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1-24-2022

What's Going On in the World

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Recommended Citation

Parks, Matt, "What's Going On in the World" (2022). *The Spectator Online*. 498.
<https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online/498>

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What's Going On in the World

Matt Parks , Staff Reporter

President Biden's Vaccine Mandate Blocked By Supreme Court

In two cases decided on Thursday, Jan. 13, the Supreme Court ruled on whether the executive branch exceeded the authority provided by Congress by imposing a vaccine mandate for large employers or health care workers at hospitals that receive federal funding. The Supreme Court blocked the Biden administration in a 6-3 vote in the employer mandate case of National Federation of Independent Business v. Department of Labor, which sought testing or a vaccination mandate for large employers. In a separate 5-4 ruling in the case of Biden v. Missouri, the High Court held that the Administration did have the power to impose a vaccine mandate on health care workers working in hospitals that receive federal funding. Both these rulings come amid the Omicron surge, which has triggered a rapid rise of COVID-19 cases across the country.

Djokovic Drama Down Under Ends in Deportation

Less than 24 hours before one of the year's biggest tennis tournaments—the Australian Open—was set to begin, the number one men's tennis player in the world, Novak Djokovic, was deported after attempting to enter the country unvaccinated against COVID-19. Australia currently has strict guidelines in place, including a vaccine mandate and lockdown policies. Originally permitted to fly to Australia for the tournament under a medical exemption, Djokovic was detained and his visa was cancelled upon arrival. Djokovic's lawyers appealed the cancellation under the grounds of a positive COVID-19 test from Dec. 16, 2021, granting him medical exemption. Controversy about the timing and validity surrounds this test. The positive result came six days after the deadline for a medical exemption, and Djokovic knowingly attended an interview while positive for the virus. Following the release of the Australian Open draw, which included Djokovic, Australian immigration minister Alex Hawke revoked his visa once again. Three federal court judges unanimously upheld the decision, agreeing that Djokovic's presence was a danger to public health. Often considered one of the all-time greats amongst tennis players, Djokovic has garnered a reputation as a 'bad boy' and leaves Australia as a lightning rod for politics amid the pandemic—a martyr for some, a villain for others.

British National Takes Hostages in Texas Synagogue

On Jan. 15, four hostages were held for 11 hours in a Dallas, Texas synagogue. The four hostages, among them a rabbi, were taken hostage by a British national whose brother described him as having severe mental health issues. The armed man, identified by the FBI as Malik Faisal Akram, demanded the release of a Pakistani war-criminal held in a Texas federal prison. For several hours, the hostages planned how to escape. It was ultimately ended by the rabbi, who threw a chair at the gunman, allowing everyone to run to the exit. Police entered the building and Akram was killed on site. President Joe Biden called the attack an "act of terror." The investigation continues.

Underwater Volcanic Eruptions Near Tonga Sparks Tsunami

Over the weekend, on Jan. 15, an undersea volcano near the Pacific island nation of Tonga blew clouds of steam and gas 12 miles into the air. The volcanic eruption caused a tsunami that initiated warnings for several continents including the United States West Coast, New Zealand, Japan and Peru and also severed communication lines with the island nation. Over the weekend, ash clouds appeared over Tonga and contaminated drinking water. In the U.S., waves appeared in California, Alaska and Hawaii with some reaching a height of over three or four feet. It is believed to have been the largest volcanic eruption in three decades with a shock wave traveling thousands of miles. The eruption caused a drop in barometric pressure that was felt on the Pacific coast and was believed to have cleared out the fog that had been blanketing the Seattle area. The volcano known as Hunga Tonga erupted again Monday, Jan. 17.

Powerful Winter Storm Blasts through South East States

On Sunday, Jan. 16, high winds and ice took out power, knocked over trees and coated over roads with ice. Over a quarter million people were without power in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida. Travel was extremely difficult and conditions deteriorated over the weekend. In Florida, a large tornado was reported near the town of Naples. One resident reported that he was inside his mobile home when the tornado picked it up and tossed it up his neighbor's home. The resident and his daughter escaped unharmed. The storm is expected to travel to the northeast and bring rain and high winds to New York and Connecticut.