North Korean criticism raises concerns that scaled-back drills have reaped little payoff

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The U.S. and South Korea have canceled some annual military exercises and changed the names of others. Commanders no longer publicly profess their resolve to confront the growing nuclear threat from the North.

The allies have drastically altered the way they train to avoid provoking the communist state since President Donald Trump announced plans to suspend “the war games” after his first summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on June 12 in Singapore.

North Korea’s response:
“‘They can never conceal the aggressive, offensive and confrontational nature of their hostile acts no matter how hard they may try to give impression about reduction in scope’ by replacing the codename,” the state-run Korean Central News Agency said Thursday.

“There will be corresponding response to it from our army,” it added, quoting an unnamed spokesman for the North’s Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country.

North Korea’s persistent criticism of joint military drills — Kim also lashed out at them in a policy speech earlier this month — underlines concerns that the military changes made to facilitate diplomatic efforts to persuade the North to abandon its nuclear weapons may have harmed readiness with little payoff.

North Korean criticism raises concerns that scaled-back drills have reaped little payoff

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Navy is revamping its protocols for reporting unidentified aircraft due to an uptick in such unauthorized flights into restricted air space, the service said.

“There have been a number of reports of unauthorized and/or unidentified aircraft entering various military-controlled ranges and designated air space in recent years,” the Navy said in a statement.

The subject of unidentified flying objects, or UFOs, captured the public’s attention last year after several declassified Defense Department videos showed Navy pilots encountering oval objects that moved at great speed. In one video, an F-18 fighter jet pilot flying along the East Coast of the U.S. gasps, “Wow! What is that, man? Look at that flying!”

The videos were collected as part of the Air Force’s Advanced Aviation Threat Identification Program, which began in 2007 but lost its funding in 2012.

The Navy statement did not refer to “UFOs” nor to any specific incidents, but it said the Navy and Air Force “investigate each and every report” of unauthorized and unidentified aircraft and take such incidents “very seriously.”

For that reason, the Navy is “updating and formalizing the process by which reports of any such suspected incursions can be made to the cognizant authorities,” the statement said.

The Navy draft detailing how such encounters should be reported in the future will be eventually issued fleetwide, the statement said.

Senior naval intelligence officials and aviators who have reported such incidents have conducted a series of briefings for some members of Congress and their staff, the statement said.

Chris Mellon, a former Pentagon intelligence official who has also worked for the Senate Intelligence Committee, told Politico that establishing a more formal system of reporting unexplained encounters in the air would be a “sea change.”

“Right now, we have a situation in which UFOs and [unexplained aerial phenomena] are treated as anomalies to be ignored rather than anomalies to be explored,” he told Politico, which was first to report about the new Navy protocols Monday. “We have systems that exclude that information and dump it.”

Military personnel routinely disregard fast-moving satellite data or radar images that do not fit into the model of a “traditional aircraft or missile,” Mellon said.

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ANALYSIS

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SEE ANALYSIS ON PAGE 5
Nations’ coast guards seen as key in Indo-Pacific region

BY THERON GODBOLD
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Nations in the Indo-Pacific region are employing “white hull” diplomacy, putting their coast guards to work to challenge China’s territorial claims at sea, a Philippine Coast Guard officer said recently.

Lt. Cmdr. Jay Tarriela described the growing strength and responsibility of coast guards in the western Pacific while speaking to the Yokosuka Council on Asia-Pacific Studies on April 18 near the home of U.S. Forces Japan.

“The rise of white hulls in the region has seen a noticeable up-turn since the early 2000s,” he said.

Smaller Asian nations are responding to territorial challenges from China with their coast guards, rather than their navies, said Tarriela, a post-graduate student at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo. That lower level response reduces the likelihood of a shooting war breaking out.

“Someday, somebody might make some mistakes and there will be a fight,” he said, quoting Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. “Some ships will be lost and there might be a war and we don’t want that.”

Tarriela focused his studies on the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia, countries that contend with conflicting territorial claims by China in the South China Sea.

“(The) China trend is a reason why the coast guard is getting bigger, but only in the last decade,” he said. However, “there are more important tasks for the coast guard.”

Coast guards should focus on search and rescue duties, law enforcement and environmental issues, he said, not duties that are more in line with a military mission.

However, China’s rising interest in the region accounts for most of the increasing coast guard presence, Tarriela said.

“Smaller ships should be the ones patrolling South China Sea,” he said. “Smaller countries need to patrol their own territories.”

China is a major trading partner for many Asian countries, which puts them in a precarious position in the region, Tarriela said. They don’t want to antagonize China with naval vessels, so they use smaller coast guard vessels, which are not technically military vessels.

The role of coast guards in the region today evolved from the model started by Japan in the 1960s, Tarriela said. The Japanese government used its coast guard to build regional goodwill and cooperation in four phases, he said.

First was the lighthouse-building phase, in which Japan built lighthouses and mapped the Straits of Malacca, the S50-mile-long body of water between the Malay Peninsula and Indonesian island of Sumatra. The strait is a major shipping channel that connects the Pacific and Indian oceans.

In the mid-1970s, after the Japanese tanker Showa Maru spilled oil into the Singapore Straits, the Japan Coast Guard shifted to an enforcement and environmental protection role, teaching other nations' coast guards the proper response to those types of events, Tarriela said.

In the early 2000s, with a rise in piracy, the emphasis shifted to law enforcement. Japan, still suspect in the eyes of neighbors who remembered World War II, adapted its approach to train the coast guards of the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Finally, Tarriela said, comes a security phase that marks the emergence of territorial claims by China in the East and South China seas, claims that often overlap those of the four countries.

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Philippine coast guardsmen take part in a 2018 multinational exercise in the 7th Fleet area of operations. The importance of “white-hull” diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific region was part of a recent discussion at the Yokosuka Council on Asia-Pacific Studies.

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Correction:
An article in Tuesday’s edition about an Okinawa-based airman arrested on suspicion of drunken driving should have said the incident happened Sunday morning.

Correction:
An article in Wednesday’s edition incorrectly reported the amount of drugs seized in a surveillance mission along the U.S.-Mexico border involving active-duty troops and agents with U.S. Customs and Border Protection. More than 1,700 pounds of drugs were seized.
**War/Military**

**Squadrons get days off for avoiding DUls**

**BY MARTIN EGNASH Stars and Stripes**

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — One U.S. Army unit in Europe has found a popular way to keep soldiers from getting behind the wheel after downing steins of the local Bavarian lager.

The Army’s 2nd Cavalry Regiment is giving out four-day weekend passes for each squadron that goes 76 days without any of its soldiers getting a DUl.

The rewards are part of the regiment’s “No DUl” campaign, which was launched after a rash of alcohol-related incidents late last year and combines the incentives, a volunteer designated driver program and a celebratory activities day.

While many soldiers may find it easy not to make the decision to drink and drive, just one member of a squadron can ruin it for everyone else.

For troopers stationed stateside, it may seem strange that soldiers would earn extra days off for not breaking the law. But units stationed in Germany face unique challenges, the regiment’s leaders said.

The blood alcohol content limits are lower for our soldiers here in Germany,” said Col. Thomas Hough, the regimental commander.

The legal limit to operate a vehicle is a 0.08% blood alcohol level in nearly all states and under a recent change to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, compared with 0.05% in Germany. The limit is 0.03% in Japan, where servicemember DUl arrests have repeatedly inflamed political tensions in Okinawa.

German beer often has a higher alcohol content by volume, Hough said, making it possible for some people to be above the legal limit after a single drink.

“With this we have an increased responsibility to make our servicemembers and their families aware of the effects alcohol has on their body,” he said. “In addition, we have a responsibility to be good ambassadors to our host nation and represent our nation and Army well.”

The regiment recently started a designated driver program in which soldiers volunteer service hours by serving as on-call drivers for soldiers who need an unplanned ride home.

The program, which promises to keep those who use it anonymous, came about after the regiment saw a sharp rise in DUls last fall.

The program seems to be working, regiment officials said.

“We are about six months into initiating these efforts and seeing a monthly downrend in DUls,” said Maj. Gordon Mok, the regimental surgeon.

There were nine DUls throughout the regiment in December, when the program began. As of Thursday, there had been three in April.

The Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs has also announced a no DUl campaign that gives out four-day weekend passes for each squadron that goes 76 days without any of its soldiers getting a DUl.

Denver Police Department officials declined to provide further DUl figures from the past year.

At Grafenwoehr, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment also has ceremonies to fix “No DUl” streamers to the squadrons’ guidons, marking periods of 90 days, 180 days or longer without drunken driving incidents.

Earlier this month, the Warhorse and Outlaw troopers of the regiment’s 4th Squadron earn 45-day and 180-day streamers, respectively.

The squadron can determine if they give an “off day” for some other type of award when they receive a 180-day No DUl streamer, said Lt. Ellen Brabo, a regiment spokeswoman.

Sikhsana, a 2012 graduate of the Air Force Academy who returned in 2017 to his alma mater to teach in the philosophy department, according to his Air Force biography. He was teaching an ethics course in that department.

The captain also has a master’s degree in philosophy, which he earned from Georgia State University in 2016, writing his thesis on the ethics of targeted killing, according to the biography.

Before returning to the academy, Sikhsana had attended intelligence officer training and worked as an instructor assigned to the 337th Air Control Squadron at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida.

**Air Force ethics instructor charged with internet luring**

**BY COREY DICKSTEIN Stars and Stripes**

WASHINGTON — An Air Force intelligence officer serving as an ethics instructor at the Air Force Academy in Colorado faces an ethics instructor assigned to meet him, according to arrest documents.

Christopher LeNeve, 7th Army Training Command commanding general, fix “No DUl” streamers to a squadron’s guidon during a recent ceremony.

Col. Thomas Hough, left, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment commander, and Brig. Gen. Christopher LeNeve, the 7th Army Training Command commanding general, fix “No DUl” streamers to a squadron’s guidon during a recent ceremony.

Sikkema is a 2012 graduate of the Air Force Academy who returned in 2017 to his alma mater to teach in the philosophy department, according to his Air Force biography. He was teaching an ethics course in that department.

The captain also has a master’s degree in philosophy, which he earned from Georgia State University in 2016, writing his thesis on the ethics of targeted killing, according to the biography.

Before returning to the academy, Sikhsana had attended intelligence officer training and worked as an instructor assigned to the 337th Air Control Squadron at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida.

**Taliban kill 9 in ambush of Afghan police in Farah**

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban ambushed a security convoy in western Afghanistan, killing nine policemen, and in Kabul, a would-be attacker died when a bomb he was trying to plant at a private university detonated prematurely, officials said Thursday.

The Taliban killed nine police officers and attempted driver program in which soldiers volunteer service hours by serving as on-call drivers for soldiers who need an unplanned ride home.

The program, which promises to keep those who use it anonymous, came about after the regiment saw a sharp rise in DUls last fall.

The program seems to be working, regiment officials said.

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The squadron can determine if they give an “off day” for some other type of award when they receive a 180-day No DUl streamer, said Lt. Ellen Brabo, a regiment spokeswoman.

Sikhsana, 29, faces one count of internet luring of a child, a class 4 felony that carries a penalty of two to six years in prison and a fine up to $500,000, according to Colorado law. Law enforcement officials have requested he be denied bond.

The Air Force Academy confirmed the instructor’s arrest in an emailed statement.

“We are aware of the arrest and can confirm Capt. Sikhsana is a professor here at the academy,” the statement said. “We are tracking his civilian court case as it goes through the legal process and will cooperate fully as needed with the Arapahoe sheriff’s department.”

Arapahoe County spans about 850 square miles, east of Denver. Its county seat, Littleton, is about 55 miles north of the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.

Arrest documents state the undercover officer first made contact with Sikhsana on Jan. 21 in an online chat room. The conversation eventually continued through text messages for about one week.

Those documents also show the Air Force officer inquired about the 14-year-old’s sexual history and whether she was “into older guys.”

During at least one point in the conversation Sikhsana acknowledged he should not be involved in such behavior, according to the documents.

“I can get in a lot of trouble by talking to you,” Sikhsana wrote. But at another point, he wrote, “Now I really wanna come up and see you.”

The Arapahoe County Sheriff’s Office declined further comment on the case, saying it remained under investigation.

Sikhsana is a 2012 graduate of the Air Force Academy who returned in 2017 to his alma mater to teach in the philosophy department, according to his Air Force biography. He was teaching an ethics course in that department.

The captain also has a master’s degree in philosophy, which he earned from Georgia State University in 2016, writing his thesis on the ethics of targeted killing, according to the biography.

Before returning to the academy, Sikhsana had attended intelligence officer training and worked as an instructor assigned to the 337th Air Control Squadron at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida.
Pilot error to blame for F-15C crash in Okinawa

Report says ‘no mechanical errors were found’

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
and AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Pilot error was to blame for the F-15C Eagle crash into the ocean south of Okinawa in June that left an Air Force pilot in serious condition and led to a temporary pause in training, according to reports released this week by the U.S. military and Japanese government.

“The accident happened because the pilot was spatially disoriented and made a wrong decision to gain back control of the aircraft and ultimately led to losing control,” the Japan Ministry of Defense wrote in its report, which was released to the press Thursday.

“No mechanical errors were found in the F-15C.”

The incident occurred at 6:17 a.m. local time June 11 approximately 70 miles south of Kadena Air Base during a simulated dogfight between F-15C Eagles from Kadena’s 44th Fighter Squadron and F-22 Raptors on deployment to Japan from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson’s 525th Fighter Squadron, according to a report released Tuesday by Pacific Air Forces.

The Eagle pilot became disoriented while tracking a Raptor flown with virtually, thinking it was a right-hand turn, the Air Force said. “In the past year, the nose started to drop. The aircraft may have stalled.”

The unnamed pilot thought the aircraft was flying too slowly and improperly applied forward stick with full right rudder, the report said.

The aircraft pitched down to the right, which was followed by a “negative (gravitational) departure from controlled flight.” A snap roll to the left transitioned into an “inverted, negative (gravitational) spin.”

The pilot was unable to recover the aircraft.

“I find by a preponderance of the evidence the mishap was caused by the improper application of forward stick with full right rudder,” Air Force Col. Har- mon Lewis Jr., the accident investigation board president, wrote in the report’s conclusion.

Furthermore, I find by a preponderance of the evidence that three additional factors substantially contributed to the mishap: spatial disorientation, lack of emergency procedure training for negative G departures from controlled flight, and limited time to analyze the situation and react to it,” he wrote.

Lewis drafted the Pacific Air Forces report in December.

After losing control, the Eagle pilot tried to eject as the fighter dropped toward the ocean but first tried to pull the wrong handle, the report said. The pilot then ejected at 1,100 feet, nearly 5,000 feet below the minimum altitude for safe emergency escape.

It took 15 seconds from the time the pilot lost control to eject, the report said.

“The pilot, who suffered a broken leg and hand, was rescued by the crew of a Japan Air Self-Defense Force helicopter, the report said. The pilot was taken to U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa for treatment.

As of December, the pilot was still rehabilitating from injuries sustained in the crash, the Air Force report said.

“There were no fatalities or property damage due to the crash. However, the Air Force lost one of its legacy air superiority fighters at a cost of approximately $42.3 million.”

The U.S. military plans to strengthen pilot training by adding more exercises based on F-15C features and to reexamine training regulations, the Japanese report states.

“We are truly grateful to the Japan Air Self-Defense Force rescue team for their help in saving our pilot,” the 18th Wing’s media section said in a statement regarding the report Thursday.

“Safety of local residents is a priority, which is why the majority of our flying training operations are conducted over water.”

Kadena temporarily paused F-15 training in the wake of the incident so the 18th Wing could review “operational, maintenance and safety procedures,” officials previously told Stars and Stripes.

At the time, Japanese officials criticized the United States for too many aircraft mishaps. Then-Defense Minister Itsunori Ono- oda called on the U.S. military to ensure the safety of its aircraft and prevent future occurrences.

Okinawan prefectural officials lodged a formal protest. They declined to comment on the report Thursday.

An F-15 also crashed into the sea off Okinawa in May 2013 due to a failure in the aircraft’s hydro-mechanical flight control system. A Japanese military search and rescue team recovered the pilot in that case as well. The pilot was listed in stable condition following rescue.

“Crash of an F-15C in the ocean off Okinawa has been blamed on pilot error. Report says ‘no mechanical errors were found’”

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japan sending a destroyer from its Maritime Self-Defense Force to the Chinese navy’s 70th anniversary fleet review “showed the international community.”

The incident followed a May 11 state visit to China by Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who had previously signaled the possibility of Japan sending a warship to the fleet review, instead of participating. “I think that’s what Japan can do, rather than criticizing China with lavish speech.”

“Japan’s military participation created an atmosphere for dialogue between the two nations’ defense authorities.”

“The way Japan does it is to take a soft approach to try to build a relationship with the counterparty and try to encourage change from the inside.”

Since 2017, the U.S. Navy has regularly sent vessels through the South China Sea in freedom-of-navigation operations near the islands and reefs that China claims. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 2016 rejected those claims.

Washington has been taking a rather hard-handed approach to ensure the safety of its aircraft and prevent future occurrences. A Japanese military search and rescue team recovered the pilot in that case as well. The pilot was listed in stable condition following rescue.

“I think the way Japan does it is to take a soft approach to try to build a relationship with the counterparty and try to encourage change from the inside.”

Since 2017, the U.S. Navy has regularly sent vessels through the South China Sea in freedom-of-navigation operations near the islands and reefs that China claims. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 2016 rejected those claims.

China has claimed 27 islands and reefs, building military outposts on at least 12 of them since 2014. To protest those actions, the U.S. last year disinvited China from its multinational Rim of the Pacific military exercises off Hawaii.

While Japan’s relationship with China “has been rapidly improving,” Watanabe said, Tokyo can take measures to encourage China to adhere to international law. Through dialogue, Japan can show China that the right thing to do is “to abide by and comply with the law,” Watanabe said, “and that would also lead to gaining more trust from the global community.”

“I think that’s what Japan can do, rather than criticizing China with lavish speech.”

But Watanabe added that Tokyo should be cautious not to harm its alliance with the U.S. in its dealings with Beijing.

“We must do very carefully to prevent the overreaction (to the appeasement of the) relationship between Japan and China leading to the decoupling of the Japan-U.S. relationship,” he said.

In his recent visit to China, Abe told the leaders of the Chinese Navy’s anniversary, the state newspaper wrote Monday.

“I think the way Japan does it is to take a soft approach to try to build a relationship with the counterparty and try to encourage change from the inside.”

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“We must do very carefully to prevent the"
N. Korea continues criticism of US-S. Korean military exercises

"We're doing our part in making sure that we're flexible and supporting the peace process and yet they're literally saying 'lay down your arms,' which is ridiculous." — retired South Korean Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun

Fort Carson soldier dies in noncombat incident in Iraq

An Idaho soldier assigned to Fort Carson, Colo., has died in a noncombat incident in Iraq, the military said Wednesday.

Spc. Michael T. Osorio, 20, died Tuesday in Taji, a district north of Baghdad that is home to a military base where U.S. and allied troops are training Iraqi forces, the Defense Department said in a statement.

No details regarding the death were released, and the military said an investigation is underway.

Osorio was from Horseshoe Bend, Idaho. He was an intelligence analyst in Fort Carson’s 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division.

He enlisted in the Army in July 2017 and was on his first deployment.

His decorations include the Army Commendation Medal and the Army Achievement Medal. The Associated Press reported Thursday:

Osorio’s death was the second noncombat fatality in Iraq in four days and the third such death among troops supporting U.S. Central Command operations in less than a week.

Spc. Ryan Dennis Orin Riley, 22, serving with the Fort Campbell, Ky.-based 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, died Saturday in Nineveh province in northern Iraq.

On Friday, Staff Sgt. Albert J. Miller, 24, died at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. Miller was assigned to the 736th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron out of Dover Air Force Base, Del.

No details on those deaths were released, and officials have said investigations are ongoing.

"Army Commendation Medal and 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Bend, Idaho. He was an intelligence analyst in Fort Carson’s 3rd Armored Brigade, 4th Infantry Division."

"Now, nearly a year later, especially in the absence of any tangible demobilization progress, the rationale for continuing to cancel exercises is much weaker."

Constant criticism

Trump's decision to curtail military exercises was widely seen as a unilateral concession to the North, which considers them a rehearsal for an invasion, although the president has said his goal is to save money.

"Also, reducing tensions with North Korea at this time is a good thing!" he tweeted after his second summit with Kim ended without an agreement in late February in Hanoi, Vietnam.

North Korea, however, has continued to lash out at the drills at all levels.

"They’ve been aiming for a complete and indefinite end to those exercises, which is why they keep taking issue with them despite the allies’ recent good faith measure," said Duyeon Kim, a Seoul-based expert on Korean affairs with the Center for a New American Security.

The KCNA report on Thursday was a response to scaled-back Air Force drills that South Korean military officials said replaced the major exercise previously known as Max Thunder.

The U.S. Air Force said airmen, soldiers and sailors were joining South Korean and Australian forces “in a combined flying training event” from April 22 to May 2 to enhance “interoperability and tactical skills.”

"It is part of the (South Korean-U.S.) Alliance’s routine, annual training program to maintain military readiness," Lt. Col. Brandon Lingle, a spokesman for the 7th Air Force at Osan Air Base, said in a statement.

"The acts of perfidy on the part of the South Korean authorities have greatly disappointed us," KCNA said Thursday.

A former South Korean army officer noted the North has long employed bellicose rhetoric in referring to the military exercises.

"It think it’s too early to tell whether this is just a part of their normal rhetoric," retired Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun said in a telephone interview. "It’s very disappointing, but we need to wait and see how accurate the accusations will be towards the overall peace process."

New norm?

North Korea, meanwhile, has not changed its posture and conducted its regular training this winter, Abrams said. In addition to nuclear weapons, the communist state has more than 1 million soldiers and thousands of artillery batteries and rockets poised near the heavily fortified border that divides the peninsula.

"US Forces Korea and the South Korean military have done the best they can to adjust combined exercises so that they do not rise to the level of a ‘major’ exercise," Spoehr said in his email. "Having said that, the ability for higher level staffs to work and plan together has been impacted, as has the ability of U.S. based forces to flow to Korea."

Navy Lt. Cmdr. James Giles, writing for the Stimson Center, a Washington-based think tank, argued that decades of joint exercises had failed to prevent the North from developing nuclear weapons or conduct past provocations.

Military effectiveness can be maintained with focused events involving smaller and deployable units, he said, adding that resources should be refocused on the growing power competition with Russia and China.

"Given these realities, there are other innovative and less provocative ways to maintain adequate military preparedness and readiness under the current political constraints," he wrote in an April 3 article on the 38 North website.

"Utilizing exercises limited in scope, which would not compromise US national security priorities on the Korean Peninsula or the integrity of its alliance with South Korea, should be the new norm," he said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Matt Keeler contributed to this report. gamel.kim@stripes.com Twitter: @kimgamel
In a real combat scenario in Europe, it’s almost certain Ramstein’s medical capabilities would be needed. Its modular field hospital is designed to be deployed and fully operational within six hours of arrival at its destination, Roberts said.

In the Defense Department, “we’re the fastest medical capability into a contingency environment,” he said.

The exercise allowed airmen to practice quickly deploying their field hospital, consisting of five tents, an operating table and a mix of trauma, intensive care and holding beds. But it also gave them much-needed practice using their emergency medical skills in an austere environment.

“When we started the exercise, I asked the team how many of them had deployed in a setting of trauma patients and only seven people raised their hands out of the 49 we have here,” Chief Master Sgt. Amy Riley, 86th Medical Group group superintendent, said in a statement. “I think one of the lessons learned for them is the ability to move outside a clinical setting, which is very controlled, into a very uncontrolled environment ... pushing them outside their comfort zone.”

Romanian military personnel posed as patients, sporting realistic-looking mock wounds from gunshot and broken bones, Nielsen said.

“You can never replicate what you see out on the battlefield or in an emergency room ... but I think they did a fantastic job of creating an environment that was stressful,” he said of the Romanians.

Near the end of the exercise, U.S. and Romanian medical personnel swapped places, with the Romanians working in the U.S. field hospital and the U.S. surgical team training in the Romanian facility.

It took some time “to get the processes squared away, but at the end of the day we could work at saving patients collectively as a team,” Roberts said.
The allegation of pro-Boeing bias stemmed from Shanahan's time as deputy defense secretary in 2017-18. The inspector general's office was expected to release details of its findings later Thursday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the outcome of the probe before its formal release.

After Mattis quit in protest of Trump's policies, the president did not rush to send Shanahan's nomination to Capitol Hill, seemingly content with letting him and a number of other administration officials languish as temporary appointments.

"I like acting. It gives me more flexibility," Trump said in January. Although Trump has publicly praised Shanahan's job performance, the former Boeing executive's situation became more precarious last month when a watchdog group filed an ethics complaint with the inspector general.

In the complaint, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington alleged that Shanahan has appeared to make statements promoting Boeing and disparaging competitors, such as Lockheed Martin. Shanahan spent more than 30 years at Boeing, leading programs for commercial planes and missile defense systems.

The inspector general formally opened an investigation and moved quickly to conduct interviews. Shanahan publicly welcomed the decision to review the allegations.

At the time, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said that scrutiny of Shanahan's ties is necessary. "In fact, it's overdue. Boeing is a behemoth 800-pound gorilla — being too close to decisions of undue influence at DOD, FAA and elsewhere," Blumenthal said.

Shanahan signed an ethics agreement in June 2017, when he was being nominated for the job of deputy defense secretary, a job he held during Mattis' tenure. The agreement outlined the steps he would take to avoid "alleged authors or apparent conflict of interest," and said he would not participate in any matter involving Boeing.

"I've never known a job where we're not going to have conflict of interest," Shanahan said. "I'm also a lawyer. I've been in ethics for 30 years. I know that is a necessary role."

Pat Shanahan of wrongdoing in meetings about government defense systems. The CREW ethics complaint, and said he would not participate in any matter involving Boeing, the defense contractor Shanahan had known for high-profile alumni such as Sanders, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

The decision by the Defense Department inspector general opens the door for President Donald Trump to nominate Shanahan and seek his Senate confirmation to serve as defense secretary. The White House has not said whether Trump intends to do so.

Shanahan has been serving as the interim Pentagon chief since Jan. 1, after Jim Mattis resigned.

Washington Post

Immigrant’s dream to join US military becomes reality

WASHINGTON — It’s been a long road to Cesar Vargas’ dream to join the U.S. military.

About 30 years ago, Vargas crossed illegally from Mexico into the United States with his recently widowed mother and three siblings. He was only 5 years old.

For most of his life, he was undocumented in the United States, attending prestigious schools and becoming a New York City lawyer. He worked with former President Barack Obama’s administration on the program called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, which allowed immigrants known as “Dreamers” to pursue schooling and other opportunities.

But one mission remained: Vargas made a vow to join the military when he was a high school student after the 9/11 attacks. On Thursday, the 35-year-old will realize a major milestone in the dream, graduating from the Army Reserve’s Basic Combat Training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri.

“I am finally here, almost two decades later,” Vargas said Wednesday by phone. “I grew up like any New Yorker. I tried to enlist after 9/11, but was told I couldn’t. I felt like my whole world collapsed. Now, it’s realizing a dream.”

Following his work with the Obama administration, Vargas joined the 2016 presidential campaign for Independent Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders. There, he met his future wife, Yesenia Mata, a U.S. citizen, and they married that year. Marriage turned out to be a Vargas only channel to gain permanent residency, and with that he joined the Army Reserve in December 2016, not long before the age cut off of 35 years old.

Vargas’ watershed moment Thursday will be a lonely affair. He won’t have family at his graduation. His mother, Teresa Galindo, 74, remains undocumented and can’t attend the ceremony because she isn’t allowed on the base. However, she traveled from New York to Missouri and will be watching the festivities from a Facebook livestream outside the base.

“It’s a bittersweet moment,” the native of Puebla, Mexico, near Mexico City, said Wednesday while visiting with his mom.

Galindo agreed.

“Now that this moment has come, I am happy; I am so proud of him,” she said in her native Spanish. “But also, I am sad because they won’t let me go in. But now more than ever he is going to fight for the immigrants, for parents like me that they don’t let in and he is going to fight for our rights.”

Cesar Vargas and his mother, Teresa Galindo, meet before his graduation from the Army Reserve’s Basic Combat Training. Courtesy of Cesar Vargas

Galindo said that a few years after her husband died she brought her four children, ages 11 and younger, under dark skies across the U.S. border near Tijuana, Mexico, on the night of May 10, 1990. It was a 3 a.m., Galindo remembers. Vargas remembers being as his held his mother’s hand with his two older sisters and a younger brother in tow.

“Cupid’s arrow unexpectedly hit me,” Vargas said. “I could finally do something. I made a commitment to my country.”

But even as a permanent resident, Vargas’ plans to join the military had begun. Soon after, the 9/11 attacks solidified his resolve.

"That was something I took very personally," he said. However, Vargas was thwarted time and again by his legal cases, including ones involving a number of other administration officials as temporary appointments.

He then diverted his military plans to become a lawyer, attending law school at the City University of New York. He fought alongside Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin, of Illinois, against the Dream Act, the 2007 proposal to protect undocumented immigrants from deportation, and still considers himself a “Dreamer.”

To overcome several legal hurdles to become one of New York’s first openly undocumented military veterans, he’s worked on dozens of legal cases, including ones involving military service members, veterans or their relatives facing deportation under President Donald Trump’s administration.

Vargas continued his political work with the Obama White House and Sanders, eventually becoming senior counsel for New York City Councilman Carlos Menchaca. He then married, became a resident soon after and joined the Army Reserve.

Vargas faced a rigorous back-
Thaw in tense ties on Okinawa?

Younger residents more tolerant of US presence, study finds

By William Cole

The Honolulu Star-Advertiser

The anti-U.S. military base sentiment that is so often highlighted on Okinawa — known as the “keystone of the Pacific” for its strategic importance — may be less resonant with a younger generation of Okinawans, a new study by the East-West Center in Honolulu found.

Seventy-four years after the end of World War II, Okinawa remains home to the largest foreign U.S. base complex in the world outside an active combat zone, according to the center.

Approximately 54,000 U.S. personnel are stationed in Japan, with about half of those on Okinawa, 950 miles southwest of Tokyo.

The island has another unique characteristic: Of the many U.S. bases around the globe, only on Okinawa are there regular protests against both existing facilities and new construction, the East-West Center noted.

With that in mind, and with most of the protests recurring on this island and at the end of the age scale, the center undertook a survey of “millennials plus” — those in the 20 to 45 age bracket, who represent 40% of eligible voters, to gauge the younger generation’s often contentious American presence.

Charles Morrison, a past president of the East-West Center, said the first half of the study’s authors, said that when he first started going to Okinawa years ago, he was always struck by how militarily some of the older residents were compared with younger people.

“I do not know of an equivalent study of post-reverent-aged (1972 and older) Okinawa to Japan) Okinawan attitudes on the bases,” Morrison said in an email.

A highlight of the new study is that there is a “major opportunity” to strengthen U.S.-military-Okinawan relations by partnering with younger residents on a more cooperative basis.

The study found:

• A majority of those interviewed supported the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, but there was some belief that Okinawa hosts too many U.S. military bases.

• That the majority of those interviewed and surveyed had never been involved in protests against the U.S. presence — typically saying they were too busy or disagreed with the position or behavior of protesters.

• Most respondents had a positive view of U.S. personnel, saying they are “friend-ly,” or “helpful.” Crime, accidents, noise, environmental issues and traffic were base problems that should be addressed.

• There was “very broad support” for enhanced contact between the bases and Okinawan communities for mutual benefit.

The study was conducted in the first half of 2018, a period when no major crimes or accidents involving U.S. personnel occurred. Criminal behavior periodically works against the U.S. cause on Okinawa, as was the case on April 13, when a U.S. sailor fatally stabbed a Japanese woman and then killed himself.

A majority of participants favored the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, but there was the strong belief that Okinawa hosts too many U.S. military bases.

“This belief is combined with resentment against the central Japanese government for allowing this situation and not giving Okinawa an effective seat at the table on base issues,” the report states.

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As part of the relocation, and to reduce the Marine Corps presence on Okinawa, the United States plans to move 4,000 Marines to Guam, 2,700 to Hawaii, 800 to the mainland and 1,300 to Australia on a rota-tional basis.

US soon to have 2,500 Marines in Australia

By Seth Robson

The Marine Corps is boosting its presence in Australia’s Northern Territory with an extra battalion headed Down Under this summer.


Once the 800-strong unit arrives, there will be 1,200 Marines in Australia in a target set by former President Barack Obama when he announced the creation of the rotational force during a visit to Darwin in November 2011.

The additional Marines will participate in previously scheduled activities, including Exercise Koolendong, Kennard said in an email.

“This increase ... is a tangible demonstration of the United States’ sustained commitment to the U.S.-Australia alliance and to the open and free Indo-Pacific region,” he said. “It will improve security cooperation activities, disaster relief response capabilities, and the ability to respond to various crises throughout the region.”

There has been a slow build-up of the force, which rotates into Darwin for six months before returning to an initial contingent of 250 Marines hit the beach there in 2012.

The first Marines in this summer’s rotation, which started arriving last week, include another infantry battalion — 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment — an artillery battalion from 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, Combat Logistics Battalion 1 and a platoon from 1st Combat Engineer Battalion.

The ground troops are supported by 10 MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotors, four AH-1Z Vipers and three UH-1Y Venom helicopters, he said.

The rotational force commanding officer, Col. Russ Boyce, told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation that the Marines would be capable of responding if a conflict arose nearby during the rotation.

“The units that have deployed here ... have trained and achieved a level of proficiency before they are able to even deploy, so certainly that’s part of the calculus,” he said.

However, Boyce added, in coming years the focus for the deployment would be on improving capabilities rather than more boots on the ground, according to the ABC.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison spoke to U.S. and Australian troops at Robertson Barracks on Wednesday, Kennard said.

Morrison told troops the story of Australian stretcher-bearer Leslie “Bull” Allen, who was awarded the U.S. Silver Star medal after rescuing 12 wounded American soldiers in Papua New Guinea at the Battle of Mount Tambu in 1943, according to The Australian newspaper.

Allen’s heroism underscored the “cama- raderie, kinship and spirit” between U.S. and Australian forces, the prime minister said, according to the newspaper.
President vows relentless opioid effort

By Kevin Freking
AND DARELNE SUPERVILE
Associated Press

ATLANTA — President Donald Trump pledged on Wednesday to battle the deadly epidemic of opioid drug abuse “until our job is done,” and he claimed progress even though it is unclear whether the crisis has diminished.

Trump spoke at an annual conference of health, law enforcement, elected and other officials who work to combat drug abuse and addiction, and used the appearance to advocate for the wall he wants to build on the U.S.-Mexico border, saying evidence that it will help keep drugs out of the U.S. His wife, Melania, introduced him.

“Mobilizing a critical national deploying every resource at our disposal to empower you, to support you and to help you,” Trump said. “We will not solve this epidemic overnight but we will stop it. There’s just nothing going to stop us, no matter how you cut it.”

Before leaving the White House for the Atlanta event, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders claimed credit for progress in combating the drug scourge.

“It’s a big problem. It’s a big addiction and we’ve had a lot of officials in political parties, said some states and communities are making headway, but not because of action by Trump. Huckabee Sanders said others have regressed.

Huckabee Sanders said Trump’s declaration of opioids addiction as a public health emergency in 2017 failed to translate into significant concrete action. Members of Congress, he said, “figured out they were going to have to do it themselves and they did.”

Efforts to curb opioid abuse are being undertaken by an array of government agencies. Trump said states are now allowed to use Medicaid dollars to pay for residential treatment facilities, expanding access to care. He said the Department of Veterans Affairs has greatly reduced the number of veterans being treated with opioids.

Trump also discussed law enforcement efforts, including shutting down online criminal drug dealing and aggressive efforts to seize illegal drugs and stop immigrants from entering the country without authorization.

He said that almost 400 miles of wall will be in place along the border with Mexico by the end of 2020 and that it “will have a tremendous impact on drugs coming into the country without authorization.”

First lady Melania Trump speaks during the Rx Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit in Atlanta on Wednesday. President Donald Trump pledged to battle the epidemic of opioid drug abuse “until our job is done.”

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump vowed to battle the epidemic of opioid drug abuse “until our job is done.”

When she was homeland security secretary, Kirstjen Nielsen was as a President Donald Trump’s chief of staff not to bring up election security, according to unnamed sources.

While prescription opioids initially accounted for most deaths, the epidemic is now driven by illicit heroin and fentanyl. Those two drugs were implicated in the vast majority of opioid overdoses reported in 2017, according to federal figures.

Keith Humphreys, a drug policy expert at Stanford University, said some states and communities are making headway, but not because of action by Trump. Humphreys said other states have regressed.

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First lady Melania Trump speaks during the Rx Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit in Atlanta on Wednesday. President Donald Trump pledged to battle the epidemic of opioid drug abuse “until our job is done.”

WASHINGTON — A top White House official told Kirstjen Nielsen, then Homeland Security secretary, not to bring up election security with President Donald Trump, steering her away from discussing the critical national security threat with a president who bristles at suggestions that Russian interference contributed to his 2016 victory, according to two people familiar with the matter.

One official said the guidance from acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney wasn’t related to the sensitivity of the election interference issue but to keep the White House meetings concentrated on border security, the most visible part of Nielsen’s sprawling portfolio and the top item on Trump’s political agenda.

But it suggests a lack of White House focus on preventing cyberattacks, which Nielsen described during her tenure as a bigger terrorism threat to the United States than planes or bombs. The potential for foreign cyberattacks to shape U.S. elections has been in

coordinate, Nielsen continued to work on election and cybersecurity outreach with administration officials, according to people familiar with the matter. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss private meetings.

The New York Times was the first to report that Nielsen had been told not to talk about the topic.

Mulvaney said in a statement he did not recall any meetings in which he told Nielsen not to bring up an election security, and stressed the topic was very important.

Trump signed an executive order last fall authorizing sanctions against foreign networks that meddle in U.S. elections and requested $17.6 billion for federal cybersecurity efforts next year in his budget.

Mulvaney added that federal, state and local governments are now sharing information, and federal authorities are conducting security breach training drills.

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Biden launches
2020 fight for
‘soul of nation’

BY STEVE PEOPLES
AND THOMAS BEAUMONT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former Vice President Joe Biden formally joined the crowded Democratic presidential contest on Thursday, declaring the “soul of this nation” at stake if President Donald Trump wins re-election.

In a video posted on Twitter, Biden focused on the 2017 deadly clash between white supremacists and counterprotesters in Charlottesville, Va. Biden noted Trump’s comments that there were some “very fine people” on both sides of the violent encounter, which left one woman dead.

“We are in the battle for the soul of this nation,” Biden said. “If we don’t take it back, this country will be a divided country for years and years.”

Biden has courted the Democratic Party’s diversity in his campaign. He’s met with predominantly black and brown women and minorities, including major civil rights figures, such as Sherrilyn Ifill, former NAACP president and CEO.

He quickly racked up endorsements on Thursday morning, becoming the first Democrat running for president with the backing of more than one U.S. senator.

Still, Biden must compete in a field that now spans at least 20 Democrats and has been celebrated for its racial and gender diversity. As an older white man with occasionally centrist views, Biden has to prove he’s not out of step with his party.

“I’m not here to outline my positions on the issues defining the 2020 Democratic primary, most notably ‘Medicare for All,’” the universal health care plan authored by Sanders that has been adopted by virtually the entire Democratic Party.

His critics in both major political parties were also quick to pounce.

“The old guard of the Democratic Party failed to stop Trump, and they can’t be counted on to lead the fight against his divide-and-conquer politics today,” the liberal group Justice Democrats tweeted. “The party needs new leadership with a bold vision capable of energizing voters in the Democratic base who stayed home in 2016.”

Biden, a native of Scranton, Pa., is betting that his working-class appeal and ties to Barack Obama’s presidency will help him win over such skeptics. Obama hasn’t explicitly endorsed Biden’s bid, but the former president took the unusual step of weighing in on Thursday’s announcement.

“President Obama has long said that selecting Joe Biden as his running mate in 2008 was one of the best decisions he ever made,” Obama spokeswoman Katie Hill said. “He relied on the vice president’s knowledge, insight, and judgment throughout both campaigns and the entire presidency. The two forged a special bond over the last 10 years and remain close today.”

Trump welcomed Biden to the campaign in a tweet.

“I only hope you have the intelligence, long in doubt, to wage a successful primary campaign,” Trump said. “It will be nasty — you will be dealing with people who truly have some very sick and demented ideas. But if you make it, I will see you at the Starting Gate.”

Privately, Trump allies have warned that Biden might be the biggest re-election threat given the former vice president’s potential appeal among the white working class in the Midwest, the region that gave Trump a path to the presidency.

The former vice president will hold his first public event as a 2020 presidential candidate in Pittsburgh on Monday. Then it’s off to Iowa, home of the leadoff nominating caucuses on Tuesday and Wednesday, followed by two days in South Carolina. He’ll visit the other two early-voting states, Nevada and New Hampshire, in early May, before holding a major rally in Philadelphia.

Some women of color frustrated by Biden bid

BY JUANA SUMMERS
AND ERRIN HAINES WHACK
Associated Press

HOUSTON — Former Vice President Joe Biden’s decision to enter the Democratic presidential race is causing consterna- tion among some Democrats, particularly women of color, who have been hoping for a nominee who better reflects the nation’s diversity.

At the She the People forum, billed as the first presidential forum focused on women of color, Roxy D. Hall Williamson’s shoulders slumped at the mention of Biden, who made his campaign announcement Thursday.

“I know that we have been cul- tured to feel that only the white man can save us,” the LaMarque, Texas, organizer said Wednesday. “I just don’t feel like Biden is our answer.”

Biden’s candidacy is likely to re- shape the Democratic Party, which has put the party’s diversity on display. The group of eight 2020 hopefuls who spoke at the forum comprised one black man, one black woman, three other women, a Latino man and two white men, all making the case for why they should be the nominee.

Black female voters will play a critical role in the Democratic Party’s attempt to defeat President Donald Trump in 2020. An inability to earn their support in past cycles has spelled political peril for Democratic candidates.

For his part, Biden has main- tained strong ties to the black community over the decades.

The raucous, standing-room crowd in the 1,800-person capac- ity auditorium at the historically black Texas Southern University listened intently as the candidates were questioned about maternal mortality, immigration, tribal sovereignty, income inequality and other issues.


LaTosha Brown, the co-founder of Black Voters Matter, said she was initially eager for Biden to enter the race but now sees “strong alternatives” to him.

“I’m over white men running the country,” Brown said. “I don’t know if him getting in changes the field. He has name recogni- tion, but his strength is also his weakness. Who is he announcing going to surprise?”

“Though we supported Presi- dent (Barack) Obama, I think we still wanted to see more happen- ing on behalf of black and brown communities, specifically black communities,” said Cherisse Scott, 44, of Memphis.

“I think Joe Biden’s great. I think Joe Biden was a hell of a vice president. But I wouldn’t vote for him for president.”

Cynthia Dismuke, 53, of Hous- ton, is undecided on a candidate in 2020 but finds Biden’s open- ness to a female running mate attractive.

Nevertheless, she was one of many women at the event who came away impressed with War- ren, saying, “She’s not making promises. She has a plan.”

“I don’t necessarily want an- other white male ticket,” Dismuke said. “I want to see who’s going to get Trump out of office.”

Leah Daughtry, CEO of the 2016 Democratic National Con- vention, said Wednesday’s forum was a testament to the strength of black women at the polls.

Federal judge hearing 2 challenges to abortion rule

YAKIMA, Wash. — A federal judge in Washington state will hear arguments in two cases against new Trump adminis- tration rules that could cut off federal funding for health care providers who refer patients for an abortion.

Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson and the National Family Planning and Reproduc- tive Health Association brought the lawsuits, saying that if the rules take effect next week as scheduled they would curb access to care such as contraception and breast and cervical cancer screening for millions of low-in- come people.

A federal judge in Oregon this week said he will at least partially block the new rules in response to a separate lawsuit brought by 20 states, and a federal judge in Cali- fornia is considering a challenge there.

Thursday’s arguments will be in U.S. District Court in Yakima.
Baltimore mayor’s homes, City Hall targeted by raids

By DAVID McFADDEN
Associated Press

BALTIMORE — FBI and IRS agents raided the homes and offices of Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh on Thursday amid widening probes to determine whether she used sales of her children’s books to disguise government kickbacks.

Dave Fitz, an FBI spokesman in the agency’s Baltimore office, said agents with the FBI and the IRS criminal division in Washington were searching both of Mayor Catherine Pugh’s homes and her offices at City Hall, as well the home of a top aide and other places. He said he didn’t release more information because the warrants are sealed.

FBI agents were seen knocking on doors and raiding a top aide’s home and her offices at City Hall, as well as to the University of Maryland Medical System, with the city, as well as to the University of Maryland Medical System, and two other buildings as well.

On Thursday, Pugh sold $500,000 worth of books to disguise government kickbacks that would have benefited the retailer in Maryland’s House of Delegates.

Pugh has been facing mounting calls for her to resign over a scandal involving her self-published children’s books to disguise government kickbacks that would have benefited the retailer in Maryland’s House of Delegates.

The first-term mayor of Baltimore’s embattled mayor-friendly City Charter currently provides no options for removing a mayor.

Members of Pugh’s communications staff have said repeatedly that they didn’t have an end date for the investigation.

While the accusations have cast a shadow over Pugh, she has not been indicted for any crime, and it is unclear how long a criminal investigation will take.

A veteran City Council leader, Bernard “Jack” Young, is serving as acting mayor.

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Ex-Army sharpshooter held in pedestrian crash

By HEATHER LONG
The Washington Post

The first tax filing season under President Donald Trump’s new tax law is over and the results show that slightly more Americans received tax refunds but the amounts were smaller.

The average refund this year was $2,725, down $55 from last year, according to data released Wednesday by the Internal Revenue Service that includes every return filed by the deadline.

Americans lashed out at Trump and Republicans on social media as they filed tax returns and realized they would receive a lower refund than they obtained last year.

Americans have come to love tax refunds, viewing them almost like a bonus, even though the IRS means that is a person overpaid their taxes during the year and is now receiving that extra amount as a refund.

Financial experts advise people not to get refunds because it just means someone loaned the government the money for free. But IRS data shows that the majority of tax filers — 73.2% (nearly 96 million people) — received refunds this filing season, a slight increase from 73.1% who received refunds during the 2018 tax filing season.

IRS and U.S. Treasury officials anticipated that fewer people would receive refunds this year and the amounts would be lower, but the refund trends turned out to be similar to those of the prior year.

After the new tax law took effect, IRS staff tweaked the withholding calculations, the amount of money deducted for taxes from a person’s paycheck, to adjust for the new rules and to try to make it so more Americans were “permanently” in that retainer to return to City Hall when she is feeling better, but have declined to provide any timetable.

Since the first-term mayor has been asked to resign by the entire lineup of the current City Council, all Baltimore lawmakers in Maryland's House of Delegates, the influential Greater Baltimore Committee business group and others. Maryland's chief accountant called Pugh's "self-dealing" arrangements to sell her books "brazen, cartoonish corruption."

Only a conviction can trigger a Baltimore mayor's removal from office, according to the city's state constitution. Baltimore's mayor-friendly City Charter currently provides no options for removing a mayor.

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IRS data: Americans got smaller refunds

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Polls see split on college admission fairness

By Collin Binkley and Hannah Fingerhut
Associated Press

BOSTON — As a sweeping bribery scandal reignites debate over college admissions, a pair of polls reveal that many Americans think the nation’s universities place too much emphasis on factors such as wealth, family ties and athletic ability.

The surveys, conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the Higher Education Analytics Center at NORC, finds Americans about evenly divided on the overall fairness of college admissions, but their views on individual selection criteria reveal a rift between the factors they see as important and the factors they think colleges value.

In a March and April, weeks after federal prosecutors ac- cused 33 parents of paying bribes to cheat on their children’s college entrance tests or get them into elite schools including Stan- ford, Yale and Georgetown. In some cases, investigators said, parents paid bribes to get their children labeled as recruited ath- letes for sports they didn’t even play.

Against that backdrop, some college counselors said they expected wide dis- trust of the admissions process. Instead, the results were mixed. About 4 in 10 say there was more pressure for wealth, while a similar share said it’s unfair. About 20% are neutral.

“Following the scandal I actually expected the floor to give out,” said Mark Sklarow, CEO of the Independent Educa- tional Consultants Association. “Maybe it confirmed concerns people already had, that the system isn’t fair or at the very least unclear.”

Spencer Buettgenbach, 24, of Topola, Kan., said the scandal affirmed his view that the college admissions process is all about money. Most colleges want students who will cover their own tuition, he said, and ideally come with a donation from their parents.

“It’s become more of a numbers game than it is finding the people who have ap- titude or talent,” said Buettgenbach, who attended three terms of college and now works in retail.

Overall, Americans are most likely to say they think high school grades and stan- dardized test scores should be important in admissions, and majorities agree that colleges value those factors too. Similarly, many think that extracurricular activities should play a role and say that colleges take them into account.

But on other criteria, there’s a clash be- tween the way Americans think students should be picked and the way they think colleges actually operate.

Niles, of the admissions association, said she suspects the public doesn’t fully un- derstand why some colleges give an edge to racial minorities. She said it’s meant to create a campus where students can en- counter diversity of all kinds, from race and economic background to geography and political viewpoint.

Still, the polls find the issue is largely drawn down racial lines. About half of black Americans say racial background should be important, while just 22% of white Americans do.

Tia Green, 54, of Lexington Park, Md., said that in an ideal world, race wouldn’t be a factor. But as long as minorities face longer odds to succeed in education, she supports it.

“It shouldn’t be based off of race, but if we’re going to be real about the world that we live in, there is prejudice, there is racism,” said Green, who is black and works for the Defense Department.

“Everyone should have access to educa- tion, bottom line.”

Americans appear to be divided by age when it comes to the importance of stand- ardized tests, like the SAT and ACT, the polls find. Among those 50 and older, three-quarters say test scores should be important, while just about half of those under 30 agree.

The AP-NORC polls were conducted March 28-April 1 among 1,009 adults and April 11-14 among 1,108 adults using a sam- ple drawn from NORC’s probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all re- sponses is plus or minus 3.6 percentage points in the first survey, and plus or minus 4.1 percentage points in the second.

Tornado kills 2 in Louisiana

Associated Press

RUSTON, La. — A tornado killed two people as it tore through the northern Louisiana city of Ruston early Thursday, of- ficials said.

The tornado caused severe damage to buildings, vehicles and power lines and forced a local university to cancel classes.

Communications director for the Louisiana Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness Mike Steele said a mother and son in Lincoln Parish, which Ruston lies in, were killed when a tree fell on their home overnight.

Steele said he could not confirm their names or ages. He said those were currently the only deaths reported in Louisiana during the storm, but that rescue workers were still combing the area.

National Weather Service hydrologist C.S. Ross said it appears the tornado cut a track over 130 miles from eastern Texas to near the Louisiana-Arkansas border.

The Dow Chemical plant in Texas City, Texas is a major producer of anhydrous ammonia. When the leak occurred around 4:30 a.m.

Initial reports suggested the ve- hicle was involved in a crash, but Covelli later said that was not the case. The cause of the leak has not been released.

The leak created a toxic cloud that lingered over Beach Park, about 40 miles north of downtown Chicago.

“[It’s a] very dangerous chemical that can cause unconsciousness and, worst-case scenario, death,” Covelli said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, inhalation of anhydrous ammonia is a colorless gas that can cause breathing dif- ficulties, burns and blisters and is fatal in high concentrations. Farmers use it to add ni- trogen to soil.

The first two officers who re- sponded to the leak had to retreat because they were overcome by the ammonia, Covelli said.

Authorities said about a dozen law enforcement agencies responded to the leak.

Ammonia leak in Illinois sends dozens to hospitals

Associated Press

BEACH PARK, Ill. — Plumes of a toxic gas that leaked in a northern Chicago suburb Thurs- day morning sent at least 37 peo- ple to hospitals and prompted an order for residents to stay locked inside their homes with windows shut tight, officials said.

Three law enforcement of- ficers who responded to the leak in Beach Park were among those injured and they were treated in stable condition, Lake County Sheriff's spokesman Christopher Covelli said.

Several other people were in serious but stable condition, Covelli said. Authorities said most of those injured suffered breathing problems.

Lake Forest Fire Chief Mike Gallo said a tractor was towing two separate two-ton containers of anhydrous ammonia when the leak occurred around 4:30 a.m.

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NY State court rules against Boy Scouts in sex abuse cases

**By David Crary**

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Under pressure over past allegations of child sex abuse, the Boy Scouts of America defended its current prevention policies on Wednesday and said there were five known victims in 2018 out of roughly 2.2 million youth members.

“Scouting programs today are safe,” said Erin Eisner, a chief strategy officer for the BSA and the mother of two scouts. “If I felt for a second that scouting was unsafe, I would not be associated with nor advocate for the BSA.”

Eisner, who joined Chief Scout Executive Mike Surbaugh in a telephone news conference, urged the creation of a national registry in which the BSA and other youth-serving organizations could pool information they had gathered about confirmed or suspected predators in order to lessen the chances that any of them could obtain positions working with children. Eisner said the Boy Scouts were collaborating on that project with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

The BSA convened the news conference in response to the flurry of news reports about abuse-related challenges facing the 109-year-old organization.

Across the U.S., lawyers are recruiting clients to join in sex-abuse lawsuits against Boy Scouts as states have moved to ease statute-of-limitations laws. New York enacted a law earlier this year creating a window for victims of long-ago abuse to file such suits, and several other states are considering such measures.

Eisner and Surbaugh defended the BSA’s century-old practice of compiling “ineligible files,” in which adult volunteers considered to pose a risk of child molestation. About 5,000 of these files have been made public as a result of court action; others remain confidential.

Minnesota-based lawyer Jeff Anderson, who specializes in sex-abuse litigation, released a court deposition in New York on Tuesday with testimony from Janet Warren, a University of Virginia psychology professor who worked with the Boy Scouts to review its files. In her deposition, Warren said there were 7,919 individuals in the “ineligible files” as of January, as well as 12,254 victims.

Warren joined in Wednesday’s news briefing, describing the BSA’s sex-abuse database as “cutting edge” and contending that the organization’s rate of reporting abuse was lower than in society as a whole.

According to the BSA, when any volunteer is added to the database for suspected abuse, they are reported to law enforcement, removed entirely from all scouting programs and prohibited from rejoining anywhere. However, the BSA does not proactively make names in the database public.

Eisner said doing so in the cases of volunteers who have never been arrested or convicted might raise issues of civil liberties and due process.

But Jeff Anderson, in an emailed statement, rejected the BSA’s argument that the database should remain out of public view.

“Through a simple keystroke, they have the ability today to re-release the names and locations of every offender that sexually abused children,” Anderson said. “Absent that, any effort, promise, pledge, practice is failing short of protecting kids.”

Past settlements in sex-abuse cases have strained the Boy Scouts’ finances, and the burden could worsen if the statute-of-limitations reforms in New York and elsewhere trigger a new wave of lawsuits.

**By Juan A. Lozano**

Associated Press

HUNTSVILLE, Texas — An avowed racist who orchestrated one of the most gruesome hate crimes in U.S. history was executed Wednesday in Texas for the dragging death of a black man.

John William King, who was white, received a lethal injection for the slaying nearly 21 years ago of James Byrd Jr., who was chained to the back of a truck and dragged for nearly 3 miles along a seared road in the piney woods outside Jasper, Texas. The 49-year-old Byrd was alive for at least 2 miles before his body was ripped to pieces in the early morning hours of June 7, 1998.

Prosecutors said Byrd was targeted because he was black. King was openly racist and had offensive tattoos on his body, including one of a black man with a noose around his neck hanging from a tree, according to authorities.

King, 44, was put to death at the state penitentiary in Huntsville, Texas. He was the fourth inmate executed this year in the U.S. and the third in Texas, the nation’s busiest capital punishment state.

King kept his eyes closed as witnesses arrived in the death chamber and never turned his head toward relatives of his victim. Asked by Warden Bill Lewis if he had a final statement, King replied: “No.”

Within seconds, the lethal drug of the sedative pentobarbital began taking effect. He took a few barely audible breaths and had no other movement. He was pronounced dead at 7:08 p.m., 12 minutes after the drug began.

In a statement released after his execution, King said: “Capital punishment: The capital gets the punishment.”

Byrd’s sister, Clara Taylor, who watched King die, said he “showed no remorse then and showed no remorse tonight.”

“The execution for his crime was just punishment,” she said. “I felt nothing — no sense of relief, no sense of happy this is over with.”

As witnesses emerged from the prison, about 200 people dozens standing down the street began to cheer.

The killing of Byrd was a hate crime that put a national spotlight on Jasper, a town of about 7,600 residents near the Texas-Louisiana border that was branded with a racist stigma it has tried to shake off ever since. Local officials say the reputation is undeserved.

King’s appellate lawyers had tried to stop his execution, arguing King’s constitutional rights were violated because his trial attorneys didn’t present his claims of innocence and conceded his guilt.

The U.S. Supreme Court rejected King’s last-minute appeal.

King, who grew up in Jasper and was known as “Bill,” was the second man executed for Byrd’s killing. Lawrence Russell Brewer was executed in 2011. The third participant, Shawn Allen Berry, was sentenced to life in prison.

Louvon Byrd Harris said earlier this month that King’s execution for her brother’s slaying would send a “message to the world that when you do something horrible like that, that you have to pay the high penalty.”

King and Brewer got “an easy way out” compared to “all the suffering” that Byrd faced, Harris said.

Mylinda Byrd Washington, another of Byrd’s sisters, said earli-er this month that the family will work through the Byrd Foundation for Racial Healing to ensure her brother’s death continues to combat hate everywhere.

**Texas executes avowed racist for dragging black man in 1998**

**POLICE: Slain Illinois boy was beaten, put in cold shower**

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Police believe an Illinois couple who reported their 5-year-old son missing last week killed him days before, by beating him and forcing him to stand in a cold shower for an extended period of time, according to court documents released Thursday.

The allegations are included in a criminal complaint that out-INES first-degree murder, aggra- VATED battery and several other charges against Joann Cunningham, 36, and Andrew Freund Sr., 60, in the death of Andrew “AJ” Freund. AJ was in the back of a van that police said was parked for four days and could not be located. When police went to the couple’s home on Monday, they found AJ cold and unresponsive, and he was pronounced dead at 7:52 a.m.

An autopsy was scheduled for Monday to determine a cause of death and to confirm that the remains found a day earlier were those of the child, as investigators believe.

Investigators say they found the body a few miles from the fami-ly’s Crystal Lake home based on information provided by Freund.

The couple’s brief court appearance Thursday came exactly a week after Freund triggered a massive search on April 18 when he called 911 to report that the couple hadn’t seen their son since bedtime the night before. Police believe the boy was killed April 15, according to the criminal complaint.

Authorities say the boy had lived in deplorable conditions.

“I’m very sorry that you have some solace in knowing that AJ is no longer suffering and his killers have been brought to justice,” Crystal Lake Police Chief James Black told reporters Wednesday, in a statement directed at the child’s relatives.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services had a long history with the fam-ily — including an investigation that was launched shortly after AJ was born when tests revealed the new baby had toxins in his body that prompted the agency to place the boy in foster care for nearly two years.

Crystal Lake police also have repeatedly been called to the family’s house. Officers in police reports described finding filthy living conditions, broken windows, evidence of drug use and the overpowering smell of dog feces.

**By David Crary**

Associated Press

Mylinda Byrd Washington, 66, left, and Louvon Byrd Harris, 61, hold up photographs of their brother James Byrd Jr. in Houston on April 10.
By Mike Strober  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Measles in the U.S. has climbed to its highest level in 25 years, closing in on 700 cases this year in a resurgence largely attributed to misinformation that is turning parents against vaccines.

“Measles is alarming,” said Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University vaccine expert.

not only is measles dangerous, but its return could mean other vaccine-preventable diseases seemingly consigned to the past may be coming back as well, he said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Thursday that 695 cases had been reported in 22 states this year as of Wednesday afternoon. That was up from 626 reported Monday and makes this the nation’s worst year for measles since 1994, with eight months still to go in 2019. There were 963 cases in 1994.

Roughly three-quarters of this year’s illnesses in the U.S. have been in New York state, mainly in two ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities in Brooklyn and suburban Rockland County. Most of those cases have been in unvaccinated people.

The number of cases is likely to go even higher. Measles is highly contagious and can spread through the air when someone coughs or sneezes. And in recent days, Jewish families have been gathering for Passover meals. It can take 10 to 12 days for symptoms to develop.

The CDC recommends the vaccine for everyone over a year old, except for people who had the disease as children. Those who have had measles are immune.

The vaccine, which became available in the 1960s, is considered safe and highly effective, and because of it, measles was declared all but eliminated in the U.S. in 2000. But it has made comebacks since then, including 667 cases in 2014.

Public health experts say some U.S. communities have low vaccination rates because of the spread of bad information — especially the now-debunked notion that the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine is linked to autism — through social media, pamphlets, hotlines and other means.

Many parents are afraid. And if you want to believe your kid doesn’t need that many shots, there’s plenty of places to find people who agree with you,” said Dr. Jonathan Fielding, former head of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

“It’s not so easy to discern what is real and what is not.”

Measles in most people causes fever, runny nose, cough and a rash all over the body. However, a very small fraction of those infected can suffer complications such as pneumonia and a dangerous swelling of the brain.

According to the CDC, for every 1,000 children who get measles, one or two will die from it. No deaths have been recorded this year.

Measles’ return may be an early warning sign of resurgence in other vaccine-preventable diseases such as rubella, chickenpox and bacterial meningitis, said Schaffner.

“Measles is the signal in these communities where there’s a profound undervaccination, they are affected by the same vaccine-preventable diseases we thought were relegated to yesterday,” he said.

Analysts stunned by Tesla’s massive loss in first quarter

By LISA MARIE PANE  
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Tesla CEO Elon Musk had prepared Wall Street for a first-quarter loss but analysts were still stunned by its size: $702.1 million, among the company’s worst quarters in the past two years.

The net loss was more than double what analysts had predicted as Tesla’s sales slumped 31% for the quarter.

The loss of $4.10 per share left Musk spending much of a conference call explaining how it happened. But he also forecast that demand and profit margins will increase as Tesla rolls out updated products and pricing for its three models and sells more battery storage units.

He predicted another loss in the second quarter but said Tesla would be back in the black in the third quarter.

The company said that due to “ unforeseen challenges” it was able to deliver only half of the vehicles ordered in the quarter by March 31 as it ramped up deliveries in Europe and China. That pushed a number of deliveries, and revenue, into the current quarter, it said.

Tesla’s cash balance at the end of the quarter grew to $2.2 billion since December, to $2.2 billion. The company attributed the decline to a $920 million bond payment, and Musk said it might be time for Tesla to raise capital again.

Tesla’s stock was little changed in extended trading Wednesday following the earnings report.

The financial turmoil was seen as a key reason the NRA raised its dues last year for the second consecutive year.

Around the same time, the NRA saw its political influence wane during the 2018 elections and got outspent by gun control groups headed by former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg. More than a dozen NRA-backed congressional candidates lost in last year’s midterms.

The NRA also faces regulatory pressures in New York, where the marketing of its line of insurance for gun owners involved in shoot ings was scrutinized.

NRA gathers for annual meeting amid internal strife over mission

By LISA MARIE PANE  
Associated Press

The National Rifle Association is used to battling forces that criticize its fiery and unapologetic efforts to protect gun rights. But as the group gathers for its annual convention this week, the NRA may be facing its toughest foe in decades: its own members.

NRA insiders and longtime observers describe an organization at war with itself over a central question: Has it strayed too far from its original mission of gun rights and far enough from hunting sports and become too political?

It is rare for the NRA to betray any hint of internal turmoil, but it erupted very publicly recently when the NRA sued its longtime public relations firm, Ackerman McQueen, accusing it of refusing to hand over financial records to account for its billings. In 2017 alone, the NRA paid the firm $40 million.

Ackerman McQueen has been by the NRA’s side for two decades and has crafted its aggressive messaging, including the “From my cold dead hands” line uttered by actor Charlton Heston in 2000 as he vowed to resist any effort to take away his guns. The line became a rallying cry for gun owners around the country.

Ackerman McQueen also created and operates NRATV, the online channel whose hosts not only aggressively defend the NRA and its cause but often venture into political debates not directly related to firearms, such as immigration or diversity on children’s TV. In its lawsuit, the NRA said some of its members have questioned NRATV’s weighing in on “topics far afield of the Second Amendment.”

The long history between the public relations firm and the NRA has made their potential parting of the ways all the more surprising to longtime watchers of the group.

“The battle in the NRA board that must have occurred with this breakup of a decades-long relationship must have been something,” said Adam Winkler, a professor at the University of California Los Angeles School of Law and a gun rights expert.

The strife is expected to be a dominant topic of conversation at the convention starting Thursday in Indianapolis, where President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence will address the crowd Friday. The NRA’s two main political action committees spent $30 million to help Trump get elected in 2016, and the organization as a whole spent a record $412 million during the presidential year, according to its tax filings.

It has been a bumpy ride for the NRA over the past year.

The massacre at a high school in Parkland, Fla., last year cre ated a groundswell of opposition to the NRA, driven by student-led protests over gun violence. Corporate America began pushing back, with some major retailers stopping gun sales and banks dropping discounts or certain services for NRA members and gunmakers.

More recently it was disclosed that Russian operatives tried to use contacts in the NRA to influence American elections. Democrats in Congress vowed to launch investigations into the gun lobby.

The NRA does not release detailed membership numbers but has repeatedly said in recent years that it has about 5 million members. The tax-exempt organization’s filings with the IRS for 2016 and 2017, the most recent years available, show combined losses of nearly $64 million. Income from membership dues plunged about $35 million in 2017.

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Putin: North Korea ready to denuclearize

Russian president says Kim seeks guarantees before beginning process

By Vladimir Isachenkov and Eric Talmandge
Associated Press
VLADIVOSTOK, Russia — Russian President Vladimir Putin said after his summit with Kim Jong Un on Thursday that the North Korean leader is ready to proceed toward denuclearization — but needs solid security guarantees to do so.

Putin said that he will be willing to share details of the summit with President Donald Trump, adding that “there are no secrets.” He noted that Kim himself encouraged him to explain certain nuances of Pyongyang’s position to Trump.

The summit on Russky Island, across a bridge from the far-eastern port of Vladivostok, reflected Russia’s effort to emerge as an essential player in the North Korean nuclear standoff, a role that would raise Moscow’s global clout and its leverage with Washington.

Putin emphasized that the North Korean leader is ready to move toward a nuclear-free status but would proceed only when he gets solid guarantees. He did not specify what those guarantees would look like.

“Above all, he focuses on protecting national interests and security,” Putin said.

Earlier in the day, Putin voiced confidence that Kim’s visit will “help better understand what should be done to settle the situation on the Korean Peninsula, what we can do together, what Russia can do to support the positive processes going on now.”

Kim’s meeting with Putin follows a year of intense diplomacy the North hopes will help it get out from under international sanctions over its nuclear weapons and long-range missile programs. Kim has already held four summits with Chinese President Xi Jinping, three with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and two with President Donald Trump.

Kim’s second summit with Trump in February ended without any agreements, and his trip to Russia reflects his desire to put more pressure on Washington and show some independence from Beijing as well.

For Putin, the meeting offers a chance to increase his role as a potential broker. He immediately emphasized that he was willing to share details of the talks with Trump.

“The Russian leader emphasized that Moscow and Washington both want Pyongyang to denuclearize. When he sat down for talks with Kim, he praised him for engaging in dialogue with the U.S.,” Putin told Kim.

Following their one-on-one meeting at the start of broader talks involving officials from both sides, Putin and Kim said they had a good discussion.

“We discussed the situation on the Korean Peninsula and exchanged opinions about what should be done to improve the situation and how to do it,” Putin said.

Kim described the talks as “candid and meaningful.”

“The reason we visited Russia this time is to meet and share opinions with your excellency, President Putin, and also share views on the Korean Peninsula and regional political situation, which has garnered the urgent attention of the world, and also hold deep discussions on strategic ways to pursue stability in the regional political situation and on the matters of jointly managing the situation,” Kim said.

Looking confident but a bit stiff, Kim also congratulated the Russian leader on his reelection to another six-year term last year.

“Ceaselessly bolstering and developing strategic and traditional relations between North Korea and Russia … is my and my government’s firm and unwavering position,” Kim said later at a state banquet, where he made a toast.

Since the Trump-Kim talks in February ended without a deal because of disputes over U.S.-led sanctions, there have been no publicly known high-level contacts between the U.S. and North Korea — although both sides say they are still open to a third summit.

Kim wants the U.S. to ease the sanctions to reciprocate for some partial disarmament steps he took last year. The U.S. maintains the sanctions will stay in place until North Korea makes more significant denuclearization moves.

N. Korea issued $2M bill for comatose Warmbier’s care

The Washington Post
BEIJING — North Korea issued a $2 million bill for the hospital care of comatose American Otto Warmbier, insisting that a U.S. official sign a pledge to pay it before being allowed to fly the University of Virginia student from Pyongyang in 2017.

The presentation of the invoice — not previously disclosed by U.S. or North Korean officials — was extraordinarily brazen even for a regime known for its aggressive tactics.

But the main U.S. envoy sent to retrieve Warmbier signed an agreement to pay the medical bill on instructions passed down from President Donald Trump, according to two people familiar with the situation. They spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

The bill went to the Treasury Department, where it remained — unpaid — throughout 2017, the people said. However, it is unclear whether the Trump administration later paid the bill, or whether it came up during preparations for Trump’s two summits with Kim Jong Un.

The White House declined to comment. “We do not comment on hostage negotiations, which is why they have been so successful during this administration,” White House press secretary Sarah Sanders wrote in an email.

Warmbier, who was a 21, fell into a coma for unknown reasons the night he was sentenced to 15 years in prison with hard labor in March 2016.

He was convicted on charges stemming from pulling down a propaganda sign in a Pyongyang hotel in the early hours of Jan. 1, 2016 — an infraction that would be minor in almost any other country, but in North Korea it was considered a “hostile act against the state.”

Fred Warmbier, Otto’s father, said he had never been told about the hospital bill, but said it sounded like a "ransom" for his late son.

After his sentencing, the North Koreans held onto the comatose student for another 15 months, not even telling American officials until June of 2017 that he had been unconscious all that time.

News of his condition sparked a frantic effort led by Joseph Yun, the State Department’s point man on North Korea at the time, to get Warmbier home.
**WORLD**

**Sri Lanka lowers toll, braces for more attacks**

Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka—Sri Lanka on Thursday lowered the death toll from the Easter suicide bombings by nearly one-third, to 253, as authorities hunted urgently for at least five more suspects and braced for the possibility of more attacks in the coming days.

In rolling back the number of dead from 359, a top Health Ministry official, Dr. Anil Jasinghe, said in a statement that the blasts had damaged some bodies beyond recognition, making accurate identification difficult.

Religious leaders, meanwhile, canceled public prayer gatherings amid warnings of more such attacks, along with retaliatory sectarian violence. In an unusually specific warning, the U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka said places of worship could be hit by extremists this weekend.

At least 58 people have been arrested in connection with the wave of blasts at churches and luxury hotels last Sunday, according to police, including the father of two of the alleged suicide bombers — one of Sri Lanka’s wealthiest spice traders. Authorities have disrupted transportation by targeting bridges, intersections and commuter trains.

Sri Lankan authorities have blamed a local Muslim extremist group, National Towheed Jamaat. Islamic State also claimed responsibility, though officials are still investigating the extent of any involvement.

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said militants who may have explosives remain on the loose in the country and “may go out for a suicide attack.”

“We have rounded up a lot of suspects, but there are still active people on the run,” Wickremesinghe said in an interview with The Associated Press. “They may be having explosives with them, so we have to find them.”

Police appealed for information about an additional three women and two men suspected of involvement in the bombings.

The bloodshed stirred fears of more sectarian violence in Sri Lanka, a country of 23 million people, about 70% of them Buddhists, with the rest Muslims, Hindus and Christians.

“Sri Lankan authorities are reporting that additional attacks may occur targeting places of worship,” the U.S. Embassy warned on Twitter. “Avoid these areas over the weekend, starting tomorrow.”

Britain advised its citizens against traveling to the island country.

Sri Lanka’s Islamic religious affairs minister appealed to Muslims to avoid gathering for Friday prayers and instead urged them to pray at home. The noon prayers are the most important in the week for Muslims. The prime minister said that Muslims who condemned the attack could be in danger.

Sri Lankan leaders have acknowledged that intelligence authorities learned of the possibility of an attack weeks before. In the wake of the bombings, the country’s president ordered a shakeup of the security apparatus, ousting the defense secretary and demanding the national police chief’s resignation.

The peace deal under arrest, Mohammed Yusuf Ibrahim, lives in a Colombo mansion that was the scene of an explosion Sunday that killed three police officers.

The prime minister described Ibrahim as a leading businessman active in politics and said he was known as “Ibrahim Haji,” attaching the Sri Lankan term for Muslims who have gone on religious pilgrimages to Mecca.

**Australian leader plays down terrorism threat at Gallipoli commemoration**

Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia — Australia’s prime minister on Thursday played down any potential link between the arrest of a suspected Islamic State member in Turkey and a World War I battle commemoration in Gallipoli attended by hundreds of Australians and New Zealanders.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison was responding to media reports that detained Syrian national Abdulkerim Hilef had been planning an attack on the annual dawn service at ANZAC Cove to mark the April 25, 1915, landing of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps troops in an ill-fated campaign to take the Dardanelles Straits.

Morrison said the arrest took place three hours away from the Gallipoli service and no changes to security were made as a result.

“The reports that we are receiving are inconclusive about any link between that arrest and any possible planned event at Gallipoli itself,” Morrison told reporters. “In fact, to make that assumption would be, I think, making a very big assumption.”

A Turkish official agreed that the 26-year-old suspect’s arrest was unconnected to the Gallipoli ceremonies. The suspect was detained in the northwestern province of Tekirdag because he had been in contact with a group of ISIS suspects near the Syrian border in the southern Turkish province of Osmaniye, the official said.

Morrison said Australian Defense Force Chief Gen. Angus Campbell represented Australia at the service and praised Turkish police and military security.

“I was not concerned for the safety or security of this event,” Campbell told reporters at Gallipoli.
CHICAGO — Rob Pruitt calls it a “monument of a movement.” Visitors to the Story Island Arts Bank in Chicago will see 2,922 portraits of former President Barack Obama. 

“The Obama Paintings” is Re-build Foundation’s newest exhibit. Pruitt painted Obama’s image for an hour a day while reflecting on his world view. Each day Pruitt searched online for the previous day’s images of the Democrat who served as president. 

Pruitt transferred each to a canvas merged with the muted colors of the American flag. 

The exhibit runs through Aug. 25.

ALBUQUERQUE — An Albuquerque man said he is getting his classic 1970 Chevy returned to him a decade after officers seized it and said earlier this year they were going to turn it into a show car.

ROB-TV reported Leo Martinez’s 1970 SS Chevy Chevelle 454 was seized in 2009 under a once widely used law enforcement tactic that has since been ruled unconstitutional.

Martinez’s car was seized under an asset forfeiture program after he was pulled over on suspicion of drinking while driving. He pleaded guilty to DWI and spent nine months in jail. He said he could not locate his car until March when he saw a Facebook photo saying the city had it.

A children’s fishing rodeo went mostly belly-up in northeast Mississippi after an asset forfeiture program stockpiled the lake with diseased and dying catfish.

Rescue personnel from the Human Space Flight Support division open the hatch to a Boeing CST-100 Starliner training capsule during a sea rescue exercise Tuesday at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Cape Canaveral, Fla. The team is responsible for safely rescuing astronauts in case of an emergency during launches or landings.

Beau because of his “squishy” appearance. He lives in Urbandale with owners T.J. and Angela McKen zie and their three children. The English bulldog is the school’s dress code and小狗 Contest title winner.

Des Moines — A 3-year-old pet from a suburb of Des Moines is this year’s winner of Drake University’s annual Beautiful Bulldog Contest. 

The university said Beau won over the judges with a winning personality, an easygoing manner and good looks. Judge Nadia Valentine said in a university news release that she chose Beau because of his “squishy” appearance.

He lives in Urbandale with owners T.J. and Angela McKenzie and their three children. The English bulldog is the Drake mascot.

School’s dress code aimed at parents.

Will turn away parents if they appear wearing pajamas, hair rollers or leggings, among other banned clothing. Bonnets also are not allowed.

The Houston Chronicle reported that Houston school district policy allows schools to establish standards for student attire and grooming, but no policy exists for parents.

Madison High’s dress code was established shortly after KPRC-TV reported that a parent attempting to enroll her child was asked to leave because of how she was dressed, which included a headscarf and a T-shirt dress.

Critics say the dress code for parents is discriminatory.

The owner of a Kansas barbecue food truck got more heat than he bargained for when he began selling T-shirts with the message “I support LGBTQ: Liberty, Guns, Bible, Trump, BBQ.”

Belle’s Smokin’ BBQ owner Jamie Smith said the backlash started with a Facebook post last week advertising the shirts. He said that after a few hours, he began to get threatening calls.

The 18-year-old said the rabbits were rescued March 17 and were in poor condition and didn’t appear to be wild, bits didn’t appear to be wild, were in poor condition and didn’t flee. Frazier said he called police and animal rescue officials, but they couldn’t help, so he and his friends rounded up 37 rabbits. His girlfriend, Kenna Hubbard, helped clean the animals.

The Miami Herald reported firefighters, police and officials with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission tried to capture the 600-pound reptile at first. A trapper was able to secure the gator with some rope, but he couldn’t get a good hold on the slippery gator because it was wet from the rain. He decided to euthanize the gator.

New York — A veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan won a $5,000 award named for the late CIA director William E. Colby.

Paul Scharre’s “Army of None: Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War” is this year’s winner of the Colby prize, given annually since 1999 by Norwich University in Northfield, Vt.

Announced Tuesday, the award is presented for work of fiction or nonfiction about military history, intelligence operations or international affairs.

The approximate number of porcupine quills a police dog got stuck on his face while pursuing a suspect. Coos County (Ore.) Sheriff’s Office K-9 Odin, right, a German shepherd, had to be sedated and was in treatment for more than two hours to remove quills from all over his face, including several that were embedded in the roof of his mouth and more around his left eye. Capt. Gabe Fabrizio said: “That dog is super-motivated and high energy. It didn’t slow him down,” Fabrizio said. “He’s a good boy.” Odin had been called to help track a suspect with several felony warrants when he encountered the porcupine.

City workers have skimmed out more than 1,000 children. The exhibit was packed too tightly in the competition caught anything.

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City to return classic car after 10 years.

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**STARS AND STRIPES**

stripes.com/special-publications
Facebook fine resembles European penalties

By Barbara Ortutay
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The possibility of a $5 billion federal privacy fine for Facebook suggests that U.S. regulators may be taking a cue from the large penalties their European counterparts have been handing out to U.S. technology giants.

While investors appear to have shrugged it off, for now, the potential fine from the U.S. Federal Trade Commission would be more than a slap on the wrist for Facebook, especially if it comes with strings that limit how the company targets advertising to its massive user base.

Facebook said Wednesday it is planning for a fine between $3 billion and $5 billion and formally set aside $3 billion for the FTC, which is investigating whether the social network violated its users’ privacy. The amount is a contingency against a possible penalty; Facebook noted that the “matter remains unresolved.”

The company’s disclosure is the latest indication of U.S. moves toward tighter regulation of the technology industry, which has enjoyed years of nearly unrestricted growth with little oversight. Talk of a national data privacy law is swirling around Capitol Hill, states like California have already forged ahead with their own measures, and U.S. presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren has proposed breaking up the biggest U.S. tech companies.

In Europe, regulators have routinely slapped Google and other U.S. firms with major fines. Google now owes almost $10 billion in such penalties for alleged anticompetitive behavior; its parent company, Alphabet, is appealing the fines.

EU watchdogs also hit Apple with a $3 billion fine for ~5 billion this year. The FTC move, she said, “may impact the ways advertisers can use the platform in the future.”

Facebook has had several high-profile privacy lapses in the past couple of years. The FTC has been looking into Facebook’s involvement with the data-mining firm Cambridge Analytica since early 2018, after reports surfaced that the company harvested the personal data of as many as 87 million Facebook users.

The agreement requires that Facebook’s first-quarter profit could subject Facebook to fines of $41.484 per violation per user per day. The agreement requires that Facebook users give “affirmative express consent” anytime that data they haven’t made public is shared with a third party.

**MARKET WATCH**

**Dow Jones industrials**

- April 24, 2019
- 26,597.05

**Nasdaq composite**

- April 24, 2019
- 8,102.01

**Standard & Poor’s 500**

- April 24, 2019
- 2,927.25

**Russell 2000**

- April 24, 2019
- 1,588.13

**WEATHER OUTLOOK**

**FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Baghdad 83/56

Kuwait City 78/62

Riyadh 78/62

Riyadh 76/62

Jeddah 80/53

Erbil 75/53

Tunis 68/51

Lajes, Azores 60/55

Lajes, Azores 60/55

**BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA**

Middlesboro 58/40

Huntsville 56/38

Anniston 56/37

Montgomery 56/37

Lafayette, La. 58/37

**FRIDAY IN EUROPE**

London 59/44

Paris 61/41

Amsterdam 60/40

Rome 60/39

Berlin 60/38

Vienna 60/37

**SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC**

Honolulu 72/68

Guam 82/78

**EXCHANGE RATES**

**Military rates**

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**Interest rates**

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BUT WHO WILL BE STANDING WHEN THE CREDITS ROLL?

PAGES 22-26
Avengers: Endgame’ is a really big deal — for more reasons than you might think

By Michael Cavna
The Washington Post

Thirty years ago, Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige was asked during a relatively small Comic-Con panel whether he could ever see his company’s characters interacting on screen.

“Who knows?” Feige teased. “This is a big new experiment for Marvel. But it’s no coincidence that we have the rights to Iron Man, Hulk, Thor, Cap” — and right then, before he could finish, he was interrupted by the volume of audience gleee and hopeful extrapolation. Fan imaginations leaped ahead at the possibilities.

Feige has cited that as a creative inflection point. It’s a moment that bears remembering when weighing just why “Avengers: Endgame” will mean so much to so many when it arrives in theaters May 2019 — a three-hour culmination of nearly a decade of superhero world-building.

Today, calling it a “big new experiment” can even sound like an understatement when considering how massively Marvel has reshaped the Hollywood blockbuster landscape.

Heading into “Endgame,” the Marvel Cinematic Universe has grossed nearly $19 billion across 21 movies, including four of the 10 biggest movies ever — an unprecedented run with nary a box-office dud.

But for a studio start-up, 2006 was not only a time before Twitter-viral superhero stars and Disney dollars. It also marked the great unknown when, despite the success of the early X-Men and Spider-Man movies, there was no map for just how far out a studio could build an interconnected franchise. James Bond, Star Trek and Star Wars may have kept producing commercially viable sequels for years, but to construct a full latticework of superhero narratives could have looked like a Bifrost Bridge too far.

Feige was wise, though, to start gradually, deliberately putting each character’s individual origin story in place. He first aimed to win over the general public with former B-list hero Iron Man, and hard work met good fortune: Director Jon Favreau and rehabilitated star Robert Downey Jr. caught lightning in a bottle with the 2008 breakout. A flop could have sunk the studio before it was off the ground; instead, the scrappy “Iron Man,” riding high on Downey Jr.’s quick-witted charisma, grossed nearly $600 million on a $140 million production budget.

Piece by piece, Feige continued to forge a connection with mainstream audiences. Louis Leterrier directed 2008’s “The Incredible Hulk” to modest success. And after 2010’s “Iron Man 2” again scored big, 2011 delivered the rock-solid combination of Kenneth Branagh’s “Thor” (nearly $450 million in global gross) and Joe Johnston’s “Captain America: The First Avenger” ($371 million) — with Chris Hemsworth and Chris Evans proving to be winningly convincing in their respective title roles.

At last, Feige could fully implement his big experiment.

With those planks in place, what came next was the most elaborately interconnected game of cinematic Jenga that Hollywood has ever seen.

2012’s “The Avengers” — the first writer-director Joss Whedon’s two outings with the team-em-up franchise — grossed a whopping $1.5 billion worldwide. That was on a scale even beyond Marvel Comics editor Stan Lee’s Tinseltown dreams.

Modern fans care so passionately about “Avengers: Endgame” because they have more than a decade invested in this intricate universe — half of which was ostensibly destroyed in last year’s lead-up film, “Avengers: Infinity War,” in which the villainous Thanos (Josh Brolin) turned so much of this beloved team to dust.

Yet filmmakers know, too, that the cliffhanger had to be a false goodbye — a plot twist that only sets up fans for the real farewells in “Endgame.”

Comic books are famous for their long con: In a world of commercial stuntst, their superheros rarely stay dead.

Yet Feige and his creative team, including “Infinity War”-“Endgame” directors Joe and Anthony Russo, know that, ultimately, some of their superheroes must vanish forever.

Feige likes to quote the line that a necessary part of the journey is the end. He got his start in show business working for the husband-wife production team of Richard Donner and Lauren Shuler Donner, so Feige also saw the “Superman” franchise — launched by director Richard Donner in 1978 — take far too long to mercifully end its journey with Christopher Reeve in the title role.

Reeve was still wearing the cape and tights in 1987’s dismal “Superman IV: The Quest for Peace.”

We know that Chris Evans will hang up his vibrumun shield as Captain America in “Endgame.” We can expect at least one other longtime MCU actor — Downey Jr.? Hemsworth? — not to enter the next big phase at Marvel, as well.

So this is really it. The end of an epic run. We have lived with some of these characters for many hours of screen time. Yet they must make way for a new team, likely led by Captain Marvel (Brie Larson), with Bucky (Sebastian Stan) probably waiting in the wings and prominent heroes from the Black Panther’s Wakanda ready for a return.

The “Iron Man” age will end, surely now or soon, having remade the tentpole terrain. No other studio has been able to replicate this degree of shared-universe success — and there’s no guarantee that Marvel’s next phase will soar just as spectacularly. (Although it certainly will get even more involved, as Disney’s forthcoming streaming service will offer small-screen shows that intersect with Marvel’s film world, involving such “Avengers” characters as Loki, the Falcon and the Winter Soldier, the Scarlet Witch and Vision.)

Even if Marvel’s next super-crow breaks box-office records, there is only one origin story for Marvel Studies. And it publicly began in 2006, when Feige said those words: “Iron Man, Hulk, Thor, Cap.” “Endgame” is an interruption that sets up a lineup change. It is a finish line before a commercial recharge.

Yet it will also be where fans have to unpack some of their memories and leave some of the fallen behind.

Creating the Universe

“Avengers: Endgame” is the 22nd film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, a collection of movies that kicked off in 2008. Since then, Marvel films have earned $18.6 billion at the box office, with the four “Avengers” films accounting for nearly $5 billion of that haul. The following is a recap of how Marvel built its cinematic juggernaut.

**‘Iron Man’**
May 2008
Domestic gross $315.6 million
Worldwide $582 million

**‘The Incredible Hulk’**
June 2008
Domestic gross $312.4 million
Worldwide $623.7 million

**‘Iron Man 2’**
May 2010
Domestic gross $134.8 million
Worldwide $263.3 million

**‘Thor’**
May 2010
Domestic gross $181 million
Worldwide $448.7 million

Source: The Associated Press, Comscore
**WEEKEND: MOVIES**

**Marvel movies you need to see before ‘Endgame’**

*By David Betancourt*

The Washington Post

A majority of the fans flocking to theaters this week to see “Avengers: Endgame” — the final chapter of a decade-long journey — have been along for the entire ride. But just in case you are not one of the die-hard fans that has seen the previous 21 films, we’ll forgive you if you’re only now getting into the mystique machine surrounding this movie. While having seen every film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe will add something to the “Endgame” experience, you can still get a handle for all that’s been going on over the past 10 years with a quick binge of these five essential Marvel Studios movies.

1. **‘The Avengers’**

“The Avengers” marks the merging of Marvel Studios’ solo movie franchises into a successful on-screen team-up. The film features Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, the Hulk, Black Widow, Hawkeye and boss of all bosses Nick Fury, but most importantly, it is the introduction to the villain and weapon these films build toward: Thanos and the Infinity Gauntlet are featured in a quick post-credits scene.

Trailer: [youtube](https://youtu.be/eOrNdBpGMv8)

2. **‘Guardians of the Galaxy’**

This movie takes us to deep space with a team of rebels that includes talking trees and raccoons (Groot and Rocket); a mostly monotone muscle man (Drax); the questionable leadership of half-human, half-something else Star-Lord/Peter Quill; and Gamora, the adoptive daughter of Thanos, who plays a heartbreaking role in the MCU’s Infinity Saga later on. This is the film (along with the first Avengers movie) that connects Earth’s Mightiest Heroes to the growing threat of the infinite cosmos.

Trailer: [youtube](https://youtu.be/2LIQ2-PZBC8)

3. **‘Captain America: Civil War’**

Before you watch the Avengers fight to save the world in “Endgame,” watch them fight each other in “Civil War.” Iron Man and Captain America have never seen eye to eye, but things turn serious after the events of the second Avengers team-up film, “Age of Ultron” (2015), in which the team barely defeats a super-intelligent robotic threat, resulting in the world wanting to govern superheroes. Iron Man agrees with that proposal; Captain America gives everyone the “son, just don’t” face he perfected in “The Avengers,” forcing the superteam to split into warring sides. “Civil War” also introduces the MCU’s version of Spider-Man (Tom Holland), who plays a major role in “Infinity War.”

Trailer: [youtube](https://youtu.be/d96cjJhvlMA)

4. **‘Avengers: Infinity War’**

“Infinity War” is the big one — until “Endgame,” that is. Throughout the MCU, powerful stones have played a role in various plots, which we eventually learn make up the Infinity Gauntlet. Whoever has all the stones in the gauntlet and wields it is all-powerful. And in this Avengers film, Thanos has made contact: with the fully loaded Infinity Gauntlet, with Earth, with the superhero team. He’s convinced the only way the universe can be saved is by destroying half of it; Gamora warns the Avengers that with a full-strength gauntlet, Thanos can do just that with the snap of a finger. An all-out war takes place in the Black Panther’s home of Wakanda, resulting in fallen heroes and setting up the finale in “Endgame.”

Trailer: [youtube](https://youtu.be/Z1BCujX3pw8)

5. **‘Captain Marvel’**

Captain Marvel/Carol Danvers is the first female superhero to lead her own franchise in the MCU. Her origin story takes place in the ’90s during a war between classic Marvel Comics alien races: the Kree (who Captain Marvel is a soldier for) and the shape-shifting Skrulls. The end of that war sees Captain Marvel become the most powerful superhero ever. She is the one hero who can balance the scales in the upcoming fight against Thanos; this film shows you how she became that hero. Side by side with the Avengers, Captain Marvel’s eventual face-to-face meeting with the Mad Titan is one of the most anticipated moments of “Endgame.”

Trailer: [youtube](https://youtu.be/6ZfuNTqbHE8)

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Trailer: [youtube](https://youtu.be/6ZfuNTqbHE8)
The greatest threat in the Marvel Cinematic Universe is Thanos, a powerful warlord who obliterated half of all life in the universe by snapping his fingers. But among the greatest threats to the Marvel Cinematic Universe, in the eyes of those who created it, is anyone who spoils even the smallest of plot details.

That makes the “Avengers: Endgame” footage that leaked last week almost as terrible as that Thanos snap, as far as spoilers go. While they didn’t respond directly to the leak, directors Joe and Anthony Russo tweeted a letter to fans, with the hashtag #DontSpoilTheEndgame, imploring viewers not to give anything away before the movie hits theaters.

“Please know that the two of us, along with everyone involved in Endgame, have worked tirelessly for the last three years with the sole intention of delivering a surprising and emotionally powerful conclusion to the Infinity Saga,” the Russo brothers wrote. “... Remember, Thanos still demands your silence.”

Since launching the MCU more than a decade ago, Marvel has become notorious for going to extreme lengths to keep spoilers at bay, sometimes withholding significant details from actors to keep them from blabbing. The spoiler concern afflicts many plot-heavy projects of a certain stature, such as HBO’s “Game of Thrones,” which reportedly once filmed fake scenes to foil paparazzi circling the set. Secrecy leads to intrigue, which makes the viewing experience more attractive and, therefore, more profitable.

“Endgame” won’t likely be affected much by the leak (especially given the spoiler-averse warnings that quickly swept the internet). Fandango reported that the movie beat a first-day presale record set by fellow Disney property “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” within just six hours, and its opening weekend is expected to rank among the most successful in history, per Fortune. Some domestic box-office estimates for opening weekend near the $280 million mark.

That would top the $257.7 million that “Avengers: Infinity War” made in its first weekend domestically, following a slightly treacherous media tour. Speaking to “Good Morning America” several months before the film’s release, Mark Ruffalo, who plays Bruce Banner, let it slip that “everybody dies.” Don Cheadle, who plays Rhodesy from the “Iron Man” franchise, reacted with wide eyes and a tense, “Du— dude! Dude. Dude.”

“Not everybody, no,” Ruffalo said quickly, his voice tense with palpable fear of Marvel executives’ wrath. “Can we rewind that part?” (The answer was no, apparently.)

Ruffalo had already erred before, accidentally live-streaming part of “Thor: Ragnarok” while at its Los Angeles premiere. Last October, Ruffalo stopped by “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon” and joked about how Cheadle would no longer do interviews with him because of the “Good Morning America” incident. And when Ruffalo swung by the show again last month to promote “Endgame,” he revealed that there’s another castmate he can no longer do media interviews with: Tom Holland, who plays Peter Parker.

“I asked to be paired with him during the press (tour), and they rejected that,” Ruffalo said. “I didn’t even get ‘Holland’ out. It’s like, ‘What about Tom Ho-,’ ‘No! Absolutely not.’ ”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26
Who will survive?

The characters most likely to meet their demise in ‘Endgame’

By Michael Cavna and David Betancourt

The Washington Post

With the fate of our favorite Thanos-battling warriors up in the air in “Avengers: Endgame,” the question over who lives or dies in the fight for Infinity gems has become its own Game of Thrones. Here are our predictions for how 10 major Marvel Cinematic Universe characters might fare. No spoilers here, because we do not know anything yet.

Iron Man

Last seen: Alive.
Odds of surviving “Endgame”: Peril is seriously high, but let at least one Stark father figure live. Because this is the superhero who launched it all for the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) — and because no one tops the rapid-fire charisma of Robert Downey Jr.’s take on Tony Stark — the Russo Brothers will tread with great care here. It is safe to say Downey Jr., 54, will soon turn over the reins of the Marvel icon to a younger star. The mid-credits Spider-Man cameo, perhaps — will come soon. Will it be a mortal farewell? We hope he and Pepper Potts will be allowed to safely fly off into the sunset.

Thor

Last seen: Alive.
Odds of surviving: Code Orange. With so much to do off screen, it is likely his life line — the solo franchise is strong with this one. On the one hand, Chris Hemsworth’s Thor is part of the MCU’s old guard after eight years, and a definite youth movement is afoot. On the other hand, Thor is a god, and “Ragnarok” imbued the character’s franchise with new life. We lean toward Thor surviving, even if his screen time is massively reduced in future team-up movies.

Captain America

Last seen: Alive.
Odds of surviving: Infinity-to-1. Despite surviving the universe-altering Thanos “snap” and co-leading the movement to take the Mad Titan down for good in “Endgame,” Captain America/Steve Rogers (Chris Evans) is high on the list of Avengers who might not survive once the battle is over. Evans is one of the many performers fans will be saying goodbye to, as “Endgame” represents the end of his long contractual run as an actor in the MCU, which gives Marvel Studios a chance to emotionally play with saying goodbye on screen.

We know the Falcon (Anthony Mackie) and the Winter Soldier (Sebastian Stan) will get their own limited series post-Endgame on the Disney+ streaming service. Could that series center on the two Captain America sidekicks deciding who will take on the star-spangled mantle after Cap has fallen in battle? Both characters have replaced Steve as Captain America before in the comics.

Black Panther

Last seen: Dead.
Odds of surviving: Surely you jest.

The Black Panther did not make it to the end of “Avengers: Infinity War,” evaporating into nothing over the Wakandan land he rules over along with several other Avengers in the battle with Thanos. Do not count on him being gone for long. We can only speculate what type of role T’Challa (Chadwick Boseman) will play in “Endgame,” if he is indeed one of the fallen to rise again. But if you think Marvel Studios is done making “Black Panther” movies — after a billion dollars at the box office while being one of the highest grossing films in the world — I have a bridge in Wakanda to sell you.

Gamora

Last seen: Sacrificed and presumably dead.
Odds of surviving: Since she is already “dead,” we are betting it is a long shot that the Infinity Stones may yet turn back in her favor. The inter-dimensional traveling Zoe Saldana has Avatar and Star Trek franchises to get back to. But now that James Gunn has been hired for “Guardians of the Galaxy, Vol. 3,” can we really go on without her? Plus, if her daddy, Thanos (Josh Brolin), is finally defeated in “Endgame,” can’t his sacrifice of Gamora be altered? A fan can hope.

Doctor Strange

Last seen: Disintegrated.
Odds of surviving: Too new to fall — Captain Marvel will need him on her next-phase team. The superhero who foreshadowed 14 million lives possible battle outcomes — with a single chance of victory — must return to help the Avengers mentally navigate that path to beating Thanos. Plus, even though story-time-jumps are easily engineered, Benedict Cumberbatch has announced a “Doctor Strange” franchise release to return to — and an “Endgame” death would cast too great a pall on that follow-up.

Nick Fury

Last seen: Dead. Odds of surviving: We guarantee he will make it through, OK?

In perhaps “Endgame’s” biggest (and only) spoiler, we know Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson), the big boss of the Avengers, will still be giving orders post-“Endgame,” thanks to the “Spider-Man: Far From Home” trailer that sees Fury introducing himself to the MCU Spider-Man (Tom Holland). What do we not know? Who will be receiving those orders. Maybe Fury follows Spider-Man across the pond to help him grieve Tony Stark (which would be a nice twist, since Tony is mourning Peter Parker heading into “Endgame”) and let him know the Avengers Initiative needs him, since everyone did not make it back. But Fury looks as though he will still be around should the Avengers need to assemble again with a new roster.

Thanos

Last seen: Very much alive after eliminating half the universe.
Odds of surviving: Thanos. Must. Fall.

Perhaps the only way to defeat Thanos in “Endgame” is to be lethal. That is a very Avengerish way of doing things, but with the fate of the universe at stake, maybe all methods of victory will be on the table. Marvel Studios will probably want to build toward a new major villain post-“Endgame,” as it heads into its next decade of storytelling, making it unlikely Thanos sees another sunrise after this.

Black Widow

Last seen: Alive.
Odds of surviving: She has suffered too many losses to die on this hill. Cue Gloria Gaynor’s iconic tune.

Scarlett Johansson’s Natasha has had perhaps the most thankless duty for nearly a decade — always a source of support and team rapport, but never the star. Black Widow has well-earned not only a time to shine in “Endgame,” but given the billion-dollar success of “Captain Marvel,” she deserves her own clear path to the stand-alone in the “Black Widow” movie said to be in production.

‘Thor: Ragnarok’

February 2018
Domestic gross $700 million
Worldwide $1.3 billion

‘Black Panther’

November 2018
Domestic gross $351 million
Worldwide $854.2 million

‘Avengers: Infinity War’

April 2018
Domestic gross $679 million
Worldwide $2 billion

‘Ant-Man & The Wasp’

July 2018
Domestic gross $217 million
Worldwide $623 million

‘Captain Marvel’

March 2019
Domestic gross $387 million
Worldwide $1.06 billion

The Washington Post

Friday, April 26, 2019

WEEKEND: MOVIES
‘Endgame’ a fitting send-off for Marvel’s superheros

By Michael O’Sullivan
The Washington Post

I (t’s a single phrase that sums up the guiding principle of the Marvel Cinematic Universe — the unbroken, interdependent series of superhero movies that, with the arrival of “Avengers: Endgame,” now numbers 22 films — it’s this: Hold that thought. (Truth be told, with “Endgame’s” running time of three hours, “hold that bladder” would also apply.)

As the stories unfolded, beginning with “Iron Man” in 2008 and introducing additional characters along the way, it has become increasingly necessary not only to retain details of the labyrinthine plots but to keep a soft spot in your heart for the protagonists, from movie to movie. To be sure, as the MCU evolved, growing into an intergalactic empire, it can be, at times, confusing, a through line has coalesced around a group of familiar objects: six powerful Infinity Stones whose scattered locations have shifted from planet to planet and from person to person, like a cosmic shell game, as the movies came and went.

But it was always the lives of the people on screen that mattered most. As even casual fans will remember, those stones ended up in the wrong hands at the end of “Infinity War.” That 2018 film ended with a cliffhanger in which the villain Thanos (Josh Brolin) snapped his fingers, with cataclysmic results. The movies that, with the arrival of “Avengers: Endgame” earlier this month, per IndieWire, the Russos confirmed that Holland wasn’t even given a full script.

“Tom Holland gets his lines and that’s it,” Joe Russo said. “He doesn’t even know who he’s acting opposite of. We’ll just use words of endearment to describe to him what is happening in the scene, because he had a very difficult time keeping his mouth shut.” (Holland had first mentioned this last year at an ACE Comic-Con event in Phoenix: “So I’m just standing there punching the air for 15 minutes,” he reportedly said, “and when I took the job I didn’t think that’s what I’d be doing. I’ve gotten used to it now.”)

Ruffalo’s and Holland’s loose lips have become a running joke among Avengers fans, but the studio isn’t willing to take chances with anyone else, either. Not one out of five cast members — Holland; Robert Downey Jr., who plays Tony Stark; Zoe Saldana, who plays Gamora; Paul Bettany, who plays Vision; and Tom Klementies, who plays Mantis — whom Jimmy Kimmel interviewed ahead of “Infinity War” had seen the final cut of the film before speaking to him. “We barely read the script,” Saldana said. Bettany admitted that he had read a fake script.

Downey did get to read the full script, however, as he and Chris Evans, who played Steve Rogers for eight years, are veteran Avengers and apparently trusted the most. (Ruffalo said he got paired with Evans after his request to do media interviews with Holland was denied.) Evans confirmed last year that he will retire from playing Captain America after “Endgame,” prompting rumors of the character’s death. He gets asked about this quite often and, usually, masterfully deflects.

But even Captain America slips. In a recent Hollywood Reporter cover story, Evans joked that Steve dies “by Tony’s hand” in “Endgame.” More seriously, he said he couldn’t “believe they even cut a trailer.”

“But so much of it is a visual spoiler. You’ll see. A lot of the characters have...” he said, cutting himself off by covering his mouth. “Probably shouldn’t have even said that.”

What others are saying

Generous in humor, spirit and sentimentality, Anthony and Joe Russo’s “Endgame” is a surprisingly full feast of blockbuster-making that, through some time-traveling magic, looks back nostalgically at Marvel’s decade of world domination. This is the Marvel movie working at high gear, in full control of its myth-making powers and uncovering more emotion in its fictional cosmos than ever before.

— Jake Coyle/AP

The filmmakers and corporations involved have painted critics into a corner with this one, with their spoiler pledges and slavish devotion to The Fans. Should I even share what I really think about “Endgame” — that it’s a dull, reheated hash of stale humor, over-the-top portentousness, swirled in a blender of gray CGI with enough endings and bittersweet goodbyes to rival “Lord of the Rings: Return of the King” — and risk backlash from fans? Everyone has my blessing to enjoy this and have fun. What’s truly interesting about this culminating achievement is they seem to have finally engineered the first critic-proof movie.

— Katie Walsh/TNS

“Endgame” will get more than a few moviegoers misty-eyed, though even they might find themselves admitting a few cold, hard truths. Namely, that actors get older, that characters run their course and that every franchise must either move forward or stagnate. As one of the most beloved Avengers puts it: “Everything’s going to work exactly the way it’s supposed to.”

— Rater Guzman/Newday

have grown up with the MCU, the films themselves have also grown more complex, like a fine wine. So how do Cap and the gang mean to fix things? If you remember last year’s “Ant-Man and the Wasp,” that film ended with Paul Rudd’s shrinkable Ant-Man trapped in the Quantum Realm, a subatomic state where the laws of space and time don’t apply. Well, Ant-Man is back, and he’s brought with him an idea for what he calls a “time heist,” combining two of filmmom’s most wildly entertaining genres: time travel and the crime caper. The details of the plan should not be spelled out, but they entail our heroes revisiting destinations that will be familiar from earlier films — New York, the Norse celestial plane of Asgard and the planets Morag and Vormir — as well as the action of those films themselves, including “Thor: The Dark World” and “The Avengers.”

In a sense, “Endgame” is an example of the MCU cannibalizing itself, but it has always been so. And it does so in a fresh way that is closer to homage than lazy appropriation. These affectionate flashbacks also serve as a tip of the hat to all the loyal fans who have been there from the beginning.

As far as the stakes are in “Endgame,” it is also a very funny film. The humor of the story has to do with the characters’ journey, and the fact that they seem to have finally engineered a time-traveling movie that is back, and they’re brought with him an idea for what he calls a “time heist,” combining two of filmmom’s most wildly entertaining genres: time travel and the crime caper. The details of the plan should not be spelled out, but they entail our heroes revisiting destinations that will be familiar from earlier films — New York, the Norse celestial plane of Asgard and the planets Morag and Vormir — as well as the action of those films themselves, including “Thor: The Dark World” and “The Avengers.”

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Just for kicks

Catch an Arsenal match and explore London football club’s history at Emirates Stadium

By Gregory Broome
Stars and Stripes

There are so many worthy ways to spend one’s time in London that a tour of a soccer stadium might not rank high on many visitors’ lists. But a walk through one of the 20-odd such facilities dotting the city and its surrounding region offers a valuable insight into an essential part of British culture.

Emirates Stadium, home of the Premier League club Arsenal, isn’t the largest of its kind in London; that honor goes to the better-known Wembley Stadium. And it’s certainly not the oldest, having just been completed in 2006. But in its fusion of the historic and the modern, in the way it dominates a neighborhood while also attempting to embed into it, Emirates Stadium is perhaps the quintessential London football stadium.

For reasons too complicated to fully explore in this space, Arsenal moved on from its historic home, Highbury, in the late 1990s and selected a nearby tract of industrial land on which to build a larger, more lucrative replacement. Emirates, the Dubai-based airline, purchased sponsorship rights to the stadium and the team’s uniforms. But the sophisticated new building was too sterile for many passionate Arsenal supporters, and the club sought to appease those fans with a project known as “Arsenalization.”

The results of that effort are unmistakable. The massive structure is wrapped in soaring murals of Arsenal players arranged with their arms around each other, symbolically encircling the monolithic building in the club’s storied history. Arsenal legends are captured mid-kick in statues arranged around the stadium. Inside, a section of seats on the lower bowl are painted to present an image of the club’s iconic cannon insignia.

The tour of the stadium, self-guided with the aid of a tablet-like device and headphones presented at entry, immerses visitors even deeper into the club’s world. The path winds through behind-the-scenes sites like the locker rooms, training facilities and the tunnel leading to the field. One can spend time in the opulent environs offered to the team’s executives and distinguished visitors, then occupy the same field-level chairs that host the Arsenal coaches and players on match days.

All told, it’s an unforgettable experience not just for the devoted soccer fan, but for any visitor looking for a new angle from which to view London.

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ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS
Located at Homsey Road in northern London. There’s an Arsenal stop on the Piccadilly line of the Underground just a short walk from the stadium.

TIMES
Tours run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays, 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sundays. Those times are subject to change due to events at the stadium, particularly soccer games.

COSTS
Purchased in advance online at arsenal.com, adults pay 25 pounds ($32.65), students and senior citizens pay 20 pounds and children from five to 15 pay 16 pounds.

FOOD
There’s a small concession stand just outside the stadium, and lots of dining options in the surrounding area.

INFORMATION
Arsenal gear is not required, but seems to be strongly encouraged; they’ll happily sell you some in the gift shop if you come unprepared.

— Gregory Broome

A self-guided, electronics-assisted tour of Emirates Stadium immerses visitors in the imagery and history of Arsenal football club.
Humble, charming little Wales is a land of lusty men’s choirs, salty harbors, slate-roofed villages, stunning mountains and stout castles. For many travelers, these mighty castles alone are reason enough to visit, and Wales is slathered with them. During the late 13th and early 14th centuries, English King Edward I started building these awe-inspiring fortresses — arguably the most breathtaking you’ll find anywhere in Europe — to subdue the rebellious Welsh. These castles were masterpieces of medieval engineering, built with state-of-the-art castle technology, with sea access to restock from England.

In the Middle Ages, the standard castle was a simple stone building (“keep”) on a hill (“motte”), surrounded by a wall that enclosed a yard (or “bailey”) where the people lived. This mound-and-yard (“motte-and-bailey”) pattern was the basis of the typical medieval village. Later castles were much bigger, with more rings of walls as much as 20 feet thick, once whitewashed and attached to the surrounding flags flying high. Outside the wall was the moat, a ditch occasionally filled with water (they put alligators in them only in fairy tales). Edward I’s castles were English islands in the middle of angry Wales. Most were built with a fortified grid-plan village attached and then filled with English settlers.

If you want to visit some Welsh castle towns but don’t have time for the whole region, head for North Wales, where my preferred home base is the town of Conwy. Built in 1280 by Edward I to hold in Wales, it also served as a busy port, back when much of England was roofed with Welsh slate. Today it boasts the best medieval walls in Britain, a protective castle dramatically situated on a rock overlooking the sea, and an appealing harbortown that locals treat like a town square.

While Conwy oozes with Welsh charm, the most famous Welsh fortress is half an hour’s drive away at Caernarfon Castle, where the last two Princes of Wales were invested. (An “investiture” is a royal ceremony similar to a coronation. Prince Charles had his in 1969.) Like Conwy, Caernarfon is an Edward I garrison town — the city still follows the original medieval grid plan laid within its well-preserved ramparts. Modeled after the striped, angular walls of ancient Constantinople, the castle, though impressive, was never finished and never really used. Despite its unfinished state, it’s fun to climb around, especially its huge Eagle Tower.

While the castle is late 13th century, Caernarfon is mostly a 19th-century restoration. At that time, the most important place in town was the area that sprawls below the castle (now a parking lot). This was once a booming slate port, shipping tidy bundles of slate from North Wales mining towns to ports all over Europe. While the slate trade is gone, Caernarfon still bustles with shops, cafes and people, making this pleasant town worth a wander.

For one of Britain’s most romantic castles, visit the romantic little village of Beaumaris on the Isle of Anglesey, about a 30-minute drive northeast from Caernarfon. Beaumaris originated, like other castle towns, as an English “green zone” in the 13th century, surrounded by Welsh guerrillas. Today, it feels genuinely Welsh, with a fine harbortown, lots of colorful shops and eateries, a fascinating Victorian prison (now a museum), and the remains of an idyllic castle.

The site has no natural geological constraints like those that encumbered the castle designers at Caernarfon and Conwy, so its wall-within-a-wall design is almost perfectly concentric. While Beaumaris shows medieval castle engineering at its best — four rings of defense, a moat and a fortified dock — problems in Scotland changed the king’s priorities before his vision could be completed. Construction stopped by 1330, and today it looks ruined (and rather squat) — but it was never ransacked or destroyed; it’s simply unfinished.

The site was overgrown until the last century, when it was cleaned up to create a park-like space, with pristine lawns and a classic moat. Because it’s harder to get here, it’s less crowded, making your visit feel more authentic.

Rick Steves’ Europe travel guides and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.
Freeze-dried fruit gives concentrated flavor boost

BY BECKY KRYSTAL
The Washington Post

Remember when I first tasted freeze-dried fruit. It was sometime in the mid-2000s, I had just graduated from college, moved into my first apartment and was doing all kinds of grown-up things. Like picking out cereal. For one reason or another, I snagged a box of Berry Burst Cheeriess. I dug in and popped one of the dehydrated-looking strawberries — I don’t even think I knew they were called freeze-dried — into my mouth. It was still dry and not soggy because I’m a freak who refuses to put milk over my cereal and drinks it separately from a glass instead. Anyway, as the emoji says these days, mind blown. The fruit basically rehydrated and melted in my mouth and was so concentrated in sweet and tart flavors that I almost didn’t know what hit me.

From there, my love of freeze-dried fruit grew and took me to new heights — like Berry Burst Triple Berry Cheeries. Since those early, steady days, I’ve seen its availability and variety skyrocket, from natural foods stores all the way down to supermarkets (my local Safeway), smaller grocery stores (Trader Joe’s) and even the big-box stops (Target). Lately I’ve spied a Carmen Miranda fruit hat’s worth of options: Apples, grapes, bananas, mango, pine-apple, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries and cherries.

But first, a bit of science. According to “The New Food Lover’s Companion” by Sharon Tyler Herbst, freeze-drying is also known as lyophilization. First, food is frozen and then subjected to a vacuum, allowing the ice to vapor. That means what’s left behind retains more of its original shape and contributes to all those excellent air pockets that cause that melt-in-your-mouth texture. Of course, the process means freeze-dried fruit is especially susceptible to losing its crisp texture when exposed to air and therefore moisture, which is why it’s often packaged with packets of drying agents and why you want to make sure to keep it in a well-sealed container. Even sealed freeze-dried fruit will eventually go soft, so be sure to use it sooner rather than later, which is not hard to do considering how easy it is to polish off a bag in a single sitting.

I fully endorse eating as much freeze-dried fruit out of hand as you want, but here are a few more ideas for taking advantage of this handy ingredient.

In frostings and whipped cream. Incorporating freeze-dried fruit in your dessert decoration is a twoflower, because you get both color and flavor. Unlike fresh fruit, the freeze-dried stuff won’t add liquid to your buttercream or whipped cream. Simply crumble the fruit into a fine powder (you can combine it with a bit of granulated sugar) in your food processor and stir it into your adornment of choice. Just be sure to remove that inedible drying packet, and yes, I speak from experience.

You might want to cover the bowl with a towel because dust tends to escape as the machine works.

For rolling. Keep that food processor out, because you can also use ground freeze-dried fruit for dipping truffles, of the cake or chocolate variety.

In meringues. No need to fear this magical combination of egg whites and sugar! It’s easier to make than you probably think. You have to be careful about what ingredients you add so as not to throw off the balance too much, but a few tablespoons of ground freeze-dried fruit will lend your meringues a gelatinous edge and flavor.

As a crunchy garnish. Chopped up into bits or even whole, freeze-dried fruit looks lovely on top of almost any dessert. Just keep in mind that it will go soft and chewy, so if you plan on storing the treats for an extended period before serving, you might want to hold off on the garnish until the last minute.

Freeze-dried fruit will also add pizzazz to a chocolate bark.

Mix into baked goods. You can use freeze-dried fruit inside of baked goods where you’d otherwise think about traditionally dried or even fresh fruit. Again, the bonus: No added moisture to mess with your better. Plus, they’ll pump a little and be pleasantly chewy after baking. So go ahead and stir them into your favorite muffin, scone, oatmeal and not soggy because I’m a freak who refuses to put milk over my cereal and drinks it separately from a glass instead. Anyway, as the emoji says these days, mind blown. The fruit basically rehydrated and melted in my mouth and was so concentrated in sweet and tart flavors that I almost didn’t know what hit me.

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Bastian Heuser swirls the snifter of deep amber whiskey before taking a sip, noting its sweet caramel flavor that soon opens up with hints of spices, nuts and dried fruits.

It’s not a single malt from a verdant Scottish glen, nor a sour mash from the hills of Tennessee. This is an award-winning German rye whiskey produced by the tiny Spreewood Distillery, nestled in a small town among the fields and forests of Brandenburg about an hour from Berlin.

German whiskey is little known outside the country, and the industry is still tiny compared with others, but isn’t unaffected by major international issues, with distillers seeing both opportunities and dangers with Britain’s decision to leave the European Union and Europe’s trade spat with the U.S. over new tariffs.

Both issues may seem far away from the Spreewood Distillery, established in refurbished farm buildings in the town of Schlepzig, home to about 600 people, where the emphasis is on a small, craft product created from locally sourced ingredients.

“From grain to glass, we do it all here,” Heuser says at the distillery he has run with his two partners since 2016. “The only thing we don’t have is our own field of rye, but maybe that will come.”

More and more micro operations like Spreewood have been opening up in recent years, focusing on small batches of quality whiskey. Nobody quite knows when it happened, but today distilleries producing whiskey in Germany outnumber those in Scotland, about 180 to 130.

“It’s crazy how many German whiskey distilleries there are these days,” German Whisky Distillers’ Association president Michaela Habbel says. “Of course the fact still is that German whiskey only accounts for 0.4 percent of the world market.”

In 2017, the entire German whiskey production was worth $13.1 million — negligible when compared with Scotch whisky exports alone that year, worth some $5.8 billion.

With such a small overall production of about 1.6 million gallons in 2017, German whiskey is mostly sold on the domestic market. But that doesn’t mean that distillers like Heuser and Habbel aren’t watching international politics, with whiskey featuring prominently in two major current issues — Brexit and U.S. President Donald Trump’s protectionist tariffs.

With 90 percent of Scotch whisky exported, accounting for 20 percent of all British food and beverage exports, the Scotch Whisky Association is increasingly concerned about Britain’s looming Brexit exit from the European Union, especially if there is no deal on future trade relations.

“Brexit represents a seismic shift for our industry and one which our members are working hard to plan and adjust for,” the association says, noting that the EU is the single most valuable market for Scotch.

Across the Atlantic, when Trump imposed tariffs on European steel and aluminum, the EU retaliated last year targeting “typically American” products, including Harley-Davidson motorcycles and bourbon whiskey.

With duties looming for Scotch and already on bourbon, Habbel sees opportunity for German distillers.

“Maybe the consumer who has always drunk Scotch will look over to the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31
distillery next door and turn to
the German product,” she says.
But if the whiskey tariffs turn
into a long-term issue, Heuser
says it would be to nobody’s
benefit.
Right now, Spreewood only
exports small quantities of whis-
key to Britain. But it’s hoping
to increase that, and is eyeing
possible exports to the U.S. down
the road.
“The U.K. is a very important
whiskey market, especially to
launch brands, because they’re
just very open toward it,” says
Heuser. “And the U.S. is a huge
market, especially for whiskey.”
Despite being sold mostly do-
merically, German whiskeys are
gaining international recogni-
tion. In 2017, a single malt from
Habbel’s Hillock Park Distillery
won double gold and was named
the best whiskey in the world by
the “World Spirits Award.”
Hillock Park is one of the old-
est German distilleries produc-
ing whiskey today. The business
grew out of the distillery’s pro-
duction of “korn” liquor — basic-
ly moonshine — to provide the
daily 200-milliliter (about seven-
ounce) ration for coal miners in
the industrial Ruhr region.
“There used to be a really
crazy korn culture in Germany
years ago,” Habbel says. “And
korn is nothing more than an
un-aged whiskey with somewhat
less alcohol.”
Whiskey can be made from
many different grains, and has
to be aged at least three years in
either oak casks that have previ-
ously been used to mature other
liquor, or virgin oak casks.
Malt whiskey is made from
malted barley and can only be
called Scotch if produced in
Scotland, according to EU regu-
lations, and is predominantly
matured in used oak casks. The
German product is known as
single malt. Bourbon must con-
tain at least 51 percent corn, and
rye whiskey predominantly rye
grain. Both are typically aged in
virgin oak barrels.
Whiskey has been grow-
ning slowly in market share as
Germans move away from more
traditional liquors like korn and
fruit brandy, and now makes up
about 10 percent of the market,
according to the Association of
the German Spirit Industry and
Importers.
German distillers tend to focus on
using the raw ingredients
readily available in the area,
making whiskey from rye, wheat,
spelt and other grains, Habbel
says.
“I don’t think there’s such a
thing as a ‘German whiskey,’” she
said. “The distillers are par-
ticularly proud that in Germany
there is tons of diversity.”
When Heuser took over Spree-
wood in 2016 with his partners, it
was producing brandy and other
liquors as well as small batches
of whiskey.
The three decided to become
Germany’s first distillery to con-
centrate solely on rye whiskey.
“If you focus on one thing you
can be really good at it,” Heuser
said.
The whiskey is aged in three
different types of oak barrels,
which are combined at the end
of the aging process for a unique
flavor that garnered it several
awards and a recent “brilliant”
rating in Jim Murray’s authori-
tative Whisky Bible.
No need for stoplights on Caribbean isle of Nevis, best known as the birthplace of Alexander Hamilton

BY PATTI NICKELL
Lexington Herald-Leader

Those who have seen the play or listened to the soundtrack of "Hamilton" remember the opening song whose lyrics ask, "How does the bastard son of a whore and a Scotsman, dropped in the middle of a forgotten spot in the Caribbean" grow up to be...well, Alexander Hamilton? I don’t know, however, I do know that the forgotten spot in the Caribbean is Nevis, located in the northern part of the Caribbean’s Lesser Antilles archipelago, just southeast of Puerto Rico and west of Antigua.

It was here that the boy with the inauspicious beginning who grew up to be one of the Founding Fathers of the United States and central figure of the American $10 bill only charges $5 for admission. The latter two—located not on the beach but against the green backdrop of the mountains—are especially picturesque. Stand on the veranda with a cool lemonade in hand and gaze at the lush landscape surrounding you and the shimmering sea far below. While the temptation on Nevis is to do a whole lot of nothing (those beaches are blessedly uncrowded), if you do want something more strenuous than turning over in your bed, there is a world-class hike to the top of Nevis Peak, a dormant volcano.

Despite its miniscule size, there’s plenty to see and do on Nevis. Just remember one thing—“Go ahead and rush...but do it slowly.”
Destination divorce parties are a new Las Vegas trend

BY SARAH FIRSHEIN
Bloomberg

In October 2015, Ariel Khawaja traveled to Cozumel, Mexico, to say “I do” before a group of 55 wedding guests.

Three years later, she corralled her two best friends to stand beside her in Las Vegas as she said two other magic words: “I don’t.”

Anchoring the trip around a Drake concert, the 28-year-old, who works in real estate, filled her week with gambling, clubbing and otherwise recharging.

“Las Vegas is fun all the time, but when you’re there for your divorce, you’re really free,” says Khawaja, who lives in Houston. “When you’re there celebrating such a big change, you live in the moment and you’re not worried about what happened yesterday. I didn’t pay to have a pity party — I wanted to relax and enjoy time with my friends after the hell I had been through.”

If the Hangover film franchise cemented Las Vegas’s reputation as the ultimate bachelor-party town, Khawaja and other fun-loving travelers are helping establish it as the opposite: the perfect destination for a divorce party. Often an exultant multiday escapade, these vacations celebrate — not mourn — the ending of a marriage. And in a city versed in over-the-top hospitality, venues are finding creative ways to help divorced men and women embrace their new relationship status.

Although the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCPA) doesn’t actively track divorce-party figures, it also doesn’t shy away from the issue, and seasoned Vegas hospitality vets have seen the festivities firsthand.

Adam Clough first heard about the concept 10 years ago but says it’s taken off more recently. He once helped a guest fete his divorce in the company of his former groomsmen.

“People started telling us that they want a fresh start,” says Clough, the executive director of social sales and concierge operations for MGM Resorts, which has 12 properties along the Strip. “At first we thought, Well this is different. But people come to Vegas for celebrations, and people come for devastating events, so in a way it makes sense.”

Pretending the moniker “girls’ trip” or “friends’ trip,” Julie Banning, a travel adviser at the Virtuoso-affiliated Embark, has seen the trend rise in the past year or so. “We’ve seen a lot of people finding any excuse to travel,” says Banning, who’s planned several such parties, mostly for straight women. “It used to be that you go on your honeymoon. Now you go on a mini-moon before you go on your honeymoon. This is like one of those milestone trips — like, ‘OK, guess I’m going to take my divorce trip now.’”

A few years ago, when Las Vegas concierge operations for MGM Resorts International, which organizes dining, nightlife, and entertainment itineraries for tourists ready to get their party on — she purposely avoided the word “bachelorette.” To meet the rising demand for divorce parties, now about 10 percent of her business, she went with Vegas Girls Night Out (VGNO).

“When you’re having a divorce party, you don’t have to worry about anybody else. There’s no guilt there. There’s nobody to answer to at home.”

Bri Steck CEO of Vegas Girls Night Out

native Bri Steck was deciding what to call her then-fledgling concierge company — which organizes dining, nightlife, and entertainment itineraries for tourists ready to get their party on — she purposely avoided the word “bachelorette.” To meet the rising demand for divorce parties, now about 10 percent of her business, she went with Vegas Girls Night Out (VGNO).

“I know bachelorettes get crazy, but it’s only to an extent because they’re getting ready to spend the rest of their life with somebody,” says Steck. “When you’re having a divorce party, you don’t have to worry about anybody else. There’s no guilt there. There’s nobody to answer to at home.”

There’s nobody to answer to at home.”

Banning says a group of friends celebrating a divorce might be a bit older — and more financially solvent — than a gaggle of future bridesmaids. That means cocktails at an exclusive speak-easy instead of Jell-O shots, and shelling out for capacious accommodations instead of cramming 10 people into one hotel room. Some venues have fully embraced their only-in-Vegas-ness by marketing specifically to the divorce-party crowd.

At Chippendales, the Divorce play (from $149 a person), often booked not by the divorcee herself but by a close friend, pulls some of the all-male revue’s signature perks — limo transfer, VIP seating and shout-outs from the stage — into a tidy package.

The confident, sexed-up atmosphere drives home another unalienable truth: Las Vegas is one of the best places on Earth to be single.

“There aren’t a lot of other places in the world where it doesn’t matter how old you are, you’re going to get hit on, and somebody’s going to make you feel special,” says Banning. “And that’s therapeutic, because you come back from the trip and you’re like, ‘I may be divorced, but I’ve got this.’”

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NFL great Manning goes deep with pass at league’s storied history

BY BARRY WILNER
Associated Press

Just as he had the true touch when he threw passes, set records and won two Super Bowls, Peyton Manning has the right approach when looking at some of the NFL’s greatest moments.

ESPN, NFL Films and the league itself clearly felt that way. Manning, a lock for the Pro Football Hall of Fame when he becomes eligible in 2021, is hosting and serving as an executive producer for “Peyton’s Places,” a five-part, 30-episode series celebrating the NFL’s 100th season.

The show debuts on ESPN+ in July, with ESPN and ABC airing special compilations.

For the quarterback, it was a labor of love, a journey into pro football’s past that was educational, humorous and heartfelt.

“The fun of the series is accompanied by a reverence for the history of his sport. Such highlights include chatting with Jim Brown about his career — in football and lacrosse and acting. Or researching the role of Bert Bell, the league’s second commissioner who created the draft, scheduled games for Sundays — college football, more popular in those days, owned Saturdays — and insisted on blackouts when television became a factor.

Bell and Nixon likely wouldn’t have gotten along. Nixon was so annoyed he couldn’t watch the Redskins’ home games from the White House during his 1969-74 administration that he asked NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle to lift the blackouts. “Rozelle refused, saying it would hurt attendance,” Manning says. “So, basically, Nixon got Congress to pass a law to end the blackouts. He called it one of the greatest achievements of his administration, and that shows you how important it was to people who wanted to watch their teams. And still is.”
By Christopher Byrd
Special to The Washington Post

I’m not a fan of the music in Yoshi’s Crafted World. I find it to be a gaudy impersonation of circus music and old toy store commercials. Its beat-you-over-the-head whimsy worms itself into the brain in a way I find most unpleasant ... Ugh! I’d like nothing more than for the remainder of this review to be as negative as the first few sentences, but honestly I don’t have anything else to pick on because the rest of this game is relentlessly sunny (in a good way).

Yoshi’s Crafted World is capital “C” cute. It’s a confection of brightly colored levels ordered around different gameplay concepts. Recently, I played a bit of it with an old college friend. I was hardly surprised when he wondered aloud if his 5-year-old daughter might like it. I imagine the developers intended for him to pose that very question because Crafted World seems designed to win over children and young-at-heart adults.

Most levels feature some quirky gameplay idea, whether it’s Yoshi guiding an inflatable plane or donning a dinosaur skull and crashing through walls.

The storyline is about as breezy as you’d expect for a game about a dinosaur that gobbles enemies and converts them into (throwable) eggs, which pop from his backside. According to lore, the Stone, which rests atop the highest spot on the island, is capable of transforming dreams into reality. Though a group of multicolored yoshis do their best to prevent the villainous turtles from making off with it, five of the Stone’s encrusted jewels (otherwise known as Dreamstones) are dislodged in the struggle and spread across the island. So naturally it’s up to Yoshi — or, if you’re playing the game with another player, the Yoshis — to try to recover them.

Similar to Good Feel’s previous games, Kirby’s Epic Yarn and Yoshi’s Woolly World, Crafted World embraces a handmade crafts aesthetic that beautifies the mundane. Egg cartons, red plastic cups, unfolded paper clips and tin cans all make for eye-catching background elements. This aesthetic carries over to some of the creatures in the game. There are fish that resemble cardboard cutouts, a snake that looks as if it’s made of accordion paper, and my favorite, a boss that is composed of a train crossed with a box-shaped gator: a gator train.

Depending on how you play it, Yoshi’s Crafted World can be either easy or moderately challenging. Distributed throughout each level are Smiley Flowers, some of which are much less conspicuous than others. Certain levels have challenges attached to them as well. On Go-Go Yoshi, you can pilot a large toy Yoshi that sports Jerry-rigged boxing gloves and punch your way through toy houses, cars and balloon-riding Shy Guys looking to make a quick exit. Throw 9,000 points worth of precise punches and you’ll win three flowers. (I’m still working on it.)

Or take out 75 moles on the stage Monty-Mole-B-Gone for another three Smiley Flowers. Flowers are used to appease gatekeepers that dot the island. So, while it might be easy to breeze through much of the game and gather whatever flowers you come across, eventually those gatekeepers will bottleneck your progress if you’re not hoovering up a sizable number of flowers on each level.

Yoshi’s Crafted World is, well, adorable. An adult should recognize that nothing this endearing can be accomplished without a lot of top-notch work.

Platform: Nintendo Switch
Online: yoshiscraftedworld.nintendo.com

Photos courtesy of Nintendo

More game reviews at stripes.com/games
Alt-rockers finally sound uncaged

The new Cage the Elephant album begins with a spacy, otherworldly hum that’s interrupted by throbbing, insistant knocking. That leads to some machine-gun drumming and, as if a door has been opened, an infectious, high-tempo post-punk glmn tune comes on. It’s the sound of Cage the Elephant finally uncaged.

After taking a detour into fuzzy guitars, tambourines and a ’60s vibe with 2015’s "Tell Me I’m Pretty," the Kentucky alternative rockers have put out arguably their best collection of songs with "Social Cues."

The band’s sound seems more genuine, their strut into personal disorder authentic. Singer Matt Shultz punctuates the opening song, "Broken Roy," with the occa-sional slurry, cocky "Yeah!" Confidence runs throughout this assured album as if the band has finally found a hard-fought consistency.

Their last album was produced by Dan Auerbach, who seemed to make the band bend toward his sound. "Social Cues" is produced by John Hill, who has let the band explore and play and really just breathe. The music is bouncy and filled with swagger, even as the lyrics reveal trauma.

Broken love is a prominent theme, the product of Shultz’s marriage cracking up and lyrics return to infidelity ("unfaithful friend" and "you sound shifty"). The super-urb first single, "Ready to Let Go," brings us into a raw moment when a vacation between lovers breaks apart and the singer is "trying to hide this damage done." Shultz isn’t angry as much as sorry in the gloomy "What I’m Becoming," singing "I’m so sorry, honey / For what I’m becoming."

The album isn’t completely devoid of hope. "Let the love light guide me home," Shultz sings on the melancholy "Skin and Bones." There’s fatigue in "The War Is Over," but he acknowledges there was "love on both sides."

The band does veer over the cliff with the overindulgent "Love’s the Only Way," but teams up with Beck for the truly ter-rific, driving "Night Running." The super title track also is a raw picture of insecurity: "Hide me in the back room / Tell me when it’s over / Don’t know if I can play this part much longer."

The album ends with "Goodbye," one of the saddest and most tender breakup songs ever recorded: "I won’t cry / Lord knows how hard we tried," Shultz sings. His heart might be broken but, thanks to this new album, you’ll fall in love all over again with this band.

— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press
It’s ‘college reveal’ season for teens raised on social media

By KAREN D’SOUZA
The Mercury News

Nicole Bacon was so thrilled to get accepted to Oakland’s Mills College that she joined Instagram to spread the news. Like many of her peers, she brought social-media savvy to her “college reveal,” posting a “Lord of the Rings”-themed selfie featuring a Mills T-shirt, a registration packet, a “one ring” pendant and a wish for “epic quests” with hundreds of their closest friends. College reveals tend to peak on May 1, the day which is National College Decision Day, although some parents think families might be lower-key this year in the wake of the college admissions cheating scandal.

“People might be more discreet,” notes Nancy Fong, of San Jose, whose son Chris made his college reveal on social media last year. “No one seems to be crowing anything from the rooftops this year.”

College reveals are as varied as the students themselves, from the simple to the brush. Some seniors just update their Facebook status. Others shoot videos complete with tricked-out cake pops, hand-made flags and balloons to add pizzazz to their announcement.

“These kids have come of age with social media. That’s where they go for validation,” says Sara Harberson, a Pennsylvania-based college admissions counselor with a lot of Bay Area clients, “and that goes for moms, too. A lot of the college reveals I see are done by mothers. You post when your kid is potty-trained, and you post when they get into Harvard.”

Some say the trend first popped up on YouTube in 2016, when Chicago vlogger Taiylar Ball posted a video of her college reveal party. Since then, social media has been a buzz about college reveals. Among the most popular is Emma Monden’s video of her college reveal party. Since then, her friends have gone on to shoot videos complete with tricked-out cake pops, hand-made flags and balloons to add pizzazz to their announcement.

The Mophie juice pack for Palm phone ($39.95) provides a 900mAh integrated battery for up to 13 hours of total use time. It’s made with a slim and lightweight design for everyday use. It’s only a battery, but it’s so simple, so basic, so easy to use and requires no setup. And the most important aspect is the usefulness 24/7/365.

The rugged, tough polycarbonate shell provides impact protection from drops and falls, and edge-to-edge protection and raised corners to help protect the Palm phone screen from scratches. The juice pack is available for many other iPhone and Android models; just check the Mophie site for a complete list.

Portable USB charging batteries are commonplace these days, so they must have a specific feature to stand out, and that’s just what the Mophie power station keychain ($39.95) has. It’s one thing to have a battery charged and ready for use, but finding it along with a corresponding charging cable always seems to be a chore.

The lightweight, pocket-size portable battery (3.15-by-1.5-by-0.6 inches, 2.1 oz) features Bluetooth pairing (up to 8 devices), battery charging, a 3.5 mm aux input for a wired connection, 4 mm omnidirectional microphone, pause, play, and volume are all done on the outside of the earbuds.

Online: mophie.com/shop/ juice-pack-palm

BY GEOFF ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

When I attend the Consumer Electronics Show every January, I try out an endless number of products scheduled to be released in the coming year. Note: when I say scheduled, sometimes they hit the market soon; other times, they don’t. Jabra is a company that I’ve known and respected for years, so when they show me a headset with impressive sound and tell me I’ll get my hands on it within a week, I would bet the ranch it will happen. You get that from an established company producing great products year after year.

The Jabra Move Style Edition wireless (Bluetooth) headphones gave me great sound on the trade show floor and accompanying sound rooms. But nothing compares to taking them on a weekend test drive, which revealed feature after impressive feature.

The lightweight (5.59 oz.) and portable on-ear headphones have a padded adjustable and flexible headband connecting padded ear cups housing 40mm dynamic speakers. Having them on for hours while flying cross country showed me right there how comfortable they are since I didn’t remove them until I landed.

“Since I listened that long, obviously the sound must be as good. Crisp and clean at any volume, these are an excellent choice. The rechargeable battery life keeps the music in your ears for about 14 hours or 12 days of standby time.

And with all of these features, it’s nice to see a solid, great-sounding headset from a major player in the consumer headset industry. Priced at just $99.99, they are a bargain compared to many similar brands.

The Jabra Move Style Edition (Blue-titanium black in gold beige, navy blue and titanium black) are since I didn’t remove them until I landed.

When you put a college reveal out there, you have to know you are opening yourself up to the haters and the trolls.”
McEwan and the robot revolution

‘Atonement’ author’s novel poses the question: Will there be any room left for us humans?

By Ron Charles
The Washington Post

Half a century ago, Philip K. Dick asked, “Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?” and now Ian McEwan is sure those androids are pulling the wool over our eyes.

His new novel, "Machines Like Me," takes place in England in the 1980s, but it’s an uncanny variation of the past we remember. Just the slightest fluctuations have altered the vectors of history. England lost the Falklands War. Unemployment is at Depression-era levels. Perhaps most significantly, in McEwan’s retelling, Alan Turing died by committing suicide after the British government convicted him of gross indecency.

Instead, the brilliant mathematician rejected the offer of chemical castration and went to prison, where, in blissful solitude, he laid down the theoretical principles that have enabled the creation of remarkably humanlike robots.

“It was religious yearning granted hope, it was the holy grail of science,” the novel begins. “Our ambitions ran high and low — for a creation myth made real, for a monstrous act of self-love. As soon as it was feasible, we had no choice but to follow our desires and hang the consequences.”

That narrator is Charlie Friend, a lazy day-trader in London. The ultimate early adopter, Charlie uses a recent inheritance to buy “the first truly viable manufactured human with plausible intelligence and looks, believable motion and shifts of expression.” The robot’s name is Adam, which suggests what the creators must think of themselves. He — it? — is one of 25 androids sold around the world in a variety of ethnicities, 12 male and 13 female versions. Adam’s handsome and muscular — “fairly well endowed,” Charlie admits while hastening to add, “Adam was not a sex toy.”

But sex is certainly central to this carefully constructed comedy of terrors. As the novel opens, Charlie is wooing Miranda, a younger woman who lives in his apartment building. He hopes that they can form a “relationship” in Adam’s personality together, as a kind of bonding experience. “He would be like our child,” Charlie says. “... We would be partners, and Adam would be our joint concern, our creation. We would be a family. There was nothing underhand in my plan. I was sure to see more of her. We’d have fun.”

Charlie is a well-educated guy, but he seems not to have read enough science fiction to know that “fun” is the last thing he’s going to have. He gets an inkling of the complications ahead, though, when he spends an evening listening to Adam loudly making love to Miranda in the upstairs apartment. It’s grim satisfaction to realize he’s the “first to be cuckolded by an artefact.”

What man could compete with that stamina, that “the scent of warm electronics on her sheets.”

McEwan, who won the 1998 Booker Prize for “Amsterdam,” is a master at cerebral silliness. He knows just how to explore the most complex issues in the confines of ridiculous situations. Trapped in an apartment-size version of “Westworld,” Charlie and Adam debate the essential nature of consciousness while vying for Miranda’s affections. Charlie is sure that his android cares for Miranda only “as a dish-washer cares for its dishes,” but Adam, who has perfect command of the world’s religious and philosophical writings, claims, “I’ve a very powerful sense of self and I’m certain that it’s real.”

He’s earnest and lovesick — his romantic haiku would make Lt. Cmdr. Data blush — but he’s charged by a crystal-clear sense of righteousness that may not integrate well with the ethical morass of human experience.

McEwan is incapable of writing a dull line, but his AI conundrums feel as fresh as a game of Pong. Fellow Trekkers will remember “Requiem for Methuselah” (Season 3, Episode 19), in which Captain Kirk falls in love with a gorgeous robot named Rayna.

But our fascination with artificially created humans reaches much further back than that — at least to Pygmalion in Greek mythology. Mary Shelley explored the existential anxiety of a manufactured being in the early 19th century. The Mechanical Turk — a fraudulent chess-playing contraption — sent minds spinning about the possibilities of artificial intelligence.

By the time Czech writer Karel Capek coined the term “robot” in 1920, we were already well acquainted with the promise and peril of being replaced by our own machines. Isaac Asimov’s Three Laws of Robotics — starting with “A robot may not injure a human being” — feel more naive with each passing wave of layoffs.

McEwan’s special contribution is not to articulate the challenge of robots but to cleverly embed that challenge in the lives of two people trying to find a way to exist with purpose. That human drama makes “Machines Like Me” strikingly relevant even though it’s set in a world that never happened almost 40 years ago. “Everything was rising,” Charlie notes, “hopes and despair, misery, boredom and opportunity.” Amid rampant inflation and permanent unemployment, Charlie says, “We could become slaves of time without purpose.” Adam cheerily observes, “From a certain point of view, the only way to suffering would be the complete extinction of mankind.”

But such nihilism is anathema to McEwan. He is not only one of the most elegant writers alive, he is one of the most astute at crafting moral dilemmas within the drama of everyday life.

True, contending with an attractive synthetic rival is a problem most of us won’t have to deal with anytime soon (sorry, Alexa), but figuring out how to treat each other, how to do some good in the world, how to create a sense of value in our lives, these are problems no robot will ever solve for us.
**NEW ON DVD**

**Tito and the Birds**: Directors Gustavo Steinberg, Gabriel Bitar and Andre Catoto deliver a heartwarming and inspirational story through a lavish design that flows with beauty and strength. Their film animation wipes away the traditional stiff borders to make the film look like it is alive. The production is both staggeringly beautiful in look and story.

The film is a cautionary tale presented through a shy 10-year-old boy who is called on to do heroic things in a world on the brink of a pandemic. It is not a disease that threatens the world, but fear that manifests itself through the crippling and then transformation of people.

Tito realizes the research his father had been doing for years could provide the cure. All he has to do is find a way to utilize the local pigeon population and their songs to create a way to counteract the fear. That mission becomes more and more impossible as those around him are consumed by fear.

The release contains both the original Portuguese language version of the film with English subtitles, and the English language dub, as well as an interview with Steinberg and Bitar as a bonus feature.

**Shameless: The Complete Ninth Season**: The suspension of disbelief was in overdrive as the show debuts this DVD collection.

William H. Macy stars in this cable drama series that features one of the most functional self-destructive detectives who must pull off what apparently seems impossible.

The production is both staggeringly beautiful and something people like. It's the sort of sly bait maneuver that, as soon as it's been done for years could provide the cure.

**Shameless**: The Complete Ninth Season:

**Killing Eve**: The TV show also starring Sandra Oh is back Saturday for season 2 on AFN-Prime. Fans of the show were eager to find out what's happened to their favorite psychopath after she was stabbed by Eve in the Season 1 finale.

“Going into Season 2, there’s a bit of comfort because you know that you have something that resonates with people and something people like,” Comer says. “But then it definitely adds that pressure of just the expectations.”

Expectations aren’t all that familiar to Comer. Her parents, whom she still lives with in Liverpool, work far outside the entertainment business. Her father is a sports massage therapist, and her mother works for a public transportation company. It was in Liverpool, at a local weekend drama workshop, that she developed an affinity for performing — but the thought of making a career out of it seemed far-fetched.

By the time she was a teen, she had landed her first professional acting gig and would go on to star in a number of TV projects, including “Thirteen,” “The White Princess” and “Doctor Foster.”

Before “Killing Eve” came along, Comer had grown restless during a seven-month slump in roles. But as the story goes, she met Walker-Bridge at a BAFTA afterparty in 2017. An impromptu gathering later in Comer’s hotel room led to their first introduction.

“I was trying not to freak out,” Comer says. “We wanted someone who you could sit beside on the tube and not give it a second thought. Jodie brings layers to this role that are so extraordinary.”

To prepare for the role, Comer did research into the characteristics of a psychopath and their relationships with other people. What struck her about Villanelle, she points out, is her humor.

“She’s got a wit about her that I did not expect,” Comer says. “I do remember when I saw the word ‘assassin’ I was like, ‘oh, hell.’ I thought of femme fatale

“We didn’t want someone who, when they walk down the street, you think, ‘Oh, they could kill somebody.’

We wanted someone who you could sit beside on the tube and NOT GIVE IT A SECOND THOUGHT.”

**Shameless**: The Complete Ninth Season:

**Killing Eve**: Executive producer and leather catsuits and a chaise lounge — really overtly sexual, and I was like, ‘I just don’t know. How much nudity will this girl have in this series?’ I should have known better.”

The show’s success, and Comer’s performance, has Hollywood taking notice. She’ll star opposite “Wonder Woman” Gal Gadot in the remake of Agatha Christie’s “Death on the Nile,” and she begins production next month on the sci-fi action film “Free Guy,” in which she plays a video game programmer and an avatar in the game she created.
by julie fraga
special to the washington post

After Ann’s daughter was born, the infant cried a lot because of acid reflux. “When she wouldn’t stop, I got angry. I felt like a monster,” said Ann, who requested that she be identified only by her middle name because of privacy concerns.

When her daughter was 6 months old, Ann saw her physician, who diagnosed her with postpartum depression (PPD), the most common complication of childbirth, affecting 1 in 7 women, according to the American Psychological Association.

Symptoms of the illness can include frequent tearfulness, feelings of hopelessness, fatigue and, in rare instances, thoughts of self-harm.

Researchers from Northwestern University, in January, identified four risk factors that may help physicians and mental-health professionals predict the seriousness of postpartum depression. The factors are: education, the number of children a woman has, ability to function at work and at home, and depression severity at four to eight weeks postpartum.

The study findings show that postpartum depression can vary in severity, which can affect the type of treatment a woman might need to recover.

“This information can help us predict the severity of maternal depression, which can benefit the well-being of a mother early on,” said Sheehan Fisher, lead author of the study and assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine.

The longitudinal study included 507 women diagnosed with postpartum depression. Each woman completed mental-health questionnaires and clinical interviews at four to eight weeks, three months, six months and 12 months postpartum.

According to the researchers, postpartum depression can fall into three categories: gradual remission, partial remission and chronic depression.

“Moms who don’t receive regular prenatal care are less likely to be screened for mental-health concerns, which can make early intervention more difficult,” he said.

Although postpartum depression is common, each woman’s symptoms can vary, which means treating the illness doesn’t always fit into a “neat little package,” said Samantha Meltzer-Brody, a psychiatrist specializing in reproductive medicine at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She explained that personalized medicine could improve prenatal and postpartum mental-health care for mothers.

“Women diagnosed with breast cancer receive personalized treatment based on the type of cancer they have, which markedly improves treatment outcomes. We need a similar way to tailor perinatal mental-health care,” Meltzer-Brody said.

To do this, clinicians need to discern between the different types of perinatal mood concern, she said. “What is often labeled as ‘postpartum depression’ could be another mental illness, such as bipolar disorder. And some women experience primarily postpartum anxiety symptoms,” Meltzer-Brody explained.

Similar to postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety can cause fear, confusion, racing thoughts and worry.

“Anxiety has always been a ‘go-to’ emotion for me, especially during stressful times. But there’s a spectrum of anxiety, and it wasn’t crippling until after I had my first child,” she said.

Given her history, Rope was at a higher risk for a perinatal mood concern, but she was never screened for the disorder, she said.

Meltzer-Brody said learning about a woman’s mental-health history should be an essential component of prenatal care.

“We cannot tell women their ‘postpartum depression’ will be quickly resolved without taking into account their personal histories,” she said.

The Food and Drug Administration approved the first new drug for postpartum depression, called brexanolone, last month.

“My hope with brexanolone is that it will be an important new treatment tool for appropriate women that suffer from severe PPD,” said Meltzer-Brody, who was the academic principal investigator for the drug’s clinical trials.
Parents struggle to determine right age for kids’ first phone

Parents struggle to determine right age for kids’ first phone

By KAREN D’SOUSA
The Mercury News

CATHERINE AMORES is shopping around for a new smartphone, but it’s not for her. It’s for her 8-year-old son Jacob. The stay-at-home mom says she will feel safer if her second-grader has an iPhone with him at all times.

“Everything I see on the TV news makes me worry all the time. There was a school lockdown in our neighborhood recently. That’s why I think it is very important to get him a smartphone,” said the Hayward, Calif., mother of three. “Being able to get ahold of him immediately will give me peace of mind.”

As smartphones dominate our daily lives, many parents feel pressured to buy them for their children at younger and younger ages. Some, like Amores, fear losing touch with their kids in a crisis. Others believe the devices offer priceless educational opportunities or worry their kids will feel left out because their friends have phones.

By the age of 13, 83 percent of kids have their own phone — up from just 34 percent in 2012, according to a Common Sense Media report last year. And a widely cited 2016 report by Influence Central put the average age for a child to get a cellphone at about 10, though some experts say that is trending downward. As the age drops, parents are left wrestling with the question of how young is too young for a smartphone.

“Phones are status symbols, especially in our tech-worshipping society. But it is parents’ responsibility to make the right call for each child, not just ‘because everyone has one,’” said Caroline Knorr, parenting editor at Common Sense Media.

“The risk with younger kids getting phones is that the devices are very powerful and require some level of maturity and responsibility.”

California students could soon be restricted or banned from using smartphones at school under a bill proposed by Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi, D-Torrance, which would require schools to limit or prohibit the use of cellphones on school grounds. Experts have long warned that exposing children to smartphones too soon poses a long list of potential dangers, from health concerns to social setbacks.

“Research tells us that increased use of screens is associated with poorer academics, obesity, decreased fitness, reduced social interaction and disturbed sleep,” said Richard Bromfield, a professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School.

The very structure of the brain can be rewired by too much exposure to a smartphone as a child, scientists warn. Children who use smartphones and other screens for more than seven hours a day are more likely to experience premature thinning of the cortex, the outermost layer of the brain that processes thought and action, according to a 2018 study released by the National Institutes of Health.

Yet many parents feel that the risks of a scary world are more pressing worries. Amores wants to give her son a smartphone, instead of a flip phone, so she can video chat with him and pinpoint his location.

“I feel like there is no safe place anywhere,” Amores, 24, said. “If he has the phone on his body, we will be able to trace his location.”

Adanuma Ison hasn’t gotten her 4-year-old son Jeremiah a smartphone, but she has let him use her Samsung so much he thinks it belongs to him. Jeremiah began watching YouTube to learn letters, numbers and shapes around the age of two. She says the phone has been a great educational tool.

“It can be hard to hold a small child’s attention, but YouTube captures his attention and keeps it,” said Ison, 39, who lives in Vallejo, Calif. “It has helped him absorb complex information, expand his vocabulary and teach him life skills.”

Eighty one percent of parents with children age 11 or younger let their child watch videos on YouTube and 34 percent do so regularly, according to a report last year from the Pew Research Center. However, having the internet in your pocket also means running the risk of addiction to constant stimulation, doctors say.

“My biggest worry is the way too much smartphone, and social media in all its forms, trains a child’s brain to think about nothing but the latest tweet,” said Bromfield.

That’s why Emma Wrankmore’s children don’t have phones. She worries they would distract their children, Blake, 10, and Natalie, 7, from the pleasures of childhood like climbing trees and playing tag with friends at the park while also exposing them to cyberbullying.

“I plan to hold out as long as I can,” said the Fremont, Calif., mother. “Elementary school feels too young to me. I will probably give in a little later on,” said Bromfield.

The very passage of time has created a long list of potential dangers, from health concerns to social setbacks. As the age drops, parents are left wrestling with the question of how young is too young for a smartphone.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari

Maintaining bridges between past, future

I slow down through the toll booth just long enough for my EZ Pass to trigger the bar to lift and the light to blink from red to green. My car picks up speed on the ramp’s incline. The road rises higher and higher, over the mammoth concrete bridge piers and toward the first suspension tower soaring skyward. The land on either side of the roadway falls quickly beneath me. In my peripheral vision, I see the bay meet the wild ocean. On my way somewhere far, far away, but exciting nonetheless.

Worries are left behind, replaced momentarily by a sense of adventure. In my mind, my trip is only a few miles. From our house to the Navy base that sits on the other side of the bay. And my adventure is grocery shopping. But as my car reaches the bridge’s apex, I have a view of the whole world.

My world.

My island town is behind me on my right, its marinas dotted with clusters of boat masts that look like sewing pins at this distance. It seems as though I can see the entire east passage of the Narragansett Bay, shimmering 20 miles away. The sun glistens on the harbor of remote Block Island, 13 miles beyond the point where the protective bay meets the wild ocean. I see my destination, Newport, port, checkblock with colonial houses, buildings, bars, restaurants, supermarkets, museums, church steeples, boats, schools, beaches and tourists. I see the military base where we lived before my husband retired from the Navy. I see the bay, with its impressive umbrella of buildings, base housing and marching grounds decorated with glossy painted cannons, torpedoes and ships’ anchors.

As I pass under the second tower, I remember why we stayed here. After many PCS moves, we wanted to settle in a place where we could finally buy a permanent home, find new jobs, integrate into the community and try to become part of the place we call home. But we know that the military lifestyle wouldn’t be easy. Twenty-eight years of military life seeps into one’s blood. We picked a home only a bridge away from the Navy base by chance, when we sip our morning coffee on the front porch, we can hear the national anthem floating over the bay.

To be connected to the military culture that was still dear to us, my husband joined our town’s posts of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars. We started a local social group of Navy veteran couples we dubbed “The Old Salts.” We keep in touch with the friends we made at old duty stations. We support military causes. I write about military issues. We shop at the commissary. We bank at Navy Federal. My husband has joined the VA Clinic. We drop by the O’ Club for a drink every now and again.

The periodic rumble of the expansion joints rouses me from my thoughts. I realize that this bridge to the Navy base is not the only link we’ve relied upon to ease our transition from active duty to civilian life. When leaving the military, one can easily become an island unto oneself, cut off from what was once so familiar. It’s important to find the bridges that span the distances between the military community, the civilian community, and family and friends.

The suspension cables flash by as my car coasts down the final slope toward Aquidneck Island and the Navy base. One day soon, this bridge will take us on a trip to London to see our daughter who is studying there, to our favorite summer vacation spot in North Carolina, to Providence to get a hair cut, to New York City to deliver our daughter for a summer internship, to the train station to pick up my mother, to Boston to see my husband’s best friend, to Pittsburgh to see mine.

And, when my errands are done today, my car will climb to the top of my world again, where this bridge will take me home.
**NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD**

**BY GRANT THACKRAY / EDITED BY WILL SHOR茨**

*The Inside Story*

**ACROSS**

1. [I (ph)]
6. Something that might be packed with juice, informally
13. Home of Velázquez’s “Las Meninas”
17. Commanders of MP s
20. “Do ___” (emphatic agreement)
21. 1958 No. 1 hit in a foreign language
22. Concern for a samurai
23. One sip, e.g.
24. Who has trouble reaching a windshield to place a ticket? [1989, 1982]
27. Who once boasted, “I’m so mean, I make medicine sick!”

**DOWN**

2. Latin American stretch
3. Prevent any involvement
33. Premier Wisconsin senator Feingold
34. Score
36. Bill “Olive” Twist thief
38. Shoot at a good
39. Major league
42. Talk show host Johnny’s children? [2003, 2008]
45. “There’s the catch!”
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Online subscriptions: Today’s puzzle and more (3,000 past puzzles, nytimes.com/crosswords ($39.95 a year)).

**GUNSTON STREET**

“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com. Online: gunstonstreet.com.

**NEWSPAPER: CROSSWORD AND COMICS**

**WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS**

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Rami Malek to play villain in 25th James Bond movie

From wire services

The 25th James Bond movie, and Daniel Craig's fifth and final installment as 007 is heading home to Jamaica.

Craig, Bond producers Barbara Broccoli and Michael G. Wilson, and director Cary Fukunaga on Thursday launched the film from the Caribbean island nation where Ian Fleming wrote all of his Bond novels. The still untitled film will be Craig's last, which was also a setting in "Dr. No" and "Live and Let Die."

For Craig, the role is cast as the villain. The recent Oscar winner said in a videotaped message that he’ll make sure Bond "will not be an easy ride of it" in Bond 25.

The film finds Bond out of active service and enjoying a tranquil life in Jamaica, producers said. That changes when his CIA friend Felix Leiter (Jeffrey Wright) turns up asking for help.

Aside from Jamaica, filming locations include Italy, Norway and London, with studio production based at Pinewood Studios outside London. Returning cast members include Lea Seydoux, Ben Whishaw, Ralph Fiennes and Naomie Harris. Production will begin Sunday. Bond 25 is due out April 8, 2020.

Spears strikes back at rumors about health

Britney Spears has set the record straight about her health, shutting down "out of control" rumors and shedding light on the "stress and anxiety" that have enshrouded her family.

"All is well," she said in a video posted Tuesday, adding that she'll be "very busy" this summer.

The 37-year-old pop star recently checked into a mental health facility after supporting her father and the rest of her family through ongoing health struggles, including a second surgery.

She popped back online this week to address rumors, death threats to her family and team, and "so many crazy things" that have been swirling since then.

"My situation is unique, but I promise I’m doing what’s best at this moment," she said. "Your love and dedication is amazing, but what I need right now is a little bit of privacy to deal with all the hard things that I'm going through. If you could do that, I would be forever grateful."

Spearstold fans not to believe everything they read and hear.

Springsteen reads a Western-style album

Fresh off his Broadway run, New Jersey’s Bruce Springsteen looked West for inspiration on a new album he’s planning to release on June 14.

The 13-song disc is his first new studio album in five years. Titled “Western Stars,” Springsteen said Thursday the album shows some inspiration from southern California pop records of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The new song and video called “Hello Sunshine” after midnight on Thursday.

Ron Aniello produced and plays on the album, which also has contributions from Springsteen’s wife, Patti Scialfa, and Bruce Springsteen’s brother, Steve Van Zandt.

“This record is a return to my solo recordings featuring character-driven songs and sweeping, cinematic orchestra arrangements,” said Springsteen. "It’s a jewel box of a record."

Among the song titles are "Mighty, Mighty," "Sleepy Joe’s Cafe," "Chasin’ Wild Horses" and "There Goes My Miracle."

Other news

* Ken Kercheval, who played scheming oil baron J.R. Ewing on the hit TV series “Dallas,” died Sunday. He was 83.

* Mark Medoff, playwright whose “Children of a Lesser God” won Tony and Olivier awards and whose screen adaptation of his play earned an Oscar nomination, died Tuesday. He was 79.

Nora Roberts sues Brazilian author, cites ‘multi-plagiarism’

Best-selling novelist Nora Roberts is suing a Brazilian writer for copyright infringement, alleging that Cristiane Serruya has committed “multi-plagiarism” on their careers, but that’s changed with contemporary artists going to the city to perform, from Jennifer Lopez to Lady Gaga.

Serruya, all apparently self-published, have copied passages from dozens of other authors too.

Roberts also criticized Amazon.com for not being more vigilant about the books sold on its site. Roberts and other authors have complained that Amazon’s Kindle Unlimited e-book subscription program, for which royalties are based on how many pages a reader reads, is an incentive for unscrupulous writers to quickly throw together material from copyright holders.

"Amazon didn’t find any of this," Roberts said to the AP of Serruya’s books, nothing that he had been ripped off by readers and fellow writers. "And that strikes me as a problem."

As of earlier this week, most of Serruya’s work had been removed from Amazon, although many books remained available on Barnes & Noble.com, Google Play and elsewhere. In a recent statement to the AP, Amazon said it has been inspired by the "violations of laws and proprietary rights very seriously."

Serruya has faced allegations from several other writers who have inspired the Twitter hashtag #CopyPasteCris. In February, author Courtney Milan titled a blog post “Cristiane Serruya is a copyright infringer, a plagiarist, and an idiot,” and cited numerous passages from Serruya’s “Royal Love” that closely resembled Milan’s “The Fox.”

"I’m very grateful that she recognized the Tweet based on my reaction to her Twitter account, and called allegations she had plagiarized "distress," she said.

"I have no idea what’s going on with the lawsuit."

Roberts is one of the world’s most popular and prolific authors, with hundreds of millions of copies sold. She was initially known for romance books, but also wrote mainstream fiction and publishes crime novels under the penname J.D. Robb.

Sting plans 16-show Las Vegas residency next year

By Mesfin Fekadu

Associated Press


"Being in one place is actually a different, spiritual vibe," the English performer said. "Welcoming people into your house — that's basically what it's going to be. I'll be telling the story of my life through songs. I've had a long, interesting life and I can't wait."

Before he heads to Vegas, Sting has a string of projects in the works: He’ll tour the United Kingdom with Shaggy (they won the best reggae album Grammy this year for their collaborative album "44/86"); he has a number of solo shows in the United States and around the world; and he will release a new album, "My Songs," on May 24.

The album finds Sting re-shaping and re-imagining some of his biggest hits.

"We weren't treating the original recordings as holy relics or museum pieces ... we were just having fun with the songs," said the 67-year-old, adding that his voice is now "different to what it was 30, 40 years ago. It has more texture, a richness to it."

His song "Shape of My Heart" will also appear on the new album. The tune has been sampled by a number of artists throughout the years, from rapper Nas to Grammy-winning R&B singer Monica to English singer Kate Moss, who collaborated with Sting when he re-worked the song in 2002.

The most famous version is Juice WRLD’s "Lucid Dreams," one of the biggest hits of the last year.

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Why Dems shouldn't impeach Trump — yet

BY DOYLE McMANUS
Los Angeles Times

I n the wake of the redacted report from special counsel Robert Mueller, Democrats were smashingly in impeach fever: Did Mueller’s findings demand that Congress launch formal proceedings to remove President Donald Trump from office? But the debate, while vigorous, already seems to be receding. The surprise wasn’t how much, but how much demanded impeachment, but how few.

Of 19 declared presidential candidates, only three insisted that impeachment begin now. Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris and Julian Castro. Even House progressives were divided; firebrand freshman Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, of New York, demanded action, but few joined her. Instead, most House members are taking the Democratic facts of life. Impeachment requires a lot.
The best course, she told them in a conference call Monday, is to take a deep breath, continue investigating Trump’s conduct on many fronts, build more public support and defer the question of impeachment until later.

“I have investigated Trump without drafting articles (of impeachment),” Pelosi reportedly told her colleagues. “Let’s see where this takes us. We’re in the middle of this.” She’s right. There are several reasons launching impeachment proceedings now would be a bad move for Democrats.

Paul Ryan, the last GOP House leader, don’t want Congress to impeach Trump, although as many as two-thirds of Democrats are ready to vote for one. That would be a losing issue in a Democratic presidential primary, but a potential loser in a general election.

However, impeachment proceedings start, they’ll draw massive media attention — and that, too, would pose a danger for Democrats. Dramatic hearings over removing Trump could make it impossible for them to win attention to proposals on health care, education or any other issue.

If for the next year and a half, going right into the heart of the election, all that the Congress is talking about is impeach- ing Trump, Trump, Trump … that works to Trump’s advantage,” the Vermont senator said.

Even if the Democratic-run House votes to impeach the president, that merely sends the case to the Senate, where the Republican majority would almost certainly reject it. Many voters would see a stillborn impeachment as a waste of congressional time. Watch the Senate’s verdict on that.

An impeachment that dies in the Senate would allow the president to declare himself acquitted of all charges, much as he has claimed — falsely — that Mueller’s report gave him a “total exoneration.”

In the view of Pelosi and her advisers, a slower, more methodical approach is more likely to help turn Trump out of office. An impeachment based solely on Mueller’s report would come after a major public outcry: Trump’s attempt to obstruct investigations into his conduct.

Mueller found no evidence of potential obstruction, and Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, has said several appeared “impeachable.” But at least six House committee chairs are investigating issues Mueller didn’t touch — and those, too, could produce evidence for an impeachment inquiry.

Nadler’s Judiciary Committee is probing whether Trump broke campaign finance laws to hide the cost of his 2016 campaign. Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., who heads the House Intelligence Committee, is seeking information on Trump’s business ties to Russia. Rep. Robin Kelly, D-Ill., chairwoman of the House Financial Services Committee, is looking into Trump’s other financial dealings — and so on.

In addition, federal and state prosecutors in New York have launched investigations into Trump’s real estate empire, his taxes, conduct of his family business and the $280,000 paid to two alleged former mistresses.

If those inquiries turn up wrongdoing, an impeachment process would have more charges to consider — and public support for impeachment might grow.

Still, Warren and others have argued, there’s a question of principle here: Doesn’t the House have a constitutional duty to impeach? “There is no political inconvenience exception to the United States Constitution,” Warren said on a televised forum on Monday.

That’s true. But the Constitution merely makes impeachment available to the House; it doesn’t require it. Congress does have a duty to hold the president accountable for his actions, but impeachment is only one tool — not a goal in itself.

Democrats who hesitate to demand impeachment hearings aren’t shirking their duty to seek justice. The investigation into Trump might just be exercising prudent judgment — and focusing on effective action instead of squandering it.

In any case, Pelosi isn’t ruling out impeachment as firmly as she did a month ago.

“If it is what we need to do to honor our responsibility to the Constitution — if that’s the place the facts take us — that’s where we’ll be,” she said Monday.

But she’s still saying the question should wait until more evidence is gathered.

That seems sensible. If the Democrats and the more investigative, Americans will know better whether impeachment is warranted. Better to make that decision slowly and well than to rush into it.

Dramatic hearings over removing Trump would be a waste of congressional time or any other issue.

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What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Columbine survivor knows guns can thwart mass shooters

The Ledger of Lakeland, Fla.

For much of last week, residents of Littleton, Colo., paused to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Columbine High School massacre.

Two student gunmen killed 13 and wounded 24, and the nation recoiled at the grisly images that showed the experiments gone awry. The gun violence that followed was personal and piercing, and it brought 26 people to their deaths in one weekend.

Twenty years ago, two teenagers killed 12 students and a teacher, and wounded 24 others, at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo.

That was then. This is now.

What the Columbine High School massacre taught us is that the lives of young people are at risk right now.

And ignoring it never does anything.

“I’ve seen evil in this world. And ignoring it never does anything. We don’t believe at this point skeptical voters have found such a candidate on the Democratic side.

Byrd’s killer is dead, but his hate-filled views sadly endure

Houston Chronicle

The execution Wednesday of John William King for the 1998 lynching of James Byrd Jr., who was chained to a pickup truck and dragged behind it until he was dead, is another in a long line of efforts to deal with the country’s past.

King was convicted of murder in 2001 for his role in the 1998 slaying of Byrd, a black man who was hanged from a tree.

But such efforts are often met with resistance, especially among those who feel that the past is better left alone.

“His execution will not bring James Byrd back to life. It didn’t erase the evil of these attacks on Easter worshippers and tourists in Sri Lanka,” said Democratic presidential candidate Tulsi Gabbard.

But it will serve as a reminder of the harm that hate can cause and the need for continued efforts to combat it.

In addition, King’s execution is a reminder of the power of hate to divide communities and to create a climate in which violence can thrive.

The execution of King is a symbol of the ongoing struggle to overcome the legacy of slavery and its aftermath.

And it is a reminder of the importance of paying attention to the past and learning from it in order to build a better future.

The execution of King is a necessary step toward healing the wounds of the past and moving forward.

But it is also a reminder of the ongoing struggle to overcome the legacy of slavery and its aftermath.

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And it is a reminder of the importance of paying attention to the past and learning from it in order to build a better future.
Eugene Sheffer Crossword

ACROSS
1 Asian desert
5 Weep loudly
9 Swiss peak
12 Mideast golf
13 “Night” author Wiesel
14 Life story
15 Pantheon members
16 Quest
17 Director Howard
18 Region
19 Texter’s “Wow!”
20 Full house, e.g.
21 Dolphins’ org.
23 Here (Fr.)
25 Used a hoe
28 Put a price on
32 Dole out
33 Stage
34 Show bad posture
36 Creatures
37 Your
38 Ornate vase
39 Corn castoffs
42 Tavern
44 Party pooper
48 Small battery
49 Ireland
50 Theater box
51 Norm (Abbr.)
52 Swampy terrain
53 Portent
54 That lady
55 River to the Baltic
56 Get one’s feet wet?

DOWN
1 Quite enthusiastic
2 Bloodhound’s clue
3 Eliot’s “Adam —”
4 Important details
5 Observe
6 Grad
7 Improvise
8 Allow
9 Start of a spell
10 King of the jungle
11 Frogs’ hangout
12 20 Everywhere
22 Command to Fido
25 “Now, where —?”
26 Right angle
27 “Xanadu” band
29 Cooking fuel
30 Balloons fig.
31 — Moines
35 Cross
36 Stove top feature
37 Mama — Elliot
40 Slangword
41 Commanded
43 Suffix for billion
45 “Arrivederci —”
46 On in years
47 Actor Hackman
49 Punk-rock subgenre

Answer to Previous Puzzle

4-27 CRYPTOQUIP

D M R H G L R M D M V B O
V H C S Z A J G Y V R Z C X B S Z Y Z D C Z
P Z T B X Z O Z T A Z M B A U H J O M B M Z
O R Z ’O BYPADLRM VDMR XZ!

Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: EVEN THOUGH BOTH BEASTS OF BURDEN ARE COVERED IN DENSE FUR, THAT ONE IS THE HAIRIER CARRIER.

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: X equals M
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Tennis

Barcelona Open

Wednesday at Real Club de Tenis Barcelona 1899 Barcelona, Spain

Surface: Clay-Outdoor

Friday, April 26, 2019

Venue: Foro Tennis (VTV5)

Second Round

Petra Kvitova (2), Czech Republic, def. Victoria Azarenka (3), Belarus, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2

Petr Kytola (6), Czech Republic, def. Alejandro Davidovich Fokina (8), Spain, 6-2, 6-2

Maryna Zanevska (16), Ukraine, def. Ashley Harkleroad, 3-6, 6-0, 6-3

First Round

Pablo Carreno Busta (6), Spain, def. Yannick Noah, 7-5, 6-3

Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, Russia, def. Vera Zvonareva, 6-2, 6-2

Tennis
Tiger to play new Japan event

By Doug Ferguson
Associated Press

Seoul American’s Mya Rollison gets set to boot the ball against Seoul Foreign during Wednesday’s Korea girls’ soccer match. The Falcons will play the school’s final league tournaments this weekend.

End near for teams at Seoul American

By Dave Ornauer
Stars and Stripes

YONGSAN GARRISON, South Korea — A mixed bag of emotions are following Seoul American’s soccer teams onto the pitch this weekend as they embark on their final league tournaments before the school closes its doors in June.

The Falcons’ boys lace up Friday and Saturday in the Korea-American Interscholastic Activities Conference Plate Tournament for sub-.500 teams at Osan. Seoul American’s girls travel to Incheon for the KAIAC Plate Tournament at Chadwick.

“It’s a strange feeling, playing our last (league) games for our school,” said senior Noah Lee of the Falcon boys.

It’s not as though KAIAC marks the end of the season; DODA-Korea teams still have their Far East tournaments slated for late May.

But “I’m still coming to terms with the fact that I’m playing the last games of my high school life,” Lee said.

“The boys are playing well at times during the season, but ‘in spots,” Inthavixay said, adding, “I think we have what it takes to have a good season and make it to the Cup.”

The Cougars have played well at times during the season, but “in spots,” Inthavixay said, adding, “I think we have what it takes to win.”

The Air Force forecast calls for rain ending just as play is scheduled to begin, with clear, warm weather projected Saturday.

Elsewhere, regular-season activities continue on the track with meets scheduled for Humphreys and Yokota, the latter despite a forecast of heavy rain overnight Friday into Saturday morning. Okinawa track takes a week off before its district finals on May 4.

Korea’s baseball and softball schedule has Seoul American hosting its last home games at Yongsan’s Lombardo Field Four-Plex, with all four league teams scheduled to play.

With the Golden Week holiday period slated to start Sunday, all DODA Japan teams except for track and field are taking this weekend off.
# NBA PLAYOFFS

## Scoreboard

### First round

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eastern Conference</th>
<th>Milwaukee 121, Detroit 86</th>
<th>Milwaukee 120, Detroit 99</th>
<th>Milwaukee 119, Detroit 103</th>
<th>Milwaukee 127, Detroit 104</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Eastern Conference

- **Golden State 123, L.A. Clippers 104**
- **L.A. Clippers 121, Golden State 125**
- **Golden State 112, L.A. Clippers 115**
- **L.A. Clippers 116, Golden State 119**

### Western Conference

- **Wednesday:** L.A. Clippers 125, Golden State 110

### Friday:

- **L.A. Clippers, AFN-Sports:** 4 p.m. Saturday, 11 a.m. Saturday, JKT
- **Sunday:** at Golden State
- **Denver 3, San Antonio 2**
- **San Antonio 101, Denver 96**
- **Denver 114, San Antonio 105**
- **San Antonio 117, Denver 103**
- **Denver 116, Spurs 90**

### Conference semifinals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Best-of-7, if necessary)</th>
<th>Eastern Conference</th>
<th>Milwaukee vs. Orlando</th>
<th>Denver vs. Portland</th>
<th>San Antonio vs. Houston</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Wednesday

- **Clippers 129, Warriors 121**

### By Keirstie Riiken

**ROCKETS ADVANCE, WAITING ON SHOT AT WARRIORS**

HOUSTON — Minutes after the Houston Rockets eliminated the Utah Jazz to advance to the Western Conference semifinals for the third straight season they were already looking ahead to the possibility of getting another shot at the Golden State Warriors.

“That’s what I want,” center Clint Capela said. “I want to face them.”

Veteran Chris Paul slightly scolded the 24-year-old for acknowledging that this is the matchup Houston has been looking forward to all season.

“That’s going to be all over (the internet),” Paul said.

But Paul couldn’t deny that the Rockets are well aware that the Warriors have been the biggest roadblock to them vying for their first title in more than 20 years.

“Real talk, in order to get to where you want to get to, you have to go through them,” he said. “They’re the reigning champs. They’ve been running the West for five years straight now.”

But the Rockets will have to wait to see if they’ll get that shot at the Warriors after they failed to close out their series with the Clippers on Wednesday, as Los Angeles won 129-121 to force Game 6.

Houston has been eliminated by the Warriors in the postseason in three of the last four seasons, including twice in the Western Conference finals. The Rockets took a 3-2 lead over Golden State in the conference finals last year before dropping the final two games with Paul out with a hamstring injury.

“If they come out of it, it’s going to be a great series,” coach Mike D’Antoni said. “We said all year: ‘Let’s run it back.’ Well, OK. I guess we’re going to run it back.”

Houston took a 3-2 lead in their first-round series against the Jazz before missing all 13 of their three-point attempts in the fourth quarter of Game 4 loss in Utah. The Rockets weren’t particularly sharp on offense in their 100-93 win that closed out the series Wednesday night, but they were proud of their defense.

Ricky Rubio cut Houston’s lead to 94-93 on a jump shot with about a minute left. Tucker missed two free throws, but grabbed a loose ball seconds later and was fouled again. This time he made both shots to make it 96-93.

James Harden blocked a shot by Rudy Gobert on Utah’s next possession and he made two free throws to extend the lead to 98-93 with 38 seconds left.

Donovan Mitchell missed a three-pointer after that and Paul added two more free throws to secure the victory.

If the Rockets hope to finally reach the NBA Finals this season, they know that they’ll have to continue to play good defense.

“That’s what’s going to get us to our goal,” Harden said. “Obviously the shot making is extra, that’s a bonus. But if we’re guarding like we’ve been guarding and knocking down our shots, it’s going to be pretty tough.”

## By Janie McCauley

**WILLIAMS, CLIPPERS FORCE GAME 6**

OAKLAND, Calif. — Lou Williams again came off the bench and knocked down big shot after big shot. Patrick Beverley crashed the boards at every chance. Danilo Gallinari drove the lane with authority.

The Los Angeles Clippers took the Warriors right out of their home court by beating the two-time defending champions at their own game with energy on both ends, extending their season long after many had counted them out.

Williams hit a fadeaway jumper with 1:29 left and finished with 33 points and 10 assists. Golden State uncharacteristically clanked shots much of the second half and couldn’t make key stops, and the upset Clippers sent their first-round series back home by a 129-121 Game 5 win on Wednesday night.

No clinch celebration just yet for the two-time defending champions, who lead 3-2 but needed far more than Kevin Durant’s playoff career-high 45 points.

“I don’t want to get ahead of myself. They’re up 2-2 still, but I just love how we played. I really did,” Clippers coach Doc Rivers said. “All we talked about is being us. I told our guys, they’ve been them in the series. We have yet to put a game where we are us through the game.”

The Clippers stymied Golden State’s comeback effort on the very court at Oracle Arena where Los Angeles rallied from 31 points down in Game 2 for the largest comeback in NBA postseason history.

Game 6 is Friday back in Los Angeles.

Beverley took a big charge against Klay Thompson with 1:40 left and wound up with 11 points and 14 rebounds for his best outing of the series.

“I thought Patrick Beverley came in, just kicked our butts right away,” Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. “He came out with more energy than we had and that set a tone.”

Houston and James Harden are on to the second round and waiting for another chance at the champs. The Clippers said not just yet, they’re not done.

The Rockets, who squandered a 3-2 series lead to the Warriors in last year’s Western Conference finals, eliminated the Jazz with a 100-93 Game 7 victory at home Tuesday.

Thursday’s Game 6 is Friday back in Los Angeles.

**The Montrezl Harrell dunks between the Warriors’ Andrew Bogut, left, and Klay Thompson during the second half of Wednesday’s Game 5 in Oakland, Calif.**
Former Blues fan Bishop now in net for Stars

Dallas GK calls homecoming 'business trip'

**By Stephen Hawkins**
Associated Press

Ben Bishop grew up rooting for the St. Louis Blues before being drafted by them. He remembers being in the stands at 14 years old during a playoff series against the St. Louis Blues that was part of the chants of “Bel-four” directed at the Dallas goalies.

Now 18 years after that St. Louis game, Bishop got the chance to get the Dallas Stars to the Western Conference Finals, Bishop will be the Stars goalie going against the Blues in the playoffs.

“It’s kind of funny to think that I’m playing for Dallas going back home,” Bishop said. “Growing up I have a lot of conflicted friends and family. But once the game obviously starts, it’s just hockey. It’s a business trip.”

The Central Division rivals, who both advanced after beating higher seeded teams, open their best-of-seven, second round playoff series Thursday night in St. Louis.

Dallas advanced largely because of Bishop, who has been better in the playoffs (1.90 goals-against average, .945 save percentage) than he was in the regular season when he set franchise records with a 1.98 GAA and .934 save percentage. The Vezina Trophy finalist had a playoff career-high 47 saves when the Stars wrapped up their first-round series against Nashville in a 2-1 overtime win Monday night.

“He’s always been a special goalie,” said Blues forward Pat Maroon, a St. Louis native who played junior hockey against Bishop.

Bishop was a third-round draft pick by the Blues in 2005, and made his NHL debut for them three years later. He was traded to Ottawa in 2012, then a year later to Tampa Bay where he went to the Stanley Cup Final in 2015. The Lightning traded him to Los Angeles in the 2016-17 season, and the 6-foot-7 goalie got dealt to the Stars that offseason and signed a six-year contract.

“He’s a big goalie. He plays the puck well. It’s obviously been a great season for him,” Blues center Brayden Schenn said. “He’s very capable of making a lot a key saves back there, but that’s our job, to make life difficult on him whether it’s throwing anything we can at the net or screens or tips.”

The Blues have rookie Jordan Binnington in net. He had a 2.63 GAA and .908 save percentage in a six-game opening series win against Winnipeg that they wrapped up Saturday night at home.

Dallas, with rookie coach Jim Montgomery, won its last three games against Nashville. That came after Bishop’s only real glitch against Nashville, allowing a goal on a deflection from Mattias Ekholm.

It’s nice to see those personalities come out. That’s how you grow the game.

— Nick Foligno
Columbus Blue Jackets center

**Did you know**

This is the fifth playoff series against the Blues for the Stars since moving to Dallas before the 1993-94 season.

**SOURCE:** Associated Press
Canes oust Capitals in 2OTs

By Stephen Whyno

WASHINGTON — Justin Williams returned to the building that was the scene of his only Game 7 loss in Carolina’s history, and the Hurricanes redeemed after knocking off his old friends and defending Stanley Cup champions.

The man who earned the “Mr. Game 7” moniker shook Alex Ovechkin’s hand after the Carolina Hurricanes’ stunning 4-3 double-overtime victory over the Washington Capitals and beams with pride in his upstart team’s latest triumph that added another piece to one of the craziest first rounds in recent NHL history. Each conference’s top seed, all four division champions and the teams that met in last year’s Cup Final are all gone to the first round and the pesky Hurricanes are storming on to the Eastern Conference semifinals.

‘You can kick the shit out of each other and look each other in the eye and say, ‘Man that was a great series, you really pushed us,'” Williams said. “We pushed each other.”

Carolina pushed Washington out of the playoffs by erasing a two-goal deficit and dominating two overtime periods in the third-longest Game 7 in NHL history. Unheralded forward Brock McGinn, who did not prevent a Capitals goal late in regulation, redirected Williams’ shot past Braden Holtby 11:05 into the second overtime to send his team to the Eastern Conference semifinals. The Hurricanes are all over the top seed, all four division champions and the teams that met in last year’s Cup Final are all gone to the first round and the pesky Hurricanes are storming on to the Eastern Conference semifinals.

By Stephen Whyno

NHL players and coaches were split Wednesday on whether changes were needed to video review protocol a day after a major penalty played a dramatic role in Game 7 in the third-longest Game 7 in NHL history.

The Hurricanes’ new head coach, Rod Brind’Amour, whose team also eliminated the New York Islanders in last year’s first round, said he was happy with how the review protocol worked.

“It’s the first time in NHL history all four division winners were eliminated in the first round. Unlike Presidents’ Trophy winning Colorado in five games, this was right there for the Caps with a series lead and a two-goal advantage in Game 7 before it slipped away.”

It’s tough right now,” Backstrom said. “It’s tough. Double overtime. Tough one for us. We were up 3-1. Looking back at that, we need to find a way to shut them down there or keep them out of the score sheet there when we got a 3-1 lead. We gave it to them.”

In just as many ways, the Hurricanes took it. Unbounded by an early deficit, they got second-period goals from Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen and tied it early in the third on Jordan Staal’s third of the series. Petr Mrazek finished off an inconsistent round by stopping 34 of 37 shots and bailed out by McGinn when he saved a would-be Capitals go-ahead goal with two minutes remaining in the third period.

“It’s just a reaction,” McGinn said. “I don’t know if it had enough steam to cross the line, but I don’t think I was taking that chance.”

In a weird series where the home team won the first six games, there were plenty of chances to end it before McGinn’s goal. Washington’s Jakub Vrana, who was demoted to the fourth line by first-year coach Todd Reirden, hit the post in the second overtime, and the Capitals couldn’t cash in on a power play for a Hurricanes delay of game penalty.

Washington fell to 4-8 in Game 7 in the Ovechkin and Backstrom era and 5-12 all-time.
DENVER — In between homework assignments this season at Massachusetts, Cale Makar brushed up on the Colorado Avalanche blue line.

The rookie defenseman studied as much film as he could of his soon-to-be teammates in order to learn his learning curve.

His takeaway from his crash course: No one tries to take on too much.

Colorado may not have anyone up for big awards among its blue liners or even a name that casual fans might recognize. Instead, the defense relies on a strength-in-numbers approach, with everyone filling a different role.

"On championship teams, everybody has to know their role they play in order to succeed," said Makar, whose squad starts a second-round series on Friday at San Jose after dispatching Calgary, the top seed in the West.

"They’re a very active ‘D-core,’ always good night in and night out."

Tyson Barrie provides the offensive force; Nikita Zadorov, the big hits; Erik Johnson, the glue; Ian Cole, the bruise-leafing blocked shots; Samuel Girard, the flash; and Patrik Nemeth, the consistent tenacity. As for Makar, he’s the playmaker and leader who made his NHL debut in Game 3 and scored a goal.

"Everyone’s playing to what they’re capable of," Barrie said. "We all have roles and we’re all accepting of it."

The Avalanche held the high-scoring Flames to just 11 goals in the five-game series and shut down Johnny Gaudreau. Now, they turn their attention to Tomas Hertl, Brent Burns and the rest of the Sharks. It’s a team they went 0-3 against in the regular season, and were outscored by a 14-9 margin.

But that was pre-Makar. He’s been the welcome addition since joining the team after his college hockey season concluded with a big finish for the NCAA champion.

"A guy like Cale mid-playoffs, that’s a big boost. It’s not every day you can do that," Barrie said. "We’re playing real solid defense. It’s a good feeling right now."

Typically, the Avalanche headlines center on Nathan MacKinnon and the offense. Rightfully so, with MacKinnon and Mikko Rantanen among the playoff scorers.

But on the defense, it’s "a chemistry thing. Maybe we don’t have the flashiest numbers as far as points or whatever, but we do a lot of good things. We’re just trying to win hockey games. That’s really all that matters at this time of the year, right?"

O’Reilly’s luck turns along with Blues

ST. LOUIS — When the St. Louis Blues traded for Ryan O’Reilly in the offseason, they received an All-Star caliber player still seeking postseason success.

He fit right in with a franchise still seeking its first Stanley Cup after 52 years of existence.

While neither has found what they are looking for yet, they are both one step closer. The Blues’ win over the Winnipeg Jets in six games in the first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs was welcomed by the team’s long-suffering fans, who watched their team climb into the postseason from the bottom of the standings in January.

It was also the first series win in three tries for O’Reilly, a 10-year veteran center now on his third team.

"It’s an incredible relief and excitement," he said. "To where we were at the beginning of the year, to crawl our way and how hard guys have worked for each other and to get in, it’s amazing. It just provides that excitement because that’s the most important thing when you’re training in the summer and you look at the beginning of the year you want to get in and compete for a Stanley Cup."

Success in April has been fleeting for O’Reilly, a 28-year-old Canadian. His teams failed to make the playoffs in four of his six seasons in Colorado and he was a spectator in all three seasons at Buffalo.

Colorado lost in six games to San Jose in 2009-10 as a No. 8 seed during O’Reilly’s rookie season. After a three-year absence, O’Reilly and the Avalanche won the Central Division, only to be eliminated by Minnesota in seven games.

"Usually at this time, it’s a frustrating time," O’Reilly said. "You’re just trying to salvage a decent season personally. Now to have the meaning and this purpose, to prepare for the playoffs, going in there, trying to sort out our seed, playing meaningful hockey and getting ready for what we train for, it’s what you dream of doing, which is competing for the Stanley Cup."

The old stereotypical defenseman that bangs it off the glass and there’s no real role for that guy in the NHL anymore," O’Reilly said. "In today’s NHL, you have to be able to defend, have to be able to skate, have to be able to make plays, have to help produce offense. Everyone knows the template that we play as a team."

Goal-tending Philipp Grubauer helps keep things running smoothly in the back. He’s constantly calling out orders — “You’ve got time.” Or “Go up the wall with the puck.” Or even “Watch out!”

"Just small, simple commands," said Grubauer, who posted a 1.89 goals-against average against Calgary. "I try to help point them in the right direction."

To make sure he fits in seamlessly, Makar learned as much about the Avalanche as he could.

The fourth overall pick in 2017 signed a three-year deal on April 14 and was instantly thrown into the playoff race.

He proved to be as speedy as advertised. Off the ice, he’s feeling right at home, too, thanks to being taken under the wing of veteran Matt Calvert. Makar is living in his basement.

The Avs have weathered their share of trying times this season.

During a particularly rough stretch, the Avalanche were 0-5-3, they were allowing an average of 4.4 goals. But down the stretch — facing must-win games when they were 8-0-2 — they allowed just 1.8 goals a game.

In the Calder series, the defense held firm in surrendering 2.2 goals.

"It’s always a growing process," Cole said. "You start to learn the tendencies and what guys look for in certain situations and what our chemistry might be."

Maybe we don’t have the flashiest numbers as far as points or whatever, but we do a lot of good things. We’re just trying to win hockey games. That’s really all that matters at this time of the year, right?"
Boston thankful for home edge

By Jimmy Golen
Associated Press

BOSTON — The Boston Bruins have home-ice advantage through Sunday, and they have the Columbus Blue Jackets to thank for it.

They got the chance to show their gratitude when they welcomed Columbus to the TD Garden on Thursday night in Game 7 of the second-round series. "The fans were obviously very thankful for home edge," Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella said after the game.

The Blue Jackets could beat the better team every night, Tortorella said, but they have been playing well in Game 7 against the Bruins. "We have a tremendous amount of respect for them, I can tell you that, but we're just going to concentrate on our team," he said. "We have a tremendous amount of respect for them, I can tell you that, but we're just going to concentrate on our team."
Prospects Brown, Jacobs understand hunger well

By Teresa M. Walker
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Marquise Brown knows too well the challenge of stretching $20 over a month to feed himself, with help from discounted meals at work and food from his junior college coach. Josh Jacobs had days when he ate only if he stole something.

Brown put on about 10 pounds this first week at Oklahoma, and Jacobs gained about 30 at Alabama.

This is why the two likely first-round NFL draft picks happily helped volunteers fill 8,000 backpacks for hungry children Wednesday morning as part of a league initiative, Huddle Against Hunger. Both Brown and Jacobs know too well what the cans of soup, the cookies and chips mean to someone with an empty belly.

“Especially being from my background and doing this type of lifestyle that I had and not knowing if I was going to eat certain days, it’s definitely dope just to be able to give back,” Jacobs said.

Brown could have used one of those backpacks himself within just the past three years.

“I had no food, I had nothing,” Brown said. “So just doing this I know the impact it has on someone’s life.”

Growing up as the middle of five children with only his father around in Tulsa, Okla., Jacobs slept under a tent with his brothers and stocking up on ramen noodles, cereal and frozen food. He ate at Six Flags when working to take advantage of discounted meals for employees. His junior college coach also helped.

“My head coach, he brought cereal in for me, different types of foods for me, he basically gave me a meal, he treated me,” Brown said. “I could have a meal, he literally treated me like he had a son, he didn’t have to worry about food in 2017 and 2018. Now he’s listed at 166 pounds and still light enough that some question whether the 5-foot-9 receiver can survive a 16-game NFL season. His answer: Just wait.

“Going to the NFL, getting more time, getting more development with nutrition and in the weight room, I feel like I’m going to put my body in the best shape,” Brown said.

Alabama running back Josh Jacobs often lived in cars and motels growing up in Tulsa, Okla., and gained 30 pounds while at Alabama.

Brown stretched that $20 going to Family Dollar and stocking up on ramen noodles, cereal and frozen food. He ate at Six Flags when working to take advantage of discounted meals for employees. His junior college coach also helped.

“My head coach, he brought cereal in for me, different types of foods just so I could have a meal,” said Brown, who brought that coach to Nashville to enjoy the draft that begins Thursday night.

Brown earned his way to Oklahoma, where he didn’t have to worry about food in 2017 and 2018. Now he’s listed at 166 pounds and still light enough that some question whether the 5-foot-9 receiver can survive a 16-game NFL season. His answer: Just wait.

“Going to the NFL, getting more time, getting more development with nutrition and in the weight room, I feel like I’m going to put my body in the best shape,” Brown said.

By Annie Stapleton
Associated Press

More than a surname binds Nasir and Herb Adderley, distant-but-oh-so-close cousins from Philadelphia who are separated by age by six decades but tight by love, creed and football.

The post-millennial and soon-to-be octogenarian make up one of the best stories of the 2019 NFL draft.

Nasir, a free safety from the University of Delaware, is a projected high pick, maybe even a first-rounder like Herb, the Hall of Fame cornerback selected 12th overall in 1961, then starred for Vince Lombardi’s Green Bay Packers.

Nasir said he wouldn’t be the player or even the person he is today without Herb’s help.

“He’s been such a tremendous influence on me,” Nasir said. “Obviously, on the field, but also as a man. He was always asking about school. He’s just a very loving individual, very supportive. He’s a man of God like I am. I just love speaking with him and I’m very happy to have him in my life.”

Nasir first reached out to Herb after losing his grandfather, Nelson Adderley, who was first cousin in with Herb’s father, Charles Adderley, in 2008.

Raised by his mother, Kia, a store manager, Nasir knew his father. So his male role model was his grandfather, who played football at Ohio State and in the Canadian Football League, and whose death hit Nasir hard.

“I was just out there on my own, raised by a single mom. Just me, my mom and my little sister,” Nasir said. “I just had to be the man of the house and he especially gave me a male figure in my life.”

Herb advised Nasir about school and sports, dating and driving, faith and family. And, of course, football.

They started calling or texting nearly every day, and when they exchanged videos of their football games, the first thing Nasir noticed was how different the sport was.

“I mean, that game definitely was a lot different back in his day. Just the way you were able to tackle back then,” Nasir marveled. “I think I actually enjoyed watching film of him. I mean, he was an incredible athlete.”

Herb popped in Nasir’s tapes from Great Valley High School and felt like he was looking into a mirror, a 6-foot-2, 200-pound carbon copy of himself.

“Wow! There are so many similarities,” Herb recalled. “Body structure-wise, tendencies on the field, movement, athleticism, ability, body control. I said, ‘Well, doggone, he’s so much like me.’ But then, it’s in my DNA.”

It wasn’t difficult for Nasir to relate to a man 58 years his elder.

“Everyone around me says I’m older than my elders, and I think that myself,” Nasir said. “I mean, I had to grow up faster than maybe a lot of people my age. I have a lot of respect for my elders and I know they’ve been through the ropes, and they’ve said a lot. I love to learn and I know knowledge is power.”

By the time Nasir was ready to be recruited, Herb reached out to his alma mater, Michigan State, to tell them another Adderley was ready to become a Spartan.

“And they totally ignored me,” Herb said. “But Nasir told me that Delaware had called and he thought it was a good fit.”

The Fightin’ Blue Hens wanted Nasir to switch to defense, too.

“So, I’m thinking the coaches must see something in me,” Herb said, who was converted to cornerback in the pros after being an All-Big Ten running back in East Lansing.

During one of Nasir’s calls, Herb advised him he was moving to cornerback.

“My goodness,” Herb said. “Which side?”

“Left side,” Nasir replied.

“And I’m thinking, OK, this has to be part of the master plan,” Herb said. “Because now he’s playing the same position that I played and this is the position that can help him the most at.”

Nasir excelled at cornerback for two years, but deep down, Herb knew free safety was his natural position.

“Why do you say that?” Nasir wondered.

“Because that was my natural position,” Herb replied. “But when I mentioned it to coach Lombardi, he said, ‘I can’t do that because if I did, what’s going to happen to Willie Wood?’”

Nasir proved Herb right when he moved over to safety for his final two seasons at Delaware, becoming one of the best free safeties in the country and one of the most versatile DBs in this draft.

“Everyone has everything it takes to be a great NFL defensive back,” Herb said. “It fills my heart with joy.”

Adderley cousins find connections across decades
Former intern DeCosta taking reins for Ravens

By David Ginsburg

BALTIMORE — Not long after Art Modell moved his football team from Cleveland to Balti- more, a young intern joined the Ravens with hopes of learning enough to fulfill his lifelong quest of becoming an NFL general manager.

Eric DeCosta was little more than a player in those days, working his way up the team’s corporate ladder, he took over as head of player personnel. DeCosta, who is thankful for the advice from his father, is thankful for the opportunity to have learned under a man who was a shrewd and wise decision-maker, and he’ll be the guy who’s going to be the next general manager of the Ravens.

DeCosta was promoted to Ravens’ assistant general manager in 2007, owner Steve Bisciotti said when asked about the 40. Dimitroff said when asked about the 40.

“It gives me a sense of energy, and I’m going to approach this draft as if it’s the most important thing in my life.”

Eric DeCosta
Baltimore Ravens general manager

For the first time in Ravens history, someone other than Ozzie Newsome will be in charge of the NFL Draft. After working his way up the team’s corporate ladder, former intern Eric DeCosta, above, succeeded Newsome as the team’s general manager and will make draft-day decisions.

Newsome, who would ultimately become the first African American general manager in the league, was in charge of acquiring talent via the draft and free agency.

“In 1996, when I was sitting there in my office — well, I didn’t have an office, I had a card table in the hallway — Ozzie would call me over to his office and say, ‘Eric, are you listening?’

“That was one of the joys in my life, sitting down and watching tape with him. He would show me plays and players, we would talk about techniques.”

The 48-year-old DeCosta now resides in a lavish office in the team’s training complex. After working his way up the team’s corporate ladder, he took over for Newsome as Baltimore’s general manager in January and this week, for the first time in franchise history, someone other than Newsome will be in charge of the Ravens draft.

DeCosta’s first draft-day decision will come Thursday, when it’s time for Baltimore — barring a trade — to make the No. 22 overall pick.

He can’t wait.

“I wake up early in the morning thinking about the draft,” said DeCosta, a Massachusetts native.

“It’s been like this since I was 10 years old. I used to sit on the couch and watch Will McDonough’s column and look at his mock draft in The Boston Globe. I get excited. It gives me a sense of energy, and I’m going to approach this draft as if it’s the most important thing in my life.”

Newsome will serve as an advisor to DeCosta, who is thankful for the advice from his father, is thankful for the opportunity to have learned under a man who was a shrewd and wise decision-maker, and he’ll be the guy making that final call.

DeCosta was promoted to Ravens’ vice president of player personnel in 2007, owner Steve Bisciotti said when asked about the 40. Dimitroff said when asked about the 40.

“Because every time I go to bed thinking that maybe I wouldn’t consider something, I’d wake up and say, ‘What are you thinking? You know you’re going to have the job someday that you’ve dreamed about, so just wait and make it perfect.’”

The wait, in effect, took more than two decades. Those oil changes, that card table that served as his office and his gig as an understudy to Newsome were all part of it, and DeCosta really wouldn’t have it any other way.

“Some people would think maybe that I would be the guy who was brought in as an intern now that I’m a GM, that I want to forget that,” he said.

“But to be honest with you, I can’t forget that. I started out as an intern now that I’m a GM, that I want to forget that,” he said.
Connor McDavid is eager to shrug off personal stats, awards and achievements and put the focus on his team in Edmonton.

Yet there he is on the cover of a video game or in a commercial for a bank.

Auston Matthews is the face of the franchise in Toronto. But he also got razzed by his Maple Leafs teammates for doing a stylish fashion photo shoot for GQ magazine.

SEE STARS ON PAGE 58

Team-oriented NHL finally shifts focus to marketing its stars

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

Connor McDavid is eager to shrug off personal stats, awards and achievements and put the focus on his team in Edmonton.

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