

# The Washington Post

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Sunny 81/61 • Tomorrow: Hazy sunshine 82/64 B8

Democracy Dies in Darkness

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2022 • B5



JAMES FORD FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## Will Commonwealth splinter?

As debates endure over the inequities of colonialism, realms consider severing ties

BY AMANDA COLETTA  
AND MICHAEL E. MILLER

When Prince Edward, the youngest son of Queen Elizabeth II, visited Antigua and Barbuda in April, the country's prime minister told him that the nation, one of 15 in which the British monarch is head of state, wished to "one day" become a republic.

After the queen's death last week, Prime Minister Gaston Browne revealed a timeline: He plans to hold a referendum on casting off the monarchy "probably" within the next three years.

"This is not an act of hostility," Browne told ITV News, but a "final step to complete the circle of independence."

**King of hearts?**  
Warmth for Charles is not widespread. **A10**

**A no-fuss royal:**  
Camilla has found favor in Britain. **A11**

**'Skipping Charles':**  
Some hoped William would get crown. **A11**

**The coffin of Queen Elizabeth II leaves Buckingham Palace on Wednesday.**

The passing of Elizabeth, a unifying figure more beloved than her son, King Charles III, comes as several Commonwealth realms are reassessing their relationships with the crown.

Leaders across the Commonwealth, an association of 66 nations, most of them already republics, expressed sadness over the monarch's death. But many of those countries, former outposts of the empire, have also been engaged in a public reckoning over the legacies of colonialism, including calls for atonement, reparations and independence.

"The accession of Charles is of course putting this debate front and center: What are we doing with this British, distant, White

SEE COMMONWEALTH ON A10

## Rail service cuts take effect ahead of possible strike

PASSENGER TRIPS, AGRICULTURE HIT FIRST

With deadline near, negotiators meet in Washington

BY JEFF STEIN  
AND LAUREN KAORI GURLEY

The threat of a rail strike on Friday has already begun rippling through the U.S. economy, as farmers, businesses and commuters start to feel the impact of a potential transit shutdown even before it happens.

While top negotiators huddled in Washington late Wednesday to try to hammer out an agreement, industry groups increasingly warned of severe disruptions to America's already fragile supply chains. Scheduled shipments of ammonia, fertilizer and other chemicals for agriculture are being pulled this week, because

those products cannot be stranded in transit should negotiations fail, farm groups said. Ethanol prices moved markedly higher this week on the threat of a strike, according to S&P Global. U.S. railroads are also prepared to stop shipping crops as soon as Thursday, the Consumer Brands Association reported.

On the passenger rail side, Amtrak is cancelling all long-distance trains starting Thursday, although most trains in the Northeast won't be affected, Amtrak said.

SEE RAIL STRIKE ON A18

**Travel plans:** Regional agencies prepare for service stoppages. **B1**

## Defiant Zelensky visits liberated eastern city

Ukraine seeks to keep Russia on the run after counteroffensive rout

BY SHOBHÁN O'GRADY  
AND ROBYN DIXON

**ZYUM, UKRAINE** — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made a bold visit Wednesday to the recently liberated city of Izyum in the eastern Kharkiv region, where he participated in a flag-raising ceremony to mark the nation's most important mili-

tary victory since Russian invaders were repelled from the suburbs of Kyiv in late March.

Zelensky, striking a resolute tone, said that while Russia might temporarily occupy parts of Ukraine, "it is definitely impossible to occupy our people, the Ukrainian people."

"The heroes are here," he said, describing the significance of the blue-and-yellow national banner. "It means that the enemy is gone, ran away."

The swift and remarkably successful counteroffensive that liberated Izyum and towns and villages throughout the Kharkiv region

SEE UKRAINE ON A12

ELECTION 2022

## GOP scrambles to settle on abortion as bill exposes rifts

BY HANNAH KNOWLES,  
RACHEL ROUBIN  
AND MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR

In a memo to GOP campaigns released this week, the Republican National Committee laid out what it called a winning message on abortion: Press Democrats on where they stand on the procedure later in pregnancy, seek "common ground" on exceptions to bans and keep the focus on crime and the economy.

Then, Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) introduced legislation to ban abortions nationwide after 15 weeks of pregnancy — overshadowing new inflation numbers and undermining what many GOP strategists see as their best message for the fall: "Leave it to the states."

SEE ABORTION ON A4

## Missing people, buried bones and an Oklahoma mystery

An investigation is a window into the often unseen threat of white-supremacist prison gangs

BY HANNAH ALLAM

**OKLAHOMA CITY** — The caller had news but warned LaVonne Harris not to get her hopes up.

Harris's son, 33-year-old Nathan Smith, had vanished along a dirt road in Oklahoma one freezing night more than two years earlier. Detectives had long stopped checking in with her, and Harris could feel her search growing lonelier with each passing month.

The call in April, from an advocate for families of the missing, wasn't encouraging, but it was a lead: Authorities in rural Logan County, just north of here, had discovered human remains belonging to more than one person. Also, the caller added delicately, the remains weren't intact.

Harris, 58, sat down to steady herself. She listened, then hung up to tell her daughter.

"I said, 'Lou, they found these bodies,'" Harris recalled. "They've been burned and cut."



NICK DEFRIO FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Licensed private detective Jathan Hunt has his dog, Justice, do another search of part of a property in Choctaw, Okla., where they were looking in July for human remains.

## For earmakers, race is on to retool factories for electric era

BY JEANNE WHALEN

**NORMAL, ILL.** — When Mitsubishi closed its auto factory here in 2016, residents worried it would become another symbol of American manufacturing decline. Six years later, the plant is back in business with a radical Silicon Valley makeover.

A fancy coffee bar and blond-wood furnishings decorate the entryway, where a wide staircase surrounded by ferns leads to the second floor. There, engineers carrying laptops hustle along a corridor lined with glass that overlooks the humming factory floor below, a scene resembling the tidy busyness of a tech startup more than a traditional auto plant.

SEE FACTORIES ON A14

**Biden in Motor City:** President touts federal investment in EVs. **A13**