



More protests against Trump are planned nationwide

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SpaceX rocket diplomacy backfires in Bahamas



SpaceX's Starship spacecraft is launched on its ninth test at the company's launch pad in Starbase, Texas, May 27. JOE SKIPPER/REUTERS FILE

Company navigates international politics in bid to expand business

Joey Roulette
REUTERS

NASSAU – When SpaceX was negotiating a deal with the Bahamas last year to allow its Falcon 9 rocket boosters to land within the island nation's territory, Elon Musk's company offered a sweetener: complimentary Starlink internet terminals for the country's defense vessels, according to three people familiar with the matter.

The rocket landing deal, unlocking a more efficient path to space for SpaceX's reusable Falcon 9, was then signed in February last year by Deputy Prime Minister Chester Cooper, who bypassed consultation with several other key government ministers, one of the sources and another person familiar with the talks said.

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"While no toxic materials were detected and no significant environmental impact was reported, the incident prompted a reevaluation of our engagement with SpaceX."

Chequita Johnson
Acting director general of the Civil Aviation Authority Bahamas



Debris streaks through the sky after SpaceX's Starship exploded during a test flight in the Bahamas March 6.



Debris that appears to be heat shield tiles from SpaceX's Starship was found floating in the water in the Bahamas March 8, two days after Starship exploded during a test flight.

PHOTOS BY PEGGY LAPIERRE/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS FILE

Minneapolis families mourn lost 'angels'

Loved ones cope with loss after school shooting

Thao Nguyen
USA TODAY

Families describing "unimaginable loss" mourned for their slain children Aug. 28, the day after an attacker fired through the windows of a Minneapolis Catholic church and sent worshippers diving behind and under pews for cover.

Jesse Merkel, the father of Fletcher Merkel, 8, called the suspected shooter a "coward" who took his son's life. "Please remember Fletcher for the person he was and not the act that ended his life," Jesse Merkel said. "Give your kids an extra hug and kiss today."

The second child killed in the shooting was identified as 10-year-old Harper Moyski, according to a statement shared to news outlets on her family's behalf.

The deadly shooting occurred at the church connected to Annunciation Catholic School, a private elementary school with about 395 students, just before 8:30 a.m. local time on Aug. 27, authorities said. According to Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara, the shooter approached the outside of the church building and fired inside toward the children sitting in pews.

Eighteen other people, 15 of them students ages 6 to 18 and three parishioners in their 80s, were struck by gunfire, authorities said. All the injured were expected to recover, though family members of some say they will have long roads to recovery from serious bullet wounds.

Authorities have not publicly released the names of the victims shot in the attack, but families and friends began to identify their loved ones.

"We as a community have a responsibility to make sure that no child, no parent, no teacher ever has to experience what we've experienced today ever again," Annunciation School Principal Matt DeBoer said at a news conference Aug. 27. "We lost two angels today. Please continue to pray for those still receiving care. Never again can we let this happen."

Fletcher Merkel

Speaking at a news conference outside Annunciation Catholic School, Jesse Merkel recalled his son Fletcher Merkel as a loving child who enjoyed friends, fishing, cooking and "any sport that he was allowed to play."

The killer's violent actions brought tremendous loss to the family, Jesse Merkel said: "We will never be allowed to hold him, talk to him, play with him, and watch him grow into the wonderful young man he was on the path to becoming."

Fletcher Merkel was the second youngest of four children, family spokesperson Blois Olson told NBC News. Two of his siblings were also

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