

# Russia frees 3 U.S. citizens in swap

Evan Gershkovich and Paul Whelan are among 24 released in a multinational deal.

BY JENNY JARVIE AND TRACY WILKINSON

Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich and former U.S. Marine Paul Whelan were freed Thursday as part of a massive prisoner swap that involved Russia, the U.S. and several European countries.

The Biden administration said Gershkovich and other detained Americans disembarked from Russian aircraft in Turkey's capital, Ankara, and then boarded flights home to the United States.

Under the deal — one of the most significant prisoner exchanges between Russia and the West since the Cold War and negotiated by nations bitterly divided by Russia's war in Ukraine — 16 prisoners sought by the West were freed in exchange for eight Russians held in the U.S., Germany, Norway, Slovenia and Poland.

Those released by Russia were three American citizens — Gershkovich, Whelan and radio journalist Alsu Kurmasheva — and U.S. permanent resident and Russian dissident Vladimir Kara-Murza, five German citizens and seven Russian dissidents, according to national security advisor Jake Sullivan. All were considered “wrongfully detained,” or in the case of the Russians who were being held by Russia, political prisoners, he [See Exchange, A4]



EVAN GERSHKOVICH, left, Alsu Kurmasheva, right, and Paul Whelan, second from right, are shown aboard a plane Thursday after being released. Moscow released 16 prisoners in exchange for eight Russians.

# STATE GAINS LABOR WITH INFLUX

Migrant surge helps U.S. and California by filling jobs, boosting taxes, data show.

BY DON LEE

Kamala Harris had no sooner replaced Joe Biden as the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee than Donald Trump began bashing her over the number of immigrants coming into the United States, declaring that they had driven countless American workers from their jobs.

But the data on U.S. employment and the economy overwhelmingly suggest a reality far more beneficial when it comes to immigration than the nightmarish vision the former president has put forth.

The surge of international migrants since 2021 — including refugees, asylum seekers and others entering legally and illegally — has lifted the U.S. and California economies by filling otherwise vacant jobs, helping to keep job creation strong, growing businesses and pumping millions of tax dollars into state, local and federal coffers.

Payroll taxes on immigrant workers have even helped relieve pressure on the nation's embattled Social Security system.

There are, of course, short-term public costs associated with acclimating so many new arrivals, plus government expenditures on education and health services for immigrants and their families, along with the political and social challenges. Many agree that the current immigration system is flawed and chaotic.

But from a budgetary perspective, the additional federal spending on immigrants is projected to pale next to the increase in revenues from the millions more people working, paying taxes and buying goods and services, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

And more than a few economists say that, by easing the shortage of American workers as the U.S. population grows older and birth rates decline — particularly in California — immigrants have played a large and positive role in maintaining a healthy, growing economy.

“This is the hottest labor market that has existed in two generations,” said Michael Clemens, an economist at George Mason University who specializes in international migration. [See Migrants, A7]

# For the second time, a California family's life is reduced to ashes



AN IMAGE from video Kristy Daneau recorded as she and her family evacuated from Cohasset, Calif., as the Park fire moved closer.

BY GRACE TOOHEY

Underneath a blazing orange-and-yellow sky, with massive smoke plumes billowing seemingly from every direction, the Daneau family made a desperate drive for safety.

But their three-car caravan didn't get far. The explosive Park fire had crossed over the only route out of Cohasset, a mountainous enclave on the outskirts of Chico. The Daneaus, firefighters said, would need to turn around.

Kristy Daneau started hyperventilating. Scarcely 30 minutes earlier, she, her husband and their 17-year-old daughter had rushed to pack up what they could — a few important documents, some clothes and their five dogs — before taking off south on the community's main two-lane road.

It was frightening, and all too familiar. The family had previously been [See Fire, A10]

## PARIS OLYMPICS

# Heat is on, literally and figuratively, at the Games

What can the IOC do to address impact that extreme weather is having on Olympics?

BY DAVID WHARTON

PARIS — The thermometer read 95 degrees, but down on the beach volleyball court, with all that gleaming white sand, it felt like 102. The players used a short break to towel off and guzzle water.

“It was really, really hot,” Carolina Solberg Salgado

said. “I was trying not to think of how [uncomfortable] I was.”

As she and her Brazilian teammate resumed their match against a Lithuanian duo, cheering erupted in a corner of the Eiffel Tower Stadium — a venue worker had stretched a rubber hose into the stands and was spraying the fans.

“It was great,” said Sean McKinnon of Toronto. “He hit full-pressure in the face of the poor girl next to us, but I think she appreciated it.”

Weather has been a challenge during the first week of these 2024 Summer

Olympics, with conditions veering from one extreme to another.

A storm blew in for the opening ceremony, drenching the city with an inch of rain and hanging around long enough to postpone skateboarding the next day. Then came the heat.

Researchers worry that Paris represents the latest in an Olympic trend that has winter athletes scrambling to find enough snow and their summertime counterparts facing health risks — cramping, vomiting, heat stroke — caused by peak [See Climate, A4]



FANS break out the umbrellas to try to stay cool this week at Roland Garros during the Olympic Games.

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## Biles makes case as greatest gymnast

American is first woman to win multiple Olympic all-around gold medals since 1968. **SPORTS, B10**

## Bookie to plead guilty to charges

Orange County man's clients included Shohei Ohtani's former interpreter. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

**Weather**  
Partly sunny and warm.  
L.A. Basin: 90/67. **B6**

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## County agrees to buy high-rise

The \$215-million price for Gas Company Tower reflects office market's slump. **BUSINESS, A6**

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# Down-ballot defenders of democracy vs. lies

## MARK Z. BARABAK

For several weeks, Joy Banks felt as though she — or at least her rights as a voter and citizen in good standing — were being held hostage.

Republican Kari Lake lost Arizona's 2022 gubernatorial election fair and square. But the Board of Supervisors in rural Cochise County refused to certify the result, embracing an under-



handed, undemocratic strategy — if you don't like the outcome of an election, simply ignore it — that has become a central tenet of the MAGAified Republican Party.

“They had my vote. They had 40,000 votes, and they were just hanging on to them,” said Banks, who co-owns a family-run electrical contracting business in tiny Huachuca City. “I've never felt so hopeless about my government.”

The board eventually backed down, under a judge's order. The two GOP members who voted against certifica-

tion have been indicted on state felony charges.

But Banks was so unsettled, she decided to run for an open seat on the three-member board. She's one of many candidates across the country campaigning for office to counter election denialism and political chicanery at the local level.

As a Democrat, the 70-year-old Banks is a considerable underdog in Cochise County, a deeply conservative pocket of southeastern Arizona. But she said it's important to take a stand [See Barabak, A10]



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