



T-storm 88/73 • Tomorrow: T-storm, humid 77/74 **B6**

Democracy Dies in Darkness

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2024 • **\$3**

## U.S. tries to pull Mideast from brink

High-stakes effort to prevent all-out war tests influence over Israel

BY MISSY RYAN,  
JOHN HUDSON,  
YASMEEN ABUTALEB  
AND KAREN DEYOUNG

JERUSALEM — The Biden administration is racing to avert an explosion of violence across the Middle East, a high-stakes moment that threatens to derail a long-awaited cease-fire deal in the Gaza Strip and underscores the limits of American influence over Israel, its closest ally in the region.

President Biden and Vice President Harris, the Democratic nominee for president, huddled with their top advisers in the White House Situation Room on Monday to discuss an anticipated Iranian assault against Israel and an attack by an Iranian-backed Iraqi militia that injured U.S. troops, a strike to which Washington vowed to respond “in a manner and place of our choosing.”

The United States has scrambled to position additional military assets, including a squadron of F-22 jets and naval destroyers, closer to Israel to help defend against what officials believe will be an imminent attack by Tehran in retaliation for last week’s killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in the Iranian capital.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken is leading a diplomatic **SEE DIPLOMACY ON A11**

**Poll:** Most Americans oppose sending troops to defend Israel. **A11**

## Alleged plot tied to Iran feared to put Trump at risk

BY DEVLIN BARRETT,  
SHAYNA JACOBS  
AND JOSH DAWSEY

Prosecutors in New York have charged a suspect in an alleged plot to pay for an assassination or other crimes on Iran’s behalf — an investigation that raised safety concerns about Donald Trump and others even before an apparently unrelated shooting at a Trump rally in July.

A complaint unsealed Tuesday in federal court in Brooklyn charges Asif Merchant, 46, of Pakistan with a murder-for-hire plot to assassinate a politician or U.S. government official on American soil. Authorities said they foiled it before any violence could be attempted — in part because the people Merchant allegedly tried to hire were undercover FBI agents.

According to court documents, Merchant met in June with people he thought were hit men, and he told them he would have a number of assignments for them, including an assassination of targets he would identify later.

Merchant was arrested, according to court papers, on July 12 — which happened to be one day before a 20-year-old man fired shots during a campaign rally in Butler, Pa., grazing Trump’s ear, killing an audience member and wounding two others. Investigators do not believe **SEE PLOT ON A8**

# With Walz pick, Democrats’ ticket is set



Vice President Kamala Harris and her newly announced running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, in Philadelphia on Tuesday.

## Easy rapport, everyman vibe sealed a quick choice

BY YASMEEN ABUTALEB,  
TYLER PAGER  
AND LIZ GOODWIN

Vice President Harris on Sunday took the final step of her running-mate selection process, interviewing the three men who had survived her team’s vetting process — Gov. Tim Walz of Minnesota, Gov. Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania and Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona. But by then, the selection was in fact largely down to two.

Walz and Shapiro had risen to the top of the pool, according to a

person familiar with the process, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a confidential matter. While Kelly, a former fighter pilot and astronaut, had a stellar resume, some on Harris’s team thought he was an uninspiring public speaker who would not generate excitement on the campaign trail.

“Shapiro could raise lots of money, very sharp politically and well-versed,” the person said. “And Walz was regular-guy sharp. His appeal will be that he could be anyone in America who became vice president.” After

those interviews on Sunday, Shapiro told the vice president’s team that he was struggling with the prospect of leaving his job as governor if he was chosen, according to another person close to the selection process.

By Monday night, Harris had made her decision: Walz would be her running mate.

Harris’s selection process was the fastest in recent memory, unfolding against a backdrop of political turbulence and forcing her to make arguably the most important decision of her candidacy at the same time she was

racing around the country introducing herself to voters. What ultimately sold Harris on Walz, according to people familiar with the process, was their easy rapport as well as his governing record in Minnesota.

In some ways, the process began even before Harris rose to the top of the ticket. In the days and weeks after President Biden’s halting debate performance on June 27 — as he doubled down on his insistence that he would remain in the race despite rising backlash from his party — **SEE SELECTION ON A7**

**The Critique:** Do we really still need a White man on a ticket? **A2**

**Biography:** Tracing Walz’s journey from teacher to running mate. **A5**

**Across the aisle:** Vance debuts attack line as race takes shape. **A6**

**A fierce fight:** Democrats and GOP battle to define Walz. **A8**



OLIVIER CHASSIGNOLE/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

## U.S. women earn the right to play for soccer gold

Sophia Smith, center, celebrates with teammates Trinity Rodman, left, and Mallory Swanson after Smith’s extra-time strike lifted the United States past Germany, 1-0, in the Paris Olympics semifinals. The team will play Brazil on Saturday for its first gold medal since 2012. **Story, D1**

## Assembly of 737 Max that had blowout is called chaotic

Boeing worker interview transcripts are released as NTSB hearing begins

BY LORI ARATANI,  
IAN DUNCAN  
AND HANNAH ZIEGLER

Newly released transcripts of interviews with Boeing employees describe a chaotic push to finish building the 737 Max that suffered a midair blowout in January, with pressure mounting on assembly workers last September as attempts to fix defective rivets dragged on.

On the same day that it began a two-day hearing into the January incident involving a door panel on an Alaska Airlines flight, the National Transportation Safety Board on Tuesday released transcripts of interviews conducted in March and April with 16 workers at Boeing and a key contractor. All said they did not know specifically about the door panel that flew off in midflight, but the NTSB’s investigation has shed light on Boeing’s manufacturing prob-

lems at the time.

One Boeing manager interviewed in March by NTSB investigators described how senior managers got involved as the repair work lagged.

“I received a lot of phone calls, a lot of emails,” he said.

Eventually, according to the NTSB, a door panel was removed for the rivet repair. But when the panel was put back in place, four bolts were missing, allowing it to come free months later as the jet flew with Alaska Airlines.

The NTSB has not fully untangled key moments in the plane’s journey through the factory outside Seattle last September because the removal of the panel was not documented.

One investigator suggested in interviews with Boeing executives that growing pressure on workers might have contributed to the failure to track the work. Other documents released Tuesday show that Boeing had long struggled to keep tabs on removals and had reminded employees about the need to document them in July 2023, saying in red underlined type that removing or loosening parts had to be recorded. **SEE BOEING ON A14**

## IN THE NEWS

**American wallets** Pointing to consumer spending, economists say the economy is still going strong even as cracks show. **A13**

**Landmark gifts** Bloomberg Philanthropies will donate \$600 million to four historically Black medical schools, including \$175 million for Howard’s College of Medicine. **B1**

### THE NATION

**The Illinois deputy** accused of fatally shooting Sonya Massey claimed he feared for his life. **A2**  
**Tropical Storm Debby** deluged Charleston, S.C., a city already weary of constant floods. **A3**

### THE WORLD

**Nobel laureate** Muhammad Yunus was named Bangladesh’s transitional leader. **A9**  
**Elon Musk** criticized the British government as riots brought scrutiny to his platform X. **A11**

### THE ECONOMY

**The IRS** opened its free tax-filing program to all states for the 2025 tax season, but few have announced intentions to join so far. **A12**  
**With Google** on the losing side of two recent antitrust rulings, what might the internet look like in the future? **A14**

### THE REGION

**Fairfax County** will begin locking students’ cellphones away during the school day in a pilot program. **B1**  
**Officials** are investigating a computer outage at D.C.’s 911 call center, during which an infant who needed advanced medical care died. **B1**

### STYLE

**French influencer** Jessie Inchauspé, a.k.a. the “Glucose Goddess,” has found a niche in promoting blood sugar awareness. **C1**

### FOOD

**The Caesar salad**, now a century old, has been interpreted by chefs in countless ways. **E1**

BUSINESS NEWS.....A12  
COMICS.....C6  
OBITUARIES.....B4  
OPINION PAGES.....A15  
TELEVISION.....C4  
WORLD NEWS.....A9

CONTENT © 2024  
The Washington Post  
Year 147, No. 53936

