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Democracy Dies in Darkness

TUESDAY, JULY 9, 2024 • \$3

An uneasy NATO is set to mark 75 years

Summit will highlight strengths, but political turmoil clouds the future

BY EMILY RAUHALA

This week's NATO summit in Washington was supposed to be a celebration.

Seventy-five years after its founding, the alliance is bigger and more relevant than it's been in decades. Transatlantic ties are strong again. Spurred by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, allies are united — thanks, in no small part, to U.S. leadership.

But as the city prepares to play host to dozens of heads of state and government, few are in the mood for a party. The U.S. president who championed NATO's revival is in serious trouble. On both sides of the Atlantic, far-right, isolationist politics loom.

NATO, at 75, is still vigorous. Yet it's hard not to wonder how the alliance will look a year from now — whether it will make it to 76 alive and well.

Over three days of meetings starting Tuesday, President Biden and Western leaders will make the case that NATO and the post-World War II order have good years ahead.

Allies will recall the history that brought them together and rally around the need to counter a revanchist Russia. They will outline how they are working to help Ukraine. And they will signal that NATO has a close eye on the budding military partnership between Beijing and Moscow.

Outside the halls of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center — where the formal business of summitry will take place — the storyline will be less sanguine, with a focus on Biden's fitness for office, the possibility of a second

SEE NATO ON A12

Families see plea deal as soft landing for Boeing

BY LORI ARATANI AND IAN DUNCAN

Boeing's decision to plead guilty to a felony fraud charge for its role in two plane crashes that killed 346 people marks an effort to open a new chapter after a half-decade of tumult and investigations. But immediate reactions to the deal — unveiled shortly before midnight Sunday — suggests moving on won't be easy.

Survivors of the victims of the 737 Max airliner crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia derided the plea agreement as a soft landing for the aerospace behemoth. Echoing a range of other critics, they argued that the deal fails to hold individual executives accountable while allowing Boeing to avoid a legal admission that its engineering and safety blunders caused the deaths.

"They're not trying to do anything in terms of justice, in terms of change, in terms of accountability," said Nadia Milleron, whose 24-year-old daughter perished in the Ethiopian Airlines crash in 2019, said of the deal. "They're trying to move the case along."

Members of the general public,

SEE BOEING ON A15

Guilty plea: Plane maker avoids trial over onboard system. **A15**

Children's hospital in Kyiv struck in devastating missile attack



ALICE MARTINS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Rescue workers and volunteers search for survivors Monday at Kyiv's Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital, which was hit in a Russian attack. Ukrainian officials said a doctor was killed and a dialysis facility destroyed. **Story, A12**

Beryl batters Texas's waterlogged coast

BY BRADY DENNIS, MOLLY HENNESSY-FISKE AND SCOTT DANCE

LAKE JACKSON, TEX. — An unusually early-season hurricane, the latest in a recent spate of soaking and turbulent storms to hit the sprawling Houston metropolitan area, killed at least four people, trapped others on flooded roadways and knocked out power to nearly 3 million people Monday.

Beryl poured more than a foot of rain on stretches of flat, saturated ground and blew 80 mph wind gusts, swelling meandering bayous, turning highways into waterways and toppling massive oaks onto power lines and homes. Officials said it may take several

Hurricane killed 4, flooded region, knocked out power for millions

days to restore power.

It was the latest stage of destruction for a storm that set records for its intensity so early in the hurricane season, fueled by extraordinarily hot Atlantic waters. And some feared it was a hint of more storms to come.

"To have a storm of this magnitude this early is not something that we would predict or expect," said Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo, chief executive of the

nation's third-largest county by population, with 4.7 million residents. "There's still the vast majority of hurricane season left. Our hope for the sake of our mental health and safety is there's not going to be another storm, but we have to hope for the best and prepare for the worst."

For Gulf Coast residents like Mike Beggs, that was an overwhelming thought. He and his wife left the Austin area last year for a quiet retirement in an RV on land they own in the waterside town of Sargent, Tex. Just weeks before Beryl sent him fleeing inland, flooding from Tropical Storm Alberto inundated a small building on the property and destroyed his freezer.

Now, sitting in his black pickup truck, waiting for word of how Sargent might have fared, he was already debating whether it was worth it to go back.

"This is just the beginning of the season, and I've already had two floods," he said. "I'm thinking of selling it and going somewhere higher."

Along the coast, the landscape was one of trees snapped in half or pulled up by their roots, of mangled signs and roofs and fences, of flooded fields and drainage ditches full or overflowing. Storm surge, or the sudden rise in sea level above normal tide, reached 4 to 6 feet along portions of the middle Texas coast.

SEE BERYL ON A2

As Wood steps in, his 'team' cheers him on

Star prospect arrives for the Nationals, and his debut is also meaningful for some in the stands

BY SPENCER NUSBAUM AND ANDREW GOLDEN

On a Friday in late June, Matthew LeCroy, manager of the Class AAA Rochester Red Wings, called James Wood, the top prospect in the Washington Nationals' minor league system. LeCroy told the outfielder to report to his office that day. He did not explain why. Not long after, though, Wood got a text from Drew Millas, the affable 26-year-old catcher who was with the Nationals at the time. "I'll see you soon," the message read.

"And I was like, 'I don't really know what's going on here,'" Wood said with a laugh.

Wood played for the Red Wings that Friday and had his chat with LeCroy, who confirmed the player's growing suspicions. He drove back to his hometown in Maryland on Saturday and on Sunday spent time with his family.

The next day, July 1, Wood stood in left field at Nationals Park and made his major league

SEE WOOD ON A16



SCOTT TAETSCH/GETTY IMAGES

Coaches, teammates, friends, family members, new fans — all were on hand to support James Wood of the Nationals as he started a new chapter in his life with his big league debut last week.

ELECTION 2024

Biden slows tide of dissent

RENEWED BACKING FROM SOME IN PARTY

A pivotal week as doubts about his chances linger

BY YASMEEN ABUTALEB, PAUL KANE, MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR AND LEIGH ANN CALDWELL

President Biden won new support for his reelection bid Monday and headed off further defections among Democratic lawmakers as Congress returned to Capitol Hill, at least temporarily stemming a tide of dissent at the outset of what could be a pivotal week in his fight for political survival.

From influential liberals such as Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) to figures such as Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) to erstwhile critics such as Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) to the powerful Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), a parade of Democrats embraced Biden's reelection run, a sharp reversal after a stretch when every day seemed to bring another defection.

"He's been the best president of my lifetime, and we have his back," said Omar, who has blasted Biden's Middle East policy. Sen. Mark Kelly (D-Ariz.), a centrist, said Biden should remain the nominee, calling him "a president who has delivered for the American people in a

SEE DEMOCRATS ON A7

Latino voters: Many are unsure about electing a Democrat. **A6**

A scramble: Party's strategy to beat Trump thrown into disorder. **A8**

Buoyed by crowds, Biden misses party's pessimism

BY MATT VISER

HARRISBURG, PA. — President Biden looked out and saw people wearing T-shirts emblazoned with his trademark aviator sunglasses. He viewed signs that read, "Women for Biden-Harris." He heard a crowd chanting, "Four more years! Four more years!" He saw children eating ice cream — and determined he would like some, too.

What he didn't see is what was happening at that very moment Sunday afternoon, on a call among senior congressional Democrats who were worried about the state of Biden's campaign: Several expressed dismay and said he should end his reelection bid, adding to a louder chorus of party officials wanting to change course.

Over a span of 72 hours, as Biden campaigned in two key swing states and returned to Washington, what became increasingly clear is just how differently things look to the Democratic standard-bearer than to many in his party.

Where they see polls predicting political calamity, he sees a dead heat. Where they see a rapidly aging man who should sit for cognitive tests, he sees no

SEE BIDEN ON A4

IN THE NEWS

Gaza City attacked Israel launched a new operation in the northern part of the enclave, with what some residents described as the worst bombardment of the war. **A13**

Momentous donation A gift from Bloomberg Philanthropies will make the Johns Hopkins medical school free for most students. **B1**

THE NATION
Columbia University put three deans on leave after texts it says evoked "antisemitic tropes." **A2**
House Speaker Mike Johnson detailed his conservative vision for foreign policy. **A3**

THE WORLD
After vanquishing the far right, France's new leftist coalition faces internal disputes. **A10**
In Beijing, Hungarian leader Viktor Orban and Xi Jinping called for a cease-fire in Ukraine. **A11**

THE ECONOMY
Threads, the one-year-old social media platform from Meta, is still trying to forge a distinct identity for itself. **A14**
Paramount Global, which has struggled to establish itself in the streaming market, will merge with Skydance Media. **A14**

THE REGION
A fatal shooting at a downtown restaurant and a hit-and-run crash in January have led to plenty of questions — but no arrests. **B1**
A recording project gave artists incarcerated in D.C. the opportunity to hear their songs in a new light. **B1**

STYLE
USA Today, whose quick hits and pithy tone made it a prototype of sorts for today's online news, is struggling in the digital world. **C1**
HEALTH & SCIENCE
ChatGPT-4 carried on breezy conversation in a study but failed simple reasoning tasks. **E1**

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