

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Evan Gershkovich Is Free

Efforts involved spy agencies, political players and his mother's advocacy

Evan Gershkovich's mother, Ella, arrived for an urgent 10:30 a.m. meeting at the White House with President Biden on Thursday, the 491st day of her son's detention. She had been told to bring her husband Mikhail and her daughter Danielle in a three-minute call that ended with a strict instruction: Tell no one.

By Joe Parkinson, Drew Hinshaw, Bojan Pancevski and Aruna Viswanatha

Five thousand miles away, Evan Gershkovich was in his final hours in Russia's custody, aboard a Tupolev-204 government jet bound for a Turkish airport where orange-vested security personnel were waiting nervously.

The Wall Street Journal reporter, 32 years old, had been documenting Russia's descent into repression when agents grabbed him from a steakhouse and turned him into the story he'd been trying to cover. Now he was set to be a central component in one of the most complicated prisoner swaps in history.

Across Europe, planes were ferrying the other human pieces of a fragile puzzle: among them, two other Americans and eight Russians who had together served decades in political prisons and penal colonies. They ranged from hardened dissidents who had braved poisoning and hunger strikes to ordinary Americans who found themselves reduced to bargaining chips in a years-long geopolitical tug of war with Vladimir Putin.

The price for their freedom was being flown in handcuffs and a bulletproof helmet from Germany on a Gulfstream jet, landing near the Turkish VIP terminal where Russia would collect him. Vadim Krasikov

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Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, free from Russian captivity after 491 days, embraced his mother, Ella Milman, upon landing in Maryland on Thursday. President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris were there to greet him.

Russia's release of WSJ reporter was secured as part of large prisoner swap

Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich stepped back onto U.S. soil to a hero's welcome from President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris late Thursday, capping a lengthy wrongful detainment and conviction in Russia that culminated in the most complex prisoner swap between Western allies and Russia since the Cold War.

By Drew Hinshaw, Joe Parkinson, Aruna Viswanatha, Ken Thomas and Gordon Lubold

Gershkovich, who was jailed in 2023 and convicted in July of espionage charges that he, the Journal and the U.S. government vehemently denied, emerged from a government aircraft that landed at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland at 11:37 p.m.

Gershkovich waved as he got off the plane and was greeted by Biden and Harris.

More than a dozen others jailed by the Kremlin had been exchanged for Russians held in the U.S. and Europe, including a convicted murderer.

Gershkovich and other Americans left Russian aircraft at roughly 11:20 a.m. ET at an airport in Turkey's capital, Ankara. In addition to the president and vice president, he was greeted in Maryland by his parents and other family members.

"They are safe, free, and have

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Paul Whelan Arrives Home After Years of Dashed Hopes

On the list of Americans released in the prisoner swap Thursday, nobody was unluckier than Paul Whelan.

By Drew Hinshaw, Aruna Viswanatha and Joe Parkinson

Arrested by Russian counterintelligence officers three days after Christmas in 2018, the 54-year-old former Marine

and Iraq War veteran spent more time in the gulag than any of the others. As the first to be convicted of espionage charges—in what his family say was an entrapment play—he served as an unwitting guinea pig as Washington and Moscow stumbled into a new era of hostage diplomacy.

His idiosyncratic backstory made it harder to draw attention to his plight. He and his

family watched with anguish as celebrity basketball player Brittney Griner was released before him after less than a year in custody on a minor drug charge, and as the case of Evan Gershkovich drew global condemnation.

Through it all, he persevered with acts of quiet defiance. His days began like all the others at the IK-17 penal colony, a maze of low-slung

cell blocks wreathed in razor wire some 300 miles east of Moscow. The Russian national anthem rang out from tinny loudspeakers, its melody the same as in Soviet times.

The former Marine would lift his hand to his chest and stage a one-prisoner performance of the "Star Spangled Banner," before heading to the prison floor to stitch pants and

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Day of Freedom

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Weak Economic Data Spark Selloff in Stocks

By RYAN DEZEMBER

Weakening employment, manufacturing and construction data pushed benchmark 10-year Treasury yields below 4% on Thursday for the first time since February and prompted a selloff in stocks and other risky investments.

Major indexes reversed an early climb after a key gauge of manufacturing activity fell deeper into contraction territory and the Census Bureau said construction spending

declined in June for the second straight month, surprising economists who expected a climb back toward April's record level.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell nearly 500 points, or 1.2%. Oil slipped, along with shares of smaller companies. The Nasdaq Composite ended down about 405 points, or 2.3%, erasing most of Wednesday's gains.

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◆ Japanese stocks fall sharply.....B8

INSIDE



MANSION
Paradise Cove in Malibu, Calif., attracts some of the world's richest people. **M1**

Israel Says It Killed Hamas Military Chief in July Airstrike

By CARRIE KELLER-LYNN

TEL AVIV—Israel has determined that it killed top Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif in a July airstrike, the country's military said on Thursday, eliminating a planner of the Oct. 7 attacks, a militant it had tried to kill for decades.

Deif is the most-senior Hamas military leader Israel says it has killed in more than nine months of fighting in the Gaza Strip, and the third high-

ranking enemy of the country declared dead in 48 hours.

Israel on Tuesday said it had killed Fuad Shukur, a top commander with the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, in an airstrike in Beirut, and Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh was killed in a mysterious strike just hours later in Tehran, an attack Iran blamed on Israel.

Those two attacks provoked furious responses from Hezbollah and Iran and have sparked concerns of an escalation.

tory spiral that could lead to a wider Middle East war.

Deif is believed to have been a key planner of the Hamas-led Oct. 7 attacks that left 1,200 people dead and around 250 taken hostage. Israeli military officials had said earlier in July that they believed they had killed him, but hadn't previously claimed the attack had succeeded. Hamas said at the time of the strike that Deif wasn't killed.

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What's News

Business & Finance

- ◆ **U.S. stocks swooned** in a sell-off prompted by weakening jobs, manufacturing and construction data, with the S&P 500, Nasdaq and Dow shedding 1.4%, 2.3% and 1.2%, respectively. The 10-year Treasury yield fell below 4% for the first time since February. **A1**
- ◆ **Apple's iPhone revenue** fell for a second consecutive quarter, a soft-demand signal investors hope will turn around once new AI features are added in the fall. **B1**
- ◆ **Amazon projected** weaker-than-expected revenue growth and said it would continue to ratchet up spending to meet expected demand for AI services. **B1**
- ◆ **Intel plans to lay off** thousands of employees this year and pause dividend payments in the fourth quarter as part of a broad cost-saving drive more than three years into a turnaround effort. **B1**
- ◆ **Airlines would have to** allow parents to book seats next

to young children without paying extra fees under a Biden administration proposal that seeks to address a major travel headache for families. **B1**

- ◆ **The Bank of England** cut its key interest rate for the first time in over four years, bringing the benchmark to 5%. **A24**
- ◆ **AB InBev said it sold** less beer in the second quarter, hurt by weaker demand in China and the continuing fallout from a Bud Light boycott. **B2**
- ◆ **An antitrust verdict** against the NFL that resulted in an award of \$4.7 billion in damages to customers of the league's "Sunday Ticket" TV package was overturned. **B4**

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World-Wide

- ◆ **Russia freed wrongly** convicted Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich as part of the largest and most complex East-West prisoner swap since the Cold War, in which he and more than a dozen others jailed by the Kremlin were exchanged for Russians held in the U.S. and Europe. **A1, A9-16**
- ◆ **A Russian hit man** convicted of murdering an enemy of Moscow in a Berlin park in 2019 was released by German authorities as part of the exchange. **A16**
- ◆ **Israel determined that it** killed Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif in a July airstrike, the country's military said, eliminating a planner of the Oct. 7 attacks. **A1**

- ◆ **Hamas political leader** Ismail Haniyeh was killed by a bomb in his heavily guarded room at an official guesthouse in Tehran, people familiar with the circumstances said. **A8**
- ◆ **A catastrophic gearbox** failure caused an Osprey aircraft to crash off the coast of Japan last year, killing all eight personnel aboard, though crew actions also contributed to the accident, the U.S. Air Force said. **A3**
- ◆ **A bipartisan tax bill** that sailed through the House six months ago reached a dead end as the Senate killed the once-promising deal and turned it into fodder for campaign-trail finger-pointing. **A5**
- ◆ **Most of the money** Harris secured for California household relief after the financial crisis didn't wind up in owners' pockets or stop them from losing their homes, a Wall Street Journal analysis found. **A4**

Olympics Surprise: The French Have Nothing to Gripe About

The host nation's famously snooty fans have finally learned to lighten up

By JOSHUA ROBINSON AND BEN COHEN

PARIS—Ever since their city won the right to host the Summer Olympics, Parisians had been a lock to win the gold medal for grumpiness.

The French managed to complain about traffic, metro station closures and the flood of American tourists. In a national poll taken in July, just 12% of French people described themselves as "enthusiastic" about the Olympics.

Then the Games actually started.

In the week since the cauldron was lit, every site in Paris has turned into a vibey, unapologetically French summer party.

The original Olympic motto

is Faster, Higher, Stronger. But it's another three words that have come to define these Olympics: *Allez les Bleus!*

You hear it everywhere in Paris, from the grandstand at Roland Garros when news of a gold medal for France's rugby sevens team rippled through the crowd, to the banks of the Seine when a French triathlete won and nobody keeled over from the bacteria-infested water. Les Bleus are riding an uncharacteristic wave of insouciant Gallic support.

Even French Olympians, so accustomed to indifference from the crowd, are rediscovering their *joie de vivre*.

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◆ **Gymnast Biles reclaims** Olympic gold..... A19