



Partly sunny 92/74 • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 101/77 **B6**

Democracy Dies in Darkness

TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2024 • **\$3**

## Mideast foes save face with restraint

Limiting the exchange of fire lets both Hezbollah and Israel claim victories

*This article is by Steve Hendrix, John Hudson, Susannah George, Suzan Haidamous and Mohamad El Chamaa*

JERUSALEM — For 26 days after an Israeli missile slammed into a seventh-floor apartment in south Beirut and killed Hezbollah's top military commander, Israel and the region had braced for the group to strike back.

Airlines suspended flights, residents of Tel Aviv and Beirut stockpiled water, and diplomats raced to head off an all-out war.

Now, after a dramatic but short-lived exchange of rockets, missiles and drones shook the border zone early Sunday, many in the region have dared to ask: Was that it?

Officials and analysts Monday mostly said yes, believing that the potentially disastrous attacks were, instead, a face-saving moment — allowing each of the combatants to step back from the edge of a wider conflict. The limited morning escalation — albeit the largest since the two sides began trading fire in October — has allowed Hezbollah to claim vengeance and Israel to project confidence in its security apparatus.

“Both [Hezbollah and Israel] are pleased with the results, which makes a descent into full-blown war less likely,” said a senior Middle Eastern diplomat familiar with regional discussions. Like others in this article, he spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military matters.

The calibrated response from  
**SEE ISRAEL ON A9**

## Russia hits energy sites across Ukraine



MICHAEL SHTEKEL/AP

People walk in front of their damaged houses after a Russian missile strike in the village of Usatove, near Odessa. The bombardment in at least 15 regions of the country, east and west, came just days after Ukraine had celebrated its 1991 independence from the Soviet Union.

## Telegram CEO's arrest ignites free-speech debate

BY PRANSHU VERMA, JOSEPH MENN AND NIHA MASIH

French authorities said Monday that they had arrested Telegram founder and CEO Pavel Durov in a probe of illegal child abuse activity on the messaging app, taking the most dramatic action to date in the global fight between officials and tech companies over limits to harmful content.



Pavel Durov was held in connection with crimes that French authorities say relied on his app.

Durov was being temporarily detained in connection with distributing child sex abuse material and drugs, money laundering and working with organized crime,

according to a statement released by French prosecutor Laure Beccuau.

The accusations also included improper use of cryptography and failure to allow authorized law enforcement interception, flash points in the efforts by some governments to force companies to reveal private messages between users. The prosecutor's statement said the probe is of an unnamed person, allowing for the possibility that Durov is not the

ultimate target.

Durov's arrest reignites a fierce debate pitting free-speech advocates, including X owner Elon Musk, against governmental efforts to police the role of social media and messaging platforms in spreading illegal and false information. It also casts a fresh spotlight on Telegram, which online experts said has created a uniquely ripe environment for harmful activity, even as X and  
**SEE TELEGRAM ON A12**

### CALLED LARGEST AIR ATTACK OF WAR

5 killed, dozens injured; grid under huge strain

BY DAVID L. STERN AND SERHIY MORGUNOV

KYIV — Russia launched its largest missile attack yet across Ukraine early Monday, hammering sites in the country's east and west, killing at least five people and injuring dozens, and putting massive strains on Ukraine's energy grid, according to authorities.

Ukraine celebrated independence from the Soviet Union on Saturday, and some form of Russian attack around the date had been widely expected, including in warnings from the U.S. Embassy. In a statement, Russia's Defense Ministry said the targets were power substations and gas compressor stations.

The bombardment, which hit at least 15 regions, followed an overnight drone attack against Kyiv and the surrounding region, as well as missile attacks over the weekend in eastern Ukraine that killed a security adviser for the Reuters news agency and injured two of its journalists.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Telegram that the attack was “one of the biggest combined strikes,” with “more than 100 missiles of various types” and “close to 100” self-destructing drones “targeting critical civilian infrastructure.”

Ukraine's air force later issued a statement calling the strikes the “most massive” air attack since the war began.

Zelensky repeated calls for Western countries to lift restrictions on the use of weapons they send to Ukraine to strike inside Russia. “There cannot be long-range restrictions in Ukraine when terrorists do not have such restrictions.”

He called Russian President  
**SEE UKRAINE ON A9**

### ELECTION 2024

## Candidates try to show might on military

BY CLEVE R. WOOTSON JR., HANNAH KNOWLES AND DAN LAMOTHE

Former president Donald Trump sought to tie Vice President Kamala Harris to the United States' deadly withdrawal from Afghanistan on Monday, accusing her and President Joe Biden of overseeing “the most embarrassing day in the history of our country.”

Days earlier, Harris had taken a not-so-subtle dig at Trump as commander in chief during her acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention. She said she would “never disparage [military members'] service and their sacrifice,” a nod to some of Trump's comments about veterans — including his former chief of staff's allegation that he called American war casualties “suckers” and “losers,” an account Trump has sharply denied.

With just over two months until the election, Trump and Harris are vying for the high ground on military issues, debating not just who would keep America safe, but also  
**SEE CAMPAIGN ON A4**

**Up in the air:** Trump again suggests he might skip debate. **A4**



ROBB HILL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

### Back in class, with a twist

Ameilya Coleman, 8, walks to school Monday with her mother, Barbara Galasso, for the first day of class in Germantown, Md. It was her first time attending school in person. **Story, B1**

## Helping Afghan allies is straining U.S. vets

Personal resources go to aid those left behind

BY HOPE HODGE SECK

As Sean Halpin gears up every morning for the product marketing management he does from his Midlothian, Va., home, he also starts checking in with the 176 Afghan linguists and family members he tracks via a spreadsheet that he has carefully maintained for nearly three years. He wants to make sure those still awaiting a pathway out of Afghanistan are safe. He tries to boost spirits with his messages, adding funny memes and links to music like the theme song from “Rocky.”

When one of these contacts needs money for food or a sudden surgery, Halpin does his best to cover it from his own savings. The former Army intelligence officer estimates that he has spent some \$400,000 on such emergencies

since the U.S. military's chaotic departure from Afghanistan in the waning days of August 2021. He even diverted the proceeds from a house sale in Texas, which were supposed to go toward his family's new home in Virginia, and moved his wife and two children into an apartment. The decision nearly ended his marriage.

Helping the allies whom American troops left behind has never felt optional — not for Halpin, nor for other veterans who continue to stand in the gap at significant personal and financial expense. Dozens of loosely formed volunteer organizations with names like Badger 6 and Heart of an Ace have emerged to coordinate the efforts.

What happened to those Afghans, in Halpin's view, was “a soul-crushing betrayal.”

**SEE VETERANS ON A10**

## Traffic fatalities have doubled since D.C.'s Vision Zero promise

BY SUSIE WEBB AND RACHEL WEINER

A decade ago, incoming Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) pledged to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries in D.C. by 2024.

Instead, the number of fatalities has risen in all but two years since the initiative, dubbed

“Vision Zero,” was launched. A Washington Post analysis of city traffic data shows that D.C. is on track this year to match last year's 52 traffic deaths, which marked a 16-year high.

D.C.'s Vision Zero plan has relied heavily on camera enforcement to catch speeders, who are more likely to cause dangerous

crashes. But The Post found that of the 33 people killed in traffic crashes so far this year, nine died within 250 feet of a traffic camera.

The traffic deaths, the data shows, fall disproportionately on lower-income and majority-Black neighborhoods in Wards 7 and 8, which accounted for half of the

fatalities so far this year.

Transportation officials say the program is moving in the right direction, despite fatalities doubling and major injuries remaining high.

“The cameras work,” said Sharon Kershbaum, acting director of the D.C. Transportation Department. She blamed a “small

number who flout the law” for rising deaths. The Vision Zero office added that it takes time for cameras to affect driver behavior.

But experts say D.C., like other U.S. cities, has not been aggressive enough in enforcing traffic rules, expanding car-free zones and redesigning problem roads to  
**SEE VISION ZERO ON A16**

### IN THE NEWS

**Special counsel appeals** A judge's dismissal of Donald Trump's classified-documents case should be reversed, Jack Smith argued. **A5**

**A guilty plea** Mel Franklin, a former Prince George's County Council member, faces up to a year of incarceration for using campaign funds for personal expenses. **B1**

**THE NATION** **Lawmakers** probing the attempt on Trump's life visited the shooting site in Butler, Pa. **A2**  
**Florida Gov.** Ron DeSantis is part of a feud between the marijuana and hemp industries. **A6**

**THE WORLD** **In Venezuela's** post-election crackdown, at least 120 children have been imprisoned. **A8**  
**At least four people** died and dozens were missing after a dam collapsed in Sudan. **A9**

**THE ECONOMY** **Amazon aims** to launch a subscription service for Alexa with artificial intelligence in October. **A11**  
**If you are** among those who have precious voicemails on their phones, take a few moments to save the messages elsewhere. **A12**

**THE REGION** **A Virginia man's** online search history could be used as evidence in the case of his wife's disappearance. **B1**  
**A lawsuit over** Alexandria's decision to end single-family-only zoning will probably head to trial after a judge's ruling. **B1**

**STYLE** **DC Comics'** style guide streamlined how its characters appeared on merchandise in the early 1980s. Now it's being reissued. **C1**

**HEALTH & SCIENCE** **The section** is off this week. It will return to the print edition of The Post next Tuesday.

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