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Public Diplomacy in the News: Winter Olympic Recap, America's Semiquincentennial Time Capsule, & More ^[1]

“Public Diplomacy in the News” is a CPD Blog series by Andrew Dubbins that spotlights noteworthy stories on public diplomacy topics such as cultural diplomacy, nation branding, exchange programs, international events and conferences, digital diplomacy, and strategic global communications.

Triumph, Turmoil and Breakthroughs at Milan Cortina 2026. Associated Press rounded up the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics' most memorable moments, including historic achievements, emotional setbacks, and political flashpoints across sixteen days of

competition. Highlights included Norway's Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo sweeping six cross-country gold medals, Alysia Liu capturing the United States' first women's figure skating gold in 24 years, and Brazil's Lucas Pinheiro Braathen earning South America's first Winter Games medal. The Games also featured heartbreak, such as Lindsey Vonn's severe crash and Ilia Malinin's stunning falls out of medal contention, as well as controversies ranging from curling cheating allegations to Ukrainian athlete Vladyslav Heraskevych's barred helmet tribute to war victims. Political tensions seeped into competition, with U.S. athletes fielding questions about domestic policies and responding publicly, while dramatic North American showdowns in men's and women's hockey capped a Games marked by both athletic excellence and global undercurrents.

Associated Press

Online Disinformation Fueled Panic After Cartel Leader's Killing. After Mexican forces killed Jalisco New Generation Cartel boss Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, known as "El Mencho," retaliatory violence erupted across roughly 20 states, leaving more than 70 dead and prompting shelter-in-place warnings. Meanwhile, a parallel surge of AI-generated fake videos and misleading posts intensified public fear. Authorities reported hundreds of problematic social media posts—many lacking context, misleading, or digitally manipulated—including false claims that Guadalajara's airport had been seized, that a U.S. agent killed the cartel leader, or that President Claudia Sheinbaum had fled to sea. Experts said the sophisticated misinformation may reflect organized crime's growing technological savvy, while residents described confusion over what to believe as dramatic but fabricated footage spread rapidly online. Although officials and the U.S. Embassy attempted to debunk falsehoods, the wave of disinformation amplified the sense of national chaos—even as some residents noted it inadvertently kept people indoors and out of harm's way.

Associated Press

Black Diplomats Warn of a Retreat From Diversity in U.S. Foreign Service. Black former ambassadors say the Trump administration's recall of nearly 30 career diplomats and rollback of diversity initiatives threatens to undermine decades of progress toward a more representative Foreign Service and could discourage Black Americans from pursuing diplomatic careers. The recalls, which disproportionately affect regions like Africa and include Black women ambassadors, break with past practice in which career diplomats typically completed their terms, and come alongside efforts to prioritize loyalty and scale back diversity-focused hiring policies. Critics argue the moves risk weakening U.S. foreign policy by shrinking the range of perspectives in diplomatic ranks and undercutting America's credibility abroad, especially when addressing human rights and racial justice. Former envoys warn that beyond personnel changes, the broader message may signal who is valued in public service, raising fears of a chilling effect on future generations and what some describe as a potential "slow death" of the Foreign Service's inclusive aspirations.

Brandon Tensley / Capital B

A Message to 2276: America's Semiquincentennial Time Capsule. As the U.S. prepares to mark its 250th anniversary, organizers have unveiled plans for a stainless-steel time capsule to be buried near Independence Hall on July 4 and opened in 2276, fulfilling a 2016 congressional mandate. The three-foot cylinder will contain archival boxes representing all 56 states and territories, the three branches of government and the commission itself, allowing

each to select materials that reflect its own story, with an emphasis on inclusivity and nonpartisanship. Engineers are designing the vessel with corrosion-resistant steel, a protective air bubble and a rounded structure to guard against deterioration over 250 years underground, a challenge highlighted by past capsules discovered in poor condition. A replica will tour Washington before the original is displayed at the Liberty Bell Center and then interred beneath a planned sculpture inspired by Benjamin Franklin's "Join or Die" image, intended as a symbolic message in a bottle to Americans five centuries after independence.

Jennifer Schuessler / New York Times

'Chinamaxxing' and China's Rising Cultural Appeal. A growing social media trend among young Americans playfully embracing Chinese aesthetics and habits reflects a broader shift in perceptions of China, signaling a potential soft power boost for Beijing, according to a report by CNN's Jessie Yeung. Viral videos featuring traditional exercises, fruit teas, Tang-style Adidas jackets and sleek skylines have fueled fascination with Chinese culture, technology and urban modernity, especially among Gen Z users disillusioned with political turmoil, gun violence and high living costs in the United States. Experts say the phenomenon reveals as much about American dissatisfaction at home as admiration for China, noting that increased exposure through platforms like Xiaohongshu and China's advances in tech, electric vehicles and infrastructure are reshaping its image in the West. Though often ironic and likely fleeting, the trend underscores a notable moment in which China's cultural influence appears to be expanding even amid ongoing geopolitical rivalry and longstanding Sinophobia.

Jessie Yeung / CNN
