



President Trump, Melania Trump, President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, second from right, touring the National Archives.

WHITE HOUSE MEMO

Welcome Mat
For Dictators,
Not U.S. Press

By PETER BAKER

WASHINGTON — At the White House gate, a throng of Chinese journalists was being admitted onto the grounds of the Executive Mansion to cover the visit of President Xi Jinping. Out on the street, several American journalists were blocked from entering the White House on the orders of President Trump.

The scene on Pennsylvania Avenue on Thursday morning captured a surreal week in the life of Washington. The president of the United States barred American reporters because he labeled them a threat to national security, while welcoming Chinese reporters who answer to the communist dictatorship in Beijing.

This would be the same president who is running government-paid television advertising vowing to stop the United States from becoming socialist or communist in the same week that he held a friendly meeting with the democratic socialist mayor of New York and rolled out a literal red carpet for the communist president of China. The same president who is waging economic war against the prime minister of Canada while inviting the president of Russia to visit his Florida golf club.

In the epic contest between democracy and autocracy, Mr. Trump has long given the impression that he may be on the other side. But rarely has that been brought home as starkly as this week, as he punishes news outlets for being too “negative” about him while embracing Mr.

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Xi’s Visit With Trump Upstages Tumult at U.N.

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

WASHINGTON — World leaders spoke, diplomats bartered and gossiped, and motorcades with sirens blaring snarled traffic. In some ways, the annual United Nations General Assembly in New York this week felt like the center of the world.

But it was ultimately overshadowed by a meeting more than 200 miles away in Washington, where President Trump hosted President Xi Jinping of China at the White House.

Even if their summit did not produce much in the way of tangi-

Dysfunctional Assembly
Does Little to Address
Top Global Issues

ble action, the Trump-Xi meeting felt at least as consequential as the diplomatic frenzy at the U.N. Mr. Trump and Mr. Xi met at a moment when their countries wield huge power over the global economy and the future of technology, including the dizzyingly — and perhaps dangerously — fast development of artificial intelligence.

The U.N. is faltering, dysfunctional and largely ineffectual as world powers increasingly circumvent or ignore it. It was telling that Mr. Xi did not bother to stop in New York on his way to see Mr. Trump. When Mr. Xi visited the Obama White House in September of 2015, he also attended and spoke at that year’s U.N. General Assembly.

The symbolism of Mr. Xi’s absence “could hardly be more devastating for the U.N.,” said Jeffrey Prescott, who served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations offices in Rome during the Biden

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Waiting for the Worst

Sandbags in the Far Rockaway section of Queens as the city braced for a powerful fall storm, which was expected to bring rain, high winds, and coastal flooding to the Jersey Shore and Long Island.

Seeking Freedom and Grace After China Cracks Down on Church

By VIVIAN WANG

On the 308th day after the Chinese police took her husband, Cherie Geng was making dumpplings. The smell of a finished batch wafted from the kitchen as she mixed flour and water at her dining table. Her 6-year-old son was busy trading Pokemon figurines with a friend, so Cherie pushed a plate toward the friend’s mom,

who had come to drop him off for the play date.

“This is pretty good — the dough is soft,” the other mom said. “Last time I made dough, it was so hard I felt like I was choking.”

“I’m not great at it either,” Cherie said. “Normally it’s my husband who likes making dumpplings.” He had been a one-man assembly line, sifting flour, mixing filling and folding wrappers. “If

Detained Pastor’s Wife
Rebuilds Life in Exile

we were feeding two or three people, he’d say, ‘You don’t need to do anything.’”

Now, though, Cherie had to do everything. Her husband, a pastor at one of China’s biggest un-

derground churches, was seized last October by officers who roused him from bed at 2 a.m. Afterward, Cherie, fearing arrest herself, had fled with their son to Thailand. Since then, she had been in charge of not just cooking, but also renting a home, sorting out visas, finding schools and earning an income. She’d had to figure out where she could find au-

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Another Rise
In Fed’s Rates
Is Anticipated

New Data May Compel
What Trump Opposes

By COLBY SMITH

When officials at the Federal Reserve raised interest rates last week in their first major step in years to turn the tide on inflation, many expected that it would buy the central bank time to see whether price pressures were easing before taking action again.

But over the course of the past week, a newfound urgency has been injected into the debate, raising the prospects that the central bank will be boxed into delivering another quarter-point increase at its next meeting in October.

That gathering is scheduled just days before midterm elections that will determine how much leeway President Trump will have to enact his agenda in the latter half of his term.

The Fed strives to be politically independent and asserts that it does not factor the electoral calendar into its policy debates. There are numerous instances in which the central bank either raised or lowered rates in the months leading up to or directly before an election because the economic conditions warranted it. But at a time when Mr. Trump has accused the Fed of being politically motivated and has taken direct aim at individual policymakers for not complying with his demands for substantially lower borrowing costs, the economic rationale needs to be ironclad.

Financial markets this week have boosted bets that the Fed will risk drawing Mr. Trump’s ire and proceed with another quarter-point increase at its meeting on Oct. 27 and 28 that will lift rates to a new range of 4 percent to 4.25 percent. Traders in federal funds futures markets now ascribe roughly 70 percent odds on that outcome.

This belief stems from a string of data that has reinforced the view that the economy is gaining, not losing, momentum. The most recent evidence came from a closely watched survey of the private sector by S&P Global, which on Wednesday showed that U.S. business activity surged to a five-year high in September. That followed a robust retail sales report the week prior and a stronger-than-expected jobs report earlier this month.

At the same time, the risks to inflation have shown few signs of subsiding. An impasse over ending the Iran war has kept the in-

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JUSTICES PERMIT
VOTER SCREENING
BY U.S. DATABASE

CHECK FOR CITIZENSHIP

Groups Fear System Will
Be Used for Improper
Purges From Rolls

By ABBIE VANSICKLE

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court ruled on Friday that the Trump administration can deploy an expansive online system that combines citizenship information, Social Security numbers and other sensitive data about millions of Americans, allowing states to use it to hunt for ineligible voters.

Critics fear that states could use the system to purge large numbers of valid voters from their rolls ahead of the midterm elections.

The decision is a win for President Trump, who has pressed his administration to find evidence of widespread noncitizen voting, even though such instances are exceedingly rare. However, states are not required to use the federal system and it remains to be seen how much enthusiasm there will be among local and state election officials for it, as it has mistakenly flagged U.S. citizens as noncitizens in past searches.

The majority concluded that a lower-court ruling that had blocked the Trump administration from rolling out the system was improper because it inhibited “the federal government’s efforts to assist state and local agencies in the proper administration of the midterm elections.”

The emergency ruling was unsigned and gave no vote count, but the court’s three liberal justices joined in dissent. In a 12-page dissent, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson emphasized that the majority’s decision created the conditions for some states to cancel the voter registrations of at least some recently naturalized citizens or to force them to provide proof of citizenship before voting.

“The harm caused by burdening or disenfranchising even a few lawful voters outweighs the non-existent harm that the government experiences when it is prevented from taking an action that it likely lacks the authority to take,” she wrote, joined by Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan.

The federal administration’s efforts to create a national citizen-

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Kennedy Center Killed Repairs
Of Leaks, Whistle-Blowers Say

By JULIA JACOBS

Former employees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts said that center officials canceled a plan to start overhauling its leaking infrastructure months ago, despite those officials now asserting the leaks pose an urgent safety risk requiring the building to close.

On Thursday, a lawyer for the former employees sent internal documents and a letter that detailed their concerns to Congress amid mounting scrutiny of President Trump’s reign over the Washington arts institution.

The center’s main building remains closed because of what officials have characterized as escalating structural deterioration that was never properly addressed by former leadership. But in the letter to Congress sent via a lawyer, the former employees said it was clear that the problems had been exaggerated because, given the chance, the center deferred responding to them over the past



Leaders have cited the leaks as a reason to close the center.

year.

In a statement on Friday, the center disputed the whistle-blowers’ assessment, saying that in recent months, new reviews of the leaks revealed more pronounced problems than officials had previously known.

“The safety of our patrons, artists, and staff comes first,” Matt

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Russian Attacks Destroy Books

About 15 million books were lost in strikes on Ukrainian warehouses, hurting the economy and culture. PAGE A5

Netanyahu’s Warning

The prime minister of Israel is said to have been alerted to the Hamas attacks before Oct. 7, 2023. PAGE A10

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A Party Is Feeling Unified

After tough primaries, a majority of Democrats in Maine and Michigan said the process strengthened them heading into November, new polls find. PAGE A13

California Braces for El Niño

As beachfront homeowners and beachgoers are watching the sand vanish into the sea, a storm bears down. PAGE A16

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Host Is a True ‘Survivor’

As the show’s 51st season begins, Jeff Probst discusses the reality game show turned cultural touchstone. PAGE C1



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Float Past Villages and Villas

The best way to see the storybook beauty of Lake Como is by boat. Just choose your size and speed. PAGE C9

Where Bluffs Meet the Surf

A Northern California bike route bathed in sun and fog passes redwoods, secluded beaches and scenic towns. PAGE C7

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Next Frontier for Data Centers

An ambitious effort from Google, which will soon test an experimental satellite, aims to put artificial intelligence data centers into space and harness the sun’s energy to power them. PAGE B1

Can Meta’s A.I. Run Your Life?

A Times reporter let Muse, Meta’s A.I. agent, handle his dental insurance, book dinner reservations and create a podcast for him. It also required his most personal data and trust. PAGE B1

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David Kirp PAGE A18

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Ready to Win at U.S.C.

Lincoln Riley has raised the college football program’s floor in his four-plus years as head coach. The problem is that he was hired to help Southern California reach its ceiling. PAGE B7

Manchester City Found Guilty

The club was reportedly found guilty of 114 of 115 charges of breaking the English Premier League’s financial rules. It was expected to appeal. PAGE B12



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