

Weekly Commentary 41

How can Trump now not win?

A few hours after I sent out last week's Commentary, another deranged person made a second attempt on DT's life in just about 65 days. This shows that the USA is on the brink of a civil war. And with that attempt on his life, it could well be that Trump will become the 47th president of the US.

The would be assassin waited several hours for Trump to get on the golf course and when he showed up, he was prepared with an AK 47 fitted with a scope. An alert secret service agent saw the AK47 pointing towards the golf course, and opened fire. Saved the Donald, obviously. And put him, if you ask me, on an irreversible path to another term in the White House.

According to AP News, this is what happened:

Trump was the subject of an apparent assassination attempt at his Florida golf club, the FBI says

A man suspected in an apparent assassination attempt targeting former President Donald Trump was charged with federal gun crimes.

The FBI says it's investigating "what appears to be an attempted assassination" of Donald Trump at his golf club in West Palm Beach, Florida. Associated Press reporter Bill Barrow says that Trump and the Secret Service are saying the former president is safe.

Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw says U.S. Secret Service agents fired at a man pointing an AK-style rifle with a scope into the club as Trump was on the course. Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump arrives at Harry Reid International Airport to board a plane after a campaign trip, Saturday, Sept.14, 2024, in Las Vegas.

In this image taken from police body camera video and released by the Martin County, Fla., Sheriff's Office, law enforcement officers arrest Ryan Routh, the man suspected in the apparent assassination attempt of Donald Trump, Sunday, Sept. 15, 2024.

Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump waves as he boards a plane at Harry Reid International Airport after a campaign trip, Saturday, Sept.14, 2024, in Las Vegas.

Photos that show an AK-47 rifle, a backpack and a Go-Pro camera on a fence outside Trump International Golf Club taken after an apparent assassination attempt of Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump, are displayed during a news conference at the Palm Beach County Main Library, Sunday, Sept. 15, 2024, in West Palm Beach, Fla.

The suspect in the apparent assassination attempt targeting Trump camped outside the golf course for nearly 12 hours before a Secret Service agent thwarted him, documents show.

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Donald Trump was the target of what the FBI said “appears to be an attempted assassination” at his golf club in West Palm Beach, Florida, on Sunday, just nine weeks after the Republican presidential nominee survived another attempt on his life. The former president said he was safe and well, and authorities held a man in custody.

U.S. Secret Service agents stationed a few holes up from where Trump was playing noticed the muzzle of an AK-style rifle sticking through the shrubbery that lines the course, roughly 400 yards away.

An agent fired and the gunman dropped the rifle and fled in an SUV, leaving the firearm behind along with two backpacks, a scope used for aiming and a GoPro camera, Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw said. The man was later stopped by law enforcement in a neighboring county.

It was the latest jarring moment in a campaign year marked by unprecedented upheaval. On July 13, Trump was shot during a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, and a bullet grazed his ear. Eight days later, Democratic President Joe Biden withdrew from the race, giving way for Vice President Kamala Harris to become the party’s nominee.

And it spawned new questions about Secret Service protective operations after the agency’s admitted failures in preventing the assassination attempt this summer.

The man who was detained had a calm, flat demeanor and showed little emotion when he was stopped, according to Martin County Sheriff William Snyder. “He never asked, ‘What is this about?’ Obviously, law enforcement with long rifles, blue lights, a lot going on. He never questioned it,” Snyder said.

Police officers direct traffic near Trump International Golf Club after the apparent assassination attempt of Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump in West Palm Beach, Fla., Sunday, Sept. 15, 2024.

In an email to supporters, Trump said: “There were gunshots in my vicinity, but before rumors start spiraling out of control, I wanted you to hear this first: I AM SAFE AND WELL!” He wrote: “Nothing will slow me down. I will NEVER SURRENDER!”

He returned to Mar-a-Lago, his private club in Palm Beach where he lives, according to a person familiar with Trump’s movements who was not authorized to discuss them publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

It was not immediately clear how the development would affect his schedule or campaign dynamics. Trump was set to speak from Florida about cryptocurrency live on Monday night on the social media site X and had stops planned Tuesday and Wednesday in Michigan and on New York’s Long Island.

An email to Trump campaign staffers obtained by AP said, “We ask that you remain vigilant in your daily comings and goings.”

“As we enter the last 50 days of President Trump’s campaign, we must remember that we will only be able save America from those who seek to destroy it by working together as one team.”

Biden and Harris were briefed on the matter and each issued a statement condemning political violence. Harris’ added that she was “deeply disturbed” by the day’s events and that “we all must do our part to ensure that this incident does not lead to more violence.”

Biden said he had directed his team to ensure the Secret Service “has every resource, capability and protective measure necessary to ensure the former President’s continued safety.”

In the aftermath, Trump checked in with allies, including running mate Ohio Sen. JD Vance, South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham and several Fox News hosts. House Speaker Mike Johnson said he spent several hours with Trump and called him “unstoppable.”

Fox News host Sean Hannity recounted on air his conversation with the former president’s golf partner, Steve Witkoff.

They had been on the fifth hole and about to go up to putt when they heard a “pop pop, pop pop.” Within seconds, he said Witkoff recounted, Secret Service agents “pounced” on Trump and “covered him” to protect him.

Trump had returned to Florida this weekend from a West Coast swing that included a Friday night rally in Las Vegas and a Utah fundraiser. His campaign had not announced any public plans for Trump on Sunday. He often spends the morning playing golf.

Trump has had a stepped-up security footprint since the assassination attempt in July. When he is at Trump Tower in New York, parked dump trucks have formed a wall outside the building. At outdoor rallies, he now speaks from behind bulletproof glass.

The Florida golf course was partially shut down for Trump as he played, but there are several areas around the perimeter of the property where golfers are visible from the fence line. Secret Service agents and officers in golf carts and on ATVs generally secure the area several holes ahead and behind Trump. Agents also usually bring an armored vehicle onto the course to shelter Trump quickly should a threat arise.

The Palm Beach County sheriff said the entire golf course would have been lined with law enforcement if Trump were the president, but because he is not, “security is limited to the areas that the Secret Service deems possible.”

“I would imagine that the next time he comes to the golf course, there will probably be a little more people around the perimeter,” Bradshaw said. “But the Secret Service did exactly what they should have done.”

Late Sunday, Trump posted a message on social media thanking the Secret Service and law enforcement for keeping him safe, calling them “brave and dedicated Patriots,” adding that it was “certainly an interesting day!”

He was to be briefed in person Monday by acting Secret Service director Ronald Rowe about the investigation into the assassination attempt, according to a person familiar with the plan for the briefing who was not authorized to speak publicly.

Former presidents and their spouses have Secret Service protection for life, but the security around former presidents varies according to threat levels and exposure, with the toughest measures typically being taken in the immediate aftermath of their leaving office.

Trump’s protective detail has been higher than some other former presidents because of his high visibility and his campaign to seek the White House again.

The man in custody was Ryan Routh, three law enforcement officials told the AP. The officials who identified the suspect spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the ongoing investigation.

Records show Routh, 58, lived in North Carolina for most of his life before moving to Hawaii in 2018. In 2020, he made a social media post backing Trump's reelection, but in more recent years his posts have expressed support for Biden and Harris.

Routh tried to recruit Afghan soldiers fleeing the Taliban to fight in Ukraine, and spent several months in the country, according to an interview with The New York Times last year.

The FBI was leading the investigation and working to determine any motive. Attorney General Merrick Garland was receiving regular updates. Agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were helping investigate.

"The FBI has responded to West Palm Beach Florida and is investigating what appears to be an attempted assassination of former President Trump," the bureau said.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, said the state would do its own investigation, posting on X that, "The people deserve the truth about the would be assassin and how he was able to get within 500 yards of the former president and current GOP nominee."

News reporters were not with Trump on Sunday. Bucking tradition, Trump's campaign has not arranged to have a protective pool of reporters travel with him, as is standard for major party nominees and for the president. Harris does not have a protective pool at all times, but does allow reporters to travel with her for public events.

Snyder, the Martin County sheriff, said the suspect was apprehended within minutes of the FBI, Secret Service and Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office putting out a "very urgent BOLO" — or "be on the lookout" alert.

Snyder said his deputies "immediately flooded" northbound I-95 and "we pinched in on the car, got it safely stopped and got the driver in custody."

When I first saw the news, I immediately thought this is ridiculous. An attempt on Trump's life twice in 2 months? Murder motivated by ideology? Or is America is now very close to fighting a civil war, Democrats vs Republicans. How else would you call this?

Most pundits say that the rhetoric should be dialled down. The Democrats attribute the Jan 6 Capitol insurrection to Trump and have called him Hitler many times. But to be fair to Trump, that label is obviously an exaggerated misnomer. Hitler started the Second WW and caused the Holocaust — Trump has been through one term of the presidency and during that term, he was the only American president that did not

cause a war. As a matter of fact, he is now calling for an end to the Ukraine war, the greatest threat to a nuclear war since these weapons were invented. Yes, he is uncouth and has a bitchy mouth, calling his political foes by unwarranted epithets, but he has caused no one to reach for a rifle and kill a foe. On the other hand, Biden is directly responsible for the Ukraine project and is indirectly behind at least 600,000 Ukrainian soldiers dying on the battlefield. There is actually no comparison between the two.

Trump himself has said this:

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump claimed that President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris' comments that he is a threat to democracy had inspired the latest apparent attempt on his life.

With the election now just 50 days away and early ballots already being mailed out in some places, this year's presidential campaign was among the most turbulent in American history even before Sunday's apparent assassination attempt. Trump was safe after the incident in Florida and praised the Secret Service for protecting him but didn't shy away from blaming his opponents.

"Their rhetoric is causing me to be shot at, when I am the one who is going to save the country and they are the ones that are destroying the country — both from the inside and out," Trump said in comments to Fox News Digital.

It is clear that both Democrats and Republicans must avoid politicising the failed assassination attempts on Donald Trump, as the Nov 5 presidential election looms. Another 50 days or so to go till the United States presidential election and already, for the second time this year on Sunday (Sep 15), it appears that someone tried to assassinate Donald Trump.

The would-be gunman Ryan Wesley Routh, as identified by American media, was waiting for the former president at his Florida golf course and appears to have intended to shoot him through the fence. Trump's bodyguard detail – the Secret Service – engaged the suspect, who fled and was later arrested.

This comes barely two months after a shooter in Pennsylvania fired at Trump on Jul 13, just missing his head. That man was killed on the spot by the Secret Service.

While this attempt, like the last one, will generate brief, intense speculation on violence in US politics, it is unlikely to alter the presidential race. **Is this a problem of political violence or a lot of guns?**

For decades, the US has suffered from mass shootings at work and school, often carried out by shooters with disturbing social media footprints but no clear political beliefs. The shootings seem, instead, like bids for notoriety.

This profile fits both would-be Trump shooters. Routh had multiple altercations with the law beforehand, voted for Trump in 2016, and his social media suggests support for an eclectic array of politicians with no clear ideological direction.

Thankfully, then, neither shooting has been “blue on red” violence; that is, neither shooter was a committed Democrat or liberal seeking to attack American conservatism for ideological reasons.

These events appear more like America’s daily experience with random gun violence – over 40,000 Americans die every year from gunfire – than a catalyst of political violence.

Today, there are more legal guns in the US than there are Americans. This creates obvious opportunities for mass civilian violence which do not exist in most developed countries.

Instead, the most likely explanation for its shooting epidemic is the easy access its unhappy citizens have to guns. The country seems to have accepted – rather shockingly – mass shootings as the cost of widespread gun ownership.

But Trump’s threat-filled rhetoric certainly worsens the problem.

He routinely uses inflammatory and apocalyptic language to describe the election, such as predicting a “bloodbath” if he loses and raising concerns by promising retribution on political rivals if he wins. This creates a febrile environment in the country, suggesting a boiling point in which violence might be imminent or necessary.

And while he had dialled down the rhetoric in the aftermath of the July attack – even calling for unity at one point – he has quickly slipped back to more familiar ways. In recent weeks, his tone has changed, stoking suspicions about the attempted assassination.

He feeds the hysteria and dislocation which is the social background for America’s epidemic of random, mass shootings. The fear is also that more in his base may feel legitimate in tipping over into political violence.

To prevent this, Republicans and Democrats must avoid politicising the assassination attempts.

With just seven weeks out from election day, how will voters react to the apparent second bid on Mr Trump's life, especially as the race for the White House is now so different compared to the first.

Here are some assessments by various news outlets:

Sky news, Martha Kelner

Monday 16 September 2024 05:53, UK

Donald Trump loves golf "more than he loves money," according to Jack Nicklaus, one of the greats of the game.

He plays at least a couple of times a week and owns 16 courses, from Florida to Aberdeen.

The fairways are where he, supposedly, escapes the stresses of the campaign trail.

He deserved an expectation of safety at Trump International in West Palm Beach, although it is one of the largest and most exposed places a former president could visit, presenting a huge challenge for his security detail.

It is not a political arena, but what happened between holes five and six on Sunday afternoon is now very much a part of the narrative of the 2024 election.

Just 64 days after surviving an assassination attempt, Trump was targeted again.

Now just seven weeks out from election day, the question of how another security breach might affect him in the polls is an urgent one.

Within a few hours of shots ringing out at the course, round-robin messages were sent to his supporters with a link to donate.

"I am safe and well," the first one read. Then: "My resolve is stronger after another attempt on my life!"

His campaign team are alive to the political opportunity this event presents, particularly with the polls so tight between him and Kamala Harris.

After Trump was shot in Butler, Pennsylvania, the image of him with his fist raised and ear bloodied became part of the framing of him as a living martyr, a strongman in contrast to the ailing Joe Biden.

In the week after he soared ahead of President Biden in all seven key swing states and some thought that searing image of defiance had won him the election.

But it is a very different race now.

Kamala Harris is his opponent and has closed the gap on him in the polls, even nudging ahead in some of those crucial states.

The attempt on his life in July is not often spoken about - it wasn't a feature of their head-to-head debate last week - and does not feel like a significant factor in the race.

Historic precedent also cautions against the idea that an assassination attempt equals a lasting boost.

Another former president, Gerald Ford, was targeted by two would-be assassins in the space of just over two weeks in 1975.

He became slightly more popular after, like Trump, declaring he would not shy away from public appearances. But his approval rating fell below the pre-assassination attempt level and he lost his reelection campaign the following year.

The presidential race, already rocked by one assassination attempt on Donald Trump, could now be impacted by a second attempt on the former president's life, experts have told *Newsweek*.

Ryan Wesley Routh, 58, is accused of lying in wait for Trump while the former president golfed at his club in West Palm Beach, Florida, on Sunday until Secret Service spotted a rifle poking out of bushes and opened fire, thwarting the possible attack. Routh fled in an SUV but was apprehended in a neighboring county.

He faces charges of possessing a firearm despite a prior felony conviction and of possessing a firearm with an obliterated serial number. Additional charges are possible.

The episode marks the second attempt on Trump's life in as many months, after a gunman opened fire from a rooftop while the Republican nominee was speaking at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, on July 13. Trump sustained an ear injury, while one rallygoer was killed and two others were injured.

Trump was not harmed on Sunday, but the incident could further unsettle a presidential race that has already seen plenty of upheaval.

"Multiple assassination attempts against Trump only make him more of a sympathetic figure," Thomas Gift, an associate professor of political science and director of the Centre on U.S. Politics at University College London, told *Newsweek*. Sunday's incident "will also once again remind voters of the iconic image of Trump in Butler, PA—after the nearest of near-misses on his life—pumping his fist and yelling 'fight, fight, fight,'" Gift said.

"Trump continues to maintain that he took a bullet for democracy, and for some percentage of Americans, that could be enough to earn their vote."

Some polls indicated the July shooting had given Trump a boost against President Joe Biden.

But Biden dropped his re-election bid in late July and Trump's opponent in November's election is now Vice President Kamala Harris, who has erased Trump's polling lead. Polls conducted since Trump and Harris debated on Tuesday show Harris gaining an advantage over Trump, though the contest remains close.

"Politically, a second assassination attempt could strengthen support among Trump supporters, but it is unlikely to move the needle by much for independents and undecided voters," Costas Panagopoulos, a political science professor at Northeastern University, told *Newsweek*.

Panagopoulos added that such incidents "would likely cause security to be reinforced, but I doubt it would affect the campaign schedule much.

"The race is simply too tight, and there is little time left. Neither candidate can afford to curtail campaign activities at this stage."

Trump has not announced any changes to his schedule. The Trump campaign has been contacted for comment via email.

Trump publicly recounted Sunday's apparent assassination attempt during a live discussion on X.

"I was playing golf with some of my friends on a Sunday morning and very peaceful, very beautiful weather... and all of a sudden we heard shots being fired in the air, and I guess probably four or five, and it sounded like bullets," Trump said.

The Secret Service's acting director Ronald Rowe said on Monday that the suspect "did not have a line of sight to Trump" and did not fire his weapon before fleeing the scene.

From CNN:

New apparent Trump assassination bid is another dark moment with unpredictable political consequences

Analysis by [Stephen Collinson](#), CNN

Updated 8:44 AM EDT, Mon September 16, 2024

There's no political playbook for how to deal with another apparent assassination attempt against a major-party presidential candidate within weeks of an election.

Yet that's where the rival campaigns now find themselves after what looks like a second attempt to kill Republican nominee Donald Trump in the latest twist to a political season defying precedent and highlighting the nation's deep polarization.

Twice within two months, America has narrowly avoided the tragedy of seeing a major political figure assassinated during an election season — and the toxic forces that such an outrage could unleash in a country wracked by visceral partisan divides.

That such incidents happen at all speak to the undercurrent of violence that is a constant shadow over American politics, one that is exacerbated by the easy availability of firearms. Both nominees now address outdoor crowds from behind bulletproof screens. There will now be fresh fears that a tempestuous period running up to Election Day could take the country further down a dark road.

After decades without an assassination attempt against a high-level executive branch official, a haunting reality has been revived this year: that those who offer themselves for the highest office are potentially putting their lives on the line.

Quick reactions from Trump's friends and foes

In his most expansive reaction to what happened, Trump [posted](#) on his Truth Social network Sunday evening about what he described as “certainly an interesting day!”

“I want to thank the U.S. Secret Service, Sheriff Ric Bradshaw and his Office of brave and dedicated Patriots, and, all of Law Enforcement, for the incredible job done today at Trump International in keeping me, as the 45th President of the United States, and the Republican Nominee in the upcoming Presidential Election, SAFE,” Trump wrote. “THE JOB DONE WAS ABSOLUTELY OUTSTANDING. I AM VERY PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN!”

Vice President Kamala Harris, her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, and President Joe Biden all quickly expressed relief that a person suspected of planning to target Trump at one of his Florida golf courses was spotted before he could get off a shot and that the former president was safe. Harris said she was briefed on the

incident and wrote on social media: “I am glad he is safe. Violence has no place in America.”

As crass as it may be to consider political ramifications in the immediate aftermath of an apparent assassination attempt, everything in America is politicized within minutes — especially with 50 days left until a close election.

Trump — who within seconds of surviving his first, much closer assassination attempt in Butler, Pennsylvania, on July 13, stood up and said, “fight, fight, fight” — quickly released a fundraising email on Sunday afternoon that read, “I am Safe and Well!”

“Nothing will slow me down. I will NEVER SURRENDER!” Trump wrote in the email that linked to a site allowing supporters to donate.

And one of the ex-president’s top allies, New York Rep. Elise Stefanik, released a statement reprising the idea Trump was spared by divine providence, which was a recurrent theme at the Republican National Convention. The House GOP conference chair suggested that after what had happened, the country now had a duty to elect Trump. “Thankfully, God continues to watch over President Trump. As Americans we must unite behind him in November to protect our republic and bring peace back to the world,” she said.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, after visiting the former president at his Mar-a-Lago resort on Sunday, also suggested that Trump had benefited from divine intervention and played into the narrative that Trump is unbeatable. “No leader (in) American history has endured more attacks and remained so strong and resilient. He is unstoppable.”

That sense of Trump being protected by God animated his supporters’ feeling at the Milwaukee convention that he was destined for victory. Such assumptions were dampened, however, when Biden shelved his reelection bid, allowing Harris to jump in and transform the contest.

Trump has already suggested, without evidence, that the Biden administration and Harris were complicit in the assassination attempt in Pennsylvania because he claims they weaponized the Justice Department against him. But all of Trump’s criminal problems have proceeded through regular order in the courts, and there is no evidence that the White House is in any way involved.

The second apparent assassination attempt comes against the backdrop of a turbulent campaign that has defied convention and predictions. For the first time since 1968, a sitting president folded his reelection campaign within months of the election, reluctantly making way for his vice president, who has a chance to become the first

Black woman and South Asian commander in chief. The Republican nominee is a convicted felon who is facing multiple criminal charges over his unprecedented attempt to stay in power after losing the last election. If he is returned to the White House, Trump would be only the second president who lost reelection to win a nonconsecutive second term.

The ex-president's actions in the coming days will be closely watched. After the first assassination attempt, the former president called on the country to come together. But his unity pledge didn't last much longer than the first third of his speech at the Republican National Convention, which degenerated into the characteristic divisiveness on which he built his political career.

Trump has also repeatedly ignored the advice of senior Republicans and his campaign team to stick to a sharp, concise argument against Harris. They'd like him to focus on her role in the Biden administration's economic policy at a time when many voters are still struggling with high prices despite a lowering of the inflation rate. So even if his aides counsel him to renew his national unity theme, there's no guarantee Trump will listen or consider it in his political interests.

Another apparent attempt on his life is likely to have some level of personal impact on the former president. In the days after narrowly cheating death or serious injury in Pennsylvania when a bullet grazed his ear, Trump seemed chastened. But ever since, he has returned to his rambunctious self and, if anything, his rhetoric has become even more extreme. He's recently been warning his political opponents that he will turn the law against them and lock them up if he considers the election fraudulent, and he has doubled down on his baseless claims that the last election was stolen.

In the immediate aftermath of Sunday's incident, the focus of most Trump opponents was on maintaining calm at a volatile moment. There can be no justification in a democracy for attempting to silence any political figure by violence. At the same time, however, in the coming days, there will be debate about the extent to which the former president — a uniquely inflammatory figure — has helped to stoke the nation's divides.

Earlier this weekend, for example, the ex-president and his running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, had been heightening political tensions. Both Republicans have highlighted baseless claims that Haitian refugees in Springfield, Ohio, have been stealing and eating pets. Trump's opponents have warned that his continued racial demagoguery is putting lives at risk.

In a contentious interview on CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday, Vance insisted that the claims about the Haitian migrants — who are in the United States legally — were validated by complaints from some of his constituents. And far from backing away from the story — despite testimony from multiple local officials that there's no truth to the rumor — Vance angrily condemned suggestions that recent bomb threats

against the city had anything to do with him and Trump escalating the claims. He told Dana Bash: “This town has suffered terribly under the problem — under the policies of Kamala Harris.”

But Republican Gov. Mike DeWine, asked on ABC on Sunday whether he had seen any evidence of the pet-eating rumors, said, “No. Absolutely not.” The Ohio governor added that the Haitian migrants, whom Trump threatened on Friday to deport to Venezuela, were in the country legally.

In normal circumstances, an apparent assassination attempt against a presidential candidate might be expected to unleash a surge of sympathy that could translate into a political boost. But the latest near-miss for Trump comes at a moment when the race with Harris is neck-and-neck. While both candidates are fighting over perhaps several hundred thousand movable voters in swing states, it’s not clear how much room remains for changing perceptions about Trump, who has been a polarizing figure ever since his 2015 launch of his first national campaign.

The former president is all but certain to use the latest events to reinforce his claim that he’s a victim of persecution meant to keep him from power. But it’s too early to say whether the second apparent assassination attempt will have greater political impact than the first.

Ultimately, it’s going to be up to voters to sort out this unpredictable and dangerous campaign season.

It is not necessary for those of us who are observers of American politics to add to the mayhem that already exists in the country. Are there people who eat dogs and cats? I have seen it before. And should it be found in the US, it would not surprise me. There is too much controversy over who has gained in the polls as it is easy to see that polls sponsored by mainstream media are in favour of the Democrats and the ones that are not will provide poll numbers that say that Trump is leading in the polls. Who to believe? It’s hard to say.

With that said, I think a second assassination attempt on Trump will generate the idea that he deserves better. There were too many impeachments, too much lawfare, and, now, one assassination too many. The Democrats, in saying that Trump is too undemocratic is now ringing hollow. They are looking like they are trying too hard. Does that guarantee Trump the win in the Nov election? Not necessarily. But at the rate the Democrats are going, Trump will soon become the flavour of the day.

The other violent event that was newsworthy over the last week is the use of exploding pagers by the Israelis to disrupt Hezbollah communications. This is vile. Many civilians were killed and injured. Here is the story from Reuters:

Israel planted explosives in Hezbollah's Taiwan-made pagers, say sources

By [Laila Bassam](#) and [Maya Gebeily](#)

September 20, 2024 4:00 PM

BEIRUT, Sept 18 (Reuters) - (This Sept. 18 story has been corrected to fix the pager model name to AR-924, not AP924, in paragraph 6)

Israel's Mossad spy agency planted a small amount of explosives inside 5,000 Taiwan-made pagers ordered by Lebanese group Hezbollah months before Tuesday's detonations, a senior Lebanese security source and another source told Reuters.

The operation was an unprecedented Hezbollah security breach that saw thousands of pagers detonate across Lebanon, killing nine people and wounding nearly 3,000 others, including the group's fighters and Iran's envoy to Beirut.

Iran-backed Hezbollah has vowed to retaliate against Israel, whose military declined to comment on the blasts.

The plot appears to have been many months in the making, several sources told Reuters.

The senior Lebanese security source said the group had ordered 5,000 beepers made by Taiwan-based Gold Apollo, which several sources say were brought into the country earlier this year.

The senior Lebanese security source identified a photograph of the model of the pager, an AR-924, which like other pagers wirelessly receive and display text messages but cannot make telephone calls.

Hezbollah fighters have been using pagers as a low-tech means of communication in an attempt to evade Israeli location-tracking, two sources familiar with the group's operations told Reuters this year.

But the senior Lebanese source said the devices had been modified by Israel's spy service "at the production level."

"The Mossad injected a board inside of the device that has explosive material that receives a code. It's very hard to detect it through any means. Even with any device or scanner," the source said.

The source said 3,000 of the pagers exploded when a coded message was sent to them, simultaneously activating the explosives.

Another security source told Reuters that up to three grams of explosives were hidden in the new pagers and had gone "undetected" by Hezbollah for months.

Neither Israel nor Gold Apollo immediately responded to Reuters requests for comment.

Images of destroyed pagers analyzed by Reuters showed a format and stickers on the back that were consistent with pagers made by Gold Apollo, based in Taipei.

Hezbollah was reeling from the attack, which left fighters and others bloodied, hospitalised or dead. One Hezbollah official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the detonation was the group's "biggest security breach" since the [Gaza conflict](#) between Israel and Hezbollah ally Hamas erupted on Oct. 7.

"This would easily be the biggest counterintelligence failure that Hezbollah has had in decades," said Jonathan Panikoff, the U.S. government's former deputy national intelligence officer on the Middle East.

BREAK YOUR PHONES, GROUP ORDERED

In February, Hezbollah drew up a war plan that aimed to address gaps in the group's intelligence infrastructure. Around 170 fighters had already been killed in targeted Israeli strikes on Lebanon, including one senior commander and a top Hamas official in Beirut.

In a televised speech on Feb. 13, the group's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah sternly warned supporters that their phones were more dangerous than Israeli spies, saying they should break, bury or lock them in an iron box.

Instead, the group opted to distribute pagers to Hezbollah members across the group's various branches - from fighters to medics working in its relief services.

The explosions maimed many Hezbollah members, according to footage from hospitals reviewed by Reuters. Wounded men had injuries of varying degrees to the face, missing fingers and gaping wounds at the hip where the pagers were likely worn.

"We really got hit hard," said the senior Lebanese security source, who has direct knowledge of the group's probe into the explosions.

The pager blasts came at a time of mounting concern about tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, which have been engaged in cross-border warfare since the Gaza conflict erupted last October.

While the war in Gaza has been Israel's main focus since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas-led gunmen, the precarious situation along Israel's northern border with Lebanon has fueled fears of a regional conflict that could drag in the United States and Iran.

A missile barrage by Hezbollah the day after Oct. 7 opened the latest phase of conflict and since then there have been daily exchanges of rockets, artillery fire and missiles, with Israeli jets striking deep into Lebanese territory.

Hezbollah has said it does not seek a wider war but would fight if Israel launched one. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant told U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Monday that the window was closing for a diplomatic solution to the standoff with the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement in southern Lebanon.

Still, experts said they did not see the pager blasts as a sign that an Israeli ground offensive was imminent.

Instead, it was a sign of Israeli intelligence's apparently deep penetration of Hezbollah.

"It demonstrates Israel's ability to infiltrate its adversaries in a remarkably dramatic way," said Paul Pillar, a 28-year veteran of the U.S. intelligence community, mainly at the CIA.

This sorry episode is despicable on the part of the perpetrators. Using something that is so universally used in everyday life for something so meaningful as messaging among so many ordinary people and then blow them up unsuspectingly is insane. And to turn that ordinary act into terrorism is, to put it simply, is nauseating. And criminal.

It confirms what the ICJ has been saying for 9 months – that Israel has forgotten the principles of good statecraft and is now a state sponsor of apartheid and genocide. You can only prosper as a state if you treat your neighbours fairly. Less than 80 years ago, they were the victims of the Nazis. Yet today, they have forgotten how it was, how they were victimised, bullied and then murdered enmasse. And now, they are using their position of strength to take it out on weaker peoples like the Palestinians and the Lebanese. They should remember this thing call karma...

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Un-Influencer in a World full of Hubris

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