

# Joyful July 4<sup>th</sup> event turns into scramble to survive

HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. — It sounded at first like fireworks to the parents who had brought excited children to a charming Fourth of July parade in their town. Or perhaps a military salute to the flag.

But within seconds, as marching band members and politicians strutted down the street, horrified spectators realized the noise from a nearby rooftop was a high-powered rifle spraying bullets into the crowd, killing six people and wounding dozens.

The attack in Highland Park, a usually safe lakefront suburb north of Chicago, set police on a sprawling manhunt that forced residents to shelter in place for much of the day and that prompted neighboring cities to cancel their holiday events. About eight hours later, police said they had taken into custody a 22-year-old man whom they described as a person of interest.

Even in a country battered from the constancy of mass violence — at grocery stores and elementary schools and on urban street corners — the carnage in Illinois proved shocking. According to the Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit research

group, the shooting Monday was the 15<sup>th</sup> this year in which at least four people were fatally shot in the United States.

For reasons that remained unclear to the police Monday evening, officials said a young man had climbed onto a rooftop with a rifle and begun firing into a sea of families in lawn chairs who were celebrating Independence Day.

“My wife looks up and screams, ‘Get up, run! Get up, run!’” said Shawn Cotreau, 47, a Massachusetts resident who was visiting family in Illinois, and who said he initially thought there were firecrackers nearby.

Mr. Cotreau estimated his family was sitting in chairs about 20 feet away from the gunman, who was on the roof of a store firing down.

“I can’t even get the image of the guy out of my head,” he said, describing a man with a large gun, wearing fatigues and a hat pulled down. “He was just opening up fire. And I saw the bullets hitting the tree that was like literally in front of us.”

Police officers, who were already assigned to the parade route, arrived and rushed to help the wounded, authorities said. Victims

ranged in age from 8 to 85, doctors who received the injured at local hospitals said.

The gunfire stopped around the time officers arrived, police said, and the gunman was able to get away. By late afternoon, SWAT teams were still combing the area, and officials were asking residents and businesses to turn over photos or videos that might provide clues.

Authorities warned that he was believed to be armed and told the public not to approach him.

“Could this happen again?” Deputy Chief Christopher Covelli of the Lake County Sheriff’s Office asked Monday afternoon, while the search for a gunman was on, and as other Chicago suburbs rushed to cancel parades and fireworks shows. “We don’t know what his intentions are at this point.”

Robert E. Crimo III was taken into custody in nearby Lake Forest after a brief chase, police said.

Survivors described a joyous family event, with high school football players and a marching band that turned suddenly into a scramble to live. Dr. David Baum, an

obstetrician who had come to the parade to watch his 2-year-old grandson push a bubble lawn mower alongside dozens of other children, said he rushed to help after what sounded like a sonic boom and people yelling, “‘Bodies down, bodies down!’”

The shooting brought outpourings of sympathy from across the state and country, and renewed pleas among Democrats for stricter gun laws, barely a week after President Joseph R. Biden signed the most significant gun legislation to clear Congress in decades. Mr. Biden said he was “shocked by the senseless gun violence.” Gov. J.B. Pritzker of Illinois, a Democrat, vowed to “end this plague.”

“There are no words for the kind of monster who lies in wait and fires into a crowd of families with children celebrating a holiday with their community,” the governor said. “There are no words for the kind of evil that robs our neighbors of their hopes, their dreams, their futures.”

Those victims included Nicolas Toledo, who had recently moved back to Highland Park from Mexico to spend more time with his family, according to his granddaughter, Xochil Toledo.

Ms. Toledo said her family had gone out at midnight to line up chairs so 15 of them could be together for the Fourth of July. Three in that group would be shot.

“We brought him over here so he could have a better life,” Ms. Toledo said of her grandfather. “His sons wanted to take care of him and be more in his life, and then this tragedy happened.”

After the shooting, 26 people were taken to Highland Park Hospital, 25 of them with gunshot wounds, said Dr. Brigham R. Temple, the medical director for emergency preparedness at NorthShore University HealthSystem. At least 10 other patients were taken to nearby hospitals, he said. Their injuries ranged from minor to severe.

With downtown still considered an active crime scene and residents encouraged to stay inside, many in Highland Park spoke of a mix of shock, grief and anger.

“On a day that we came together to celebrate community and freedom, we’re instead mourning the loss, the tragic loss, of life and struggling with the terror that was brought upon us,” Mayor Nancy Rotering said. — © 2022 The New York Times

## Hong Kong considers shorter COVID quarantine for travelers

HONG KONG — Hong Kong will look into shortening COVID-19 quarantine requirements for travelers, while still aiming to curb the spread of the virus and prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed, the city’s new leader John Lee said on Tuesday.

Mr. Lee spoke at his first weekly news conference as the city’s chief executive after being sworn in on Friday by China’s President Xi Jinping following celebrations marking 25 years since the former British colony’s return to Chinese rule.

China is alone among major countries to pursue a “zero COVID” strategy that aims to stamp out all outbreaks at just about any cost.

“I am conscious of the need for Hong Kong to remain open and convenient to travelers, but it is also important that we address the risks at the same time,” Mr. Lee told reporters.

He added he had instructed Health Secretary Lo Chung-mau to look into shortening mandatory quarantine for travelers, but did not give further details.

“I’m giving him time to look at the statistics so that he will formulate some options that we may consider,” Mr. Lee said.

Hong Kong, which has some of the most stringent travel restrictions in the world out-

side mainland China has reported daily case tolls of around 2,000 infections in the past week, without tightening rules. Such numbers would lead to very stringent curbs on daily activities in any mainland city.

The city still imposes a seven-day hotel quarantine on arrival, at the traveler’s own cost, and demands a raft of forms and strict testing requirements from passengers boarding flights to Hong Kong.

Airlines face suspension if they bring in too many passengers who test positive after landing, leading to canceled flights and people struggling to re-book trips and hotels, ending up stranded, in some cases for months, outside the city.

Mr. Lo said on Monday he hoped the border with Shenzhen would reopen before Aug. 4.

The Asian financial hub, which faced a large wave of COVID infections this year, has officially reported more than 1 million cases and more than 9,000 deaths — one of the highest fatality rates in the world since the start of the pandemic.

Some epidemiologists estimate more than 4 million people in the city of 7.4 million may have been infected. Health officials have said the city’s hospitals are not under any significant pressure as COVID cases rise again. —

**Reuters**

## Stinky seaweed threatens Mexico’s tourism boom

MEXICO CITY — Millions of tons of stinky brown seaweed washing up along Mexico’s beaches threaten a post-COVID tourism rebound as international tourists plan summer travel, according to Spanish bank BBVA.

Sargassum seaweed, which gives a brown tint to the crystal-clear waters of the Caribbean coast and emits a sewage-like stench when it washes ashore, reached an all-time monthly high in June, according to the University of South Florida. There were 24.2 million tons recorded in the month in the Caribbean region, up from 18.8 million tons in May.

The boom in sargassum poses a “significant threat” to the country’s post-pandemic tourism recovery, particularly in Quintana Roo state, home to oceanfront destinations like Cancun, Tulum and Playa del Carmen, analysts from bank BBVA said in a research note.

The seaweed outburst defied massive daily efforts by Mexico’s Navy and

local workers who scrambled to remove it from the water and sand.

“The sargassum... is not a problem that can be solved, but must constantly be addressed, mainly in the summer months,” BBVA said on Monday.

Mexico’s GDP from tourism took a 25% hit in real terms in 2020 due to the pandemic, even though the country never closed its borders. In 2021, however, the sector rebounded nearly to pre-pandemic levels, according to BBVA, which warned the upward trajectory was in danger unless the seaweed is controlled.

“The tourism sector must continue to promote new attractions so that the beaches are less and less the reason that attracts tourists to Quintana Roo.” Since 2011, seaweed here and across the Caribbean has exploded for reasons scientists do not yet fully understand.

Researchers blame multiple factors, including climate change, human sewage, agricultural runoff and dust blowing west from Africa’s Sahara Desert. — **Reuters**

## UK plans to strengthen internet laws to fight Russian disinformation

LONDON — Britain is proposing a new law that will require social media companies to proactively tackle disinformation posted by foreign states such as Russia, the government said on Monday.

The law would tackle fake accounts on platforms such as Meta’s Facebook and Twitter that were set up on behalf of foreign states to influence elections or court proceedings, the government said.

The law is likely to be passed during this parliamentary session through an amendment to link the National Security Bill and Online Safety Bill, both of which are in the government’s current program.

Communications regulator Ofcom will draw up codes of practice to help social media companies comply with the law, and will have the power to issue fines for infringement.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said on Monday the invasion of Ukraine has shown how Russia uses social media to spread lies about its actions.

“We cannot allow foreign states or their puppets to use the internet to conduct hostile online warfare unimpeded,” she said. “That’s why we are strengthening our new internet safety protections to make sure social media firms identify and root out state-backed disinformation.” — **Reuters**

### Inflation, from SI/1

Prices of meat and others surged by 8.1% year on year in June from 5.4% in May. Rice prices, likewise, inched up by 2% from 1.5% in the previous month.

The transport index, which accounts for 9% of the CPI, quickened by 17.1% in June from 14.6% in May. This was attributed to the faster increase in the prices of gasoline (53.9% in June from 47.2% in May); other passenger transport by road (2.7% from 1.1%); and diesel (92.5% from 86.2%).

Alcoholic beverages and tobacco rose by 7.8% in June from 6.8% in May, while utilities picked up by 6.6% from 6.5%.

Furnishings, household equipment and routine household maintenance grew by 2.9% in June from 2.5% in the previous month.

Higher annual hikes were seen in health (2.6% from 2.4%); personal care and miscellaneous goods and services (2.6% from 2.5%); clothing and footwear (2.2% from 2.1%), and recreation, sport, and culture (1.9% from 1.7%).

Meanwhile, restaurants and accommodation services and education services steadied at 2.8% and 0.6%, respectively.

Information and communication commodities, on the other hand, eased to 0.5% in June from 0.7% in the previous month.

In a statement, BSP Governor Felipe M. Medalla said inflation is expected to remain elevated in the next few months “due to the continued rise in global commodity prices and more pronounced second-round effects on domestic goods and services.”

“The BSP is prepared to undertake necessary policy actions to bring inflation back to a target-consistent path over the medium term and deliver on its primary mandate of price stability. The upward adjustment in monetary policy rates in May and June should help temper inflation expectations,” Mr. Medalla said.

### PURCHASING POWER

With the latest headline inflation print, the value of the Pi declined further to 87 centavos in June from 88 centavos in May. This was the lowest value of the local unit under the 2018 prices.

The purchasing power of the peso is computed by getting the reciprocal of the CPI then multiplied to 100.

“The purchasing power of the peso is a function of the CPI so if our CPI goes up, it erodes the purchasing power of our money to buy goods and services,” Mr. Mapa said.

Meanwhile, inflation as experienced by the poor households, under 2012-based prices, increased by 5% in June, higher than the 4.3% both in May and in June last year.

The PSA said the rebased 2018-based inflation for poor income households is scheduled to be released in December 2022.

“The main culprit driving inflation pressures remain the same since March: oil and food prices,” said Security Bank Corp. Chief Economist Robert Dan J. Roces. “Hence the larger CPI contributions from the transportation, utilities, and food baskets brought on by the effectivity of transport and wage hikes, costlier operations, and supply challenges in wheat, sugar, meat, and poultry last month.”

Mr. Roces also noted the possible emergence of spillover effects on core prices (nonfood and non-energy), which grew by an average of 0.3% on a monthly basis in June.

“This underscore persistently higher operating costs for suppliers which are then shared to consumers through higher sticker prices, and push towards a disanchoring of inflation expectations. With higher domestic minimum wages and further price pressures from abroad, we expect an uptick in core inflation soon,” he said.

Global oil and commodity prices spiked after Russia invaded Ukraine in late February this year.

In June, minimum daily wages increased by P30 to P110, depending on the region.

For Bank of the Philippine Islands Lead Economist Emilio S. Neri, Jr., inflation has probably not peaked yet.

“The headline figure may continue to go up until October assuming oil prices will stay at current levels. In this scenario, average inflation is expected to settle between 5 to 5.5%,” he said on a research note.

UnionBank of the Philippines, Inc. Chief Economist Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion said inflation is expected to remain elevated, with his forecast now at 5% for this year. — **Abigail Marie P. Yraola**

### Rate, from SI/1

The Monetary Board has four more meetings scheduled for the year to be held on Aug. 18, Sept. 22, Nov. 17 and Dec. 15.

### PESO

“The recent large policy rate hikes of the Fed in reaction to, what most would consider to be, unanticipated, meaning wrongly forecasted, US inflation spike is causing nearly all currencies to significantly depreciate against the US dollar. This is certainly adding another layer of complication to our domestic inflation-targeting and expectations,” Mr. Medalla said during the BSP’s 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary and turnover ceremony on Monday.

The US Federal Reserve’s aggressive monetary policy tightening has put downward pressure on the peso.

### AMRO, from SI/1

The BSP last month revised its average inflation forecast for this year to 5%, from 4.6%, reflecting the impact of higher oil and food prices.

For 2023, AMRO also raised its inflation forecast to 3.8%, higher than the 3.5% projection given in April.

The BSP raised its key interest rate by 25 basis points to 2.5% for a second straight meeting on June 23 to cool inflation.

“We don’t think that the increase in the interest rate or policy rate will have significant impact on growth this year or next year,” Mr. Khor said.

“Growth is self-sustaining [and] it’s prudent for the (BSP) to raise rates now in order to create more headroom for the economy in case there’s another shock and they need to lower rate[s].”

The Monetary Board will hold its next rate-setting meeting on Aug. 18.

### REGIONAL OUTLOOK

Meanwhile, AMRO downgraded its growth projection for the ASEAN+3 region to 4.3%, from the 4.7% forecast given in April, which reflected the impact of the coronavirus outbreak in China, the prolonged Russia-Ukraine war and tighter global conditions.

The region is composed of the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members, China, Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea.

For 2023, AMRO raised the region’s GDP forecast to 4.9% in 2023, from 4.4% previ-

ously, and inflation projection to 2.8%, from 2.3% previously.

“Just as the ASEAN+3 region is starting to emerge from the COVID-19 health crisis, the protracted war in Ukraine and persistent inflation in the United States have ushered in a new set of challenges for policy makers,” Mr. Khor said.

On its own, the ASEAN region is expected to grow by 5.1% this year, and by 5.2% in 2023.

“The Plus-3 economies — not just China, but also Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea — saw flare-ups of COVID-19 infections and attendant restrictions that weighed on growth in the first quarter of 2022. Growth was relatively stronger in ASEAN, as economic reopening gained further traction,” AMRO said.

AMRO also upgraded the region’s inflation forecast to 5.2% this year, from the 3.5% projection given in April.

“Much of it is coming from the supply shock because of the oil prices,” Mr. Khor said.

Risks to the growth outlook for the ASEAN+3 region have increased, including sustained rise in energy and food prices and supply chain disruptions.

Other risks cited by AMRO include the sharper-than-expected slowdown in China, aggressive monetary policy tightening in the United States, and the possible emergence of new COVID-19 variants. — **Diego Gabriel C. Robles**

### Economy, from SI/1

cessor, which experts said might push the government to reduce spending. The government is expected to implement austerity measures and find ways to increase its revenues to address its ballooning external debt.

“The goal is not to reduce the debt but to increase growth to a level sufficient to pay for the debts,” said Leonardo A. Lanzona, who teaches economics at the Ateneo de Manila University. “Expenditures have to be properly allocated to projects with high returns.”

Also, Mr. Marcos said the Cabinet discussed ways to improve government services “so it would be easier for the public to do business with the government.”

“We are also trying to streamline the government so its function is better, its function is much more efficient. I want to make sure that every department, every agency has already the plan in mind so that our Cabinet secretaries are coordinated with each other,” the President said.

“Let’s get our bureaucracies streamlined. I said you’d have a relatively free hand in deciding who you want to hire and how you want to change the structure of your department if that’s what you want to do. But do it soon.”

Mr. Marcos, 64, faces economic problems worsened by the soaring prices of basic goods.

During the media briefing, Mr. Marcos seemed to have disagreed with the 6.1% inflation recorded last month.

“We are not that high,” he said, without elaborating. The data was released by the government’s statisticians.

“Unfortunately, it looks like we may cross that threshold, *tatawid tayo sa 4%*,” Mr. Marcos said when asked to comment on the June inflation. “We have to think about interest rate levels. But there’s a conflicting force in [foreign] exchange rate levels.”

June inflation accelerated to 6.1%, above the central bank’s 2-4% target range. Year to date, inflation averaged 4.4%, mainly due to higher prices of food, utilities and transport.

“The forces that have pushed commodity prices up are beyond our control. Much of our inflation is imported,” Mr. Marcos said, referring to the spike in global commodity and oil prices due to the Russia-Ukraine war. “It’s inflation on products that have suffered inflation that we import.” — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**