



Charlie Kirk was fatally shot about 20 minutes after he began to address a crowd Wednesday on the Utah Valley University campus.

SIGNS OF RETREAT BEFORE U.S. FIRED

New Doubts Over Attack on Venezuelan Boat

By CHARLIE SAVAGE and HELENE COOPER

WASHINGTON — A Venezuelan boat that the U.S. military destroyed in the Caribbean last week had altered its course and appeared to have turned around before the attack started because the people onboard had apparently spotted a military aircraft stalking it, according to American officials familiar with the matter.

The military repeatedly hit the vessel before it sank, the officials added, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter. President Trump has said he authorized the strike and claimed the boat was carrying drugs.

The disclosures provide new details about a military operation that was a startling departure from using law enforcement means to interdict suspected drug boats. Legal specialists who have called it a crime to summarily kill suspected low-level smugglers as if they were wartime combatants said the revelations further undercut the administration's claim that the strike was legally justified as self-defense.

Mr. Trump announced the strike last week, saying it took place in international waters and had killed 11 people who he said were transporting drugs "heading to the United States" and were part of a Venezuelan gang, Tren de Aragua. He has not put forward evidence to support those assertions but has said "we have tapes of them speaking."

While the White House has not provided a detailed legal rationale, it has put forward the outlines of a novel argument that using lethal military force was permissible under the laws of armed conflict to defend the country from drugs because 100,000 Americans die annually from overdoses. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said people suspected of smuggling drugs toward the United States pose "an immediate threat." Mr. Trump, in a letter to Congress, justified the attack as a matter of self-defense.

Many legal specialists, including retired top military lawyers, have rejected the idea that Mr. Trump has legitimate authority to

Continued on Page A8

NATO Downs Russia Drones In Polish Skies

By MICHAEL SCHWIRTZ and QASIM NAUMAN

More than a dozen Russian drones entered Poland overnight, prompting NATO to scramble fighter jets to shoot them down in what Western officials described on Wednesday as a dangerous escalation of the war in neighboring Ukraine.

It was the first time in the history of NATO that alliance fighters had engaged enemy targets in allied airspace, officials said. The drone incursion prompted Poland's government to invoke Article 4 of the NATO treaty, a rarely used mechanism triggered when a member is under threat that prompts a formal discussion within the alliance.

"We are dealing with a large-scale provocation," Donald Tusk, Poland's prime minister, said. "The situation is serious, and no one doubts that we must prepare for various scenarios."

Details of the incursion remained murky. It was unclear whether Moscow had intentionally sought to expand the conflict. Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, said later on Wednesday that the drones — which were concentrated in Poland's east — were the Shahed-style attack weapons regularly used to terrorize Ukrainian cities, without elaborating further. Photographs of some of the drones online appear to show unarmed dummies, which are often sent to fool Ukrainian air defenses.

Of the nine drones found so far, all were unarmed dummies, called Gerbera drones, a spokeswoman for the prosecutor's office in Lublin in eastern Poland told the news media on Wednesday.

Continued on Page A9

Risking All in a Bid for Asylum, Only to Be Sent Back to China

By VIVIAN WANG and BERRY WANG

The journey from Dallas to the city in northern China involved two planes, three stops and more than 24 hours of travel. Tao, an electronics repairman in his early 30s, spent them wide awake — metal cuffs biting into his wrists and ankles, his mind racing.

He was being deported back to China, after American officials rejected his asylum claim. Questions swirled in his head.

What awaited him in China, the country that he had tried so hard to escape? Would he be punished? Would he ever leave again?

Tao — whom we are identifying by his first name only in order to protect his family — was part of a record-breaking wave of undocumented Chinese migrants who, during and after the pandemic, made harrowing journeys through the jungles of Central America to the United States. Many, including Tao, were not high-profile dissidents but ordinary Chinese who felt suffocated by their government's tightening grip on society and discouraged by dimming economic prospects.

Continued on Page A6



A New Sept. 11 Generation
Thomas Riches, whose brother Jimmy was a firefighter killed in the attacks, with his son Tommy, who will read names of victims on Thursday in the annual ceremony in New York. Page A19.

Mamdani, Chasing Milestone, Reflects on Muslim Life Post-9/11

By EMMA G. FITZSIMMONS and TIM BALK

It was the second day of classes at the Bank Street School for Children in Manhattan when the planes hit the World Trade Center. Zohran Mamdani can recall his father picking him up early to walk him home, the streets in a state of unease.

He was 9 years old at the time, having moved to New York City two years earlier from South Africa. His memories of the attack and the days that followed have grown hazy with time. But he can clearly remember what it was like growing up in its aftermath, in a city transformed by tragedy, and the Islamophobia that lingered.

"It became a fact of life," Mr. Mamdani, the Democratic may-

dani is on the precipice of becoming the city's first Muslim mayor, a potential milestone for the hundreds of thousands of Muslims who live here, and a signpost of broader acceptance, even as Mr. Mamdani has faced attacks because of his faith.

After a recent prayer service at the Islamic Center at New York University, Amani Al-Khatahtbeh,

Signpost of Acceptance in Support for Run

Now 24 years later, Mr. Mam-

CHARLIE KIRK DIES AFTER BEING SHOT ON A UTAH CAMPUS

A Close Ally of the President and a Voice of Young Conservatives Was 31

This article is by Michael Levenson, Robert Draper and Thomas Fuller.

Charlie Kirk, a close ally of President Trump's and the founder of the nation's pre-eminent right-wing youth activist organization, was fatally shot on Wednesday, an assassination that spread shock and fear across the country at a time of deep and menacing divisions.

Mr. Kirk, 31, was struck about 20 minutes after he began speaking on the campus of Utah Valley University in Orem. The shot was fired from more than 100 yards away, possibly from a rooftop, officials said.

One person was taken into custody, but was released after being questioned, according to Kash Patel, the F.B.I. director. "Our investigation continues," he said on social media.

Immediately after the shooting, leaders from across the political spectrum flooded social media with messages expressing horror and anger. But in a sign of the country's severely fractured politics, the attack also set off an argument on the floor of the House of Representatives over how Mr. Kirk should be honored.

Videos posted on social media showed the moment Mr. Kirk was shot and the seconds leading up to it.

Mr. Kirk, founder of the conservative organization Turning Point USA, was speaking to a crowd of about 3,000 people around 12:20 p.m. He sat under a tent with the slogan "The American Comeback" printed on it and was being asked questions about mass shootings in America.

"Do you know how many mass shooters there have been in America in the last 10 years?" a person

asked. "Counting or not counting gang violence?" Mr. Kirk, holding a microphone, responded right before he was shot.

Mr. Kirk keeled to his left, blood pouring from his neck as he dropped the microphone. Members of the crowd shrieked in horror and began to run away. Mr. Kirk was driven in a private vehicle to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

While the motive was not immediately known, the killing followed



Mr. Kirk founded the group Turning Point USA in 2012.

a spate of politically connected violent incidents, including assassination attempts against Mr. Trump last year.

Mr. Kirk was one of the most recognizable faces in the nation's resurgent right-wing political sphere. His killing seemed to add a layer of vulnerability to American politics.

Political violence in recent years has been perpetrated at rallies, on a golf course, at the govern-

Continued on Page A14

Israel's Attack Could Threaten U.S.-Gulf Bond

By VIVIAN NEREIM

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — Qatar hosts the largest American military base in the Middle East, has bought billions of dollars worth of defense systems from the United States and recently gifted a luxury Boeing jet to President Trump.

Yet on Tuesday, none of that stopped Israel, a key U.S. ally, from launching a brazen military attack on Qatari soil. It was an attempt to assassinate senior Hamas officials who had gathered to discuss a cease-fire proposal to pause the war in Gaza — a deal that was backed by Mr. Trump.

"Qatar being unable to protect its own citizens with literally the U.S. Central Command on its territory has prompted locals to question the value of the American partnership," said Kristin Diwan, a senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, a research group. "It's a real problem for Gulf leaders. And it should worry the United States as well."

The Israeli attack sent shock waves through Gulf capitals that have been courted by Israel as potential allies in recent years and have long regarded the U.S. as their main security guarantor.

The strike hit a residential neighborhood in the Qatari capital of Doha, sending black smoke into the sky and killing a member of Qatar's internal security forces,

Continued on Page A10



INTERNATIONAL A4-12
Calm, for Now, in Nepal
Leaders of protests that toppled a prime minister met with the military to discuss a path forward. PAGE A8

Day of Disruption in France
Protesters blocked roads, roundabouts and tram lines as Sébastien Lecornu took office as prime minister. PAGE A12

NATIONAL A13-21, 24
ICE Turns to Local Jails
With detention numbers at a record high, county facilities have proven to be a convenient way for the immigration authorities to expand capacity. PAGE A16

Wind's Unexpected Champion
Virginia's Republican governor has been quietly defending a \$10.8 billion project off his state's shores. PAGE A18

SPORTS B7-10
An M.L.B. 'Boys Club'
Several high-ranking male employees of the Detroit Tigers have been accused of misconduct toward women. PAGE B9



THURSDAY STYLES D1-6
Autos of Yesteryear, Restored
An Italian jewelry scion has turned an old drive-in theater in Pennsylvania into a vintage-car showplace. PAGE D1

Taking Aim at Birth Control
On social media and podcasts, criticism of hormonal contraception is rising, and young women are listening. PAGE D5

BUSINESS B1-6
Republicans Advance Fed Pick
Stephen Miran, a top economic adviser to the president, cleared a key Senate hurdle on Wednesday, putting him one step closer to a seat on the Federal Reserve. PAGE B1

Trump's Agenda Awaits Ruling
For the president, the power to issue limitless tariffs is at the heart of his second-term vision, from trade to foreign policy. The Supreme Court will decide if it is legal. PAGE B1

OPINION A22-23
Gail Collins
PAGE A23



ARTS C1-6
An Ecstatic Dance Vision
On Sunday, the choreographer Robbie Blue picked up an Emmy and an MTV Video Music Award, for his work with Lady Gaga and Doechii. PAGE C1

