



Washington Insider

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Washington Insider

ABOUT US

Transatlantic Today delighted to present the Washington Insider Magazine, a product that we present to our readers in Washington DC and beyond. Our magazine publishes unique and independent coverage on transatlantic relations with a Washington perspective. Transatlantic Today covers policymaking, politics and business related to the transatlantic relationship.

Our magazine strives to be become a key news analysis source for news on politics and policymakers in the US with particular focus on DC. Our coverage is designed with nonpartisan journalism and real-time tools create, inform and engage a those seeking timely and concise news.

We believe in providing our audience with indepen-

dent journalism throughout expert writers, analysts and journalists. Our culture is distinguished by unwavering grit, honesty, and a focus on innovation.

Our work is designed by relentless grit, integrity and a prioritization of urgent and newsworthy topics.

In both of our website and and this magazine we cover topics about Diplomacy, Security, Defence, Counter Terrorism, foreign policy and international affairs. Indeed our reporting, OPeds, interviews with various stakeholders provide unique insights and analysis as well as the tools to arm you with the intel you need to make informed decisions.

Here I wish to commend.

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RIISING SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AMID TRUMP'S INDICTMENT AND 2024 ELECTION

BY ERIC GAHAGAN

A recent report by the University of Chicago's Project on Security & Threats (CPost) indicates a surge in American support for political violence as the 2024 election cycle intensifies. The June federal indictment of Donald Trump appears to be a significant factor, with 18 million Americans now believing force may be justified to restore him to office—a marked increase from previous months.

Professor Robert Pape, leading the research, notes this radical shift isn't exclusive to Trump supporters. While approximately 7% of Americans, many of whom believe the 2020 election was stolen, now endorse violence to reinstate Trump, left-wing radicals are also showing heightened support for force. Support for violence to push lawmakers on abortion rights has grown, reflecting broader frustration on both sides of the political divide.

Pape cautions that while public sentiment may be radicalizing, it alone is insufficient to trigger violence.

The right conditions—a rallying message or act of incitement—could ignite widespread action, as seen during the January 6 Capitol riot.

The survey underscores the complex and volatile environment shaping the 2024 campaign. Trump's favorability has slightly declined among Republicans, yet his influence remains profound. Many Trump supporters perceive ongoing legal actions as politically motivated, fostering distrust in federal institutions. The "Dangers to Democracy" survey also reveals that nearly 90% of his most radical backers believe in a "deep state" conspiracy, a core tenet of the QAnon theory.

While both Trump and President Joe Biden are viewed as polarizing figures, respondents rated Trump as a more significant threat to democracy by a margin of 52% to 33%. This data highlights the heightened tensions as Americans brace for a pivotal election amid escalating political polarization.

Support for violence among Democrats, particularly to pressure Congress on abortion rights, rose notably. An estimated 44 million now endorse such action. This convergence of grievances from both sides suggests a concerning trend as the election season heats up, with indictments against Trump likely to fuel further radicalization.

With early debates and primaries on the horizon, Pape warns that "we haven't even reached the peak of the 2024 election season, yet support for political violence is already climbing." This report, backed by various organizations, including the Anti-Defamation League and the Pritzker Military Foundation, signals a need for urgent efforts to address this widening rift in American democracy.

Biden and Trump: Contrasting Global Leadership Styles Amid 2024 Campaign

By JanFrazier



image, framing him as a maverick against what he perceives as political persecution.

Foreign policy analyst Dina Smeltz notes that Biden's NATO engagement could benefit his campaign, presenting him as the "commander in chief" who unites allies against common threats. Biden's show of leadership, however, may resonate less with voters focused on domestic issues and Biden's record on the Afghanistan withdrawal, which impacted his approval ratings. Still, Barbara Perry, director of presidential studies at the University of Virginia, believes that Biden's stature among NATO leaders reinforces his 2024 message of experienced leadership, contrasting with Trump's confrontational legacy.

As the 2024 U.S. presidential race intensified, President Biden and former President Donald Trump displayed starkly contrasting images of leadership. Biden, attending the NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, emphasized his role as a global statesman committed to strengthening alliances and supporting Ukraine in its defence against Russia. Trump, meanwhile, sought to delay his impending criminal trial, reinforcing his image as a defiant outsider challenging the political establishment.

In a speech to nearly 10,000 people, including dignitaries and civil society leaders, Biden declared unwavering U.S. support for Ukraine, symbolized by his blue-and-yellow tie representing the Ukrainian flag. He asserted, "Our commitment to Ukraine will not weaken," highlighting NATO's unity against

Russian aggression. His presence at the summit underscored the Biden administration's efforts to solidify alliances, as seen in NATO's welcoming of Finland and anticipated membership for Sweden. Biden's diplomatic moves contrast with Trump's history of criticizing NATO and his one-time threat to withdraw from the alliance, which former National Security Adviser John Bolton recounted in his memoir.

While Biden projects a seasoned and steady hand on the world stage, Trump's brand of leadership remains adversarial and populist. The former president often clashed with NATO allies and withdrew from international treaties, positioning himself as a voice for Americans sceptical of foreign commitments. His current legal challenges add another layer to his unorthodox

Biden's NATO achievements—Turkey's acceptance of Sweden's membership and a security program for Ukraine—exemplify his diplomatic approach. In a nod to NATO's evolving mission, Biden emphasized that America's commitment to the alliance and democratic principles remains unwavering, indirectly drawing a line between himself and Trump's more isolationist policies. For Biden, the images of alliance

and diplomacy present a hopeful contrast to Trump's combative style, a comparison that could

influence voters in the upcoming election.

As the election season heats up, the two candidates embody

competing visions for America's role on the world stage, underscoring the crucial choice facing voters in 2024.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen Visits Beijing to Ease Tensions with China

By Christina Levandowsk



US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen arrived in Beijing for a four-day visit aimed at reducing tensions and fostering open communication between the US and China. Her arrival follows months of strained relations over trade, Taiwan, and the US's stance against China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific. The Biden administration has expressed a desire to manage these tensions constructively rather than escalate them.

In a series of tweets upon arrival, Yellen emphasized the need for "healthy economic competition" and collaboration on global challenges.

importance of direct communication to avoid misunderstandings. This trip follows Secretary of State Antony Blinken's recent visit, part of the administration's efforts to stabilize relations.

Yellen's reception was modest, with a Chinese finance ministry official and US Ambassador Nicholas Burns welcoming her at the airport. Discussions are expected to cover critical issues, including Washington's security-based trade restrictions, which have limited Chinese access to advanced technology.

Beijing, on its part, remains concerned about US curbs on China's tech access, perceiving them as a threat to its developmental goals in AI, telecoms, and more.

On Friday, Yellen will meet Premier Li Qiang and former economy chief Liu He, a close ally of President Xi Jinping. She intends to advocate for a fair competition framework while addressing the national security grounds of US trade restrictions. Anonymously, a senior Treasury official indicated that Yellen would also raise concerns about China's export controls on metals vital for semiconductors and solar panels.

Yellen's visit underscores the US stance that security measures are non-negotiable. With Xi Jinping accusing the US of hindering China's progress, Yellen's presence marks a bid to stabilize bilateral ties and establish clear communication channels, keeping competition healthy while maintaining essential security safeguards.

House Speaker McCarthy Predicts Biden Family Impeachment Inquiry Amid Foreign Business Probes

By Eric Gahagan

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, during an appearance on Fox News, hinted that the ongoing GOP investigations into Joe Biden's family's foreign business engagements could escalate into an impeachment inquiry. Citing newly revealed information and findings from GOP-led probes, McCarthy stated that evidence warrants the power an inquiry would bring, giving Congress deeper access to the information needed.



In his conversation with Sean Hannity, McCarthy claimed that President Biden's family received foreign funds, challenging Biden's previous assurances of non-involvement and statements that no family member had profited from foreign deals. McCarthy referenced testimony from IRS whistleblowers who allege delays in prosecuting Hunter Biden's tax violations, as well as House investigations tracing millions from foreign sources to Biden family accounts via shell companies.

The White House pushed back, with spokesman Ian Sams criticizing the GOP's focus on the inquiry, accusing them of prioritizing political attacks over issues like inflation and job creation. Press Secretary Karine

Jean-Pierre echoed similar sentiments, refuting any claims that President Biden conducted business with his son.

This development follows the recent release of an FBI document containing unverified corruption allegations linked to Hunter Biden's association with Burisma, a Ukrainian energy company. McCarthy's remarks also come as Hunter's former associate, Devon Archer, prepares to testify, allegedly confirming that Hunter would include his father in business

discussions with foreign partners. Archer, facing jail time for unrelated charges, could further implicate Hunter's business dealings.

Adding to the turmoil, McCarthy hinted at a potential impeachment inquiry into Attorney General Merrick Garland, citing IRS whistleblower claims that Garland hindered the special counsel status of the prosecutor investigating Hunter Biden.

Rising Political Violence in America Amid Trump's Indictment: Survey Analysis

By Irene Taschek

Recent data indicates a surge in Americans endorsing political violence, underscoring potential threats to democracy as the 2024 presidential election approaches. In a June survey by the University of Chicago's CPost research center, it was found that Trump's federal indictment has spurred radicalized support for the former president, with roughly 18 million Americans now believing that force might be warranted to restore him to office. These sentiments represent a 6 million increase since April, revealing a troubling trend of escalating political extremism.

The "Dangers to Democracy" report highlights a polarizing effect not only among Trump's supporters but also within liberal demographics. Survey leader Robert Pape explained that, alongside Trump's base, there is growing support for forceful action on the left to restore federal abortion rights, although no organized groups have emerged to act on this sentiment. As the election cycle intensifies, concerns over Trump's criminal cases are also igniting radical beliefs across the political spectrum.



Key findings show that 68% of Trump's radical supporters see the 2020 election as stolen, while 62% suspect the indictments are aimed at damaging his 2024 campaign. These figures reveal that political loyalty is transforming into aggressive support, a stark contrast to the broader conservative base, where Trump's favorability has slightly dropped.

Key findings show that 68% of Trump's radical supporters see the 2020 election as stolen, while 62% suspect the indictments are aimed at damaging his 2024 campaign. These figures reveal that political loyalty is transforming into aggressive support, a stark contrast to the broader conservative base, where Trump's favorability has slightly dropped.

Interestingly, the research also discovered that Democrats increasingly support coerc

ion to influence Congress. From January to June, those in favor of using force to compel

lawmakers grew from 9% to 17%, primarily among Democrats, with notable advocacy for the reinstatement of federal abortion rights. Pape warns that this uptick in approval for violence on both sides reflects a dangerous trend, risking societal destabilization if left unchecked.

The survey further shows a growing belief in conspiracy theories. Many respondents continue to suspect that a secretive "deep state" controls the government, underscoring the persistence of radicalized attitudes. The study's findings come amid expectations of additional indictments against Trump, heightening concerns about increased political extremism as the first GOP debate and election season draw near.

Ron DeSantis Unharmed in Car Crash on Campaign Trail in Tennessee

By Eric Gahagan



On Tuesday, Ron DeSantis, the conservative governor of Florida and Republican presidential candidate, was involved in a minor car crash while campaigning in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Despite the incident, DeSantis and his team emerged

unscathed, with his press secretary Bryan Griffin reassuring the public that the governor was unharmed.

The crash occurred as the motorcade DeSantis was traveling in encountered slowed traffic, causing four vehicles to

collide. According to local ABC affiliate News Channel 9, one staff member sustained minor injuries but continued to the campaign stop for treatment.

DeSantis, who is currently polling in second place behind former president Donald Trump by roughly 30 points in the Republican primary race, has been working to reinvigorate his campaign ahead of the upcoming Republican debate. Tuesday's events marked a continuation of his fundraising tour across Tennessee.

In a brief statement, Griffin expressed gratitude for the support received, saying,

"We appreciate the prayers and well wishes of the nation for his continued protection while on the campaign trail."

US Soldier Detained in North Korea After Unauthorized Border Crossing

BY ERIC GAHAGAN

A U.S. Army soldier, identified as Private 2nd Class (PV2) Travis King, 23, has reportedly been detained in North Korea after crossing the fortified border from South Korea without authorization. King was on a guided tour of the United Nations-controlled zone dividing the two nations when he crossed over, according to the Pentagon. A U.S. Army soldier, identified as Private 2nd Class (PV2) Travis King, 23, has reportedly been detained in North Korea after crossing the fortified border from South Korea without authorization. King was on a guided tour of the United Nations-controlled zone dividing the two nations when he crossed over, according to the Pentagon.

The incident adds strain to an already tense relationship with North Korea, one of the world's most isolated nations. Admiral John Aquilino, Commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, confirmed there has been no contact with King since his detention and stated the soldier had voluntarily crossed the border in an unauthorized manner. U.S. Forces Korea is investigating the incident.



U.S. travel advisories explicitly warn citizens against visiting North Korea, citing severe risks of arrest and the threat of wrongful detention. Hours after King's detention, North Korea launched two ballistic missiles into nearby waters, though no link between the launch and King's situation has been suggested. South Korea's military confirmed the missile launch amid ongoing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

It remains uncertain if King intended to defect or hopes to return to the U.S., and North Korea has yet to release any information. The Pentagon stated that King has served in the Army since January 2021 as a cavalry scout, a reconnaissance specialist,

assigned to the 1st Armored Division on deployment in South Korea. However, King faced legal issues in South Korea, including a two-month prison term for assault charges. Reports from Seoul indicate that King had been fined for damaging a police vehicle and allegedly involved in an altercation at a nightclub last September.

King was released from prison on July 10 and escorted to the airport for a U.S.-bound flight. However, he left the terminal and joined a border tour where he then crossed into North Korea. A fellow tourist recounted that King suddenly laughed and sprinted across the border. "At first, I thought it was a joke, but when he didn't come back, everyone realized the seriousness of the situation," the eyewitness told CBS News.

The United Nations Command, overseeing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and Joint Security Area (JSA), stated it has reached out to North Korean military

officials to negotiate King's release, believing he is currently in North Korean custody. The DMZ remains one of the world's

most fortified regions, lined with landmines, electric fences, barbed wire, surveillance cameras, and armed guards on constant alert.

US-Russia Secret Talks: Former US Officials Engage with Russian Diplomats to Explore Ukraine Peace Options

By Athena Nagel

A group of former senior U.S. national security officials has engaged in discreet talks with influential Russians, some reportedly close to the Kremlin, in an attempt to lay groundwork for peace negotiations in Ukraine, according to several sources informed of these discussions. This unofficial "Track Two" diplomacy, intended to test potential areas for compromise, saw U.S. participants like Richard Haass, a former diplomat, meet with Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov for several hours in New York this past April.

The discussions covered complex issues, including the control of Russian-held Ukrainian territory and potential diplomatic off-ramps tolerable to both nations. Present with Haass were Charles Kupchan, a European affairs expert, and Russia expert Thomas Graham, both from the Council on Foreign Relations. Their objective is to keep dialogue with Russia open and explore possible paths for de-escalation in the conflict. Although the Biden administration was aware

of these talks, it did not initiate them, and participants briefed the White House National Security Council afterward.

The American side includes former U.S. Defense Department officials like Mary Beth Long, who has extensive NATO experience. At least one former U.S. official traveled to Russia for discussions about the Ukraine conflict. Russian participants include academics and influential think tank leaders believed to have regular contact with President Vladimir Putin, though specific names remain undisclosed for safety reasons.

The conversations reflect increasing U.S. and allied interest in exploring peace talks as the fall approaches and Ukraine's counteroffensive continues. During a recent visit to Kyiv, CIA Director William Burns heard from Ukrainian officials on the feasibility of pushing Moscow toward peace talks by year's end.

Following these talks, Haass and Kupchan published an article in

Foreign Affairs advocating for a cease-fire plan where both Russian and Ukrainian forces would pull back, creating a neutral demilitarized zone to pave the way for peace negotiations. This kind of Track Two diplomacy has historical precedent, but the Ukraine talks have divided American diplomatic and policy circles. Some, like Bradley Bowman from the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, warn these unofficial negotiations could signal a desperation for a deal. Others, such as former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, believe any such talks should include Ukraine to avoid undermining its position.

While these informal exchanges continue, the broader path to resolving the conflict remains uncertain, with Ukraine's future hanging in the balance amid both diplomatic overtures and active military engagements.



UFOs Pose National Security Threat: Testimony at U.S. Congressional Hearing

By Eric Gahagan

A former Navy combat pilot testified before a congressional committee on Wednesday, asserting that unidentified flying objects represent a direct threat to U.S. national security. This concern, voiced by multiple officials, underscores a shift in how the government addresses unidentified aerial phenomena (UAPs) — a topic once dismissed as science fiction.

Cmdr. David Fravor, an F-18 pilot, recounted to the committee a notable 2004 incident involving UAPs. Fravor and his colleagues observed a 40-foot, Tic-Tac-shaped object moving with advanced technology and capabilities beyond anything known in the U.S. arsenal. According to Fravor, the object descended

from above the Earth's atmosphere, hovered over a disturbed ocean surface, matched his aircraft's path, then vanished with incredible speed.

"The technology we faced was far superior to anything we had," Fravor explained. "If captured and reverse-engineered, it could move through space, descend rapidly, perform maneuvers, and disappear." His account emphasizes the limitations of U.S. defenses in responding to such encounters.

The hearing, convened by the House Oversight Committee, marked a significant step toward greater government transparency regarding UAPs. Ryan Graves, another former

Navy F-18 pilot, highlighted the dangers of dismissing unidentified aircraft, noting potential risks posed by adversaries. He warned that overlooking such targets, whether due to stigma or fear, could be exploited.

David Grusch, a former intelligence officer with the U.S. Air Force, also testified, claiming that he had seen evidence of non-human biological remains at UAP crash sites investigated by the U.S. government. While refraining from sharing sensitive details in the public session, Grusch agreed that UAPs frequently appear near U.S. nuclear facilities, indicating a possible interest in critical national infrastructure.

Despite the high-profile nature of the hearing, longtime UFO researchers voiced disappointment, suggesting that Congress missed opportunities to obtain clearer answers, particularly from Grusch. Clas Svahn, chairman of Sweden's Archives for the Unexplained, noted that better questioning could have yielded more substantial revelations, especially in a classified follow-up session.



Fravor and others expressed frustration over the limited scrutiny given to UAP

incidents by U.S. military personnel, reflecting a broader need for serious investigation

into potential security implications posed by these phenomena.

Biden Establishes National Monument to Honor Emmett Till

By JanFrazier

President Joe Biden has announced the establishment of a national monument to honor Emmett Till, the Black teenager whose lynching in 1955 became a pivotal moment in the American civil rights movement. During a ceremony at the White House on what would have been Till's 82nd birthday, Biden signed a proclamation celebrating both Till and his mother, Mamie Till-Mobley.

"Only with truth comes healing, justice, repair, and another step forward toward forming a more perfect union," Biden stated, emphasizing the importance of understanding the historical context of Till's story. He expressed hope that visitors of all backgrounds would learn about the contributions of

Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley through the new national monument.

Biden also highlighted the significance of speaking out against injustice, saying, "Silence is complicity. I will not be silent, nor will you be silent, about what happened." The brutal killing of 14-year-old Till in Mississippi and his mother's activism—including her decision to hold an open-casket funeral to expose the brutality of his murder—played a crucial role in galvanizing the movement to end segregation and the Jim Crow laws in the South. "It's just barbaric—barbaric—what happened," Biden remarked, urging reflection on the courage displayed by Till-Mobley in allowing the public to witness

her son's mangled body.

The establishment of the national monument has been welcomed by many observers as a significant step in honoring the legacy of both Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley. It also serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle against anti-Black racism, especially amid efforts by some right-wing politicians to limit the teaching of American history in schools.



Judith Ezekiel and the Confederate Memorial A Family's Legacy and Controversy

By Christina Levandowski



When Judith Ezekiel was five, her grandfather took her and her brothers to Arlington National Cemetery to see a statue created by their relative, Moses Jacob Ezekiel. A prominent Jewish sculptor from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Moses is best known for the Confederate Memorial, which has stood at Arlington since 1914.

“My grandfather was proud of his artistic legacy,” Dr. Ezekiel recalls, noting that he took all 15 grandchildren to see the statue during their childhood. The memorial, a bronze statue atop a granite base, honors those who fought for the Confederate states during the Civil War.

For over a century, this statue has remained in Arlington, America’s most sacred military cemetery, which houses around 400,000 graves of soldiers, sailors, astronauts,

and two presidents. However, by next year, the U.S. government has ordered its removal as part of a broader effort to reassess how the country commemorates the Confederacy.

Since 2015, 377 memorials have been renamed or removed, yet as of 2022, 723 Confederate memorials still exist, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. Numerous roads, schools, and parks named after Confederate figures also remain untouched.

Dr. Ezekiel, a historian and professor emerita of women’s and African American studies, didn’t think much about the statue until 2017. That August, white supremacists marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, to protest the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, resulting in violence that shocked the nation.

As she watched the events unfold, Judith noticed the irony of seeing demonstrators near a statue of Thomas Jefferson, also sculpted by her ancestor, Moses Ezekiel. “What can we do about Moses Ezekiel’s monument in Arlington?” she asked her relatives.

Moses Ezekiel had fought for the Confederacy and aimed to build a monument to counter what he perceived as false narratives about the South. His statue includes a stereotypical depiction of a Black woman handing a baby to a Southern soldier, reflecting the outdated notion that the war was about states’ rights rather than slavery. This interpretation is largely regarded by historians as a myth used to glorify the Confederacy and obscure its history of slavery.

Days later, Dr. Ezekiel, along with other family members, penned a public letter to the Washington Post, calling for the removal of the statue. “As proud as our family may be of Moses’s artistic talent, we — twenty Ezekiels — demand its removal. It should be relocated to a museum that highlights its oppressive history,” she stated.

In the wake of George Floyd’s murder, the U.S. Congress established the Naming Commission to identify and .

recommend actions regarding monuments honoring the Confederacy. Last year, the commission recommended the removal of the Arlington Confederate Memorial, leaving only its granite base to avoid disturbing surrounding graves

This statue, located at the cemetery's far western edge near the grave of Moses Ezekiel, has not been a popular stop for tour groups due to its remoteness. Nevertheless, some visitors have begun to pay their respects. One grave belonging to a Confederate sailor has a white naval cap placed upon it.

The decision to remove the statue has sparked controversy, with the cemetery receiving about 300 written responses shortly after the order was issued. Opponents of the removal have filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Defense, claiming the decision is "illegal and arbitrary" and that the statue holds significant historical and cultural value.

LM Siegel, a member of the Defend Arlington campaign group involved in the lawsuit, argues that removing the statue would reopen historical wounds. "I was taught, don't mess with

people's graves," she insists, asserting that such actions are sacrilege.

She referenced President Woodrow Wilson's speech at the statue's unveiling in 1914, which stated that the creation of such monuments exemplified American democracy, where the vanquished were honored rather than oppressed.

Beyond the cultural implications, the practical challenge of dismantling a 32-foot tall statue made of granite and bronze looms large as the debate continues.

Public Confidence in American Institutions Remains Low in 2023

By Eric Gahagan

Americans' trust in major societal institutions has not seen improvement over the past year, continuing a downward trend that began in 2022. A Gallup survey highlighted that confidence levels dropped significantly in 11 out of the 16 institutions tracked annually, with the presidency and Supreme Court experiencing the most pronounced declines—15 and 11 percentage points, respectively.

In the latest poll, conducted between June 1-22, 2023, confidence in the Supreme Court stands at 27%, while the presidency has fallen to 26%. This survey was conducted

before the Supreme Court made pivotal decisions on issues like affirmative action in education, college loan forgiveness, and LGBTQ+ rights, which could have further impacted public perception of these institutions.

The survey indicates that public confidence in the other 14 institutions remains stagnant compared to last year, with no significant changes in scores. Among these, small businesses rank highest, with 65% of Americans expressing a great deal or fair amount of confidence. The military follows closely, with 60% confidence, while the police receive a score of 43%.

The top five institutions also include the medical system and organized religion, garnering 34% and 32% confidence ratings, respectively. Other institutions like the U.S. Supreme Court, banks, public schools, the presidency, large tech companies, and organized labor all fall between 25% and 27% in confidence levels.

Conversely, the five institutions rated the lowest include newspapers, the criminal justice system, television news, big business, and Congress, with Congress attracting the least confidence at just 8%.

Gallup's survey also included higher education, and a deeper analysis of its results will be reported separately. Many institutions are hovering close to record low confidence levels, with four—police, public schools, large tech companies, and big business—tying for their all-time lows.

Despite some institutions showing higher confidence than their historical lows, such as the military and small businesses, the overall trend remains concerning. The average confidence score for nine long-tracked institutions fell to a new low of 26% this year, down ten points from 2020.

The survey reveals that seven of the institutions measured this year have significant partisan confidence divides. The largest differences appear in



perceptions of the presidency and public schools, with Democrats expressing much higher confidence than Republicans. Conversely, Republicans show greater confidence in the Supreme Court, organized religion, and the police.

Overall, the results reflect a

continuation of the trend of diminishing trust in societal institutions, with the average confidence ratings for 14 institutions remaining at 26%, matching last year's record low.

crackdown on dissent that many observers believe is politically motivated against Saied's critics, regardless of their political affiliations.

Moussi appeals to segments of the population nostalgic for Tunisia's pre-revolutionary past

and has been a vocal critic of leaders such as the imprisoned Ennahdha party leader Rached Ghannouchi. Notably, she held a position in the ruling party of long-time President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

In 2022, Tunisia's constitution

was rewritten to establish a presidential regime, significantly limiting the powers of the parliament, and raising further concerns regarding the democratic process in the country.

Zimbabwe Must End Crackdown on Opposition Ahead of SADC Summit, Urge Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch

By Eric Gahagan

As Zimbabwe prepares to host the Southern African

Development

Community (SADC) summit on August 17, 2024, in Harare, human rights organizations Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are calling on authorities to halt their ongoing crackdown on opposition and civil society members. They demand the immediate and unconditional release of individuals arrested for exercising their rights.

The groups emphasize the need for a thorough and effective investigation into allegations of torture and mistreatment of detainees, insisting that any suspected perpetrators be held accountable through fair legal proceedings. With the SADC leadership soon transitioning to Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa, there is a pressing need for the regional



body to take a firm stand against these human rights violations.

Khanyo Farise, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for East and Southern Africa, highlighted the severity of the situation: "Since mid-June, Zimbabwean authorities have conducted a massive crackdown on dissent. Over 160 individuals have been arrested, including elected officials, opposition members, union leaders, students,

and journalists." He emphasized that authorities must cease these violations and release all detainees immediately.

The crackdown began on June 16 when police raided the home of Jameson Timba, leader of the opposition Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), during a private gathering, leading to the arrest of 78 individuals. Security forces employed tear gas and batons, resulting in serious injuries to attendees, one requiring

surgery. The detained were charged with “gathering with intent to promote public violence and disorderly conduct,” and held unlawfully for over two days without being brought before a court. Although two children were released and one adult granted bail, 75 people remain in arbitrary detention.

Subsequent arrests continued, including 44 members of the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) on June 24, who were forced to pay fines for “disorderly conduct.” President Mnangagwa warned on June 27 against “opposition political parties bent on peddling falsehoods,” following which police violently disrupted peaceful protests demanding the release of those arrested at Timba’s residence. Further intimidation came from Information Minister Jenfan Muswere, who threatened opposition elements and civil society organizations.

The crackdown intensified as the SADC summit approached. On July 31, state agents forcibly removed four activists from a plane at Harare Airport, detaining them for eight hours and subjecting them to torture. These activists were charged with “disorderly conduct” for participating in a protest. Since August 1, more than 30 individuals have been arrested across Zimbabwe, primarily in relation to protests and opposition support.

Idriss Ali Nassah, senior Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch, criticized the Zimbabwean government for its failure to uphold basic human rights: “The serious violations we are witnessing, including violent attacks, abductions, torture, arbitrary arrests, and other abuses against the opposition, are a clear indication of this failure.” He also noted that SADC has remained silent on these issues, urging the bloc to take a

decisive stance against the ongoing crackdown.

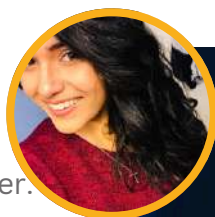
The organizations underscore that the deteriorating human rights situation in Zimbabwe is directly connected to the government’s preparations for the SADC summit. As President Mnangagwa prepares to assume leadership, it is crucial for SADC to leverage this opportunity to advocate for human rights throughout the region, in accordance with the SADC treaty.

In conclusion, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are calling on SADC leaders, particularly President João Lourenço of Angola and Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema, to publicly condemn the Zimbabwean government’s actions and demand the release of all unjustly detained individuals. The time to act is now, before the situation deteriorates further.

New Portals on USA Jobs Simplify Federal Careers in IT and National Security

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSK

If you're seeking a federal career in IT or national security, your job hunt just became easier.



USA Jobs, the primary career listing site for the federal government, has launched two distinct portals specifically for national security and for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) jobs. This enhancement allows job seekers to navigate open positions more efficiently.

With over 25 years in operation, USA Jobs has undergone several redesigns, yet users have often found the vast database challenging to search. On average, more than 1,100 jobs are posted daily. While other pathways to public service exist, such as social media and agency-specific sites, most federal agencies predominantly use USA Jobs to advertise vacancies, making it a crucial resource for both job seekers and recruiters.

Recently, the Office of Personnel Management has implemented multiple upgrades to improve user experience. In February, a dedicated portal for federal internships.



Currently, over 500 federal agencies utilize USA Jobs to post a wide array of job openings, ranging from entry-level positions to executive roles. In 2019 alone, the site recorded over 1.4 billion searches.

Amid a global shortage of cybersecurity and IT professionals, the federal government is actively seeking candidates in these fields. However, the slow hiring process, often around 100 days

due to limited human resources and regulatory hurdles, presents challenges.

As agencies reassess their telework policies, remote positions listed on USA Jobs are particularly appealing, attracting hundreds of applicants soon after posting. According to a recent McKinsey & Company study, today's job candidates prioritize flexibility, meaningful work, competitive pay, and opportunities for advancement.

Strengthening AUKUS: A Key to Countering China's Strategic Rivalry

By Eric Gahagan



The United States and its allies are facing an intense strategic rivalry with China, highlighted by the exposure of U.S. defense-industrial base limitations due to the war in Ukraine and delays in weapon deliveries to Taiwan. The Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) security agreement, announced in September 2021, offers a pathway to address these industrial challenges and bolster allied defense in the Indo-Pacific.

For AUKUS to succeed, the U.S. must revise its defense trade regulations with allies and foster a more competitive mindset to mitigate technology transfer risks. AUKUS consists of two pillars: the first focuses on Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-

powered submarines, while the second promotes enhanced integration and cooperation in developing advanced defense capabilities. Although the submarine program has attracted significant attention, establishing a functional submarine fleet will take a decade or more, emphasizing the need for urgent action on the second pillar.

The second pillar provides an opportunity to accelerate the research and deployment of advanced defense technologies, including hypersonic missiles and quantum technologies. Streamlined cooperation across defense-industrial bases is essential to counter China's overwhelming manufacturing dominance.

To capitalize on this opportunity, fundamental reforms to U.S. export control laws and technology release processes are imperative. Modernizing the International Traffic in Arms Regulations and Foreign Military Sales processes is necessary to maintain an edge over China.

AUKUS serves as an optimal test of the U.S. ability to create a seamless defense trade partnership with its closest allies. Given the established intelligence-sharing relationships and frequent military coordination, this should be a straightforward process. However, two years post-AUKUS, progress has been limited, largely due to the Biden administration's overly cautious approach to the second pillar. The current risk management strategies are outdated, reflecting a Cold War mindset that no longer suits the current geopolitical landscape dominated by China's rapid military advancements.

To remain competitive, the U.S. must leverage its allies' technological contributions and industrial capabilities. While protecting advanced technologies is crucial, overly restrictive regulations should

not be applied to countries with robust legal and regulatory frameworks comparable to those of the United States.

Our risk management strategy must recognize the substantial benefits of collaboration under AUKUS, including access to advanced systems developed by allies. The greater risk to U.S. national security lies in treating its technology as too precious to share.

AUKUS is not the first initiative aimed at enhancing defense cooperation with the U.K. and Australia. Previous efforts, including defense trade treaties and the incorporation

The Biden administration asserts that this is the “decisive decade” in strategic competition with China, and an incremental approach to AUKUS could jeopardize the opportunity to maximize alliance benefits.

Failure of AUKUS would undermine allies’ trust in U.S. reliability, while its success could motivate other key allies to improve their industrial practices. It is insufficient to merely acknowledge that allies are a comparative advantage against authoritarian regimes; enabling greater defense-industrial cooperation is essential.

Earlier this year, I introduced the Torpedo Act (S 1471) to outline the necessary steps for successful implementation of AUKUS’s second pillar. Encouragingly, core regulatory changes proposed in the Torpedo Act recently passed out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with bipartisan support, reflecting Congress’s commitment to align AUKUS’s ambitious goals with essential reforms to export control and technology release policies. Failing to act would render U.S. rhetoric hollow and signal a lack of seriousness in competing with China.

Switzerland, Finland, and Sweden Eye U.S. National Guard Partnership

By Christina Levandowski

Switzerland, Finland, and Sweden are exploring opportunities to join the U.S. National Guard’s security partnership program, marking a significant expansion of American military ties in Europe following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. This announcement was made by Gen. Dan Hokanson, chief of the National Guard, during his remarks at the National Press Club.

The interest from these three countries reflects how the war in Ukraine has prompted them to reconsider their long-standing policies of military nonalignment. Gen. Hokanson stated, “I’m pleased to announce

that we will soon deepen and expand our security cooperation relationships throughout Europe.” He indicated that Finland and Sweden are already in discussions for partnerships, while Switzerland is evaluating its options regarding the National Guard program.

Finland and Sweden, the latest countries to seek NATO membership, have adjusted their defense strategies in response to security threats. Finland officially joined NATO in April, while Sweden awaits final approval. Meanwhile, Switzerland has begun to reassess its neutrality, including

potentially easing restrictions on arms exports to active conflict zones.

The National Guard’s State Partnership Program, a key tool for U.S. military engagement, enables American troops to build relationships with foreign militaries through training and educational exchanges. This initiative helps partner nations align their military operations with Western standards, crucial for facilitating multinational military cooperation, especially among Eastern European countries.

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with Western standards, crucial for facilitating multinational military cooperation, especially among Eastern European countries.

Established 30 years ago after the Soviet Union's collapse, the program initially aimed to assist former Soviet states in transitioning from communist military structures. Ukraine was among the first participants, partnering with California's National Guard. Since the onset of the invasion, Ukraine's air force has sought support from these U.S. partners.

The war in Ukraine prompted Sweden and Finland to abandon

their military nonalignment policies. Their NATO applications aim to bolster their security under the alliance's protective umbrella. Finland shares an extensive border with Russia, while Sweden has historically maintained military neutrality for over 200 years. Recent discussions have seen Turkey agree to support Sweden's NATO bid, contingent upon deeper security cooperation and a commitment to revive Turkey's EU membership ambitions.

The conflict has also forced Swiss officials to reconsider their constitutional commitment to neutrality, which has traditionally prohibited.



Senate Defense Bill Expands U.S. Military Support for Kosovo

By Jan Frazier

The Senate's draft annual defense bill aims to add Kosovo to the list of Eastern European nations eligible for U.S. military training, reflecting growing tensions in the Balkans. Set for debate this week, the fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act allows Kosovo to participate in U.S.-led military exercises, enhancing its interoperability with NATO forces. This inclusion enables Kosovo to receive reimbursements for training through multilateral military exercises alongside NATO and Partnership for Peace members, including Serbia, its regional rival.

As a NATO Partnership for Peace member, Serbia frequently hosts the Platinum Wolf military exercises with U.S. and NATO allies, continuing despite its strained relations with Kosovo. A committee report accompanying the bill commends the Department of Defense for supporting Kosovo in developing its national security forces, emphasizing the need for professionalization and improved response capabilities against external threats.

The Senate Armed Services Committee has also highlighted the importance of expanding cybersecurity cooperation with Kosovo's armed forces, directing Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to brief Congress on these efforts by the year's end. The committee seeks



to identify new areas for strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing existing cybersecurity collaboration.

This push to strengthen U.S.-Kosovar military relations aligns with the Biden administration's goal of improving Pristina's fraught ties with Serbia amid rising tensions between Albanian and Serb communities within Kosovo. Although the House Foreign Affairs Committee has engaged in discussions regarding the situation, opinions vary on the pressure to exert on Kosovo versus Serbia.

In a recent hearing, Europe subcommittee Chairman Thomas Kean emphasized that Kosovo must implement an association of Serb-majority municipalities, a commitment made a decade ago. He stressed the necessity of safeguarding the rights of Kosovo Serbs without compromising Kosovo's

sovereignty.

Violence has erupted in northern Kosovo's Serb-majority municipalities following the installation of Albanian mayors elected amid a Serb boycott. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic condemned the elections and supported the boycott. The U.S. and EU have urged Kosovo to conduct fresh elections in these municipalities, warning that failure to comply could hinder Kosovo's aspirations for NATO and EU membership.

Deputy Secretary of State for Eurasian Affairs Gabriel Escobar underscored that the U.S. has received assurances from Serbia to avoid opposing new elections, highlighting that there will be consequences for Serbia if it does not adhere to this commitment.

U.S. Approves \$2.9 Billion Air-to-Air Missile Sale to Germany

By Irene Taschek



The U.S. State Department has authorized a significant military sale to Germany, involving air-to-air missiles valued at approximately \$2.9 billion. According to a July 19 announcement from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, the potential sale includes up to 969 AIM-120C-8 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles, along with related equipment.

The proposed deal encompasses additional elements such as AIM-120 training missiles, a telemetry kit, spare parts, and logistical support. This transaction aims to strengthen Germany's defense capabilities, enhance NATO security, and contribute to political and economic stability in Europe. With the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, ensuring that NATO allies like

Germany have access to modern air-to-air munitions is crucial.

The Defense Security Cooperation Agency emphasized that the sale would significantly improve Germany's ability to address current threats, bolstering their existing air defense systems. Germany already utilizes AMRAAM missiles, and this potential acquisition will further enhance interoperability with U.S. forces and other NATO partners.

RTX, based in Tucson, Arizona, is designated as the principal contractor for this deal. Importantly, the transaction is not anticipated to negatively affect U.S. military readiness. Following this approval, if Congress does not object, negotiations will commence, during which the financial and equipment specifics may be adjusted.

China's Strong Presence at Turkey's IDEF 2024 Defense Conference

By Irene Taschek

ANKARA, Turkey — China is poised for a significant presence at Turkey's biennial defense conference this month. Seventy-four Chinese firms are set to participate in the International Defence Industry Fair (IDEF), scheduled from July 25-28 in Istanbul, highlighting China's growing interest in Turkish defense capabilities. In contrast, only five American companies

are signed up for the event.

According to Ozgur Eksi, head of the media outlet TurDef, the Chinese delegation aims to identify Turkish companies that align with their long-term strategic goals. Eksi noted, "After acquisitions, they will bring in their technology, enjoy low production costs in

Turkey, produce NATO-standard systems, and target markets that utilize NATO systems."

Security and defense analyst Eugene Kogan suggests that Chinese businesses view Turkish firms as viable targets for acquisition, particularly to enhance sales to NATO member countries.

“I foresee cooperation between China and Turkey in Africa, where both nations seek to diminish foreign competition,”

Kogan stated. He believes that China is specifically interested in acquiring second-tier Turkish defense companies, where Western expertise can be merged with Chinese resources.

As IDEF 2024 approaches, the partnership between China and Turkey may lead to significant shifts in the defense industry landscape, potentially impacting NATO markets and regional security dynamics.



The Intense Heatwave Across the World Shows No Signs of Abating

BY JAN FRAZIER

The intense heatwave across the world has shown no signs of abating, leaving residents in Asia, Europe, and North America scrambling for relief from the unforgiving temperatures. As extreme heat was forecast globally, firefighters battled blazes in Greece and the Canary Islands, while authorities from California to China warned about the health dangers posed by the searing temperatures, urging people to hydrate and seek shelter from the sun.

China

In China, tourists flocked to a giant thermometer displaying a staggering 80°C (176°F) on Wednesday, igniting both curiosity and chaos. Beijing recorded its 27th day of temperatures exceeding 35°C (95°F), marking a new record for high-temperature days in a single year. The remote Turpan Depression saw a shocking maximum temperature of 52.2°C (126°F), breaking the previous national record of 50.3°C (122.5°F) set in 2015.

Greece

Wildfires raged for a third consecutive day west of Athens,



with air water bombers resuming operations at dawn. Fire spokesman Yannis Artopios described it as “a difficult day,” with yet another heatwave expected to hit on Thursday, bringing temperatures up to 44°C (111°F). A forest fire near Loutraki led to the evacuation of 1,200 children from holiday camps.

Italy

In Italy, the islands of Sardinia and Sicily may surpass the continent-wide record of 48.8°C (120°F) recorded in Sicily in August 2021. In Cagliari, locals are reporting heat-related symptoms, raising concerns for public health.

Spain

In Spain, the heat is so intense that television presenter Silvia Intxaurreondo exclaimed, “We’re all suffocating!” during a broadcast as the nation faces its third heatwave of the summer. The national weather service declared the highest alert level for parts of Mallorca, Catalonia, and Aragon.

France

Southern France also experienced record-breaking temperatures, with 29.5°C (85.1°F) recorded at the Alpine resort of Alpe d’Huez and 40.6°C (105.1°F) in Verdun, marking the first time such high temperatures were documented in this region.

Canary Islands

In the Canary Islands, approximately 400 firefighters battled a wildfire that consumed 3,500 hectares (8,650 acres) of forest, prompting the evacuation of 4,000 residents and warnings about poor air quality.

United States

In the Canary Islands, approximately 400 firefighters battled a wildfire that consumed 3,500 hectares (8,650 acres) of

forest, prompting the evacuation of 4,000 residents and warnings about poor air quality.

Meanwhile, tens of millions of Americans faced dangerously high heat levels this week.

The National Weather Service warned of an “extremely dangerous and long-duration heatwave” continuing across the Southwest, with oppressive

heat indices spreading across the south-central and southeast regions. In San Angelo, Texas, temperatures were expected to reach 40-42°C (104-108°F), with officials running out of ways to convey the severity of the heat. In Arizona, Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport recorded 43.3°C (110°F) on Tuesday, breaking the previous record of 18 consecutive days at or above that temperature, set in 1974.

German University Suspends Collaboration with China Scholarship Council to Combat Espionage Risks

By Christina Levandowsk

Friedrich Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (FAU) has become the first German university to suspend collaboration with students funded by the China Scholarship Council (CSC) due to concerns over industrial espionage. This decision marks a significant shift in Germany's approach to academic partnerships with China, echoing similar moves by universities in Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the United States earlier this year.

The CSC primarily funds foreign students in China and offers scholarships to thousands of Chinese doctoral candidates at prestigious institutions worldwide. In recent years, the number of CSC scholarship holders in Germany has surged,

with approximately 30 universities participating in the program.

In a recent email, FAU's executive committee announced the indefinite suspension of collaborations with CSC scholarship recipients, effective June 1. The committee emphasized the importance of academic freedom and raised alarms about the evolving political landscape, which has heightened concerns regarding scientific and industrial espionage, data security, and the protection of intellectual property.

The email pointed out troubling contractual stipulations imposed on CSC students, which require them to pledge allegiance to the Chinese state, maintain contact with the

Chinese embassy, and return to China after their studies. These conditions extend to family members, who must remain in China and serve as guarantors for the scholarship holders. Critics argue that such provisions compromise the academic freedom guaranteed under German law.

Experts believe that FAU's decision could prompt a ripple effect across other German institutions, as many universities grapple with similar concerns. While the FAU has exempted holders of the joint Sino-German CSC-DAAD postdoctoral scholarship program from this ban, the scrutiny over CSC contracts raises critical questions about the implications of such agreements on academic integrity and freedom.

Germany's domestic intelligence agency has identified China as a significant threat in terms of economic and scientific espionage, highlighting the need for universities to carefully evaluate their collaborations. Recent reports have also revealed that Chinese students in Germany are often subjected to repressive regulations imposed by the Chinese government, further complicating the issue.

The German government is currently developing a strategy to mitigate risks associated with collaborations with China, particularly in sensitive technological fields. While some universities are opting for more nuanced approaches, the growing concerns over espionage and academic freedom continue to drive discussions about the future of Chinese scholarship programs in Germany and beyond.



As the academic landscape evolves, it remains to be seen whether other institutions will follow FAU's lead or seek to academic collaboration.

maintain their ties with the CSC under revised conditions. The ongoing dialogue around these issues will play a crucial role in shaping the future.

Europe Debates Missile Defense Strategy as Paris Air Show Highlights Divide

By Eric Gahagan

At the Paris Air Show, discussions surrounding missile defense systems highlighted strategic rifts within Europe. The event, held for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, featured an array of ground-based defense displays. Notably, German-led and French-led initiatives clashed, underscoring contrasting visions for European missile defense.

Germany's Sky Shield Initiative, uniting 17 European nations, proposes a unified defense shield using European, American, and Israeli technologies, such as Raytheon's Patriot and Israel's Arrow 3 systems. German officials view the Arrow 3 as an essential addition to counter long-range threats. However, French President Emmanuel Macron voiced strong

reservations about integrating non-European systems, promoting instead a domestically produced alternative like the Franco-Italian SAMP/T missile defense system, now operational in Ukraine.

Macron underscored the need for European-produced solutions, citing independence from third-country suppliers as

a critical factor. France also announced joint procurement of Mistral 3 missiles with Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, and Hungary, further aligning with France's preference for locally developed systems.

Despite the collaborative spirit Germany hopes to foster through Sky Shield, Macron's address revealed France's commitment to an independent approach, sparking debate over Europe's long-term defense strategy. German officials emphasized the importance of multi-nation defense readiness, while France continues to pursue more organic growth within its defense industry.



Amid these diverging approaches, German lawmakers recently approved initial funding for Arrow 3 components, signaling momentum for Sky Shield. Israel

Aerospace Industries, which manufactures Arrow 3, anticipates the system's deployment by 2025, viewing it as a significant enhancement to Europe's layered defense.

EU Nature Restoration Law Marks a Major Step for Biodiversity and Climate Action

By Jan Frazier

The EU's Nature Restoration Law, passed on July 12, represents a significant step forward in the EU's commitment to biodiversity and climate resilience. As EU Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius emphasized at the plenary session in Strasbourg, this law is about creating a sustainable environment that can support present and future generations, ensuring that land and seas remain productive.

The Nature Restoration Law is a cornerstone of the EU's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, which highlights that climate action is about both reducing emissions and preserving

ecosystems. Economic studies estimate that every euro spent on restoration yields between 8 and 38 euros in benefits. The law builds on the successful EU LIFE programme, which has supported nearly 6,000 environmental projects since 1992, aiming to reverse habitat degradation across Europe.

Europe's biodiversity is at risk, with more than 80% of habitats in poor condition. The law focuses on restoring diverse ecosystems, from forests and rivers to marine areas, fostering sustainable use of natural resources.

Projects like Romania's LIFE CARPATHIA in the Făgăraș Mountains show the law's potential. Through the project, almost 900 hectares of diverse forests were planted, reintroducing the rare European bison and sparking local ecotourism growth. In Cyprus, the LIFE KEDROS project worked to conserve the endangered Cyprus cedar by restoring habitats, preventing soil degradation, and building artificial lakes.

This year, an additional €611 million has been allocated for LIFE conservation and climate initiatives. With the Nature Restoration Law, the EU aims to

mobilize even more projects to restore ecosystems and strengthen community resilience, ensuring a future where European nature thrives alongside local economies.

For those interested in securing funding for conservation, the LIFE 2023 Calls for Proposals offer new opportunities for projects across Europe.



EU Parliament Passes Act to Boost Ammunition Production for Ukraine

By Eric Gahagan

On Thursday, the European Parliament passed the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP), a significant measure aimed at boosting EU production of ammunition and missiles to counter current shortages. This act is central to accelerating defense supplies to Ukraine and aiding EU member states in restocking their arsenals amidst growing demands.

ASAP's framework, developed alongside the Council, seeks to increase the EU's ammunition production by introducing targeted strategies and funding mechanisms. A €500 million budget has been allocated to support expanded production of artillery ammunition, missiles, and essential components, a critical move for meeting immediate defense needs.

During the discussions with the Council, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) secured funding provisions to benefit a diverse range of projects, prioritizing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with higher funding rates. Importantly, MEPs ensured the new financing will not detract from existing cohesion funds, addressing concerns over the potential reallocation of resources. They also reinforced commitments that EU-funded ammunition delivered to Ukraine will remain exempt from export restrictions, ensuring it reaches the front lines without delay.

Cristian Bușoi, the EP negotiating team leader, remarked on the legislation's strategic importance, stating, "Today's vote marks another s

tep forward for Europe's security and defense, and in our steadfast support of Ukraine. It is a testimony of Europe's solidarity and for our collective security."

The act, approved with a vote of 505 to 56 and 21 abstentions, now awaits Council endorsement to become law.



Restrictions on Women's Travel Rights Persist in Middle East & North Africa

BY IRENE TASCHEK

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), women's mobility rights remain restricted, with many countries enforcing male guardianship rules. A recent report from Human Rights Watch, titled *Trapped: How Male Guardianship Policies Restrict Women's Travel and Mobility in the Middle East and North Africa*, exposes the breadth of these restrictions. Despite activist-led reforms in some countries, policies still prevent women from moving freely or obtaining passports without permission from male guardians, typically a father, brother, or husband.

In a number of MENA nations, laws require women to gain guardian consent for domestic and international travel, curbing their independence. Some states extend these controls to travel with children, meaning women may need permission from a child's father to journey abroad. Such policies have deep historical roots, influenced by regional traditions and foreign legal practices that traditionally subordinate women's rights to male oversight.



Saudi Arabia, for instance, enacted a codified Personal Status Law in 2022 that formalizes many traditional restrictions, obligating women to “obey” their husbands or risk loss of spousal support. Additionally, in countries facing conflict, such as Yemen, local authorities impose rigid travel limitations, compelling women to have a mahram, or male relative, accompany them. This has led many women, including those employed with NGOs, to quit their jobs, impacting family income and welfare.

While there have been positive developments — Saudi women gained the right to drive in 2018 and now can obtain

passports without guardian consent — challenges persist. In Iran and Qatar, women still require male permission to secure passports. Further, Hamas authorities in Gaza impose court-ordered travel bans on unmarried women, limiting their right to leave the region.

The fight for mobility freedom is ongoing. As restrictions evolve, activists continue to press for comprehensive reforms to end discriminatory policies, aiming to secure women's autonomy and broader societal equality across the region.

Israel's Judicial Hoopla: Protests and Political Turmoil

By Jan Frazier



For over seven months, Israel has been gripped by intense protests against a divisive judicial reform promoted by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The legislation, now passed, has stirred public outrage across the country, uniting diverse groups—doctors, military reservists, and financial professionals—under a shared banner of opposition. Critics argue the reforms undermine the Supreme Court's authority, consolidating unchecked power within the government and raising concerns over Israel's democratic future.

Background of the Protests

The protests reached their peak ahead of the reform's vote, with demonstrators establishing a tent city outside the Knesset. Israeli President Isaac Herzog.

The protests reached their labeled the moment as an “emergency,” stressing the necessity of urgent negotiations before the vote.

Netanyahu's stance is that the overhaul curtails judicial overreach, yet opponents believe it signals a drift toward autocratic governance.

Legal Challenges and Political Fallout

Legal petitions challenging the reforms have surged following the legislation's enactment. The Supreme Court is set to deliberate on these petitions in September, a session many view as pivotal. The law, now curtailing the court's ability to rule government actions as “unreasonable, has traditionally been a vital check on potential abuses of power, heightening the stakes of the upcoming hearings.

Netanyahu's motivations are also under scrutiny, especially amid his own legal entanglements over corruption allegations. Observers suspect he might be leveraging the judicial overhaul to protect his interests, a concern that fuels public resistance.

Societal Division and Prospects Ahead

Beyond political dynamics, the reform stirs deep societal divisions, sparking fears that democratic principles will erode and far-right policies will gain ground, potentially impacting Palestinian rights and broader social equity. The ongoing unrest hints that protests, strikes, and military pushback may persist as citizens rally against perceived threats to Israel's democratic integrity.

With rising domestic and international concerns—including statements from U.S. officials—the future of Israeli governance appears precarious. Opposition groups remain resolute, advocating for a democratic course and the preservation of judicial independence.

In essence, Israel's judicial upheaval signifies a crucial juncture, laden with profound implications for its democracy, governance, and societal harmony.

Senate Defense Bill Expands U.S. Military Support for Kosovo

By Christina Levandowski

Egypt's intensifying crackdown on dissent has sparked widespread discontent across the nation, affecting sectors from academia to cultural expression. Amid this restrictive environment, however, a glimmer of change emerged with the sentencing and subsequent pardon of Patrick Zaki, an Egyptian rights researcher.

Zaki, who had been studying in Italy, was sentenced to three years for spreading false information. Yet, within a day, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi granted Zaki a pardon, alongside the prominent human rights lawyer Mohamed el-Baqer. This rare move by the Egyptian government has been seen by some as a potential sign of softening in its stance on human rights issues.

Cultural Backlash: Travis Scott's Giza Concert

Simultaneously, cultural tensions surfaced as U.S. rapper Travis Scott faced backlash over his planned concert at the iconic Giza pyramids. The Egyptian Musicians Syndicate voiced opposition, arguing that his music does not align with Egyptian cultural identity. Calls for cancellation circulated widely on social media, with critics accusing Scott of promoting an "anti-Egyptian Afrocentrism agenda." This controversy highlights ongoing debates.



within the nation's approach to foreign influences.

Economic Strain and Labor Discontent

Adding to Egypt's mounting challenges is an economic crisis that has spurred labor unrest. BBC staff in Cairo recently ended a three-day strike, demanding pay parity with colleagues elsewhere in the Middle East. With inflation and currency devaluation straining living conditions, the workers cited economic hardship as a primary driver for their strike. The labor unrest underscores the impact of Egypt's economic struggles on daily life and reveals a growing frustration with inequalities in the workplace.

Press Freedom and a Complex Political Landscape

Against the backdrop of continuing protests against media restrictions, these events illustrate the tensions between state repression and occasional gestures of leniency in Egypt's current political landscape. The pardons for Zaki and el-Baqer suggest the possibility of greater flexibility in addressing dissent, though persistent economic and cultural challenges complicate any straightforward path forward.

In summary, Egypt's political environment is marked by a paradoxical mix of repression and selective leniency, as seen in both human rights and cultural tensions. The nation stands at a complex crossroads, grappling with the demands for rights, identity, and economic stability.



Escalating Tensions: Israel Strikes Gaza

Following Jenin Operation

By Eric Gahagan



In a week marked by intensifying violence, Israel launched air strikes on Gaza following rocket fire from Palestinian militants. This escalation comes on the heels of Israel's largest operation in years in the Jenin refugee camp, a stronghold of Palestinian militancy in the occupied West Bank. Over two days, the Israeli military targeted Jenin with drones and ground forces, killing 12 Palestinians, with one Israeli soldier also losing his life. The military described the mission as a "counter-terrorism operation" aimed at eliminating weapons and disrupting the camp's militant networks. The aftermath has sparked more tension as Gaza and Israeli cities brace for potential conflict escalation.

Gaza Air Strikes in Response to Rocket Fire

Following the Jenin operation, militants launched five rockets toward southern

In retaliation, Israeli fighter jets hit Gaza, targeting facilities Israel says are used by Hamas for producing weapons. Although no group claimed responsibility for the rocket fire, the Israeli military held Hamas accountable, warning that all security violations will face severe consequences.

Rising Tensions in Tel Aviv

In a related incident, a car-ramming and stabbing attack took place in Tel Aviv, where seven people were injured. The attacker, a Palestinian from the West Bank, was shot dead at the scene. Hamas hailed the attack as a "natural response" to the Jenin operation, underscoring the fragile state of Israeli-Palestinian relations as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed continued efforts to "uproot terrorism."

Humanitarian Concerns and Civilian Displacement

The Jenin operation displaced over 3,000 Palestinians as families fled intense fighting and drone strikes. Many civilians were left without essential services such as water and electricity. The UN expressed alarm over the scope of the operation, noting its impact on densely populated areas. Palestinian officials reported that ambulances were restricted from reaching critical areas, and Israeli bulldozers dug up streets to neutralize explosives, exacerbating.

Political Repercussions and International Response

As Israel pledges further security actions, Palestinian leaders have condemned the Jenin operation, calling it an unjust invasion. Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh criticized statements from foreign governments supporting Israel's right to self-defense, arguing that only the Palestinian people have a legitimate right to defend themselves against occupation.

Israel's latest measures in Gaza and Jenin highlight a volatile period of rising tensions and renewed conflict. With the fragile ceasefire between Israel and Gaza under strain, observers worry that any further provocation may lead to a broader escalation affecting the entire region.

Extreme Heatwaves Devastate Middle East and North Africa

By Jan Frazier

Global temperatures are reaching unprecedented highs, with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) among the hardest-hit regions. Scorching heatwaves are pushing temperatures to record-breaking levels, leading the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to issue warnings about the severe impact on human health, infrastructure, and regional stability.

Record-Breaking Temperatures Across MENA

Countries in the MENA region, from Algeria to Syria, are experiencing some of the highest temperatures recorded this year, reaching upwards of 40°C (104°F). These extremes not only endanger public health but also place immense strain on local infrastructure. With prolonged high temperatures, the risk of heat-related illnesses and fatalities has surged, particularly affecting vulnerable populations.

Widespread Wildfires and Power Shortages

The relentless heat has intensified wildfires across the region, with several areas facing emergency warnings. Power grids are also struggling to cope, leading to outages that are impacting millions. In Gaza, the situation is particularly severe, as frequent power shortages have spurred protests amid the



worsening heat. Many families are resorting to creative cooling methods to survive the sweltering conditions.

WMO's Call for Urgent Climate Action

The WMO has highlighted the urgency of addressing these extreme conditions, attributing the intensifying heat to climate change. John Nairn, WMO's senior advisor on extreme heat, noted that current weather patterns deviate significantly from historical norms. He emphasized the

importance of climate repair to mitigate these adverse trends, calling for comprehensive efforts to adapt to and counter the impact of global warming.

A Warning of Future Extremes

As temperatures continue to rise, experts warn that the

recent heatwaves may become the "new normal" for regions like MENA. Immediate climate action and adaptation strategies are crucial to safeguarding public health, infrastructure, and natural resources in the face of this escalating climate crisis.

Escalating Tensions in Jenin: The Struggle Intensifies in the West Bank

By Athena Nagel

The atmosphere in Jenin's refugee camp resembles Gaza post-conflict but is unfolding in the occupied West Bank, where dynamics differ profoundly. In what feels like a swift descent into a more perilous situation, the destruction from the Israeli army's largest operation in 20 years is stark.

Hundreds of Israeli troops entered the camp on a recent Monday, unleashing airstrikes, unseen in the West Bank for two decades, and clearing roads of militants' bombs. Gun battles between the Israeli forces and Palestinian militants continued until Israeli troops withdrew on Tuesday night.

In the aftermath, thousands of residents filled the streets to survey the wreckage. They captured images of demolished homes, vehicles crushed by Israeli bulldozers, and damage to water and power networks. For many, the devastation recalls scenes from earthquakes in Turkey and Syria earlier this year.

Although the Israeli convoys have pulled out, fear persists. Israel has pledged to continue operations as long as needed, while Palestinian militant groups have vowed revenge, deepening the resolve on both sides. Amid the turmoil, the camp mourns



the deaths of 12 Palestinians, four of whom were minors.

The growing violence in Jenin highlights the crumbling peace process. The younger generation of militants is disillusioned with the Palestinian Authority, viewing it as complicit in Israel's military occupation. This frustration recently led to clashes between residents and PA forces, underscoring the region's escalating instability.

As Israel continues its mission to curb what it deems a "city of refuge for terrorism," some fear that the West Bank may soon experience more intense military action. The result is a sobering picture: deepening disillusionment among Palestinians, a shifting balance of power in favor of armed resistance, and an Israeli government steadfast in expanding settlements and asserting exclusive rights over the contested land.



Washington Insider

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