

# Gun Violence Claims More Lives in U.S. Cities



Police are hunting for a gunman after a shooting in Washington that injured multiple and left two dead.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – Multiple people were shot at a recreational facility in Washington, DC, early Sunday morning, the Metropolitan Police Department said, as it began a search for one suspect in the attack.

Two people were killed and five more injured in the gun attack, which began at Kennedy Recreation Center in the capital’s downtown early Sunday, MDP Executive Assistant Chief Jeffery Carroll said in a briefing to media at the scene, NBC News re-

ported.

“A total of seven people were shot at this location, two of which have since been pronounced deceased,” he said.

The other five injured people were transported to local hospitals, he added. All the victims were adults.

Public Information Officers were responding at the scene, the DC Police Department said on X.

In a separate post on X, the department said it had begun a search for one suspect in the attack.

Meanwhile, a suspect has been taken into custody in New Jersey after allegedly shooting dead three family members, authorities have said, following an hours-long effort to detain him.

Andre Gordon, 26, “surrendered peacefully”, Trenton Police Department spokeswoman Lisette Rios told the AFP news agency on Saturday, after a trail of violence that triggered shelter-in-place orders in two states.

Authorities said Gordon, who is believed to be homeless, began the day by carjacking a vehicle in Trenton before driving some 65km (40 miles) to the northern Philadelphia suburb of Levittown.

There, police said, the suspect killed two people – identified as his 52-year-old stepmother and his 13-year-old sister.

Three others, including a minor, managed to hide “as he went through the house searching for them”, Bucks County District Attorney Jennifer Schorn said in a briefing.

The suspect then drove to a nearby residence where he broke in before shooting and killing a 25-year-old woman – who Schorn said was the mother of his two children – before bludgeoning her mother with the butt of his rifle.

## Macron Repeats Threat of Western Operations in Ukraine

PARIS (AFP/Reuters) –French President Emmanuel Macron said in an interview that Western ground operations in Ukraine might be necessary “at some point,” days after meeting with German and Polish leaders.

Last month Macron refused to rule out putting troops on the ground in Ukraine, which prompted a stern response from Berlin and other European partners.

The French president has not recanted from his position, but stressed that Western allies would not take the initiative.

“Maybe at some point — I don’t want it, I won’t take the initiative — we will have to have operations on the ground, whatever they may be, to counter the Russian forces,” Macron told newspaper Le Parisien in an interview conducted on Friday.

“France’s strength is that we can do it.”

Disagreements over the possibility of ground operations and the delivery of long-range missiles to Kyiv had threatened to undermine cooperation between the allies.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz reacted angrily to Macron’s earlier refusal to rule out sending troops to Ukraine and his pointed comments urging allies not to be “cowards.”

Macron met his German and Polish counterparts in Berlin on Friday, in a show of solidarity behind Kiev.

After the meeting, Macron said



Leopard 1 A5 combat tanks ready for delivery are pictured at the military ground at the Kliestz, eastern Germany, on February 23, 2024. Soldiers from Ukraine are trained on the tank in Germany.

the three countries of the so-called Weimar Triangle were “united” in their aim to “never let Russia win and to support the Ukrainian people until the end.”

As for the developments on the ground, Russian air attacks damaged agricultural enterprises and destroyed several industrial buildings in the Black Sea port of Odesa overnight, Ukraine’s forces said on Sunday.

Russia launched 16 drones and seven missiles, Ukraine’s air force posted on the Telegram messaging app. Fourteen drones were destroyed over the Odesa region.

It was not immediately clear what

happened to the two drones that were not destroyed or whether the missiles hit their targets. The air force said the missiles targeted Ukraine’s Kharkiv, Donetsk and Chernikhiv region.

Russia’s attacks come as Ukraine launched 35 drones against broad areas of Russia, including Moscow, on Sunday, the final day of Russia’s presidential vote.

Reuters could not independently verify the reports.

The south command of Ukraine’s armed forces, whose area includes Odesa, said two agricultural enterprises were damaged in Odesa district.

## Trump Warns U.S. Voters of ‘Bloodbath’ If He Loses Presidential Election

WAGHINGTON (AFP) – **Former U.S. president Donald Trump warned of a “bloodbath for the country” if he is not elected in November.**

Donald Trump told a rally in Ohio that November’s presidential election will be the “most important date” in U.S. history, painting his campaign for the White House as a turning point for the country.

Days after securing his position as the presumptive Republican nominee, the former president also warned of a “bloodbath” if he is not elected – though it was not clear what he was referring to, with the remark coming in the middle of comments about threats to the U.S. auto industry.

“The date – remember this, November 5 – I believe it’s going to be the most important date in the history of our country,” the 77-year-old told rally-goers in Vandalia, Ohio, repeating well-worn criticisms that his rival, President Joe Biden, is the “worst” president.

Criticizing what he said were Chinese plans to build cars in Mexico and sell them to Americans, he stated: “We’re going to put a 100 percent tariff on every single car that comes across the line, and you’re not going to be able to sell those cars if I get elected.”

“Now if I don’t get elected it’s going to be a bloodbath for the whole – that’s going to be the least of it, it’s going to be a bloodbath for the country. That’ll be the least of it. But they’re not going to sell those cars.”

As Trump’s comment gained traction on social media, Biden’s campaign released a statement calling the Republican a “loser” at the ballot box in 2020 who then “doubles down on his threats of political violence.”

“He wants another January 6 but the American people are going to give him another electoral defeat this November because they continue to reject his extremism, his affection for violence, and his thirst for revenge,” the campaign said, referring to the deadly attack on the U.S. Capitol by Trump supporters in 2021.

Later, Biden spoke at a dinner in Washington, where he also warned of “an unprecedented moment in history.”

“Freedom is under assault... The lies about the 2020 election, the plot to overturn it, to embrace the Jan. 6 insurrection pose the greatest threat to our democracy since the American Civil War,” he said.

“In 2020, they failed, but ... the threat remains.”

## Europe Faces €56bn NATO Military Spending Hole



German soldiers participate in a NATO training exercise

BRUSSELS (FT/Ruptly) – NATO’s European members need to find an extra €56bn a year to meet the alliance’s military spending target, according to research by Germany’s Ifo Institute for the Financial Times.

The research showed many of the EU countries with the biggest shortfalls in NATO’s target for military spending to hit 2 percent of gross domestic product — including Italy, Spain and Belgium — also have among the highest levels of debt and budget deficits in Europe. The push for the 32 members of the U.S.-led alliance to boost military spending in response to the war on Ukraine is stoking budgetary pressures in Europe at a time of low growth and when many countries are tightening their fiscal plans. Economists say this will make it harder for the laggards to bridge the gap.

The biggest shortfall by value was in Germany, which last year spent €14bn less than needed to meet the benchmark, according to Ifo. But Berlin has halved this gap in the past decade, adjusted for inflation, and plans to close it completely this year. The next largest European shortfalls were €11bn in Spain, €10.8bn in Italy and €4.6bn in Belgium. The trio were among six EU countries with debt above 100 per cent of their GDP last year. Italy also had one of the bloc’s highest budget deficits at 7.2 percent and its interest costs are set to rise above 9 percent of government revenues this year.

**Thousands Join Anti-NATO March in Paris**

Meanwhile, thousands gathered in

Paris on Saturday to protest against the French government’s decision to send weaponry and financial aid to Ukraine.

Footage shows protesters marching and chanting while carrying flags and banners. The leader of The Patriots (LP) party Florian Philippot, one of the most staunch opponents of NATO in France, also attended the march.

On Tuesday, the French National Assembly supported a 10-year bilateral security agreement covering arms, training and 3 billion euros of military aid to Ukraine.

In recent weeks, President Macron has also suggested ground troops could not be ‘ruled out’ and that allied nations shouldn’t be ‘cowards’. The UK, Germany and others - as well as NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg - subsequently said they will not be sending troops to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russian presidential spokesperson Dmitri Peskov stated that ‘judging by Mr. President’s statements, France is not averse to increasing its involvement’. He previously accused Macron and other Western leaders of ‘playing with fire’ and escalating the conflict.

Moscow launched the military operation in Ukraine in late February 2022 after recognizing the independence of the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics (DPR and LPR), claiming that Kiev had failed to guarantee their special status under the 2014 Minsk Agreements, and urging Ukraine to declare itself officially neutral and give assurances that it would never join NATO.

## Venezuela’s President Maduro Announces Candidacy for July Re-Election

CARACAS (Dispatches) – **Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro will run for a second re-election to secure another six-year term in voting planned for July 28, the ruling Socialist party said on Saturday.**

Maduro, a 61-year-old former union leader, was proclaimed as the Socialist party’s candidate by Vice President Diosdado Cabello, and took the stage at a large sports arena to address supporters.

“There’s just one outcome, the people’s victory on July 28,” Maduro said, wearing a bright red zippered jacket. “They haven’t been able to stop us, nor will they be able to.”

Maduro will have to probably face the opposition candidate Maria Corina Machado.

Though Machado won an opposition primary in October, it was unclear whether she will appear on the ballot after the country’s top court upheld a ban barring her from holding public office.

Venezuela said the United States is interfering in its

upcoming elections, after Washington criticized Caracas for barring the opposition candidate from holding public office for 15 years.

The country’s controller general said that a previous ban on Machado had been extended because she supported U.S. sanctions against the government of Maduro.

She was barred from holding office in 2015 for 12 months.

Candidates have until March 25 to register and it remained unclear whether the opposition will name a replacement for Machado, who is under increasing pressure to pick a substitute.

The U.S. partially rolled back sanctions on Venezuela’s government in late 2023 because of an elections deal with the opposition, but the nascent rapprochement came to an end with arrests of opposition figures and the court decision about Machado. The U.S. has pledged a reinstatement of oil sanctions from mid-April.

Maduro gained victory in 2013 elections.

## News in Brief

REYKJAVIK (AFP) – Icelandic police declared a state of emergency Saturday as lava spewed from a new volcanic fissure on the Reykjanes peninsula, the fourth eruption to hit the area since December. A “volcanic eruption has started between stora Skogfell and Hagafell on the Reykjanes Peninsula,” said a statement from the Icelandic Met Office (IMO). Live video images showed glowing lava and billowing smoke. Iceland’s Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management announced it had sent a helicopter to narrow down the exact location of the new fissure. The authority also said the police had declared a state of emergency due to the eruption. According to the IMO, it occurred close to the same location as a previous eruption on February 8. Lava appeared to flow south towards the dykes built to protect the fishing village Grindavik, it said. Minutes before the eruption, the agency had issued a statement saying that seismic activity indicated that there was an increased chance of an eruption. “The pre-eruptive warning phase was very short,” the IMO said.

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MOSCOW (AFP) – More than half of Russian voters had cast their ballots at polling stations or online in the presidential election, according to data released by the Central Election Commission (CEC) of the Russian Federation. Without counting early remote voting, the turnout for the presidential election had reached 58.1 percent among over 114 million eligible voters, said the commission. Russia’s eighth presidential election began on Friday and ended on Sunday. Four candidates registered for the election, namely incumbent Russian President Vladimir Putin, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party Leonid Slutsky, Vladislav Davankov from Russia’s New People Party, and Nikolai Kharitonov, the Russian Communist Party’s candidate. Early voting for the presidential election began on Feb. 25 when voters in remote, hard-to-reach areas, polar regions, overseas vessels, and border outposts cast their votes. Russian citizens living abroad started their early voting on March 1. The election introduced remote online voting in several regions for the first time. Under Russia’s presidential election law, the president, who serves as the head of state, is elected directly by the populace for a six-year term. Eligible presidential candidates must be Russian Federation citizens who are at least 35 years old, have resided in Russia for more than 25 years, and have never held citizenship of another country.

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MADRID (AFP) – Spanish farmers blocked traffic on one of the main arteries of the Spanish capital Madrid, protesting at “unfair competition” from products imported from countries “that do not respect European standards.” Like their European counterparts, Spanish farmers are also protesting against the cumbersome bureaucracy and complex standards imposed by Brussels, and complaining about the low prices at which they have to sell their produce. European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen has laid out a further series of concessions to EU farmers, especially for those on smaller properties, in a bid to calm rolling protests in the sector. The measures aim “to further ease the administrative burden” and loosen compliance with some environmental rules farmers encounter when getting money from the bloc’s subsidy program, von der Leyen told Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in a phone conversation, a commission statement said. The changes affecting the EU subsidy program, known as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), were officially proposed on Friday evening.

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MOSCOW (Reuters) – South Ossetia, a region that broke away from Georgia and calls itself an independent state, has discussed becoming part of Russia with Moscow officials, Russian news agency RIA cited the head of South Ossetia’s parliament as saying on Sunday. Russia recognized South Ossetia and another breakaway region, Abkhazia, as independent states in 2008 after Russian troops repelled a Georgian attempt to retake South Ossetia in a five-day war in 2008. Venezuela, Nicaragua, Nauru, and Syria recognized them as independent too. “We are discussing all these issues in close coordination with Russia, taking into account our bilateral relations and treaties,” RIA quoted Alan Alborov, the chairman of South Ossetia’s parliament, as saying in answer to a question about the possibility of holding a referendum on becoming part of Russia. “When we come to this idea together with the Russian Federation (about joining the Russian Federation), we will do it,” RIA quoted Alborov as saying. The Russian-backed leader of South Ossetia, Alan Gagloev, last year expressed hope that the region could be formally incorporated into Russia, RIA said.

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PORT-AU-PRINCE (AP) – Police in Haiti seized firearms and cleared roadblocks in a Port-au-Prince neighborhood controlled by notorious gang leader Jimmy “Barbecue” Cherizier, in an operation that left several criminals dead, authorities said. National police units entered the Delmas neighborhood Friday evening with the aim of unblocking a road, said Lionel Lazarre of the Haitian police union. Several “bandits” were killed, he said. A later police statement said officers exchanged gunfire with men from Cherizier’s gang, seized firearms and succeeded in unblocking roads. “New strategies are being implemented by the police with the aim of recovering certain areas occupied by these armed gangs in recent days, in order to facilitate the free movement of peaceful citizens,” the statement said, without providing details. Another operation was underway Saturday morning as law enforcement attempted to regain control of the capital’s main port, where gangs had looted several containers, a source at the port told AP.

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BOGOTA (Anadolu) – At least 52 people have died in the South American country of Bolivia due to floods caused by heavy rains in the last three months. According to local press reports on Saturday, the rains affected many cities, particularly La Paz, resulting in numerous casualties and property damage. Since the beginning of the rainy season in the country, 52 people have died and five others have gone missing. The authorities said heavy rains caused flooding in 133 towns, affecting 51,668 people. The rains also destroyed 911 houses, while 1,251 houses were partially damaged, prompting a “red alert” in some areas.