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Trump stokes fresh fury as Biden appeals for calm

● President claims election fraud ● Rival gains ground in key states ● Protests over slow vote counts

David Charter Washington

President Trump issued wild claims of fraud and launched more legal actions as America's vote count tightened in the remaining four key races.

With the country on tenterhooks and the president's grip on power appearing to weaken, Mr Trump tried to halt the count in Pennsylvania and Nevada. A judge in Georgia threw out a similar attempt hours after it was filed.

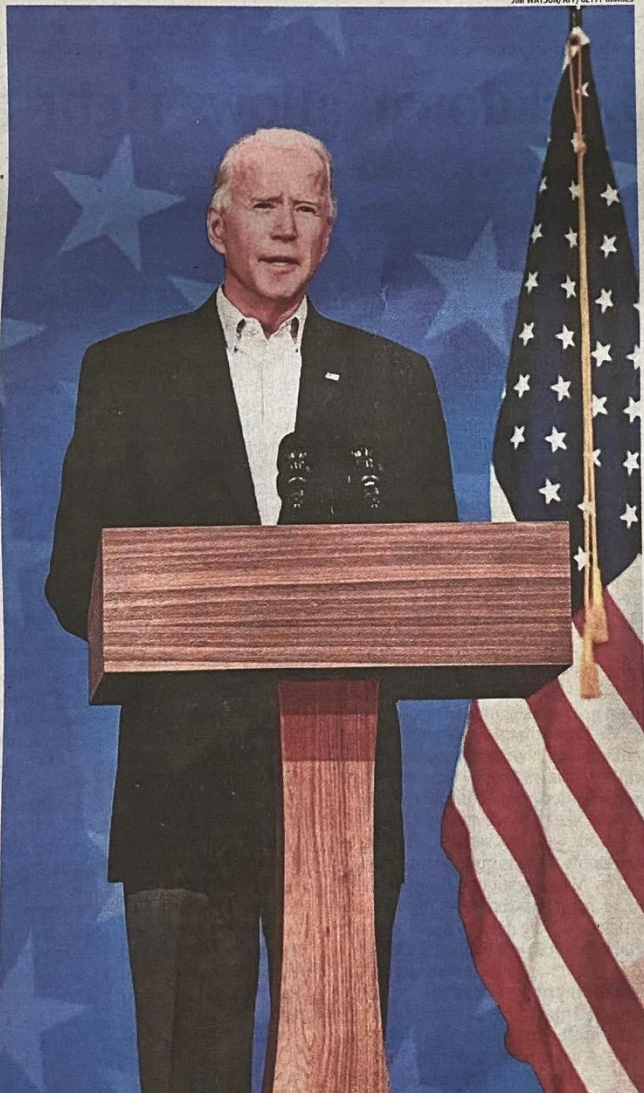
Joe Biden, his rival, appealed for patience while the unprecedented numbers of postal votes from Tuesday's election were tallied. "I ask everyone to stay calm," he said, delivering a brief statement. "The process is working. The count is being completed, and we'll know very soon."

On a rollercoaster day of counting in which both candidates were sweating on slim leads as the final votes came through, Mr Biden was gaining ground in Mr Trump's narrow advantages in Pennsylvania and Georgia, while Mr Trump was doing likewise in Arizona. Mr Biden was leading in Nevada by a whisker. The Democratic challenger needed only to win Pennsylvania, or any two of Arizona, Georgia and Nevada, to become the next president.

The long wait for results, compounded by the refusal of some states to start processing the record haul of postal votes before election day, threatened to end with costly litigation in the courts. North Carolina and Alaska are the only other states still counting, and were assumed to be heading for Mr Trump.

Mr Trump, 74, who did not emerge from the White House, spent the day explaining that the election was being ended and calling for an end to counting. More registered Democrats than Republicans made postal votes and Mr Trump, 77, benefited as they were tallied. "IF YOU COUNT THE LEGAL VOTES, I EASILY WIN THE ELECTION!" Mr Trump said in a statement issued by his campaign. "IF YOU COUNT THE ILLEGAL AND LATE VOTES, THEY CAN STEAL THE ELECTION FROM US!"

Minutes later Mr Biden wrote on



Joe Biden urged voters to be patient yesterday after protests at counts across the country. Donald Trump Jr called for "total war" to keep his father in office

Twitter: "Be patient, folks. Votes are being counted, and we feel good about where we are."

Frustrations flared as police made dozens of arrests at protests against slow counting. Trump supporters, some armed, staged protests in Arizona in response to rumours that Republican votes were being ignored. They chanted: "Count my vote!" In Pennsylvania Mr Trump and his supporters were calling for the count to be stopped.

The president's eldest son called for "total war" to keep his father in office.

Donald Trump Jr, 42, tweeted: "The best thing for America's future is for @realDonaldTrump to go to total war over this election to expose all of the fraud, cheating, dead/no longer in state voters, that has been going on for far too long. It's time to clean up this mess & stop looking like a banana republic!"

The candidates were anxiously hoping to reach the total of 270 votes in the electoral college that decides the US presidency. Mr Biden started the day on 253 and Mr Trump on 213.

In Nevada, the smallest of the outstanding states with six electoral college votes, Mr Biden's lead narrowed during the day. It was announced that the result would probably be confirmed today. In Pennsylvania, which has 20 electoral college votes, Mr Trump's early lead was shrinking.

In Georgia about 47,000 votes remained to be counted at 6pm. Mr Trump held a 9,500 lead but many of the remaining postal ballots were in Atlanta, a heavily Democratic area.

Asked about Mr Trump's claims that the election was being stolen from him, Gabriel Sterling, a Georgia election official, said: "The effort here is to make sure that everybody's legal vote is counted properly and that the actual results are reflective of the voters' intent."

In the nationwide vote Mr Biden had 72.3 million votes in the running total, more than any other US presidential candidate in history, while Mr Trump had 68.7 million, the second highest. US election latest, pages 6-9

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Sunak plan criticised by leading economist

Steven Swinford Deputy Political Editor

Rishi Sunak's new multibillion-pound package of support for workers has been criticised by a leading economist as "wasteful and badly targeted".

The chancellor's move to extend the furlough scheme until March means that the state will have paid 80 per cent of the wages of millions of Britons for a year.

Mr Sunak yesterday warned that the nation faced a "difficult winter" as the "economic recovery slowed" as he announced a blanket extension that will cost up to £6.2 billion a month. Workers will be able to claim 80 per cent of their usual wage to a maximum £2,500 a month, employers only having to contribute national insurance and pension costs.

The Bank of England announced further £150 billion of quantitative easing — effectively printing money to prop up the economy. The Bank cast that the economy would have contracted by 11 per cent by the end of the year compared with last year and the number of people on furlough would increase from 2 million to 5.5 million during the lockdown.

Mr Sunak also announced grants for self-employed workers would be raised from 55 per cent to average profits in the three months January to 80 per cent, up to a maximum of £7,500. The Treasury said the measure would cost £7.3 billion.

Paul Johnson, head of the Institute for Fiscal Studies think tank, said he was "taken aback" by the plan, calling them "wasteful and badly targeted". He said: "For the limited period of a national lockdown to return to targeted and generous schemes makes sense. But to suggest that will cover all the way through to March could leave two million people furloughed on 80 per cent of pay."

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IN THE NEWS

Make exams easier

CSE and A-level grade boundaries are likely to be lowered next year due to the impact of the pandemic on students, the head of the exams watchdog said. Page 2

Cleaner beaches

Sir David Attenborough's Blue Planet series may be partly responsible for litter on beaches almost halving in the past three years, according to a conservation charity. Page 4

Ex-BHS owner jailed

Dominic Chappell, the former owner of BHS, has been jailed for evading tax on £2.2 million of income that he received after buying the department store chain for £1. Page 5

Law to protect Putin

Vladimir Putin could be given lifelong immunity from prosecution for any alleged crimes committed before, during and after his presidency under a proposed law. Page 34

RSA faces takeover

RSA, one of Britain's oldest insurers, faces being broken up after it received a £71 billion joint takeover approach from rivals in Canada and Denmark. Page 37

Pay-per-view dit

Premier League clubs abandon pay-per-view matches for at least for the rest of this year after a backlash by supporters over the £14.95 charge. Page 3

Oval Office (London) sells for £140m

Carol Lewis Deputy Property Editor

While next year's occupant of the White House remained unclear, one wealthy homebuyer spent £140 million to ensure they could stroll through an Oval Office whenever they wanted. Albeit one in London.

The replica of the president's office was built by Joseph Kennedy when he was based at the American embassy, which has been converted into a grand residential development. The replica is said to have helped encourage his son, the young JFK, to go into politics.

In what is believed to be the most expensive penthouse purchase this year, the anonymous buyer has acquired the top storey and two lower apartments at No 1 Grosvenor Square in Mayfair, where the embassy was housed from 1938 until 1960.

The buyer plans to knock the three apartments together to create a massive 15,600 sq ft home. The properties have been bought as "shell and core" — the main one is at present a concrete box with no internal walls — and could cost millions of pounds to transform into a residence.

Gabriel York, chief executive of Lodha UK, the developer, said that the identity of the buyer could not be disclosed but the majority of the buyers in the building were "those who run and own businesses based in the UK, including some of the top FTSE companies".

It is not the first time the 8,100 sq ft penthouse — a modern single-storey apartment on the roof of the building — has sold. A Chinese buyer was reported to have bought it and another apartment in the building off-plan in 2018 for about £110 million but the sale fell through.

The most recent sale is one of the most expensive in 2020, a year in which, despite the pandemic and a glut of properties on the market in the capital, there has been no shortage of multi-million-pound deals. Knight Frank, the estate agency, has reported there were 56 sales of homes for more than £10 million in central London during the first eight months of the year.

The penthouse is also believed to be one of the most expensive in London. The penthouse at One Hyde Park owned by the property developer Nick Candy was valued at £160 million in



The replica was built by JFK's father, Joseph Kennedy, below, when No 1 Grosvenor Square was the US Embassy



Year's most expensive homes

£210 million Paid by Cheung Chung-Kiu, a Hong Kong-based Chinese property magnate, for 2-8a Rutland Gate, a mansion with 45 bedrooms close to Hyde Park, in January.

£140 million An unnamed buyer

bought three apartments at No 1 Grosvenor Square to convert into one huge penthouse after exchanging having only seen a video tour and brochure during the last lockdown. He visited before completing the deal last month.

£104 million Christian Candy, the property tycoon, sold a mansion — created by turning seven buildings into one — on Cambridge Terrace overlooking Regent's Park in June.

£55 million For a flat this summer at No 1 Grosvenor Square.

2018. Ken Griffin, an American hedge fund billionaire, bought two penthouse apartments in the Peninsula hotel next to Hyde Park corner for £100 million last year.

Joseph Kennedy was the American ambassador in London from 1938 until 1940,

during which time he worked and entertained at No 1.

In 2014 the building — which became the Canadian High Commission after the Americans moved across the square in the 1960s to London Chancery Building at No 24 — was sold to Lodha for a reported £308 million. The developer restored the building facade and built

40 apartments behind it. It includes an exact reconstruction of Kennedy's Oval Office, complete with a fireplace which was created by moulding plaster to the original, damaged, wooden replica. It is now a reception room on the ground floor of the building.

The residents, who pay from £8 million, will also have access to a spa, a 25m swimming pool, a games lounge, a private screening room, a residents' lounge, a business suite, a 24/7 concierge and "embassy-level security". They also get what is believed to be the UK's largest and fastest automated parking system: they can call down to the concierge as they leave their apartment and the car will be outside waiting by the time they get downstairs.

There is also another link to JFK in the neighbourhood. A 5,000 sq ft flat at No 47 Grosvenor Square, previously owned by the Onassis shipping family and which hosted Aristotle and Jackie Kennedy Onassis, recently sold to a Saudi businessman for £18.6 million.



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