in Khan Younis on Thursday. Gaza’s 650,000 students are now missing their second year of normal school.**

**U.N. workers killed:** UNRWA says six died in school strike in Gaza. **A11**

## New journey begins with first private spacewalk

SpaceX civilian crew celebrates a ‘massive effort’

BY CHRISTIAN DAVENPORT

Billionaire entrepreneur and adventurer Jared Isaacman performed the first spacewalk by a private citizen early Thursday in a giant leap for the growing commercial space industry, with a live broadcast that showed him popping his head and torso out of the hatch of SpaceX’s Dragon capsule and performing a series of maneuvers near the capsule.

He was followed by Sarah Gillis, a SpaceX engineer who is part of the four-person, all-civilian crew and also floated outside the spacecraft while tethered and holding onto handrails.

The spacewalk was originally scheduled for 2:23 a.m. Eastern time Thursday but was pushed back to just before 7, when Isaacman exited the hatch. Isaacman and Gillis spent several minutes each outside the capsule as it flew below Australia, over

New Zealand and then across the Pacific Ocean. The images of Isaacman and Gillis silhouetted more than 200 miles high against a dramatic backdrop of Earth will be added to the annals of space history at a time when companies such as SpaceX are authoring new chapters of exploration.

“It’s gorgeous,” Isaacman said of the view. “Back at home, we all have a lot of work to do, but from here, Earth sure looks like a perfect world.”

In an exclusive interview after the spacewalk, Isaacman told The Washington Post that the spacewalk was “a massive effort from everyone to get to this moment. And we know it’s just one step on a much longer journey and we feel very proud to be a part of it.”

The spacewalk was intended to test SpaceX’s new spacesuit, **SEE SPACEWALK ON A16**

### IN THE NEWS

‘Thankful it wasn’t worse’ Across southern Louisiana, Hurricane Francine’s rainwater submerged roads, snapped trees and left roadways littered with stalled cars. **A9**

**Officer’s funeral** A community gathered to commemorate the legacy of Wayne David, a 25-year veteran of D.C.’s police force. **B1**

**THE NATION** **Federal authorities** are preparing charges over Iran’s alleged hack-and-leak attack. **A5** **The NYPD** commissioner resigned amid a federal probe into potential corruption. **A8**

**THE WORLD** **Brazil** is being racked by drought, but climate change isn’t the only culprit. **A10** **The United States** will withdraw most troops from Iraq by 2026 under a tentative deal. **A14**

**THE ECONOMY** **A Boeing strike** looks increasingly likely as union workers vote on a contract that includes 25 percent pay increases over four years. **A15** **Mortgage rates** have fallen sharply in the past year. What you need to know about where rates are heading. **A16**

**THE REGION** **D.C. Council** member Trayon White Sr. pleaded not guilty to bribery and said he is still running for reelection. **B1** **Two D.C. officers** were sentenced to years in jail for their roles in a 2020 chase of a Black man on a moped who died after hitting another car. **B1**

**OBITUARIES** **Alberto Fujimori**, 86, former Peruvian president, was imprisoned for human rights violations committed by his government. **B4**

**WEEKEND** **Get your fill** of beer, brats and polka: The best Oktoberfest events in the D.C. area.

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