

Donald Trump surrendered himself at a Georgia jail on Thursday in connection with charges related to his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss in the state.

Trump was released on bail, with his mug shot taken, a first for a former US president.

Mr Trump denies any wrongdoing and asserts that the now four criminal indictments against him are politically motivated, given his leadership in the Republican race to challenge President Joe Biden in the forthcoming year's presidential election.

The potential impact of his ongoing legal battles on the presidential race raises significant questions.

A conversation with Glenn Drush, a justice reporter for the New York Times, was recorded on Wednesday, the day prior to Trump's appearance before Fulton County authorities.

I am Lenka Kaprowlova and this is 559, a news podcast of Cezna Mspráve.

It's Saturday, August 26th.

And we have some breaking news to tell you about involving former President Donald Trump.

A short time ago, the former president posted on his account on Truth social media that he plans to turn himself in to Georgia authorities on Thursday, writing, quote, can you believe it?

I will be going to Atlanta, Georgia on Thursday to be arrested.

It's a witch hunt.

It's just a continuation of a witch hunt.

They want to silence you.

They want to silence you.

And they mean silence.

They are, I think they're sick people.

I think they are people that have no idea how the world works and they have no idea the anger they cause.

Glenn Drush, Justice Department reporter at the New York Times.

Hi, Glenn.

Thank you so much for joining our podcast.

Good morning.

So Glenn, Donald Trump has said that he plans to turn himself in on Thursday to court in the state of Georgia to face charges of election interference.

In your view, how significant is it going to be this step in the whole Trump indictment saga?

Well, what makes this one different is he's been indicted in New York and there are two federal indictments that he has faced already, both in Washington, DC and in Florida.

What makes this one different is he's going to be treated the same as almost any criminal defendant that passes through the Fulton County Courthouse.

He will be fingerprinted.

He will get a mugshot.

He will have to pay bail, \$200,000, and he will have to be weighed.

And all of that information presumably will be made public.

So that's the first time, right, unlike in the previous cases?

In all the other cases, he was allowed to leave on his own recognizance.

He was not subjected to anything close to that, particularly on the two federal charges.

When we were asked about his mugshot, we were told that there were plenty of photographs of Donald Trump already in their system.

And there's a political peril in having some of this material out.

I think a lot of his enemies here are going to rejoice, embarrassing him.

But I also think there was a reluctance, at least on the part of the federal authorities, to allow any of that information out into the public because they thought it would prompt a backlash and increase the number of threats against prosecutors.

Well, there was so much said about the mugshot before.

Why is the mugshot so important?

Mugshot is incredibly important because it's an image that can be used in politics.

And it is an image that Trump can use to portray to the people who support him that he is being persecuted unfairly.

He is a man who believes in pictures.

Words are always subsidiary.

There's an old anecdote about Trump whenever he was on television, before he was president, would want to see the playback of his interviews with the sound off because he only cared about the pictures.

Well, the image of arguably the most famous man in the world posing for a mugshot is a powerful image and its release into the world is going to have unpredictable consequences.

Trump has four indictments now.

How damaging are the 91 felony charges in total that a former president faces?

They are incredibly important.

First of all, this has never happened in the history of our country.

This merging of the criminal justice process and the political processes is unprecedented and very dangerous.

And the charges he faces in these various jurisdictions can be sort of ranked.

The New York charges, which stem to him paying hush money to a porn actress, are probably considered to be the least serious.

And that case is likely not to be heard for quite a while.

Then you get the two federal cases.

The consensus is that the Mar-a-Lago documents case that he kept classified documents illegally and tried to obstruct justice at his resort down in Florida, that is actually considered from an evidence point of view the most straightforward and dangerous case for Trump personally.

Then you get into the two cases that involve attempting to overturn the election in 2020.

And that's really what the January 6 federal investigation and the Fulton County investigations are about.

And there are two very different approaches to the same problem.

The federal case brought by Jack Smith, the special counsel here in Washington, is very streamlined.

There are no co-defendants.

It's only a trial of Trump.

There are six unindicted co-conspirators.

We don't know if they will eventually be indicted or just used as witnesses, but it is a case that is built for speed.

And Jack Smith wants this thing, the trial to start as early as December or January.

That's not likely, but it's something he wants to happen very quickly.

The Fulton County case, there are 18 co-defendants.

The core of the charge is a fairly obscure racketeering law in Georgia.

So one case on the January 6 matter in federal court is streamlined relatively quick to try, and then you have the case in Atlanta, which is really a kitchen sink worth of charges against a whole cast of characters.

The indictment in Georgia is sometimes by some pundits considered to be the most serious.

What challenges does it pose for Trump?

Well, I think it's the most serious because, again, the federal case about January 6 and the Georgia case both confront the core question of whether Trump attempted to overthrow a democratic election.

So from that regard, from a political perspective, it is incredibly serious.

But I would push back and say the charges against Trump in Florida, stemming from the documents case, are equally serious from a legal perspective.

And if you were to handicap it from a distance, you'd say that the charges in Florida would be the ones that most prosecutors think are the easiest for the government to win.

But in terms of seriousness, the Georgia charges are the most comprehensive.

They cover the broadest range of behavior.

This indictment reads like an encyclopedia, and it covers almost every aspect quite surprisingly, given that it is a local prosecutor who brought the case, but it covers this entire range of behavior.

That includes Trump's attempt in Georgia to strong arm local officials asking them, and this is the infamous tape that everyone has heard here in this country, where he asks them to, quote, find, unquote, around 11,000 votes to put him over the top.

It's the most straightforward piece of evidence showing him attempting to overturn the election.

So look, all I want to do is this.

I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more that we have, because we won the state and flipping the state is a great testament to our country.

But there were two other things that he did that this indictment also documents.

He attempted to get an entire slate of fake electors, a group of people essentially who are ceremonial figures who just go sign on a dotted line and say that Joe Biden won the state, the normal electors.

He tried to create a fake set of electors who would say that he won the state, which is against the law.

And then the third is this nebulous charge, but probably the most important one about him engaging in a conspiracy, because there was so much interaction between him, his lawyers Rudy Giuliani and Sidney Powell, who came up with all these crazy ideas to overturn the election, and probably the most significant collaborator of all, this fellow by the name of Jeffrey Clark, a Justice Department official, really mid-level Justice Department official that no one in the department had ever heard of, who Trump made an alliance with, tried to promote to the level of Attorney General for the express purpose of throwing the weight of the Justice Department.

And that's the agency in the United States responsible for prosecutions, it controls the FBI.

But what he wanted to do is have the Justice Department pursue these phony charges of election fraud that he hoped would ultimately overturn the election.

And how important is the judicial side of it, or let's say the legal side of it, that the fact that he is charged under the Racketeer Influence and Corrupt Organizations Act, does it play a special role in this case?

Yes.

Unlike any of the other three cases, this is a law that is intended to convict people for conspiring criminally.

You don't necessarily have to prove every detail of the underlying charge.

But if people get together with the intention to create a criminal enterprise and a prosecutor can prove that, that is a crime in and of itself.

And the huge irony here is that Rudy Giuliani, one of his main co-defendants in Georgia, used to be before he was mayor of New York City, used to be if the top federal prosecutor in New York and his use of the racketeering statute, the federal racketeering statute, which is much weaker, is really what gained him fame.

He went after mob bosses, he went after Wall Street people.

He used it as a tool to expand the power of the prosecution.

And now it is being used against Trump and Rudy Giuliani.

I'm sorry, I won't be able to go to Iowa today.

I won't be able to go to New Hampshire today because I'm sitting in a courtroom on bullshit because his attorney general charged me with something.

Terrible.

Well, Donald Trump denies all charges, as we know.

What did he have to say about these latest indictments?

You have to understand, these prosecutions are a core part of his political strategy for 2024.

So, on one hand, he is genuinely, I think, from talking with people in his circle, genuinely concerned, borderline frightened of the possibilities that this can entail.

I mean, if he is convicted in any one of these jurisdictions, he could easily, he's 77 years old, he could spend the rest of his life in jail, in prison.

But in general, his argument is that this is a prosecution, a political prosecution made against him by his main political rival.

He doesn't talk about the special counsel being the main motivator behind this, though he has called Jack Smith deranged.

He talks about this coming directly from the top, that Joe Biden has ordered a political hit job on his main opponent.

Polls show the majority of Americans don't agree with that, but a very substantial minority and almost all of his supporters go along with that idea.

You already mentioned that the important fact is that in this indictment, there are also 18 other accused associates.

All of this is happening also in the swing of the primaries that are just about to start in the winter, but we have the debates already.

How, according to your view, can it influence its course?

That is the most unpredictable question.

Is it already baked in?

We are so highly polarized as a country.

The election comes down to, I would say, between 10 and 15% of the population that remains undecided, and they also tend to be the least informed voters, right?

So the people who hate Trump hate him, and the people who love Trump love him.

But the softness of the support in the middle is the question, how vehemently people feel about this.

So the open question as we head into the primary is, how strongly will Republican voters feel that Trump is being attacked?

At the moment, and we are what, four months, five months before any vote has been cast, Trump seems to have the vast majority of Republicans on his side.

All of his other competitors, particularly Ron DeSantis, who's the governor of Florida and appeared to be a strong challenger for Trump, have faded.

And Trump is, at the moment, really on a glide path to a nomination, almost like an incumbent president, to be honest.

But as these trials move forward, and more evidence is presented in the public square of things that he may have done, or as a way of reminding people of things that they may have forgotten that he had done, the damage could be inflicted.

The elections that we have seen, sort of the off-year elections, by elections, I guess you'd call them in a parliamentary system, that we have seen, have all been in favor of the Democrats recently.

The Republicans were supposed to have a big victory in the midterm elections in 2022. That did not materialize.

And a lot of that has to do with the Supreme Court's decision essentially outlawing the right for women to have abortions.

So you have a lot of political factors that are going on here.

But it'll be very interesting to see what the impact of these ongoing trials, the motions, evidence, testimony, will be on the political system.

We assume it will be profound.

But at the moment, it just seems to be exacerbating the polarization that we have already seen.

We are back with new poll numbers as the summer presidential campaign heats up.

A new NBC News poll shows that former President Trump is actually expanding his lead over that large field of other Republican candidates, this despite being indicted by a federal grand jury.

And in the morning consult that just came out, I wanted to say, because, you know, every time you get indicted, I like to check the polls.

One more indictment, and I think this election's over.

And when we talk about the situation inside the Republican Party and inside the Republican voters, how is it possible that the former president really seems to be defying all gravity?

So the number of criminal charges, they keep rising.

And so do his poll numbers in the Republican primary.

And also the pile of campaign money.

How is that possible?

You see it around the world.

When people are bought into a particular leader, as opposed to a set of principles for a party, then any attack, any criticism is considered to strengthen them.

There are a couple of factors here.

There was a poll that came out last week that said that Trump supporters, 80%, I think of them, view him as their primary source of the truth on political information.

And us, the media in the low teens.

So you're dealing with an inverted system in which somebody who has been demonstrated to promote falsehoods.

And I mean, it's, you know, when I first started covering Trump back in 2015, you had to be very careful about your formulation about, well, certain things that Trump says aren't true.

To now, there are just standard ways of expressing it in newspaper stories because it's been proven Donald Trump does not tell the truth on a consistent basis.

So the first answer to that is that the core of his supporters believe his side of the story regardless of anything.

And then the second thing, which is just as important, is that the Republican Party that Donald Trump sort of took over in the way that he would brand a failing casino, right? Which is what he would do.

He would grab a failing airline, a failing casino, a failing housing complex and slap his name on it and rebrand it, right?

That was kind of the case with the Republican Party in 2016.

They appeared to be confused, riven by internal dissent.

They had not won the popular vote in a presidential election and they didn't in 2016, by the way, in a couple of cycles, a trend that continues.

And most importantly, they didn't coalesce around a single set of coherent ideas, particularly on foreign policy.

I think the one data point that most people observing American politics don't understand is the extent to which the Republican Party has ceased to exist as sort of a collection of positions, political positions, and become at the moment the representation of one man. And the one fact that really points to that is that in 2020, they did not have a party platform, which is an astounding thing.

A party platform, it's somewhat perfunctory, but every party up until 2016 from time immemorial produces a platform that essentially lays out the party's positions on social issues, education, crime, foreign policy.

It's not a comprehensive document, but it's essentially a statement of principles that the candidate generally adheres to.

By 2020, they had gotten rid of it.

And that, I think, tells you where the Republican Party is right now.

Well, so you mentioned all these layers, and I was wondering if it's possible to maybe say in general, what is the overall impact of Trump's strategy on the American society?

I know that it's a difficult one to answer, and you already mentioned the deep polarization, but when he's casting doubt on the independence of the US judiciary, he shows a disdain for

the rule of law.

He uses all these legal fights as much as this marketing opportunity and further pursuing of his own goals.

What consequences does it have on the polarized American public?

Immense, immense.

Donald Trump puts a stress test on any institution that he encounters.

Whether these challenges that he poses to all these different systems will make them ultimately stronger or weaken them is an open question, but he has stressed the presidency by violating the norms, the rules, and he's accused of violating the law now.

And so his definition of what a president can and can't do is wildly different than what the institution has traditionally been, so he stresses that institution.

He has turned the media on its head.

Whatever intention news outlets have of putting him in sort of context and not allowing him to dominate news, that all goes by the wayside once the political process begins.

So he has stressed the news business, and you've seen wholesale changes across the board, less so in my organization, but particularly in cable news.

He's shaken it up.

In the case of Fox, he's precipitated the most desired, the Justice Department history.

And now he is turning his ire on both and the federal court system.

And this is really going to be an enormously consequential moment because faith in the courts in particular is at an all-time low, in part because the Republican Supreme Court has made a few decisions, particularly the Dobs decision on abortion that are wildly unpopular.

And the Supreme Court right now is the subject of a lot of investigative reporting about ethics violations, particularly having to do with the money and gifts that Clarence Thomas, a conservative Supreme Court judge, took from conservative groups.

But Trump himself has attacked the judiciary, calling out judges by name, calling out prosecutors like Jack Smith by name, and you can't do that.

That is something that defendants do with their peril.

They will wind up paying fines.

These are called contempt citations in federal court.

And in particular, he has attacked Judge Chutkan, an Obama appointee to the federal court who will preside over his trial in Washington.

And she has warned him in no uncertain terms that if he continues to do that by tweeting, by vaguely mentioning witnesses, which could constitute witness tampering, that she is going to take action against him.

And that is where it gets really, really dangerous.

Because if you think a mugshot could have a political impact on our system, imagine what a candidate campaigning from a prison cell would do.

Glenn Thresh, Justice Department reporter at The New York Times.

Glenn, thank you so much.

Great talking to you.

Thanks.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.

Bye.