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The Washington Post



The Daily 202

Intelligence for leaders.

Presented by **Blue Cross Blue Shield Association**



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Welcome to The Daily 202 newsletter! [Tell your friends to sign up here](#). On this day in 1969, Apollo 11 rocketed to the heavens to make the first manned mission to the surface of the moon.

With the Taliban making big gains in Afghanistan and [some analysts predicting](#) a “who lost the war?” debate, former president [George W. Bush warned this week](#) women and girls there will suffer “unspeakable harm” after the American withdrawal.

In an interview with Germany's Deutsche-Welle, Bush also predicted Afghans who worked with U.S. forces are "just going to be left behind to be slaughtered by these very brutal people, and it breaks my heart."

"The consequences are going to be unbelievably bad," said the former president, who sent troops to Afghanistan nearly 20 years ago to hunt down Osama bin Laden after the 9/11 attacks.

Bush is almost certainly right about the fate of women and girls under the Taliban, though at least some of the Afghans who partnered with America over the past two decades [are on track to get evacuated](#).

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But President Biden has rebutted those criticisms, and the growing chorus of hawks warning the American withdrawal is a mistake. He most notably did so in what we might call a "prebuttal" in a February 2020 interview with CBS News.

 A U.S. soldier walks along a road that is under construction near Bagram, about 37 miles from Kabul, in 2010. (Joël Saget/AFP/Getty Images)

A U.S. soldier walks along a road that is under construction near Bagram, about 37 miles from Kabul, in 2010. (Joël Saget/AFP/Getty Images)

We'll get to that question and answer session in a moment. It's a fascinating look at Biden's attitude toward Afghanistan and how the

president approaches the question of when to send American men and women into combat.

First, though, the news out of war-ravaged Afghanistan this week all seems to be foretelling the same dark future.

There was [the chilling video](#) of Taliban fighters executing 22 Afghan commandos who were trying to surrender. NATO ally [France told its citizens to quit the country](#), chartered a special July 17 flight to evacuate them, and warned there would be no others. Taliban fighters took control of an important border crossing into Pakistan ([whether they still hold it is under dispute](#)), after seizing others [linking Afghanistan to Iran, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan](#). And the Islamist militia grabbed ever more [control over territory and infrastructure](#).



All of this has happened since Biden defended the American withdrawal — [which is quite popular](#) — in a July 8 speech, his first public remarks on the subject since he announced in April U.S. forces were pulling out.

My colleagues [Cleve R. Wootson Jr.](#), [Dan Lamothe](#), and [John Wagner](#) reported:

“ ‘Let me ask those who want us to stay: How many more — how many thousands more Americans, daughters and sons — are you willing to risk?’ Biden said from the East Room of the White House, standing in front of the flags of [the U.S. military branches](#). ‘I will not send another generation of Americans to war in Afghanistan with no reasonable expectation of achieving a different outcome.’ ”

(The language was reminiscent of Biden climate envoy [John Kerry’s 1971 rebuttal](#) to politicians who urged a continued presence in Vietnam: “How

do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?”)

White House aides also note that staying beyond the target withdrawal date set by President Donald Trump could have led Taliban fighters to target Americans, about 2,400 of whom have died in Afghanistan over 20 years of war.

Biden voted in favor of the Afghan war in September 2001. But by the time President Barack Obama was weighing a troop “surge” there, he was a committed skeptic. My colleague [Greg Jaffe reported in February 2020](#) that the future president argued against the surge in a memo he wrote in longhand and sent to Obama via fax over Thanksgiving weekend in 2009.



Which gets us to [Biden’s Feb. 23, 2020 interview with CBS](#).

Biden confirmed a report in The Washington Post he had declared in an internal administration debate he would not send his son to Afghanistan to fight for women’s rights.

“What I meant was there's a thousand places we could go to deal with injustice,” he said. “The question is is America's vital self-interest at stake or the vital self-interest of one of our allies at stake?”

Anticipating a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, “Face The Nation” host Margaret Brennan asked Biden “don't you bear some responsibility for the outcome if the Taliban ends up back in control and women end up losing the rights?”

“No I don't,” Biden replied. “Look, are you telling me that we should ... go to war with China because what they're doing to the Uyghurs, a million

Uyghurs, out in the West in concentration camps? Is that what you're saying to me?"

Biden continued: **“Do I bear responsibility? Zero responsibility. The responsibility I have is to protect America's national self-interest** and not put our women and men in harm's way to try to solve every single problem in the world by use of force. That's my responsibility as president. And that's what I'll do as president.”

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What's happening now

This weekend is set to bring the summer's fourth major heat wave. “Another weekend is set to bring another string of potentially record-breaking high temperatures to another part of the Western United States,” [the New York Times reports](#). “This time, it is the northern Rockies and the High Plains, including parts of Montana, Idaho, Wyoming and Utah, that will be under a high-pressure system known as a heat dome, according to forecasts. That will set temperatures in those states soaring through the weekend and early next week, peaking on Monday.”

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Lunchtime reads from The Post

- **“The health and climate consequences of the American food system cost three times as much as the food itself,”** by Laura Reiley: “The U.S. spends \$1.1 trillion a year on food. But when the impacts of the food system on different parts of our society — including rising health care costs, climate change and biodiversity loss

— are factored in, the bill is around three times that, according to a report by the Rockefeller Foundation, a private charity that funds medical and agricultural research.”

- **“A man in a gladiator costume filmed the Jan. 6 mob for his mother, feds say: ‘Here comes the riot police, Mom,’ ”** by Katie Shepherd: “When Nathan Wayne Entrekin joined a crowd of rioters that pushed its way into the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, he donned a Roman gladiator costume over jean shorts and a T-shirt despite the winter chill, federal investigators say. As the mob chanted, Entrekin allegedly filmed videos on his cellphone, narrating the action for his mother, who was back in Arizona. ‘Wow, Mom. I wish you were here with me,’ Entrekin said in one video, according to a criminal complaint. ‘It’s really exciting in here. It’s joyful and it’s sad at the same time. We can’t let Biden ... be our president. We can’t ... there’s no way.’”
- **“Los Angeles County reimposes indoor mask mandate for all as coronavirus cases rise nationwide,”** by Fenit Nirappil: “Los Angeles County announced Thursday it will revive an indoor mask mandate applying to everyone regardless of vaccination status in response to rising coronavirus cases and hospitalizations linked to the highly transmissible delta variant. The order to take effect late Saturday in the county of 10 million people marks the most dramatic reversal of the country’s reopening this summer as experts fear a new wave of the virus.”

... and beyond

- **“Arizona Senate to seek more election material from Maricopa County; door-to-door questioning recommended,”** by the Arizona Republic’s Andrew Oxford and Mary Jo Pitzl: “Arizona Senate President Karen Fann said Thursday that the Legislature needs more materials and data from Maricopa County for an unprecedented and controversial review of 2020 election results that is deep into its third month. Suggesting that the Senate’s review may not be nearing its end, Fann said during a

hearing at the Capitol that she expects the demands for additional materials will end up in court, setting up yet another legal battle in the saga that has seen the county and state lawmakers spar over the scope of the Legislature's subpoena power."

- **“Young Black activists helped change the state flag. They intend to change the state,”** by the Mississippi Free Press's Nick Judin and Ashton Pittman: " 'We should talk about felony rights restoration,' [said organizer Timothy Young, 22]. ... In 1890, white supremacist lawmakers wrote felony voter disenfranchisement into the state constitution, singling out certain crimes that they believed Black residents were more likely to commit or, at least, get convicted for committing. It was part of a larger effort to rollback Black gains alongside other now-defunct Jim Crow voting provisions like poll taxes and literacy tests. ... The felony disenfranchisement provision still stands, though, barring thousands of Mississippians from ever voting again even after serving their time. The number of Black Mississippians who are permanently barred from voting because of that law today exceeds the margin by which Republican Tate Reeves beat Democrat Jim Hood in the 2019 election for governor."

On the Hill

Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-Ohio), chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, was arrested during a voting rights protest at the Senate office building.

- Beatty was arrested along several activists, [Vanessa Williams reports](#). "Speakers voiced frustration that the Senate has not passed the For the People Act, a far-reaching bill that would provide minimum standards for early voting, vote-by-mail and automatic voter registration, overriding many of the provisions in new Republican state laws. The measure also would impose federal mandates for nonpartisan congressional redistricting and public campaign financing. They also called for Senate passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, which would restore a key provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965."

- “The statement was titled ‘Getting into Good Trouble, Defending Voting Rights,’ a nod to the late congressman John Lewis (D-Ga.) who repeatedly urged the next generation of activists to get into ‘good trouble.’ ”
- “The protesters called on Senate Democrats, who with Vice President Harris as tie-breaker hold a one-vote majority, to eliminate the 60-vote-threshold filibuster and pass the bills to counter laws enacted by Republican legislatures across the country.”

 Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-Ohio) is taken into custody by U.S. Capitol Police officers in the Hart Senate Office Building, after a demonstration supporting the voting rights. (Jose Luis Magana/AP)

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Meanwhile, Sen. Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.) once again said he will not support a filibuster exception for a voting rights bill.

- Manchin’s decision effectively dashes “chances that Democrats could maneuver around Republican opposition to overhauling the nation’s elections laws,” [Bloomberg’s Sophia Cai reports](#). “The West Virginia Democrat made the remarks after meeting with a group of Texas House Democrats who left the state to stall a vote on Republican-backed legislation that they say would restrict voting.”

Democrats are pushing for sweeping climate legislation amid a scorching summer.

- “The far-reaching set of climate measures that Senate Democrats outlined this week came as a scorching summer brought deadly heat waves, deepened droughts and fueled wildfires across the American West — the latest reminders of why the party has sought to prioritize efforts to slow rising temperatures around the globe,” [Dino Grandoni, Brady Dennis and Juliet Eilperin report](#).
- “While the \$3.5 trillion budget deal that emerged Wednesday could change in key ways in the months ahead, the proposal represents one of the biggest efforts yet that Congress has undertaken to address climate change. It underscores how cutting U.S. greenhouse gas

emissions — and spurring other nations to do the same — has emerged as a central priority for Biden and his party.”

- “Still, the climate measures unveiled this week face significant political, legal and technical hurdles — including some from within the Democratic Party itself. Already, [Manchin] has expressed skepticism over the push to rapidly phase out fossil fuels.”
- “The package represents the best chance of locking in the emissions cuts required to meet Biden’s goal of cutting U.S. greenhouse gas emissions at least in half by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.”

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) set a new infrastructure deal deadline as the IRS provision faces strong blowback.

- “[Schumer] sought to move lawmakers one step closer to debating and potentially passing roughly \$4 trillion in new federal spending, announcing his plans to hold a key chamber vote on a still-forming infrastructure deal next week,” [Tony Romm and Seung Min Kim report](#). “The announcement essentially doubled as a major new deadline for a group of roughly two dozen Democrats and Republicans, who for the past few months have been hammering out a proposal to invest close to \$1 trillion in the country’s roads, bridges, pipes, ports and Internet connections.”
- “One of the key components financing their tentative legislation — increased federal efforts to collect unpaid taxes — seemed in particular political peril Thursday amid sustained GOP opposition. Its potential absence from the final package left lawmakers scrambling to find other ways to cover the costs of their long-sought infrastructure investments, because some senators from both sides have maintained that they are not willing to support an agreement that adds to the deficit.”
- “In calling for the early infrastructure vote next week, Schumer on Thursday also issued a similar edict to his own caucus, telling Democrats that they need to come to a full agreement on a second package that includes additional spending to enact President Biden’s fuller economic agenda.”

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) visited Trump yesterday, showing how House Republicans see their path back to power through the former president.

- “McCarthy became the latest in a parade of Republicans to make the pilgrimage to a Trump-owned property seeking the former President's support, while scores of GOP candidates have been invoking Trump's name and image to boost their campaign coffers, which are filling up at record rates,” [CNN's Melanie Zanona reports](#). “With Republicans counting on Trump to be a crucial pillar of their efforts to reclaim the House majority next year, both in terms of fundraising and turnout, they are eager to stay in his good graces and reluctant to damage or provoke the mercurial ex-President over the next 16 months.”
- “He's still the biggest dog in the Republican pound among the base,” said Rep. Tim Burchett, a Republican from Tennessee, referring to Trump.”
- “Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has taken a decidedly different approach toward Trump, careful to avoid talking about the ex-President even as Trump promises to play a role in several key contests. But for the most part, Republicans see far more political upside to keeping Trump front and center.”

Quote of the day

“They are brave, they are bold, they are courageous,” said Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) about the Texas lawmakers that left their state legislature to avoid voting on bills that would limit voting rights. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) called the runaway lawmakers “defenders of the Constitution,” while Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) hailed them as “freedom fighters.”

The new world order

Records reveal how a Haitian American held in the probe into the assassination of the Haitian president financed a “personal security” team.

- Christian Emmanuel Sanon — a 63-year-old Haitian American and self-described pastor and physician now detained in Haiti in connection with the investigation into the audacious assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse — met with “Walter Veintemilla, a Florida financier who invests in infrastructure projects, and Antonio “Tony” Intriago, the owner of a local security firm also in Florida,” [Shawn Boburg, Anthony Faiola, Samantha Schmidt and Dalton Bennett report](#).
- “A company owned by Veintemilla, Worldwide Investment Development Group, and Intriago’s CTU Security would recruit and assemble a private security force to protect Sanon until he became Haiti’s president, according to the details in an unsigned draft consulting agreement obtained by The Post. Sanon ultimately would repay them for their services using the country’s assets, according to the draft contract circulated on June 22.”

Young Cuban activists are carrying on the fight for freedom started by their parents and grandparents.

- “As Alberto Jimenez, 87, stood near the monument listening to the chants from the rally, a torrential rain started and several young protesters immediately rushed to shelter him with their umbrellas,” [Lori Rozsa reports](#). “‘Don’t worry, we’ll stand here with you,’ Olga Rodriguez, 18, told Jimenez.”
“It was the first protest Rodriguez and her friends had ever attended, and her words carried meaning beyond just protecting Jimenez from the rain. She and the hundreds of other young Cubans who have joined protests here and on the island in recent days reflect what some see as a changing of the guard. They believe they can win the fight started by their parents and grandparents. Some of their elders do, too. “These young people, they will make this change for freedom,” said Jimenez.”

Over 100 have died in the European floods.

- “As deadly floodwaters began to recede Friday across Germany and Belgium, the full extent of the destruction was slowly revealed: muddy washouts where homes used to stand, cars and debris tangled together and officials still adding to a death toll that surpassed 115 and could climb higher,” [Loveday Morris and Jennifer Hassan report](#). “ ‘Whole places are scarred by the disaster,’ German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said at a news conference after the worst flooding in decades to hit the region. ‘Many people have lost what they have built all their lives.’ ”
- “The storm — a major low-pressure system that stretched from Germany to France — brought a deluge Thursday that quickly swelled rivers, collapsed bridges and roads and left many people scrambling to rooftops or onto fallen trees. At one point, German officials said up to 1,300 people remained unaccounted for. But the staggering figure could be due to the fact that mobile phone networks were crippled.”

The Amazon rainforest is the world’s carbon sink. Parts of it now release more carbon than can be absorbed.

- “A study recently published in the journal Nature suggests that fire and deforestation, along with warmer temperatures and markedly drier conditions, mean the world’s largest rainforest is gradually losing its ability to be a carbon sink,” [Rachel Pannett reports](#). “The impact of changes to the Amazon reach far beyond South America.”
- “Over the course of nearly a decade, the researchers used small planes to collect hundreds of air samples at up to 14,800 feet above sea level. They found that not only were carbon emissions greater in eastern parts of the Amazon than in the west, but that the southeastern area — a hot spot of deforestation — is now acting as a source of carbon emissions into the atmosphere rather than a carbon sink.”

Pulitzer Prize-winning Reuters photojournalist Danish Siddiqui was killed in Afghanistan.

- Siddiqui “described intense clashes and a near miss on his Twitter account. ‘I was lucky to be safe and capture the visual of one of the

rockets hitting the armour plate overhead,' he tweeted Tuesday," [Ezzatullah Mehrdad reports](#).

- "Siddiqui was with an Afghan special forces unit attempting to retake the district of Spin Boldak, southeast of Kandahar city along the border with Pakistan. He was killed along with a senior Afghan officer, according to the Reuters report."

Hot on the left

Rep. Matt Gaetz's (R-Fla.) campaign paid \$25,000 to a lawyer who represented Jeffrey Epstein. "The Florida Republican and acolyte of Trump is under investigation for possible sex trafficking of a minor. A spokesman for Gaetz did not address the payment but touted the congressman's fundraising haul, which totaled more than \$1.3 million in the second quarter of the year," [Isaac Stanley-Becker reports](#). "The June payment, for legal consulting, went to the law office of Marc Fernich, whose website says he specializes in 'subtle, novel and creative arguments that other attorneys may miss.' "

Hot on the right

"Lindsey Graham pledges to 'go to war' for Chick-fil-A amid Notre Dame protest," [Emily Heil and Maria Luisa Paúl report](#). "A group of students at the University of Notre Dame had objected to the suggested opening of a location on its campus, citing the company's history of donating to anti-LGBTQ groups. The students also pointed to donations made by Chick-fil-A's billionaire owner, Dan Cathy, to a group fighting the Equality Act, legislation that would ban discrimination based on sexual orientation. News of the students' beef with the chicken chain was amplified by a story on Fox News ... Fox's headline was enough to prompt Graham to stand up for Big Chicken."



How K-pop conquered the universe, visualized

K-pop, mainstream pop music from South Korea, has a distinct recipe for creating global hits. The main ingredient, a catchy hook song, gets paired with a signature dance move and is wrapped up in a flashy video. [Marian Liu, Youjin Shin and Shelly Tan report on why K-pop is so popular.](#)



Today in Washington

Biden will receive a briefing from members of the White House coronavirus response at 1 p.m. At 2:30 p.m., Biden will depart the White House en route to Camp David. He will receive the weekly economic briefing at 3:45 p.m.

Harris will meet with members of the Black Women's Roundtable and other women leaders on voting rights. At 4:20 p.m., she will deliver remarks at a virtual finance event for the Democratic National Committee.

In closing

Stephen Colbert assessed Trump's claim that he is "not into coups:"



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