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Germany, Hungary & Israel air forces trained together in first joint exercise

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IDF strikes Hamas targets in Gaza for 10th day as Turkey is directing violence

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Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait may follow UAE accord amid virus, annex, Iran tensions

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Gantz accuses Netanyahu of hiding sale of F-35s in UAE deal with Israel

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Police began removal of protest tent outside PM residence & banned drummers

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Israel soldiers fired at three youths carrying material to attack passing vehicles

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Sale of F-35s & drones to UAE under review, Israeli policy forbids Arab advantage

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Trump confirms US mulling F-35 sale to UAE, not a secret clause, It's under review

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Ex-Trump adviser Steve Bannon charged in fraud of southern border wall scheme

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US notified UN to restore sanctions against Iran expiring October, Council resists

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Democrats nominate Joe Biden for president, vowing to end Trump foreign policy

08.20.20 – Th - - -

Germany, Hungary & Israel air forces trained together in first joint exercise

08.20.20

Germany welcomes Israeli air force for first joint exercise

The cooperation between Germany and Israel, which includes military exercises carry a deeper symbolic significance after Germany became a staunch ally of Israel in the aftermath of the Holocaust

Associated Press| Published: 08.20.20 , 23:37

Germany welcomed military aircraft from Israel to its airspace on Thursday in their first joint combat exercises in German territory as both air forces praised the intensive cooperation between the two countries.

"It was very emotional for us when, one after the other, the first Israeli jets arrived here in German airspace," a spokesman for the German Luftwaffe told the German news agency DPA

"Nowadays, we have a very intense partnership with the Israelis," spokesman Thorsten Weber said. "We work closely together, we do exercises together, German soldiers are being trained in Israel."

Israeli Air Force pilot Lt. Colonel O., who didn't give his full name in line with the military branch's regulations, said that during the exercises he remembered the difficult past of Germans and Jews while also looking to the future.

During the Third Reich, Nazi Germany murdered 6 million European Jews and others in the Holocaust. Relations between Israel and Germany were difficult in the first decades after the end of the war, but have been growing closer together over the years.

"I think all of us are feeling it right in the heart how deep the past is," said O. "But we're looking into the future and are happy for the opportunity of flying together."

He added that the cooperation of the two air forces was a good thing for both countries. Nowadays, Germany is one of Israel's staunchest supporters.

Still, most interactions between the two nations carry a deeper symbolic significance because of the horrors of the Holocaust, which ended 75 years ago when Germany surrendered in World War II.

The Israeli pilots arrived at the base in western Germany on Monday for two weeks of exercises. They are conducting training with the German air force for the first week, and also with planes from the Hungarian air force in the second week.

Their planes include a group of six F-16s, two Gulfstreams and two Boeing 707 tanker jets. A total of around 180 Israeli personnel are involved.

08.20.20 – Th - - -

IDF strikes Hamas targets in Gaza for 10th day as Turkey is directing violence

08.20.20

IDF strikes Hamas targets in Gaza for 10th straight day

There were 42 fires caused by incendiary devices launched by balloons from Gaza and Palestinian factions attempted to launch rockets at Israeli communities; Hamas leader warns confrontation imminent

Yoav Zitun, Elinor Levy | Published: 08.20.20 , 23:27

The IDF conducted strikes by air and from tank fire on Thursday on targets in Gaza for 10th straight day after incendiary devices launched from the Strip caused 42 fires in communities in the south.

Palestinian sources say attacks targeted a Hamas military installation in the area of Khan Yunis in the southern part of the enclave.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniya, who is in Turkey said there is a good chance that a new cycle of violence is imminent unless Israel accepts demands made by the terror group.

"We are waiting for a response to the demands we submitted to the Egyptian Intelligence delegation during its visit to Gaza," he said.

Earlier Palestinian factions launched two rockets towards Israel, but the projectiles failed to cross the border and landed inside the strip.

08.20.20 – Th - - -

Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait may follow UAE accord amid virus, annex, Iran tensions

08.20.20

Rabbi to Bahrain king: Manama will be next to normalize Israel ties

Marc Schneier, a close confidant of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, says many other Gulf states are ready and willing to sign accords with Jerusalem after UAE created 'a domino effect', including the younger generation of Saudis

Itamar Eichner | Published: 08.20.20 , 23:05

Israel's normalization agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will have "a domino effect" in the region, with other Gulf states joining in the accord, said Rabbi Marc Schneier, a special adviser for the King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

"I predict that another Gulf state will normalize relations with Israel by the end of 2020," said Schneier, referring to Bahrain.

"I can't think of any other Gulf state or leader who is readier and who deserves the recognition than the King of Bahrain," he said, adding that Al Khalifa is deserving of recognition for his effort to promote peace.

With the help of the Bahraini king, the well-known New York rabbi has worked with the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Muslim civil rights and advocacy group.

Emirati Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has even personally told him that his dream is to visit Jerusalem.

"The Bahraini king always talked about his desire to form relations with Israel," Schneier said.

"He led the effort in the GCC to legislate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization and sent an interfaith delegation to Jerusalem following the U.S. decision to move the embassy to the capital city in a sign of solidarity and Bahrain was the one to host the Peace to Prosperity conference in June on the economic aspect of the White House's peace plan," he said.

"No other person is readier for this than he."

Asked whether Saudi Arabia could potentially sign an agreement with Israel, Schneier said that while Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is ready for such a deal, the issue is a "generational one."

"I know the [Saudi] crown prince is ready for relations with Israel. The older generation is just more conservative," Schneier said.

"I believe that the UAE and Israel's agreement will affect the younger generation in Saudi Arabia. It is merely a question of time."

Scheier also did not rule out the possibility that Qatar, which is known as an economic ally of Hamas, might eventually get on the bandwagon.

"Qatar is the only Gulf state that openly works with Israel when it comes to cooperation and humanitarian and economic aid to the Gaza Strip – at Jerusalem's request," he said. He also projected that Bahrain and Oman might also form relations with Israel, with Kuwait also a possibility.

Schneier said several issues helped the UAE deal come to fruition.

"With no tensions there is no deal," he said.

The first is the coronavirus pandemic. I have heard several Gulf officials saying that with Gulf states money and Israeli ingenuity, a vaccine could be found.

"The second is the issue surrounding the planned annexation of territory in the West Bank. It was important for the UAE to save the Palestinians from that. Without it off the table, there would have not been any peace. The third one is the Iranian threat."

08.20.20 – Th - - -

Gantz accuses Netanyahu of hiding sale of F-35s in UAE deal with Israel

08.20.20

Gantz accuses Netanyahu of circumventing authority over UAE deal and F-35
Gantz accuses PM and National Security Council chief of going against protocol, withholding crucial information from military and Defense Ministry on the Israel-UAE peace deal despite security implications

Yoav Zitun | Published: 08.20.20 , 22:25

Defense Minister Benny Gantz sent a scathing letter on Thursday, to both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and the Director of the National Security Council Meir Ben-

Shabbat, after reports of the latter's conversation with Air Force Commander Maj. Gen. Amikam Norkin came to light.

According to Gantz, the conversation between Ben-Shabbat and Norkin constitutes circumvention of authority, since procedures dictate that the National Security Council must first coordinate with the Office of the Chief of Staff and the Defense Ministry before speaking to any senior military officials.

According to the reports, Norkin may face reprimand for his failure to report the conversation to his superior officer, Chief of Staff Aviv Kochavi. Ben Shabbat called the airforce chief to hear his view on the possibility of the sale of F-35 fighter jets to the UAE. Norkin vehemently objected to such a possibility in line with the IDF's long-standing policy objecting to advanced weaponry in the hands of Arab states.

It seems Ben Shabbat kept information on the pending agreement between the two countries from Norkin, who was kept in the dark also on the UAE's demand for F-35 fighter jets in exchange for agreeing to sign an agreement with Israel. The National Security Council and the prime minister apparently hid the agreement with the Gulf state from senior members of the Defense establishment despite the security implications of such a deal.

While discussions between the NSC, state officials and senior military officials are commonplace and sometimes occur on a daily basis, they had always followed protocol, which dictates both the Chief of Staff and the Defense Ministry must first be informed.

The Prime Minister's Office stated on Wednesday: "The NSC chief has the right to consult with military bodies of his choice. There was no need for further discussion."

08.20.20 – Th - - -

Police began removal of protest tent outside PM residence & banned drummers

08.20.20

Ex Shin Bet chief hauled away as police clear Jerusalem protest site

Former defense minister Moshe Ya'alon says action was politically motivated, accuses 'Netanyahu's public security minister' of 'using police against a just democratic protest'; police say action necessary after demonstrators refused to relocate

Gilad Cohen | Published: 08.20.20 , 17:05

Police officers forcibly removed protesters from their tent outside the Jerusalem residence of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday afternoon, just hours before a demonstration were expected by people calling for him to resign and another by his supporters.

Among the protesters dragged away by police were Carmi Gillon, a former head of the Shin Bet security agency and retired IAF general Amir Haskel.

Haskel has already been arrested for public disturbance and is considered one of the leaders of the anti-Netanyahu protest movement. Former defense minister Moshe Ya'alon, who visited the scene, claimed the police action was politically motivated.

"Netanyahu's minister of public security is using the police against a just democratic protest," Ya'alon said.

Jerusalem police said however that the action was necessary.

"After frequent unsuccessful attempts at a resolution that would move the protesters away, and their refusal to relocate to a dedicated area prepared for them, Jerusalem police forces began a forceful removal of the protest tent," the police said.

Demonstrations were scheduled to begin outside the official residence at 8 pm and are set to end by 11 pm.

On Wednesday, the High Court rejected an appeal by some residents of the area to ban demonstrations, citing city ordinance and claiming protesters were disturbing the peace. The court did however restrict the noise level allowed and banned drummers from the protest after 9:30 pm.

Roads leading to the area were closed off in the afternoon to allow the demonstrations to proceed.

Police called on all demonstrators to observe health guidelines during their demonstrations.

08.20.20 – Th - - -

Israel soldiers fired at three youths carrying material to attack passing vehicles

08.20.20

DF fire at West Bank 'terror squad'; Palestinian teen said killed

According to Palestinian health officials Mohammad Hamdan, 16, was killed by Israeli forces and two other Palestinians were wounded while Hamas issued a statement mourning his death

Reuters| Published: 08.20.20 , 17:33

Israeli soldiers fired at Palestinians who were believed to be preparing to attack Israeli cars in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, the military said, and Palestinian officials said a Palestinian teenager was killed.

A military spokeswoman said members of a "terrorist squad" were hit by the gunfire but she had no details on their condition.

Palestinian health and municipal officials said Mohammad Hamdan, 16, was killed by Israeli forces and two other Palestinians were wounded. The Hamas Islamist militant group issued a statement mourning his death.

Imrad Zahran, chairman of the local council of Hamdan's village, said the three youths were near a road used by Jewish settlers when the soldiers shot them. The military spokeswoman said the soldiers opened fire after spotting Palestinians carrying flammable material and preparing tires which they planned to ignite and use to attack passing Israeli vehicles.

Zahran said two of the Palestinians shot by the troops were treated in Palestinian hospitals and that the military, which had taken Hamdan away, later informed him that he had died of his wounds. A Palestinian health official also said Hamdan was killed. The military spokeswoman said the shooting occurred at a spot where similar attacks against Israeli vehicles have been carried out in the past. Palestinians regard Jewish settlements, seen as illegal by most countries in the world, as a bid by Israel to exert permanent control over the West Bank and destroy their aspirations for statehood.

Israel has pledged to annex parts of the West Bank but suspended implementation at the United States' request as part of a normalization deal with the United Arab Emirates last week. Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Middle East War. Palestinians seek the territory for a future state that would include the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

08.20.20 – Th - - -

Sale of F-35s & drones to UAE under review, Israeli policy forbids Arab advantage

08.20.20

UAE official: Israel deal should clear way for U.S. F-35 sale

Senior Emirati diplomat says request to buy advanced fighter jets predates newly announced agreement between Abu Dhabi and Jerusalem; comments come day after Trump said he was considering sale despite long-standing Israeli concerns over shift in military might

Associated Press, Ynet| Published: 08.20.20 , 16:46

The UAE's newly announced deal with Israel should clear the way for the purchase of American F-35 fighter jets, a senior Emirati official said Thursday. hours after U.S. President Donald Trump said he is considering selling the Gulf state the advanced warplanes.

The agreement for normalized ties with Israel should remove "any hurdle" to the sale of the fighter jets, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said, adding that the UAE requests to buy the planes predated the new alliance.

"We have legitimate requests that are there. We ought to get them ... the whole idea of a state of belligerency or war with Israel no longer exists," Gargash said in an online interview with the Atlantic Council.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vehemently denied that the nascent agreement between Jerusalem and Abu Dhabi included a secret clause to facilitate the sale of the jets to the UAE.

Ynet on Tuesday revealed the existence of the secret clause in the recently reached agreement between Israel and the UAE to establish diplomatic ties, which allows the U.S. to provide the Emiratis with the F-35s and advanced drones.

Trump told reporters at a White House news conference on Wednesday that the Emiratis had expressed interest in buying "quite a few" of the stealth fighter jets.

He said such a sale was "under review" given the new dynamic between Israel and the UAE since the two nations agreed to normalize relations last week.

Perhaps just as important, Trump said, is that the UAE can afford to buy the planes.

"They have the money and they would like to order quite a few F-35s," Trump said. "It's the greatest fighter jet in the world, as you know, by stealth, totally stealth."

"They'd like to buy F-35s, we'll see what happens," Trump added. "It's under review, but they made a great advance in peace in the Middle East."

Netanyahu took to Twitter on Tuesday to deny the existence of the secret clause - branding the Ynet report "completely fake news" - even as his office said that he had repeatedly expressed to American officials Israel's concerns over such an arms sale. "The peace agreement with the UAE does not include any clause of this kind, and the U.S. has made clear to Israel that it will always ensure that Israel has the qualitative advantage," the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement.

But the statement also said that, "In the prime minister's conversation with U.S. Ambassador [to Israel David] Friedman on July 7, the prime minister explicitly expressed Israel's opposition to the sale of F-35 aircraft and other advanced weapons to any country in the Middle East, including as part of any peace agreements," it said.

Maintaining regional military supremacy has been a hallmark of Israeli policy for decades, and Jerusalem has used close ties with Washington to ensure that certain sophisticated weapons are not sold to neighboring countries.

As part of his various corruption scandals, Netanyahu has also been accused by critics of bypassing Israel's defense establishment in regards to a German sale of advanced submarines to Egypt.

08.20.20 – Th - - -

Trump confirms US mulling F-35 sale to UAE, not a secret clause, It's under review

08.20.20

Trump confirms U.S. mulling F-35 sale to UAE, says 'they have the money'
President's first comments on issue come after Netanyahu denied existence of clause in Israel-UAE peace deal to sell advanced American aircraft to Abu Dhabi; Trump says Emiratis expressed interest in purchasing 'quite a few' fighter jets

U.S. President Donald Trump said Wednesday that the country is considering selling advanced F-35 warplanes to the United Arab Emirates, a day after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vehemently denied that the nascent agreement between Jerusalem and Abu Dhabi included such a provision.

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Trump said that at some point he expected Saudi Arabia to join the Israel-UAE agreement announced last week.

"I do," Trump replied when asked at a White House news conference if he believed Riyadh would also sign an agreement with Jerusalem.

In security-obsessed Israel, confirmation that military-related strings are attached to the UAE deal could temper some of the excitement that has widely surrounded it thus far. Netanyahu took to Twitter on Tuesday to deny the existence of the secret clause - branding the Ynet report "completely fake news" - even as his office said that he had repeatedly expressed to American officials Israel's concerns over such an arms sale. "The peace agreement with the UAE does not include any clause of this kind, and the U.S. has made clear to Israel that it will always ensure that Israel has the qualitative advantage," the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement.

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Maintaining regional military supremacy has been a hallmark of Israeli policy for decades, and Jerusalem has used close ties with Washington to ensure that certain sophisticated weapons are not sold to neighboring countries.

The UAE has long been reported to be interested in acquiring U.S.-made F-35 stealth fighter jets and attack drones like those of the Israeli Air Force.

The Prime Minister's Office also said Tuesday that Defense Minister Benny Gantz, who serves as the alternative prime minister and is Netanyahu's chief coalition partner, had been updated on his opposition to the F-35 sales in July.

But Gantz said later the same day that he had only been informed of the UAE agreement once it had been signed last week and decried any move to end Israel's military advantage in the region.

"Israel's resilience depends on its air superiority in the Middle East," he said, and vowed to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge at any price.

As part of his various corruption scandals, Netanyahu has also been accused by critics of bypassing Israel's defense establishment in regards to a German sale of advanced submarines to Egypt.

08.20.20 – Th - - -

Ex-Trump adviser Steve Bannon charged in fraud of southern border wall scheme

08.20.20

Ex-Trump adviser Steve Bannon charged in border wall scheme

A spokeswoman for Bannon did not immediately respond to a request for comment; Prosecutors alleged that Bannon and three others 'orchestrated a scheme' to defraud of donors

Associated Press| Published: 08.20.20 , 17:37

Former White House adviser Steve Bannon was arrested Thursday on charges that he and three others ripped off donors to an online fundraising scheme "We Build The Wall."

The charges were contained in an indictment unsealed in Manhattan federal court. donors

Federal prosecutors alleged that Bannon and three others "orchestrated a scheme to defraud hundreds of thousands of donors" in connection with an online crowdfunding campaign that raised more than \$25 million to build a wall along the southern border of the United States.

08.21.20 – Fr - - -

US notified UN to restore sanctions against Iran expiring October, Council resists

08.21.20

US demands restoration of UN sanctions against Iran

U.S. insistence that it can authorize snapback had rejected by virtually all other members of the 15-nation council. Germany, a participant in the Iran deal but not a council member, is also opposed

Associated Press| Published: 08.21.20 , 00:04

The Trump administration on Thursday formally notified the United Nations of its demand for all U.N. sanctions on Iran to be restored, setting off an immediate confrontation with Russia and other Security Council members who called the U.S. move illegal.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered the notification to the president of the U.N. Security Council, citing significant Iranian violations of the 2015 nuclear deal, a requirement to "snap back" U.N. sanctions.

Pompeo tweeted: "The United States is determined to make sure that the Iranian regime doesn't have the capacity to inflict even more harm on the world."

Russian deputy U.N. ambassador Dmitry Polyansky shot back: "Looks like there are 2 planets. A fictional dog-eat-dog one where US pretends it can do whatever it wants without 'cajoling' anyone, breach and leave deals but still benefit from them, and another one where the rest of the world lives and where intl law and diplomacy reign."

At the heart of the showdown in the U.N.'s most powerful body is President Donald Trump's 2018 withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal between six global powers and Iran.

The U.S. maintains that under the Security Council resolution endorsing the agreement it retains the right as an initial party to invoke the provision to "snap back" sanctions. Russia, China, Britain, France and virtually all other council members say the Trump administration does not have the right since it is no longer a party to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA.

The U.S. action sets the stage for a showdown that could lead to a crisis of credibility for the Security Council.

Even before Pompeo presented the council president with the notice, other members rejected the step.

In a letter presented to Indonesia's ambassador to the U.N., Dian Triansyah Djani, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the council, Pompeo said the U.S. was notifying the body of "significant non-performance" by Iran related to the nuclear deal. As a result, Pompeo said the process leading to the re-imposition of U.N. sanctions had been initiated.

The U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, has reported some Iranian violations of the agreement, but Tehran says those are the result of the U.S. violating the accord by withdrawing from it and then re-imposing harsh unilateral sanctions.

Pompeo noted that the European participants in the deal had attempted to bring Iran back into compliance. But he said, "despite extensive efforts and exhaustive diplomacy on the part of those member states, Iran's significant non-performance persists."

"As a result, the United States is left with no choice but to notify the council that Iran is in significant non-performance of its JCPOA commitments," Pompeo wrote.

Pompeo's letter was accompanied by a six-page explanation of why the U.S. believes it retains the right to invoke snapback.

The U.S. insistence that it can authorize snapback had already been rejected by virtually all other members of the 15-nation council. Germany, a participant in the Iran deal but not a council member, is also opposed.

"France, Germany and the United Kingdom note that the US ceased to be a participant to the JCPOA following their withdrawal from the deal on May 8, 2018," the group said in a statement released after Pompeo presented the letter. "We cannot, therefore, support this action which is incompatible with our current efforts to support the JCPOA."

Russian Ambassador to the U.N. Vassily Nebenzia said: "We do not take it that they have the legal right or the reason to initiate this. So, of course, we will challenge it."

China has said it agrees with the Russian position, and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told U.N. chief António Guterres in a Thursday phone call that the Security Council must resist the U.S. demand.

"This would have dangerous consequences for international law, it will bring nothing but the destruction of international mechanisms and it will discredit the Security Council," Zarif said.

Under the terms of the Security Council resolution that enshrined the nuclear deal, Thursday's notification starts a 30-day clock after which pre-2015 U.N. sanctions on Iran that were eased will be re-imposed unless a resolution specifically extending their suspension is passed. The U.S., however, would use its veto power to block any resolution extending the sanctions relief.

Because of the legal debate over U.S. standing, it is possible that the snapback demand will simply be ignored by the other members, which could call into question the Security Council's relevance and ability to enforce its own legally binding decisions.

Trump and Pompeo had made no secret of their intention to pursue snapback, particularly after the administration's embarrassing defeat last week at the Security Council on extending the arms embargo on Iran that expires in October. The U.S. won just one other "yes" vote, with China and Russia opposed and the 11 other members abstaining.

U.S. allies Britain and France are hoping to preserve the nuclear deal in the event Trump loses his bid for a second term in November's presidential election. Democratic Joe Biden has said he would try to revive the agreement.

The Europeans fear that the re-imposition of sanctions may lead Iran to quit the deal entirely and plow ahead with efforts to develop atomic weapons. The Trump administration says it withdrew precisely because it eased sanctions, opening major revenue streams for Iran while gradually easing restrictions on its nuclear activities that money could pay for.

08.19.20 – We - - -

Democrats nominate Joe Biden for president, vowing to end Trump foreign policy

08.19.20

Democrats nominate Joe Biden for president, vowing to end Trump 'chaos' Democrats, and several Republicans, endorse the former U.S. vice president and his running mate California senator Kamala Harris, to formalize what has been clear for months

Associated Press| Updated: 08.19.20 , 09:15

Democrats formally nominated Joe Biden for president on Tuesday, vowing his election would repair a pandemic-battered America and put an end to the chaos that has defined Republican President Donald Trump's administration.

The second night of the party's four-night national convention, under the theme "Leadership Matters," featured elder statesmen like former presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter, rising stars of the Democratic Party as well as prominent Republicans, who made the case that Biden would return integrity to the White House and normalcy to American lives.

Biden's wife, Jill, an educator, delivered the headline speech from a Delaware high school where she once taught, offering a deeply personal account of how their love helped him heal after his first wife and infant daughter were killed in a car accident.

"I never imagined at the age of 26 I would be asking myself, 'How do you make a broken family whole?'" she said. The answer, she said, is the same for a broken nation: "With love and understanding."

"If we entrust this nation to Joe, he will do for your family what he did for ours: bring us together and make us whole," she said.

Throughout the evening, Democratic leaders contrasted Biden's long experience with what they described as Trump's deadly mishandling of the coronavirus outbreak and his willingness to corrupt democratic institutions.

"At a time like this, the Oval Office should be a command center," Clinton said in a prerecorded video. "Instead, it's a storm center. There's only chaos. Just one thing never changes - his determination to deny responsibility and shift the blame."

With the four-day convention largely virtual due to the coronavirus, delegates from around the country cast votes remotely to confirm Biden as the nominee in a coast-to-coast roll call that drew instant raves on social media.

In clips that showcased the party's diversity, Democrats explained why they were supporting Biden while putting their own state-specific spin on the proceedings, from a calamari appetizer in Rhode Island to a herd of cattle in Montana.

After hearing from his home state of Delaware, which went last in his honor, Biden appeared live alongside Jill Biden to thank the party for nominating him, more than three decades after his first unsuccessful run for the White House.

"Thank you very, very much from the bottom of my heart," said Biden, who will deliver his acceptance speech on Thursday. "It means the world to me and my family."

Rising stars, Republicans speak

The program started by showcasing some of the party's rising politicians. But rather than a single keynote speech that could be a star-making turn, as it was for then-state Senator Barack Obama in 2004, the convention featured 17 Democrats in a video address, including Stacey Abrams, the one-time Georgia gubernatorial nominee whom Biden considered for a running mate.

"America faces a triple threat: a public health catastrophe, and economic collapse and a reckoning with racial justice and inequality," Abrams said. "So our choice is clear: a steady experienced public servant who can lead us out of this crisis just like he's done before, or a man who only knows how to deny and distract."

As they did on Monday's opening night, Democrats featured a handful of Republicans who have crossed party lines to praise Biden, 77, over Trump, 74, ahead of the Nov. 3 election.

Cindy McCain, widow of Republican Senator John McCain, spoke in a video about her husband's long friendship with Biden. Trump clashed with McCain, who was the Republican nominee for president in 2008, and the president criticized McCain even after his 2018 death.

Republican former Secretary of State Colin Powell, a retired four-star general who endorsed Biden in June, was one of several national security officials who spoke on the Democrat's behalf.

"He will trust our diplomats and our intelligence community, not the flattery of dictators and despots," Powell said. "He will make it his job to know when anyone dares to threaten us. He will stand up to our adversaries with strength and experience."

Democratic former Secretary of State John Kerry attacked a Trump foreign policy he called "incoherent."

"When this president goes overseas, it isn't a goodwill mission, it's a blooper reel... America deserves a president who is looked up to, not laughed at," Kerry said. Without the cheering crowds at the in-person gathering originally planned for Milwaukee, Wisconsin, TV viewership on Monday was down from 2016. But an additional 10.2 million people watched on digital platforms, the Biden campaign said, for a total audience of nearly 30 million.

Aiming to draw attention away from Biden, Trump, trailing in opinion polls, held a campaign rally in Arizona, a hotly contested battleground state that can swing to either party and play a decisive role in the election.

Trump called Biden's immigration plan "radical" and "extreme," continuing his effort to portray Biden as a puppet of left-wing agitators. In a statement on Tuesday night, campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh said Biden's nomination means "his supervisors from the radical left are now formally in charge."

Biden's vice presidential pick, Senator Kamala Harris, will headline Wednesday night's program along with Obama.

The Republican National Convention, also largely virtual, takes place next week. Trump will give his acceptance speech at the White House, despite criticism he is politicizing the presidential residence.