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What's News

Business & Finance

- ◆ **U.S. inflation eased** substantially in June, extending a recent slowdown in price increases that opens a path for the Fed to cut rates by the end of the summer. **A1**
- ◆ **Cooling inflation** prompted a rotation in stocks that favored small-cap names, helping to depress the S&P 500 and Nasdaq by 0.9% and 2%, respectively. The Dow rose 0.1% and the Russell 2000 soared 3.6%. **B9**
- ◆ **The EU said Apple's** decision to let third-party mobile wallet and payment services use the technology behind its Apple Pay app fully addressed its antitrust concerns, ending a long-running probe. **B1**
- ◆ **A U.K. government** agency said that Amazon.com risks a formal investigation if it doesn't improve its treatment of grocery suppliers. **B4**
- ◆ **Delta Air Lines** reported a sharply lower profit in the second quarter as it faced a new challenge during the busy summer travel season: airlines are flying too much. **B3**
- ◆ **BHP Group will shutter** its Australian nickel operations later this year due to a global glut of the metal, a key element in electric-vehicle batteries. **B3**
- ◆ **PepsiCo reported a** 1% increase in revenue and a 2% drop in sales volume in the June quarter globally, with sales volume for its North America beverage business down 3%. **B3**
- ◆ **Stephen Ross stepped** down as chairman of Related, the real-estate company he founded 52 years ago, and is managing a new concern based in West Palm Beach, Fla. **B1**

World-Wide

- ◆ **Biden held** a high-stakes news conference in which he was forceful and defiant, vowing to pursue re-election and finish the job he started, but he also made some flubs as he tried to slow a stream of Democratic defections that risked turning into a mutiny. **A1, A4**
- ◆ **A communiqué released** as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's summit in Washington papered over differences within the alliance regarding the urgency of admitting Ukraine. **A1**
- ◆ **China warned the U.S.** and its allies not to "provoke confrontation" after NATO took the unusual step of explicitly identifying Beijing as a threat to its interests. **A8**
- ◆ **Israel's military blamed** itself for failing to defend against Hamas militants' rampage through a community on the Gaza border where scores were killed or taken hostage on Oct. 7. **A7**
- ◆ **The U.K. economy** expanded more than expected in May, providing a tailwind for newly elected Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who has pledged to raise the country's growth rate after more than a decade of weakness. **A8**
- ◆ **China faces a demographic** crunch that the United Nations predicts will reduce the country's population by more than half by the end of the century. **A16**
- ◆ **The world's population** is growing more slowly and will peak at a lower level than projected, new estimates from the U.N. show. **A16**
- ◆ **Died: Shelley Duvall**, 75, big-screen star. **A4**

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President Vows to Stay in Race

At news conference, defiant Biden insists he can beat Trump; defections continue

WASHINGTON—President Biden held a high-stakes news conference Thursday in which

By Ken Thomas,
Siobhan Hughes
and Lindsay Wise

he was forceful and defiant, vowing to pursue re-election and finish the job he started, but he also made some flubs as he tried to slow a stream of

Democratic defections that risked turning into a mutiny.

Democrats have continued to break with their 81-year-old standard-bearer after a calamitous debate and public appearances that haven't reassured colleagues about his fitness for the campaign trail or a second term. Biden has pledged to keep running, but many lawmakers have pushed him to reconsider, with more than a dozen going so far as to publicly call for him to step aside in favor of another candidate.

The news conference was seen as potentially Biden's last major opportunity to prove he is capable of defeating Donald

Trump in November, and immediately he made a misstep.

"Look, I wouldn't have picked Vice President Trump to be vice president if I didn't think she's not qualified to be president," Biden said, mixing up his opponent's name with that of Vice President Kamala Harris. Sticking with his plans to run for re-election, he told reporters he thought he was "the most qualified person to run for president. I beat him once, I will beat him again."

The news conference along the sidelines of the NATO summit gave the president an opportunity to give extended responses on a number of foreign

policy issues, including China and the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine. Addressing his re-election bid, Biden said he wasn't in the race for legacy reasons but to finish the job he started as president, and he offered support for Harris, saying she was "qualified to be president."

"I'm determined on running but I think it's important I allay fears by letting them see me out there," Biden said.

The president acknowledged "there are other people who could beat Trump too but

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◆ **Accounts about Biden's medical care shift..... A6**



President Biden greets Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky at the NATO summit where Ukraine fell short of full membership.

Trump Clouds Ukraine's Path to NATO

WASHINGTON—NATO's declaration this week that Ukraine is on an "irreversible path" toward joining the alliance offers Kyiv a strong gesture of Western support, but

By Michael R. Gordon,
Lara Seligman and
Daniel Michaels

membership could easily be blocked if Donald Trump returns to the White House next year.

The communiqué, released as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's summit in Washington, papers over

differences within the alliance over the urgency of admitting Ukraine. And it faces major headwinds if Trump wins election in November and presses Ukraine to compromise on a peace settlement he has vowed to hammer out before Inauguration Day next Jan. 20.

"There's no such thing as irreversibility, and the NATO pledges don't guarantee future funding," said Daniel Fried, a former top State Department official for Europe and a fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank. "But it appears that the Biden administration

is far more willing to take this seriously than it was a year ago, when it was in a defensive crouch and didn't want to even think about NATO membership for Ukraine."

In vowing to admit Ukraine someday, NATO didn't set talks with Kyiv on its eventual admission or outline a schedule for when talks might start.

NATO assured Ukraine as far back as 2008 that it would become a member of the alliance. And some members now say that any move to bring in Ukraine must now await the end of the war with Russia and greater efforts to

fight corruption.

The talk of eventual membership was accompanied by steps to bolster Ukraine's military, most notably an announcement that the alliance is moving to deliver the first of dozens of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine.

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine thanked NATO on Thursday for its pledge and said he was looking beyond semantics.

"We're not thinking in

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◆ **China says NATO rebuke is 'full of prejudice'..... A8**

Milder Inflation Bolsters Rate-Cut Chances

Consumer-price data eased to 3% in June, fueling possible Fed action in September

By SAM GOLDFARB
AND NICK TIMIRAO

U.S. inflation eased substantially in June, extending a recent slowdown in price increases that opens a path for the Federal Reserve to cut rates by the end of the summer.

The consumer-price index, a measure of goods-and-services costs across the economy, fell slightly from May, dropping the year-over-year inflation rate to 3%, which was the lowest since June 2023.

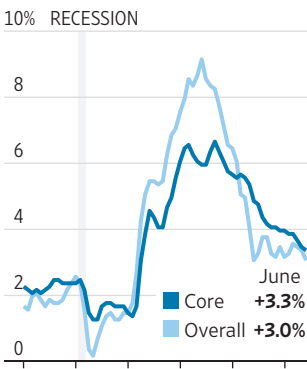
Core prices, which exclude volatile food and energy items and are seen as a better gauge of underlying inflation, rose 0.1% since May. That was the mildest increase since January 2021, when large swaths of the economy were still frozen by the pandemic.

Altogether, the report showed prices cooled broadly in the second quarter and were below economists' expectations—the reverse of what happened in the first three months of the year, when inflation was surprisingly brisk.

"We've definitely seen a pretty sharp slowing," said Kevin Cummins, chief U.S. economist at NatWest Markets. "This is certainly a confidence booster for the Fed."

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Consumer-price index, change from a year earlier



Note: Core excludes food and energy prices.
Source: Labor Department

◆ **S&P snaps winning streak on cooler inflation..... B9**

States Capitulate To Home Insurers' Demands

By JEAN EAGLESHAM

Home insurers are pushing for big rate increases and weakened consumer protections—and increasingly getting what they ask for.

State regulators across the U.S. appear to be buckling to industry demands for fear that insurers will pack up and exit their regions, leaving residents with few coverage options.

In the past 12 months alone, one state decided its regulator can no longer veto rate requests and another made it easier for insurers to reduce storm coverage. A third agreed to expand the types of costs companies can take into account when setting rates.

States are giving home insurers almost everything they ask for on rates, an analysis conducted for The Wall Street Journal suggests. The average state-approved increase since

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◆ **Heard on the Street: Bracing for more Beryls..... B10**

INSIDE



U.S. NEWS

Extreme weather, population growth overwhelm Houston's primary utility. **A3**



MANSION

The latest luxury trend? A mini house to complement your big one. **M1**

A Wacky 18th-Century Firearm Stars in Modern Gun Debates

U.S. Supreme Court ruling has lawyers buzzing about an ancient flop, the 'Puckle'

By CAMERON McWHIRTER

Three centuries ago, London lawyer James Puckle dreamed up a gun he hoped would be a hit with the British Navy, and a financial boon for himself.

Instead, Puckle's peculiar creation, resembling a giant revolver on a tripod, flopped spectacularly.

Only a handful were ever

made, and Puckle and his gun were relegated to mere footnotes in weapon history. One might say his invention went out more with a whimper than a bang.

But now, thanks to the strange twists and turns of America's endless gun debate, Puckle and his gun are having a moment. The Puckle gun has peppered legal briefs, orders,

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Plan to Turn Coal Into Clean Energy Draws Skepticism

Tony Robbins bet \$200 million on West Virginia project; proof remains elusive

By SCOTT PATTERSON
AND AMRITH RAMKUMAR

Tony Robbins donned ear protection and stepped inside a nondescript metal building in southwestern Pennsylvania. What the celebrity motivational speaker saw was mesmerizing.

The roaring machines in front of him stood three stories tall and had the potential to create a revolutionary new energy source, he later wrote. The inventor of the equipment—and Robbins's guide that day—was Simon Hodson, a white-haired California scientist with a background in cement and food packaging.

Hodson was using advanced technology to turn waste coal into fertilizer and other products. That was exciting enough, but Robbins had come for a visit because Hodson had told him about something even more thrilling.

The "quantum reformers"

he had designed, Hodson had said, could turn coal into clean-burning hydrogen—without emitting any greenhouse gases. And that hydrogen, Hodson said, could run old coal-fired power plants, something that had never been done before.

Soon after that visit in September 2022, Robbins lent Hodson nearly \$200 million to develop the potentially breakthrough technology. That amounted to the largest single wager he has ever made.

Together, the two men took over a defunct coal-fired power plant in West Virginia and set out to prove their revolutionary idea will actually work.

"If I'm wrong, I lose all that" money, Robbins said in an interview in April. Recently, Hodson's company repaid him \$75 million, according to his spokeswoman.

Called Omnis, the company

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