**By J.P. Lawrence**  
Stars and Stripes

Soldiers of the future may be eating bacon and egg breakfasts via tiny food bars due to a new technology that shrinks meals to a fraction of their normal size. Think sous vide, but for tactical quiches that may end up in your next Meal, Ready to Eat.

‘A complete meal in a bar, that’s my goal.’  
Tom Yang  
U.S. Army senior food technologist

One dish begins with bacon, egg, cheese and heavy cream. The ingredients are inserted into a vacuum microwave dryer for 80 minutes of shrinkage. The result: a bar that’s smaller than a Snicker’s candy bar but with twice as many calories—and much more nutrition.  

“A complete meal in a bar, that’s my goal,” said Tom Yang, senior food technologist at the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Research, Development, and Engineering Center. Yang and other food scientists at Natick are researching the Army’s new generation of portable rations. On the menu of the future are MRE pizzas, portable fruit and a lightweight ration for soldiers on the go. Yang’s bars may soon be found in the new ration, the Close Combat Assault Ration, which is supposed to contain three times the nutrition of a normal MRE while being lighter and smaller. Prototypes for the new ration are about one-third the weight of similar MREs, an Army statement said.

The military is trying to figure out how to feed small, isolated units who may go up to a week without fresh food.
search and rescue crew left Andersen Air Force Base aboard an SH-60 Seahawk to rescue the person from the tanker.

Two crew members were lowered onto the Chinese vessel to check on the patient and prepare him to be hoisted into the Navy helicopter amid 15-foot waves, Lt. Michael Sipah, the Seahawk’s co-pilot, told Stars and Stripes in an email Thursday.

“The 15-foot sea state, less than ideal weather, as well as the moving ship, required precision work between the crew chief ( Petty Officer 1st Class ) Joshua Teague and myself at the controls to maintain the aircraft over the hoisting spot,” Sipah said.

The crew then lifted the mariner into the aircraft hovering above and gave lifesaving medical care, aircraft commander Lt. Cmdr. Philip Pretizinger said in the Navy’s statement.

“The 15-foot sea state, less than ideal weather, as well as the moving ship, required precision work between the crew chief ( Petty Officer 1st Class ) Joshua Teague and myself at the controls to maintain the aircraft over the hoisting spot,” Sipah said.

By this time last year, the squadron had made 10 survivor recoveries and received 22 emergency calls, according to a July 25 Navy statement.

Since its start in 1984, the squadron has saved 617 people in search and rescue operations and 667 in medical evacuations, Task Force 76 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Russ Wolfkiel told Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

The unit, the Navy’s only Seahawk squadron permanently stationed overseas, averages about 30 rescues and 70 medical evacuations per year, according to the squadron’s website. It keeps emergency capabilities ready 24/7 to respond to calls from the Coast Guard and Joint Region Marianas, the organization that manages Andersen and Naval Base Guam.

The squadron also supports more traditional military duties such as drone and torpedo recovery and fleet logistics around Guam, according to its website.

Before Tuesday’s recovery, the squadron’s last rescue took place July 24 after a civilian was hurt sailing three days before in a severe thunderstorm about 100 nautical miles west of Guam, according to a July 25 Navy statement.

Lt. Erik Kumetz and Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle Bowen, of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25, Guam, provide medical care to a Chinese mariner on Tuesday.

The man’s condition had deteriorated over the three days, but the crew stabilized him with IV fluid during the flight back to Guam.

“HSC-25’s ability to launch our aircraft on a moment’s notice for a SAR or MEDEVAC is astounding,” HSC-25 commanding officer Cdr. Frank Loforti said as it expressed condolences to the man’s family, friends and co-workers.

MSC-K commander Col. Christopher Noe expressed condolences to the man’s family, friends and co-workers.

“He wasn’t just an employee here; he was part of our tight-knit MSC-K family,” Noe was quoted as saying.

“Our number one priority is taking care of his family and assisting his coworkers at this time. Our prayers and thoughts are with them during this difficult time,” he added.

S. Korean worker killed on US base

SEOUL, South Korea — A South Korean man died in an apparent accident while working at Camp Carroll, a U.S. military base southeast of Seoul, officials said.

He was an employee of the U.S. Army Materiel Support Command-Korea and had served with the Army for several years, according to a news release.

The man, who was not otherwise identified, died Tuesday “after sustaining injuries while performing his job,” the command said as it expressed condolences in a statement.

Local police said the man died after he was trapped between a crane and an armored vehicle while Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles were being unloaded from a trailer. A senior official said he couldn’t provide more details because the death was still under investigation.

MSC-K commander Col. Christopher Noe expressed condolences to the man’s family, friends and co-workers.

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“Our number one priority is taking care of his family and assisting his coworkers at this time. Our prayers and thoughts are with them during this difficult time,” he added.
Army eyes tokens for communications in field

By Corey Dickstein

WASHINGTON — The Army hopes to outfit soldiers with small, wearable tokens that will allow them simple, noncontact access to secure battlefield networks for communications while serving in the field.

Army Futures Command is working to develop the technology that would produce a wireless signal to sign into mission command systems, communications networks, handheld devices and other tactical platforms almost instantly while serving in a war zone or similar location. Officials said in a news release published Tuesday. Simply approaching their laptops or other devices and entering a personal identification number to ensure their identity would grant them access to computerized platforms needed in combat. Just walking away would log them out.

The idea is to allow soldiers, constantly on the move in an area threatened by an enemy, a simpler solution to electronics access than can be provided by even their Common Access Cards, the chip-enabled identification cards that grant service members and Pentagon civilians access to physical locations and many electronic applications. It would also standardize access for secure, tactical platforms soldiers use in the field, which do not use CAC cards and now use various authentication methods.

The new technology under development at the Army’s Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland would be largely an adaption of commercially developed wireless payment products — Apple Pay, for example — and flexible hybrid electronics, said Ogedi Okwudishu, the Army engineer leading the project, known as the Tactical Identity and Access Management, or TIDAM, program.

The tokens could be placed in a soldier’s pocket or worn on the wrist similar to a Fitbit fitness bracelet.

“Soldiers should not have to take out a smart-card, insert it into a card reader and then remember to remove the card from the reader when they are done,” Okwudishu said in the Army statement. “Contact-less identity tokens are not only easy to use, they provide a significant cost savings for the Army. You can continue to add authentication capabilities without needing to redesign, or deploy new, tactical hardware to every laptop, server, handheld device or weapon system in the field.”

Since Futures Command was established last summer, top Army officials have pledged to adapt commercially available technology to serve soldiers’ needs. They have said the use of that technology would get new products out to the force much quicker than developing new gear entirely within the service.

“We’re looking to move at the speed of the information age,” Okwudishu said. “We want to be able to research, test, proof the concepts and integrate emerging [information technology] capabilities from industry as they become available.”

Wearable technology is not new to the force. The Army has used some wearable technology in recent years for physiological monitoring of its troops, and it has proposed other tech-laced gear that could monitor situations on the battlefield, including the extent of injuries.

However, wearable technology has also come under Pentagon scrutiny at times. Last year, the Pentagon banned the use of personal fitness trackers and other geolocation devices and applications in sensitive locations around the world, including in war zones.

That decision followed the publication of geolocation “heat maps” by GPS tracking company Strava, which appeared to reveal locations and movements of American troops in combat zones including in Afghanistan and Syria. The company said data on the map was largely gathered from wearable fitness trackers.

Top Pentagon officials determined there was potential for such information to be used by enemy forces to target Americans. However, they stopped short of banning all GPS-enabled devices, such as cellular phones, as long as the GPS signal can be disabled.

Army officials hope to field the new wireless tokens, which would not by GPS-enabled, to soldiers by 2022.

Army Sgt. 1st Class David Worthington, the top enlisted soldier in the unit overseeing the project, endorsed the wireless token program.

“Nobody has done anything like this yet,” Worthington said. “If done properly, it will make the authentication process a lot easier and a lot faster.”

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Marine Corps mascot Chesty XV promoted to lance corporal

By Rose L. Thayer

Obeying commands in the Marine Corps can lead to promotion. It did for Chesty XV.

After nearly one year serving as the Marines’ mascot, Chesty was promoted from private first class to lance corporal during a ceremony last week at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C.

“He was happy to get promoted. It was a long time coming,” said Staff Sgt. Alexander Spence, the assistant drill master and non-commissioned officer in charge of Chesty’s handlers at the barracks.

Chesty barked as his new chevron was placed onto his uniform, Spence said, noting the nearly 2-year-old pedigreed English bulldog reached lance corporal more quickly than most privates first class.

Chesty celebrated his achievement with a nice meal Thursday evening that included an extra treat — a diversion from his strict diet that ensures Chesty, like all Marines, maintains his weight.

Named to honor Lt. Gen. Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller Jr., the most decorated Marine in history, the mascot has been a mainstay at the Marines’ oldest active post since July 5, 1957. Chesty’s main duties include participating in the Friday evening parades held during summer at the base, greeting visitors who tour the base, and going to special events to represent the Marines.

“He’s on a strict training schedule,” Spence said. Remaining focused on that schedule helped in Chesty’s promotion. “He’s very disciplined. He obeys commands very well. He’s learning how to salute,” Spence said.

Chesty is in his second parade season at the barracks. In his first year, Chesty disobeyed orders and instead of sitting when he was told, he rolled over and often refused to walk on his leash.

“He needs to sit in the parades when we want him to sit, and interact with the crowd, so that he’s friendly and approachable,” Spence said.

“He’s on the right path right now. If he can continue to do that, he’ll continue to get promoted.”

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Esper visits Mongolia to strengthen bonds

By Lolita C. Baldor
Associated Press

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia — With one hand resting on the mane of a sturdy Mongolian horse, U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper invoked the name of one of America’s great soldiers as he sought to strengthen the military bonds between the U.S. and this landlocked democracy sandwiched between Russia and China.

“My goal is that the next generation of American leaders will grow up thanking you,” Esper said Thursday as he was presented with a 7-year-old buckskin during a time-honored traditional ceremony at Mongolia’s Ministry of Defense.

Esper’s stop in Ulaanbaatar—the third U.S. engagement with Mongolia in recent weeks—underscored its key role in America’s new defense strategy that lists China and Russia as priority competitors.

With just over 3 million people spread over an area twice the size of Texas, Mongolia has worked to maintain its independence from Beijing and Moscow by increasing its ties to other world powers, including the U.S. It describes the U.S. as a “third neighbor.”

Esper has made it clear throughout his weeklong travel across the Asia Pacific that countering China’s aggressive and destabilizing activities in the region is a top administration priority.

The activities, he said, include Beijing’s militarization of man-made islands in the South China Sea, efforts to use predatory economics and debt for sovereignty deals, and a campaign to promote the state-sponsored theft of other nations’ intellectual property.

“We’ve got to be conscious of the toeholds that they’re trying to get into many of these countries,” Esper told reporters traveling with him to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea and Mongolia this week.

He said the U.S. is working to build relationships with key countries in the Indo-Pacific that share values and respect for each other’s sovereignty, “whether it’s Mongolia this trip, Vietnam, a future trip, Indonesia, other countries who I think are key.”

His stop in Mongolia was less than 24 hours long, but Esper told his defense counterpart, Nyamaagiin Enkhbold, that it gives him the “opportunity to look at different ways we can further strengthen the ties” between the two nations.

As he stood outside the ministry, just steps away from a large statue of Mongolia’s famed founder Genghis Khan, Esper recounted a story of Marshall disciplining one of his soldiers who had struck a Mongolian horse that was being stubborn. Marshall, said Esper, had high regard for the horses.

As he spoke, the newly named Marshall yawned and stood patiently as Esper patted his neck.

“He’s happy,” said Esper. “He likes his name.” Esper also presented the horse’s caretaker with a saddle blanket emblazoned with the name and insignia of the U.S. Army’s Old Guard.

The horses, which are bred for endurance, always remain in Mongolia, and the tradition dictates that recipients name them after something they consider important.

Just last week, the Mongolian government gave one of the horses to President Donald Trump’s 13-year-old son, Barron, who named it Victory.

A previous Pentagon chief, Chuck Hagel, got a Mongolian horse when he visited in 2014, and then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld received one when he went in 2005. Hagel named his 9-year-old buckskin gelding Shamrock, after his high school mascot, and Rumsfeld named his Montana because the arid, mountainous landscape around the Mongolian capital reminded him of that state.

Esper’s trip is the first by a Pentagon chief since Hagel, and it comes on the heels of a visit to the White House last week by Mongolia’s president, Khaltmaa Battulga, the first since 2011. In addition, national security advisor John Bolton went to Mongolia in June.

Esper said he had no specific goals for the visit involving how the Pentagon can expand its military cooperation with Mongolia. Instead, he said he wants to build stronger relationships at senior defense levels.

The State Department’s 2019 budget for foreign operations was explicit in outlining Mongolia’s importance, stating that the primary goals of U.S. assistance are to “ensure the United States remains a preferred partner over geographical neighbors Russia and China.”

More broadly, Mongolia wants to enhance its trade with the U.S., and that was a key topic when Battulga met with President Donald Trump last week. The country is looking to diversify its trade flows since China buys more than 85 percent of Mongolia’s exports.

The U.S. is interested in Mongolia’s economic resources, including rare earth metals and cashmere. Most of Mongolia’s raw cashmere is finished in China, triggering interest in finding another market to bolster competition.

The U.S. is open to helping Mongolia expand its access to the trans-Siberian pipeline, thereby allowing a route for shipping goods to the West other than through China.
The VA Office of Inspector General released findings that VA supervisors pressured staff to quickly decide claims and some staff members said they were encouraged to deny claims to maximize productivity. The culture, which “created systemic pressure to favor speed over accuracy,” led to staff incorrectly reviewing incomplete and inaccurate information about their denial, limiting their ability to appeal, the IG wrote. During visits to nine offices nationwide, inspectors found stacks of unsent decision letters — many of them containing time-sensitive information — that were up to two months old.

Claims examiners were encouraged to move quickly — receiving bonuses, overtime and telework privileges if they met their production targets, the IG found. They received work- production credit when they rejected or granted claims but didn’t get credit for researching them or suggesting that the claim be further reviewed.

The IG surveyed examiners who said production standards were too high and “did not allow enough time to do a thorough and complete job of assessing claims,” the report states. One examiner wrote in response to the survey that supervisors threatened examiners with being fired if they didn’t meet their production standards.

“Constant nonstop intimidation. The atmosphere is terrible. I think it is more that processors didn’t meet their production standards,” said Stone, executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration.

In response to the report, Richard Stone, executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration, submitted plans to comply with the IG’s 11 recommendations. One is to review and correct the inaccurate decisions that the IG used in its sample. To estimate the total number of inaccurately processed claims during that time, the IG reviewed 240 rejections.

The veteran, who has not been identified publicly, died just before 9 a.m. in the visitor parking lot after he was discharged from a four-day stay at the inpatient mental health unit. The VA Office of Inspector General later determined Miller was not provided with an adequate treatment plan and staff didn’t find out with certainty whether he had access to a gun.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order in March creating a Cabinet-level task force that he promised would “mobilize every level of American society” to address suicide by veterans. This week, the task force ended a public comment period during which it asked for feedback on how to improve research and how to use it to reduce suicide by veterans.

Veterans and servicemembers facing mental health crises can talk to emergency responders at the Veterans Crisis Line. To reach the hotline, dial 800-273-8255 and press 1, text 838255 or open an online chat at Veteran-scrisisLine.net.
Aviano Air Base, Italy — Working around-the-clock under searing heat and high humidity, airmen built bombs and loaded them onto fighter jets during a five-day exercise that tested how rapidly an Air Force wing can meet its ammunition needs in times of conflict.

In years past, the focus of the Combat Ammunition Production Exercise was on building bunker-buster bombs. This year, the 43 airmen also loaded the ammunition they built onto F-16s and worked with 250-pound, GBU-39 small diameter bombs, which some of them had handled in recent deployments to Afghanistan, said Master Sgt. Anthony Neal, the exercise’s munitions accountable systems officer.

The exercise “is the first step in getting to where the Air Force wants us to be” in terms of getting ammunition built, loaded and ready to drop, Neal said Wednesday.

Instead of the F-16s taking off and releasing the bombs, in this exercise, the munitions were unloaded from the fighter jets and taken to a repack building.

“At this assembly line, up to six airmen partake in the tearing down of the bombs and repack them for storage,” said Master Sgt. William Dunston, a munitions stockpile section chief with the 731st Munitions Squadron at Camp Darby.

U.S. Air Forces in Europe brought their senior noncommissioned officers to provide experience and oversight. They evaluated everything from tactics, techniques and procedures to safety, said Master Sgt. Robert Denson, lead exercise planner and a command munitions manager assigned to USAFE Headquarters Logistics.

“During this exercise, we have been able to identify focus areas that could affect units and processes across the U.S. Air Force,” Denson said. “We will take these observations and take them into consideration for changes to future operations and exercises.”

The exercise operated 24-hours-a-day to simulate a real-world operation, exercise officials said.

The event, hosted by the 31st Fighter Wing, began Monday and was scheduled to end Friday. It included airmen participating from Italy’s Aviano Air Base and Camp Darby; England’s RAF Lakenheath and RAF Welford; Germany’s Ramstein Air Base and Spangdahlem Air Base; and Beale Air Force Base, Calif.

By Norman Llamas
Stars and Stripes

Airmen build bombs to test conflict capabilities

Photos by Norman Llamas/Stars and Stripes

**MILITARY**

**Shrinks: Army hopes it found sweet spot in quest to reduce weight of rations**

FROM FRONT PAGE

re-supply, Yang said. Currently, a soldier would need 21 MREs to survive that week.

“No one wants to carry that much MREs,” Yang said. “The number one feedback from the field. We need to be able to reduce the weight.”

The secret for losing weight — for food, if not the people who eat it — is a technology known as vacuum-microwave drying.

The method involves placing food into a dryer, sucking all the air out of the container, then dehydrating the food until it shrinks.

In a vacuum, water boils at a much lower temperature than normal.

While different in many ways from the increasingly popular sous vide method of cooking, the two techniques both use vacuum sealing to give cooks more control over the process and cook at lower temperatures.

In vacuum-microwave drying, the food is cooked at 30 degrees Celsius, or essentially room temperature, which means less exposure to harsh temperatures that could make everything tough or powdery. The mildness of the drying also means the food does not lose as much nutrition.

The goal, Yang said, is to create MRE bacon that is springy like a raisin, not dry like beef jerky.

The Army believes the new technology will result in rations with fresher tasting fruits and vegetables.

A vacuumed microwaved banana is about a third of its original size while still being springy and pliable — not hard like a fully dehydrated banana chip, according to a military press release.

It listed other items in the new rations, including a tart cherry nut bar, cheddar cheese bar, mocha dessert bar, vacuum-dried strawberries, fruit and nut trail mix, Korean barbecue stir fry, spinach quiche and French toast.

Yang said he recently shrunk cheesecake into portable bar form, which made him happy.

He noted that while the technology has been around for decades, the shrinking machines used to be too large and bulky. But as the dryers have shrunk, their utility has grown.

The new, lighter rations may prove incredibly useful in wars increasingly fought by small, highly mobile units, said Anastacia Marx de Salcedo, the author of “Combat-Ready Kitchen: How the U.S. Military Shapes the Way You Eat.”

“My concern,” Yang said, “is to find any good tech with sound science ways that will benefit soldiers.”

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**The Army is developing a new ration that uses vacuum-microwave technology to shrink items. Items under development from the Close Combat Assault Ration include a root vegetable bar, Korean barbecue stir-fry package, spinach quiche, cheddar cheese bar, banana and French toast.**

**One entree, a cheesecake, could offer variety in the flavors available in the rations.**

**The Army hopes vacuum-microwave drying technology will allow the inclusion of fruit and vegetables into rations. The vacuum microwaved banana is reduced in size while still being pliable.**

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**S T A R S  A N D  S T R I P E S**

Friday, August 9, 2019
**Navy SEAL's ex-attorney is seeking up to $1M**

**By Andrew Dyer**  
The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — A former attorney for a San Diego-based Navy SEAL acquitted of war crimes is trying to force his former client into arbitration to get paid, according to a complaint obtained by the San Diego Union-Tribune.

In the complaint, Texas-based attorney Colby Vokey says Navy SEAL Petty Officer 1st Class Eddie Gallagher is in breach of a contract he signed in October and is seeking $200,000 in damages. In that contract, also obtained by the Union-Tribune as part of the complaint, Gallagher apparently agreed to go into arbitration should any attorney-client disputes emerge.

Gallagher signed the document Oct. 11. Vokey represented Gallagher until mid-March, when another civilian defense attorney, Timothy Parlatore, joined the case. Parlatore called Vokey’s move “grotesque” in comments to the Union-Tribune on Wednesday.

“The Gallagher family has been through hell, and it is grotesque that Colby Vokey has decided to go after them when the case isn’t even over,” Parlatore said when reached by phone.

Gallagher is waiting on the Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. John Richardson, to finalize the case. Richardson can confirm, vacate or alter the sentence imposed by a San Diego military jury in July.

Gallagher was found not guilty of the most serious charges against him, which included premeditated murder and shooting at civilians while in Iraq in 2017. He was found guilty of pointing the body of an Islamic State fighter, and he was sentenced to a reduction in rank and four months confinement, which Gallagher served before trial.

Richardson took over as convening authority in Gallagher’s case last week. It is unknown when he might make a final decision in the case.

In a post on their joint Instagram account, Gallagher’s wife, Andrea, said her family was being sued by Vokey.

“Our hour of need, Colby Vokey and (nonprofit United American Patriots) came in and promised to give Eddie a top-notch legal defense with all expenses paid,” Andrea Gallagher said in the post. “Instead, they dragged the case out, focused more on using our family for fundraising while Colby ran up the bill, and made little to no progress in actually freeing Eddie.”

Vokey declined to comment when reached by phone Tuesday. In the post, Andrea Gallagher said Vokey was “fired” after he “tried to push the trial out to November. We felt that he lied, threatened and extorted our family.”

We believe it if were up to Colby Vokey, Eddie would still be in the brig with a trial in November or later,” she said in the post.

In addition to hiring Parlatore, the family hired Marc Mukasey, who also serves as one of President Donald Trump’s personal attorneys. Mukasey said Wednesday that because he and Parlatore don’t normally practice in military court, they were able to deploy a more unstrained defense.

“It was a really smart move, and a brave move, for Eddie, Andrea and Sean (Eddie Gallagher’s brother) to ultimately go with lawyers from outside the system,” Mukasey said. “We were able to take a more aggressive approach, rattle cages that needed to be rattled and hold the government accountable.”

Although Vokey began representing Gallagher as early as spring 2018, any contract signed before October was not included in the complaint. According to the October contract, Vokey and co-counsel Philip Stackhouse were to be paid $400 per hour. However, it also says that Gallagher was approved for financial support through United American Patriots, a nonprofit that helps fund legal costs for servicemen.

“Client has applied for and been accepted for financial support from United American Patriots to cover attorney fees and case expenses,” the contract states. Vokey is listed on UAP’s website as a member of its advisory board.

In March, after Vokey’s alleged firing, Andrea Gallagher announced on social media that her husband’s defense would no longer raise money via UAP. She directed supporters to donate to the Navy SEALs Fund, another nonprofit that helps Navy SEAL families in need.

“Please confirm you will pay the legal fees & expenses of any clients regarding Edward Gallagher … If this Lien is not honored … I will take the necessary action to hold the Navy SEALs Fund responsible,” Van Shaw wrote in the email. “We believe if it were up to Colby Vokey, Eddie would still be in the brig with a trial in November or later, so she said in the post.

In an email to the Navy SEALs Fund obtained by the Union-Tribune, Vokey’s attorney, Van Shaw, informed the fund about his efforts to obtain legal fees allegedly owed to Vokey and issued a lien notice to the nonprofit.

“Reached by phone Wednesday, Shaw suggested there was an agreement between the Navy SEALs Fund and Vokey but declined to specify what it was,” Parlatore said.

Parlatore said he did not expect Vokey to move against the Navy SEALs Fund.

“Threatening the Navy SEALs Fund is not what anyone would expect from any professional attorney who values representing U.S. servicemembers,” he said.

Parlatore said the Gallaghers were “stunned” by the arbitration demand.

“We are certainly going to fight this, and I expect at the end of the day, Mr. Vokey will end up owing Eddie Gallagher money,” Parlatore said. “When I took the case over, absolutely nothing Colby Vokey did is representing Eddie Gallagher was of any help in moving this case forward. He performed no valuable services.”

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**Naval Academy appealing reinstatement of fired professor**

**By Brian Witte**  
Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The U.S. Naval Academy is appealing a judge’s decision to reinstate a fired English professor who has been a longtime critic of the academy, officials said Wednesday.

Bruce Fleming, a civilian who is a tenured professor, was fired last year after the academy alleged “conduct unbecoming a federal employee” in the classroom.

Andrew Phillips, the academy’s academic dean and provost, wrote to Fleming on Wednesday that he had been reinstated with all pay and benefits to which he is entitled. Phillips wrote for Fleming to report to the academy Monday to receive assignments “such as scholarly research and writing and service to the school.”

Phillips wrote that Fleming’s duties will not include teaching or advising students because the Navy has determined “your presence in the classroom and engaging with midshipmen in any advisory role would be an undue disruption to the academic environment.”

Accusations against him included allowing students to tell jokes of a sexual nature in class, discussing sexual matters in class, emailing a partially clothed photo of himself to his students and touching students on the neck, shoulders and back in class without their consent.

But Mark Syska, an administrative judge with the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, wrote in his order for reinstatement last month that a student who was a primary witness in the case “had severe credibility issues.” He also wrote the purported victims in the case, who were students, “did not generally take offense or have any actual issue with the appellant.”

“The appellant appears to be a rather unique professor at the academy,” Syska wrote in his order, noting that he is “irreverent, theatrical, fashion-conscious, outspoken in his criticism” of the academy, both in the classroom and his writings.

Fleming and his attorney, Jason Ehrenberg, have contended the academy is unfairly trying to punish him for criticizing the academy and for his teaching style in an affront to the academic freedom that is supposed to come with tenure.

“The military either doesn’t know or doesn’t care about tenure, because that’s not the way the military works,” Fleming said in a recent interview.

In response to the appeal, Fleming wrote in an email Wednesday that the academy was trying to “drag the process out as long as possible.

“They will lose the appeal,” Fleming, who became a professor at the academy in 1988, said. Fleming has criticized the academy’s administration for years, publishing op-eds in prominent newspapers and other publications.

In 2005, the academy’s superintendent privately rebuked him for a Navy Times magazine article that criticized the academy’s practices. In 2017, he wrote an op-ed criticizing Vice President Mike Pence and other graduation speakers for portraying graduates as “superior to those people they are supposed to defend.”
Syria decries US-Turkey safe zone deal

By Albert Ai
Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — Damascus on Thursday accused Turkey of “expansionist ambitions,” saying Ankara’s agreement with Washington to set up a safe zone in northeastern Syria only helps the country’s Turkish neighbors.

The statement by Syria’s Foreign Ministry comes a day after the U.S. and Turkey announced they agreed to form a coordination center to set up the safe zone.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the move, which is designed to address Ankara’s security concerns, was important.

The announcement of the deal may have averted — for now — a Turkish incursion into that part of Syria. Ankara seeks to push out U.S.-allied Syrian Kurdish fighters from the region as it considers them terrorists, allied with a Kurdish insurgency inside Turkey.

The Syrian Kurdish fighters were the main fighting force on the ground against Islamic State militants in the area, and Washington has been hard-pressed to protect its partners.

Erdogan said the Syrian Kurdish groups “bear historic responsibility” for the U.S.-Turkey deal and urged them to drop “this aggressive U.S.-Turkish project” and align with the Syrian government instead.

Damascus has had no presence along the Turkish border since 2012, when Syrian rebels and Syrian Kurdish groups took control of different parts of the region.

After three days of talks in Ankara and repeated Turkish threats of a military incursion in northeastern Syria, Turkish and U.S. officials agreed that the coordination center would be based in Turkey and would be set up “as soon as possible,” according to the Turkish Defense Ministry.

The ministry did not provide further details but said the sides had agreed that the safe zone would become a “corridor of peace” and that all additional measures would be taken to ensure the return of refugees to Syria.

Turkey has been pressing to control — in coordination with the U.S. — a 19- to 25-mile-deep zone within Syria, east of the Euphrates River and wants no Syrian Kurdish forces there.

In its previous military incursions, Turkey entered northwestern Syria, compelling Islamic State militants and Syrian Kurdish fighters from the area and setting up Turkish military posts there, with allied Syrian opposition fighters in control.

Turkish troops also man observation points that ring the last opposition stronghold in the northwest — posts that are meant to uphold a now fraying cease-fire.

Ariz. delegation seeks more aerial refueling tankers

By Deb Riechmann
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Unrelenting Taliban attacks like the deadly car bomb that rocked Kabul on Wednesday are undermining the credibility of negotiations to end the nearly 18-year-old war in Afghanistan, the country’s ambassador to the U.S. said.

The near-daily attacks across the country will cause greater distrust of talks that U.S. and Turkish officials have said are close to producing an agreement and the eventual withdrawal of American forces, Ambassador Roya Rahmani said in an interview with The Associated Press.

“Is it simply not understandable why somebody with the idea of peace in mind would like to continue killing people,” Rahmani said in a nearly hourlong interview with The Associated Press.

The most recent Taliban attack targeting Afghan security forces blasted a busy neighborhood during morning rush hour, killing at least 14 people and wounding 145 — most of them women, children and other civilians. The bombing was one of the worst in the Afghan capital this year and comes just after U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad reported “excellent progress” in U.S. talks with the Taliban.

“As a citizen, for me, it becomes much harder to trust and continue with a positive spirit if I feel continuously attacked. I think this is shared by our people,” the ambassador said.

Earlier this week, the Taliban said differences had been resolved over the withdrawal of the remaining 14,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan and about Talib an guarantees that they will cut ties with other extremist groups, such as al-Qaida, which was responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks.

She said the attacks across the country could be evidence that the Taliban are trying to get further concessions at the negotiation table or that they want to capture more territory. The Taliban now control roughly half of the country, but not the cities of Afghanistan. Rahmani said she thinks reaching a cease-fire first could have provided a better climate for negotiations and would have instilled the “trust that is needed for a successful peace process.”

Rahmani said there’s no way to carry out any kind of negotiated peace if the Afghan government is sidelined.

“We who are going to implement whatever you’re going to agree to’ the ambassador asked. “If there is no government in place, no institutions to implement what you’re agreeing to in the peace talks, then how is that going to hold? I think if they want peace, they would have to sit with the government.”

Earlier this week, the Taliban issued a statement saying that the upcoming Afghan presidential election in late September will be worthless.

The insurgent group vowed to sabotage the process through multiple attacks on election sites and campaign rallies.

Afghan ambassador: Taliban attacks undermine peace talks

By Deb Riechmann
Associated Press

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Ariz. delegation seeks more aerial refueling tankers

By Albert Ai
Associated Press

PHOENIX — Arizona congressional delegation members are asking the Pentagon to provide more aerial refueling tankers to a Phoenix-based Air National Guard unit.

A letter signed by Sens. Kyrsten Sinema and Martha McSally and eight of Arizona’s nine U.S. House members says the 161st Air Refueling Wing should get additional KC-135s because there’s an increasing demand for aerial refueling in the region.

The letter cites refueling needs of planes either based at installations in metro Phoenix, Tucson and Yuma or assigned to out-of-state units using the Barry M. Goldwater Range.

The letter also says expanding the 161st’s current roster of eight KC-135s would help justifying expanding its home base at Goldwater Air National Guard Base at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

Democratic Rep. Raoul Grijalva did not sign the letter.

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**Cracks in C-130 wing parts prompt partial grounding**

**By JENNIFER H. SVAN**

Sailors and Marines could still pop positive on a drug test if they use cannabidiol, popularly known as CBD, while treating medical conditions, the Navy warned this week.

In a new policy, the Department of Navy forbids members of the Navy and Marine Corps from putting any products made of hemp or hemp derivatives into their bodies without a genuine prescription, even if the goods are sold legally and despite manufacture claims that they’re free of THC, the principal chemical found in pot known as tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC.

Low-THC hemp was removed from the Controlled Substances Act, which bans cannabis with higher amounts of the chemical, by a 2018 farm bill President Donald Trump signed in December, adding that the aircraft was deemed safe for operations.

A policy message signed the same day by Navy Secretary Richard Spencer states that the use of hemp products — either by injection, ingestion, inhalation or other routes, including absorption through the skin — would interfere with Navy and Marine Corps drug testing programs and “result in the reporting of unlawful THC levels.”

The service already bans the use of such substances among their members.

Failure to comply with the Navy policy will be considered a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice Article 92, failure to obey a lawful order or regulation, and any other article that applies, the service said.

Sailors who test positive for THC or other controlled substances face mandatory administrative or disciplinary action, including a possible “other than honorable” discharge that can affect their eligibility for veterans’ benefits and employment opportunities.

The policy does not ban the use of topical products containing hemp or its derivatives, including shampoos, conditioners, lotions or soaps, the message states.

It’s the latest attempt to clarify military rules about cannabis-related goods and services amid the loosening of restrictions on pot-derived products and a growing number of states legalizing marijuana for medical or recreational use.

While federal law and Defense Department policy remain opposed to possession, use, manufacture, sale or distribution of pot, rapid changes to the laws have caused confusion for the troops.

Earlier this year, some service members had been warned that investing in marijuana businesses, knowingly or unknowingly, could jeopardize their employment or security clearances. That presented complications since some mutual funds — including the government’s Thrift Savings Plan — include stocks in marijuana-related industries.

But, despite the warnings, the Defense Department had no official guidance “specific to financial involvement with marijuana,” Pentagon spokeswoman Army Lt. Col. Andrea Harris said in March.

When the farm bill was signed last winter, DOD policy on drug abuse testing for military personnel did not mention hemp “per se,” though it did mention marijuana, synthetic cannabinoids and controlled substances, which includes THC, said the website for Operation Supplement Safety, a Pentagon resource for information about dietary supplements and prohibited ingredients.

But in separate service-specific rules, the Army, Air Force and Coast Guard had policies that forbid military members from using products made with hemp or hemp seed oil. The Navy and Marine Corps did not until now.

In an attempt to cut through the haze around the products and policies, the Navy has produced fact sheets on the use of hemp or CBD that emphasize its “zero tolerance” on drug abuse, stating that even accidental exposure to the banned substances is not a legitimate excuse for a positive urinalysis.

“Unless you have a valid prescription to justify a positive result, you are subject to the full range of consequences from any drug positive urinalysis result,” the fact sheets state.

**Navy: CBD products remain under ban**

**By JOSHUA KARSTEN**

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**Navy Operational Support Center North Island conducts a monthly urinalysis test of assigned reserve sailors on Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego, on July 13. The Navy warned that hemp-derived products are still prohibited by the military.**

**Officials say USAF pay issue caused by upgrade**

**By BRIAN FERGUSON**

A software upgrade was responsible for a pay issue that affected some 6,800 active-duty and reserve airmen, the Air Force Personnel Center said Thursday.


The issue started when a software upgrade at a DISA data center caused a server to stop transferring data, a DISA spokes person said.

The types of pay affected included updates to special duty assignment pay, selective reenlistment bonuses and foreign language pay, Dickerson said.

Service has been restored and any missing payments will be corrected in the next pay round.

“It’s important our airmen have confidence in the personnel and finance professionals supporting them and the systems through which those transactions occur,” Dickerson said. “We continue partnering with DISA and DFAS to help ensure our airmen’s records and pay are accurate.”

The pay alert was first posted Monday on the front page of myPers.af.mil, a secure personnel site.

The Navy has not experienced any pay issues, a spokesman said. The Army and Marines also have not reported any problems.

The Air Force asked in its initial alert for airmen not to submit formal queries until after Aug. 15.
**NATION**

**Texas governor: No ‘red flags’ from suspect**

By Morgan Lee and Paul J. Weber
Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas — Gov. Greg Abbott said Wednesday he’s not aware of any “red flags” in the suspected El Paso gunman’s past and made no mention of taking major gun control measures in Texas, where three mass shootings since 2017 have killed more than 30 people.

Abbott, a Republican, said racism needs to be confronted and a crackdown initiated on internet sites used by violent extremists after the weekend attack that left 22 people dead in the mostly Latino border city.

“The people of Texas have been victimized by several mass shootings. It must be stopped,” said Abbott, who met with legislators Wednesday in El Paso and said the state will act swiftly to address his calls for action.

The lawmakers in the meeting with him, all Democrats from El Paso, have unsuccessfully pushed for tighter firearms restrictions in the state Legislature. They gathered for a discussion hours before Abbott welcomed President Donald Trump to El Paso amid protests blaming Trump for inflaming racial and political tensions.

Last year, 10 people were killed in a shooting at Santa Fe High School near Houston. In 2017, a shooting at a church in rural Sutherland Springs left more than two dozen worshippers dead.

In the El Paso shooting Saturday, authorities believe the suspect gunman, Patrick Crusius, got a racist screed online before opening fire at a Walmart. Hours later in Dayton, Ohio, another gunman killed nine people in an entertainment district.

An attorney for Crusius’ family said Wednesday that the suspect’s mother contacted police weeks before the rampage out of concern that her son had a rifle.

Dallas attorney Chris Ayres confirmed to The Associated Press that the call was made to police in Allen, a Dallas suburb. He declined to give details, but a fellow attorney R. Jack Ayres told CNN that Crusius’ mother contacted the Allen Police Department to ask about an “AK” type firearm Crusius owned.

The attorneys said the mother was only seeking information and wasn’t motivated by a concern that her son was a threat to anybody.

They also said the mother didn’t identify herself or her son in the call.

Sgt. Jon Felty, Allen police spokesman, said there was no record of such a call and he wasn’t aware of it.

Crusius has been charged with capital murder in state court and may face federal hate crime charges that could also come with death sentences if his conviction.

Mark Stevens, Crusius’ court-appointed attorney, said he “will use every legal tool available to me to prevent” Crusius from being put to death.

Following the Santa Fe High School shooting, Abbott signaled support for so-called red flag laws, which restrict gun access for people deemed dangerous to themselves or others. But he retreated amid pushback from gun rights supporters in Texas, which has more than 1.3 million handgun license holders and allows handguns and rifles like the one used Saturday in the El Paso shooting to be openly carried in public.

**Mayors press Senate for action on gun bills**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than 200 mayors, including those affected by recent shootings in Texas and Ohio, are urging the Senate to return to the Capitol to act on gun safety legislation amid criticism that Congress is failing to respond to back-to-back shootings that left 31 people dead.

In a letter Thursday to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and the Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer, the mayors wrote, “Our nation can no longer wait for our federal government to, yet again, fail in its primary and necessary duty to prevent people who should not have access to firearms from being able to purchase them.”

The mayors urged the Senate to vote on two House-passed bills expanding background checks for gun sales that passed that chamber earlier this year. The letter was signed by El Paso, Texas, Mayor Dee Margo; Dayton, Ohio, Mayor Nan Whaley; and others where mass shootings have occurred, including Orlando and Parkland, Fla.; Pittsburgh; and Annapolis, Md.

Quick passage of these bills is a critical step to reducing gun violence in our country,” they wrote.

The push comes as McConnell, the Republican leader, resists pressure to recall senators from the congressional recess despite wrangling calls to “do something” in the aftermath of the shootings.

Instead, the Republican leader is taking a more measured approach, as GOP senators talk frequently among themselves and with the White House in the face of mounting criticism that Congress is failing to act.

President Donald Trump is privately calling up senators while publicly pushing for an expansion of background checks for firearms purchases, but McConnell knows those ideas have little Republican support.

In fact, the White House threatened to veto a House-passed background checks bill earlier this year. Yet, as the nation reels from the frequency of shootings and their grave toll, McConnell’s unwillingness to confront the gun lobby or move more swiftly is coming under scrutiny.

“I can only do what I can do,” the president told reporters Wednesday as he departed Washington for visits to El Paso and Dayton to comfort victims and families and to praise first responders.

Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown made a personal plea to Trump during his visit to call on Sen. McConnell to bring the Senate back in session this week, to tell the Senate he wants the background checks bill that has already passed the House.

The politics of gun violence are difficult for Republicans, including McConnell, who would risk losing support as he seeks reelection in Kentucky if he backed restricting access to firearms and ammunition.

Republicans are trying to build support for modest measures, including so-called red flag bills from Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., which would allow friends and family members to petition authorities to keep guns away from people deemed a threat to themselves or others. But those efforts are also running into trouble from conservatives who worry about due process and infringing on gun owners’ rights.

Mayors warn Trump on checks

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump has repeatedly told lawmakers and aides in private conversations that he is open to endorsing extensive background checks in the wake of two mass shootings, prompting a warning from the National Rifle Association and concerns among White House aides, some lawmakers and administration officials.

Trump, speaking to reporters Wednesday before visiting Dayton, Ohio, and El Paso, Texas, where weekend shootings left 31 people dead, said after the president expressed “great appetite for background checks” amid an outcry over government inaction in the face of repeated mass shootings.

Trump’s previous declarations of support for tougher gun controls, including after the deadly Parkland, Fla., shooting in February 2018, have foundered without a successful legislative push by the president and support from the NRA or Republican lawmakers. Even Trump’s advisers question how far he will go in any effort.

NRA chief executive Wayne LaPierre spoke with Trump on Tuesday after the president expressed support for a background check bill and told him it would not be popular among Trump’s supporters. The NRA has focused on bills that would be struck down by the courts on the condition of anonymity to freely discuss internal talks.

Trump has backed the NRA and the legislation sponsored by Sens. Patrick Toomey, R-Pa., and Joe Manchin III, D-W.Va., declined to comment.

Trump has waffled, current and past White House officials say, between wanting to do more and growing concerned that doing so could prompt a revolt from his political base. Even some supporters of the Manchin-Toomey bill, which would expand background checks to nearly all firearm sales, say it is unlikely to pass.

The White House would need a White House official to take the lead on the president or his Republican allies going to become out of nowhere advocates of aggressive gun control,” said Matt Schlapp, who leads the American Conservative Union and is a close ally to Trump.

The NRA, like hundreds of groups on guns extensively since the shootings, calling lawmakers and surveying donation requests about what he should do — outreach that began Sunday evening.

Some measures — such as a ban on assault weapons — have been ruled out, White House officials and legislative aides say.
Dem voters take lead in Calif. GOP stronghold

By Amy Taxin
Associated Press

SANTA ANA, Calif. — A California county long known as a national GOP stronghold now has more registered Democrats than Republicans.

Orange County’s Registrar of Voters reported Wednesday there are 89 more Democrats than Republicans among its 1.6 million registered voters.

It’s the first time Democrats have outnumbered Republicans in more than four decades, said Neal Kelley, the county’s Republican registrar of voters. The county is also part of a national change with growing Latino populations in many states and counties that they too can turn their regions blue.

The parties each have about 547,000 registered voters, while 441,000 registered voters have no party affiliation.

The ascendency of the county Democrats mirrors a long-running trend in California, which has grown increasingly Democratic.

Up until several decades ago, the state was a reliable win for the GOP in presidential elections. Today, Democrats hold every statewide office, dominate the Legislature and command a nearly 4 million edge over the GOP in voter registrations.

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Candidates face pitfalls at Iowa State Fair

By Thomas Beaumont and Alexandra Jaffe

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Howard Dean took one bite of a deep-fried strawberry Oreo and dismissively pitched the State Fair fare with a strawberry and cream mixture.

"I am a hunter and a gun owner," Bullock said. "And let me say as a hunter, no real hunter needs a 30-round clip. No real hunter needs a weapon of war."

"Do you think that my money pay nothing in taxes? A man who's paying as much as they have and pay as little in taxes as they do? Do you think it's OK that big corporations pay nothing in taxes? Ama-

"I would order a smoothie," said Jeff Link, a veteran Iowa Democratic operative. "That kind of summed the whole thing up right there.

"The state fair, a quadrennial presidential prerequisite stop, is a cultural obstacle course more fraught with pitfalls than opportunities to sway the narrow band of voters who will attend the state’s kick-off caucuses in less than six months.

Starting Thursday, more than 20 Democratic presidential candidates will begin weighing nutritional questionably food choices and navigating media flocks resembling crows on a French fry — all while trying to seem both presidential and comfortable with the folkways of Middle America.

This year, selections that include bacon-wrapped corn dogs and a monstrosity called the hot beef sundae pose particular challenges for Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, a vegetarian, and New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, who keeps vegan.

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Latest governor of Puerto Rico facing protests

By Danica Coto
Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Puerto Ricans braced for more political turmoil Thursday as the third governor in a week took charge of this U.S. territory still divided over who should lead the economically struggling island of 3.2 million people.

(Armed forces fatally shoot a black man in Texas. President Joe Biden vowed to unify the island and bring much-needed stability. A protester outside the government mansion La Fortaleza in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on Wednesday calls for the removal of the island’s newly sworn-in governor, Justice Secretary Wanda Vazquez. By Wanda Vazquez, who has worked in the government for more than 30 years, stepped into the position Wednesday after Puerto Rico’s Supreme Court declared that the assumption of the office on Friday by Rossello’s pick, Pedro Pierluisi, was unconstitutional.

“Puerto Rico is living its most important juncture of its democratic history,” Supreme Court President Maite Oronoz wrote in her opinion. “The summer of 2019 will be remembered as the moment without precedent in which Puerto Ricans — of all ages, ideologies, backgrounds and creeds — threw themselves into the streets to demand more from their government.”

The court settled the political dispute over who will lead Puerto Rico after its establishment was knocked off balance by the huge street protests spawned by anger over corruption, mismanagement of funds and a leaked obscene-laced chat in which Rossello and several top aides disparaged islanders.

Vazquez, 59, a former prosecutor, is the second woman to be governor and is to serve out the remainder of Rossello’s term until elections in November 2020, but at least some of those involved in the anti-Rossello protests are calling for her ouster too.

Critics of Vazquez say that she was not aggressive enough as justice secretary in pursuing corruption investigations involving members of her New Progressive Party and that she did not prioritize gender violence cases.

Appointed justice secretary in January 2017, Vazquez previously worked as a district attorney for two decades at Puerto Rico’s justice department, handling domestic and sexual abuse cases. In 2010, she was appointed director of the Office for Women’s Rights.

The new governor did not speak to reporters after she was sworn in at a ceremony accompanied by her daughter and her husband, Judge Jorge Diaz. But in her televised statement, Vazquez said she would be working for all Puerto Ricans.

“History has brought me here without any political aspirations,” she said. “I recognize that I was not chosen by the people for this position ... But I came from those same people.

“I am a product of public schools ... I know what it is to come from nothing. I know what hard work is.”

A small group of protesters gathered earlier outside the governor’s mansion in San Juan’s colonial district calling for Vazquez to resign and yelling, “There’ll be no peace as long as there’s impunity!” The crowd remained calm as onlookers including tourists took pictures and video of them.

Carmen Santiago, a homemaker from San Juan participating in the protest, said Puerto Ricans have enough energy left to organize more protests.

“Especially the young people,” she said. “It should be the people who choose the governor, not the party.”

Those who oppose the new governor also mention how the Office of Government Ethics received a complaint in November about possible ethical violations by Vazquez, who was accused of intervening in a case involving a suspect charged with stealing government property at a home where her daughter lived. She appeared in court to face charges including two violations of a government ethics law, but a judge ruled in December there was no evidence for her arrest.

Pierluisi was briefly governor after he was appointed by Rossello to fill the vacant secretary of state position while legislators were in recess.

On Aug. 2, the House approved his nomination to the job, which is first in line to replace a governor who leaves office, and he was sworn in as governor after Rossello formally resigned.

Puerto Rico’s Senate then sued to challenge Pierluisi’s legitimacy as governor, arguing that its approval was also necessary. The Supreme Court decided in favor of the Senate.

Largest US immigration raids in a decade net 680 arrests

By Rogelio V. Solis and Jeff Amy
Associated Press

MORTON, Miss. — U.S. immigration officials raided seven Mississippi chicken processing plants Wednesday, arresting 680 mostly Latino workers in the largest workplace sting in at least a decade.

The raids, planned months ago, happened just hours before President Donald Trump visited El Paso, Texas, the majority-Latino border city where a man linked to an online screed about a “Hispanic invasion” was charged in a shooting that left 22 people dead.

“No one is safe when hate is as powerful as it is now,” said Virginia Solis, executive director of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights.

About 600 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents fanned out across the plants operated by five companies, surrounding the perimeters to prevent workers from fleeing.

In Morton, about 40 miles east of the capital, Jackson, workers filled three buses — two for men and one for women — at a Koch Foods Inc. plant.

Those arrested were taken to a military hangar to be processed for immigration violations. About 70 families, friends and residents waved goodbye to his mother, a Koch worker, as he stood beside his father. Some employees tried to flee on foot but were captured in the parking lot.

Workers, including Domingo Candelaria, who could show they were in the country legally were allowed to leave the plant after agents searched the trunks of their vehicles.

“It was a sad situation inside,” Candelaria said.

Mississippi is the nation’s fifth-largest chicken producing state, and the plants’ tough processing jobs have mainly been filled by Latino immigrants eager to take whatever work they can get.

Chicken plants dominate the economies of Morton and other small towns east of Jackson.

Matthew Albin, ICE’s acting director, told The Associated Press in an interview Wednesday in Pearl, just down the road from the Koch plant, that the raids could be the largest-ever workplace operation in any single state.

Asked about their coinciding with Trump’s visit to El Paso, Albin responded, “This is a long-term operation that’s been going on.”

He said raids are “racially neutral” and based on evidence of illegal residency.

The companies involved could be charged with knowingly hiring workers who are in the country illegally and will be scrutinized for tax, document and wage fraud, Albin said.
Tensions high in Yemen after separatist attack

Associated Press

CAIRO — A senior official in Yemen's separatist government on Thursday accused a southern separatist leader of "foisting sedition" after his forces clashed with Yemeni troops near the presidential palace in Aden as concerns rose about a new front in the country's devastating civil war.

In a statement carried by the official news agency, Interior Minister Ahmed al-Mesmery called on the followers of separatist leader Hani Ben Braik to ignore his calls to overthrow the government, saying "they only aim at engendering war" and undermine the fight against Houthis rebels.

A Saudi-led coalition has been backing the Iran-aligned rebels since 2015 on behalf of the internationally recognized government, which is largely confined to the southern city of Aden. The stalemated war has killed tens of thousands of people and driven the country to the brink of famine.

There have long been tensions within the coalition between northerners who fled to the south during the Houthis' advance and southerners who once had their own state and want greater autonomy or outright independence.

WHO: Yemen probe ongoing

CAIRO — The World Health Organization says it follows "a zero-tolerance policy against all forms of corruption" amid calls for greater transparency following an Associated Press report on fraud and mismanagement among some U.N. operations in Yemen.

The WHO issued a statement Wednesday saying it has an ongoing investigation into its Yemen office after an internal audit last year found controls over administration and finances there "unsatisfactory." The audit, it said, identified "conflicts of interest" and "suspected wrongdoing" among staffs in Yemen.

The WHO said it "moved quickly to address audit recommendations." On Monday, the AP revealed investigations by the WHO and UNICEF into operations in Yemen that found some U.N. staffs had been profiting off the massive humanitarian aid program aimed at keeping Yemenis alive.

From The Associated Press

Backers help ex-Kyrgyz president elude arrest

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Kyrgyzstan's ex-president urged his supporters Thursday to push for the ouster of the Central Asian nation's government following a failed police attempt to arrest him that left one policeman dead and nearly 80 people injured.

Almazbek Atambayev, who was in office from 2011 to 2017, accused his successor and one-time protege, Sooronbai Jeenbekov, of fabricating false criminal charges against him to stifle criticism. He urged his supporters to rally Thursday in the capital, Bishkek, to demand Jeenbekov's resignation.

Police attempts to arrest Atambayev at his residence outside the capital failed Wednesday after his supporters rushed to his defense and clashed with police. A police officer later died of injuries at a hospital and 79 people were injured, according to official statements.

Atambayev's supporters took six policemen as hostages but released them Thursday.

The violence has raised the threat of a new round of turmoil in the former Soviet nation, which borders China and hosts a Russian military air base.

Kyrgyzstan's first two presidents after independence were both driven from office by riots.

Shopping malls and other businesses began shutting down Thursday ahead of the planned rallies, in fear of widespread looting that accompanied earlier violence.

Atambayev's supporters, however, changed course and headed back to his countryside residence instead of rallying in the capital, apparently fearing another attempt by the authorities to arrest him.

Atambayev dismissed a slew of charges, including corruption and the expropriation of property, as "absurd." He said he fired several shots when police came to arrest him Wednesday, adding that he "tried not to hit people.

Addressing an emergency parliament session called to discuss the crisis, Jeenbekov said Atambayev should face charges for firing at police.

Hindu activists scuffle with policemen Wednesday after they tried to disrupt a protest demonstration against the Indian government for revoking Kashmir's special constitutional status in New Delhi, India.

Associated Press

NEW DELHI — Indian security forces have arrested more than 500 people since New Delhi imposed a communication blackout and security clampdown in divided Kashmir, where people remained holed up in their homes for a fourth day.

Pakistan, which claims the divided Himalayan region together with India, on Thursday suspended a key train service with India over change in Kashmir's special status by New Delhi as tensions between the rivals soared.

India's government this week revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and downgraded the region from statehood to a territory. Rebels in Muslim-majority Kashmir have been fighting Indian rule in the portion it administers for decades.

State-run All India Radio, which reported on the arrests without details, also said that cross-border firing by Indian and Pakistani troops hit the Rajouri sector of India-controlled Kashmir late Wednesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was expected to address the nation on Thursday to discuss Kashmir. His national security adviser, Ajit Doval, visited the region Wednesday to assess the law and order situation.

Activist Ali Mohammed told the New Delhi Television news channel that he has been organizing ambulances to carry sick poor people to hospitals in Srinagar, the main city in India's portion of Kashmir, as local residents can't even use phones to ask for medical help.

"It's hell," a patient told the television channel.

In New Delhi, opposition Congress party activist Tejshawn Poonawalla said he expected the Supreme Court to hear his petition on Thursday seeking immediate lifting of curfew and other restrictions, including blocking of phone lines, internet and news channels in Kashmir. He also sought the immediate release of Kashmiri leaders who have been detained, including Omar Abdulah and Mehbooba Mufti.

In response to India's action, Pakistani Federal Minister for Railways Sheikh Rashid Ahmad suspended the Express, or Friendship Express, train service to India starting Thursday. The suspension announcement was made as passengers were waiting to board a train in the eastern city of Lahore to travel across the border.

Islamabad on Wednesday said it would downgrade its diplomatic ties with New Delhi, expel the Indian ambassador and suspend trade. Prime Minister Imran Khan told Pakistan's National Security Committee that his government will use all diplomatic channels "to expose the brutal Indian racist regime" and human rights violations in Kashmir, the government's statement said.

India rejected Pakistan's steps and said in a statement that "the intention behind these measures is obviously to present an alarming picture to the world of our bilateral ties."

The External Affairs Ministry said it was not surprising that Pakistan has negatively perceived India's decision to end Kashmir's special status as Islamabad "has used such sentiments to justify its cross-border terrorism."

India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars over control of Kashmir. The first war ended in 1948 with a U.N.-brokered cease-fire that left Kashmir divided and promised its people a U.N.-sponsored referendum on the region's future.

 Hundred arrested since change in Kashmir's status

Associated Press

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Japan OKs first S. Korea export under new law

By Mari Yamaguchi
Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan said Thursday it has granted the first permit for South Korea-bound shipment of chemicals for use in high-tech materials under Tokyo's new export requirement that has increased tensions with Seoul.

The Japanese Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry said it approved the export of a type of photo resists, which enable computer memory chips to be manufactured, to a South Korean company for a specific use.

Tokyo imposed controls last July on the export of three chemical materials to South Korea, saying they were developed for use in weapons programs.

South Korea has accused Japan of using trade to retaliate against Seoul's national security concerns. The move is apparent to mean calm South Korean anger over Tokyo's export curbs and show there is no trade ban in place.

Japan imposed stricter controls on three key materials — fluorinated Arduin photo resists and hydrogen fluoride — that are used mainly for South Korea's semiconductor industry as of July 4. The rules also downgraded South Korea's trade status beginning later this month.

Japanese chemical manufacturers have expressed concerns that case-by-case inspections may prolong the approval process and may hold up production lines for their customers.

The first approval came after about a month, much faster than the standard 90 days.

"The permit merely demonstrates that export licensing by the Japanese government is not arbitrary and is granted to any legitimate transactions that pass strict inspections," Seko told reporters. "The step we took recently is not an export ban."

South Korean President Moon Jae-in remanded a new sanction to administrative fines to those who soil, deface or damage the city's historic, artistic and monumental sites.

The rule serves as an attempt to curb unwanted tourist behavior, from jumping into fountains to walking around Rome shirtless. It also extends to sitting on the Spanish Steps, a historic monument and 18th-century UNESCO-protected attraction. Those in violation of the ordinance will be subject to fines from 250 to 400 euros.

According to a news release from the Italian news wire service Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata, police have begun to enforce the ban this week. People who attempt to take a seat are signaled with whistles and asked to move from the site.

The regulation has been in the works long before this recent implementation.

"It took years for the law to be effective," said Simone Amorico, CEO of Access Italy, a private tour operator. "The mayor (Gianni) Allemandi was the first one who had the idea. Then other mayors agreed with it. But it only came into law a month or two ago."

It's not the first time Roman authorities have tried taking legal action against tourists. In 2012, the city issued a municipal ordinance to ban eating and drinking in historic or culturally significant areas of Rome, with fines up to $550. In 2017, Rome put a temporary ban on eating and drinking near approximately 40 of the city's fountains.

Some tourists may not realize that the public structures are considered priceless works of art rather than a spot to eat gelato.

"You need to set rules to reduce the risk of people being disrespectful to the city of Rome. So many things are so old and so ancient," said Amorico. "Walking in Rome is like walking in a museum. Things go back 2,000 years old. You can walk from one part of the city to the other and pass the most important monuments and venues there in history."

Rome bans sitting on famous steps

By Natalie B. Compton
The Washington Post

In July, Roman officials announced a new sanction to administer fines to those who soil, deface or damage the city’s historic, artistic and monumental sites.

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Israeli troops search West Bank after soldier stabbed to death

By Ilan Ben Zion
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israeli troops raided a Palestinian village on Thursday and the military said it was sending reinforcements to the West Bank, hours after a 19-year-old soldier from the occupied West Bank was stabbed to death.

"We salute the hero fighters, sons of our people, who carried out the heroic operation which killed a soldier of the occupation army," Hamas said in a statement. The Palestinian militant group also hailed the killing as "heroic and bold."

"We promise to ensure the security of our people," said Dvir Sorek, 19, who was killed near a West Bank settlement in response to the incident.

"Our prayers this morning are with the family of the murdered soldier and our hearts grieve for the life cut short," Rivlin said. "We fight terrorism without compromise to ensure the security of our people."

Israel captured the West Bank, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, in the 1967 Middle East war. The Palestinians seek the territories as part of a future state, with the occupied West Bank as the centerpiece and east Jerusalem as a capital.

Most of the international community considers Israel’s West Bank settlements illegal and an obstacle to creating a two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel considers the territories “disputed,” and says the fate of the settlements should be determined through negotiations, which have been moribund for years.

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Swift to perform at MTV VMAs

No need to calm down, Taylor Swift fans. The pop star is set to perform at MTV’s Video Music Awards on Aug. 26, it was announced Wednesday.

The award show is set to take place in Newark, N.J., three days after Swift’s seventh studio album, “Lover,” is scheduled to be released.

The “Shake It Off” singer, 29, last performed at the VMAs in 2015, when she took the stage alongside Nick Minaj for a rendition of Swift’s song “Bad Blood.” That song also earned Swift video of the year honors.

Swift is tied with Ariana Grande for the most nominations at this year’s award show with 10.

Her nominations include video of the year and song of the year for “You Need to Calm Down.”

Willie Nelson cancels tour

Willie Nelson has canceled his tour because of a “breathing problem.”

The 86-year-old singer apologized on Twitter late Wednesday, writing “I need to have my doctor check the problem out.”

Nelson had just finished performing with Alison Krauss in Toledo, Ohio, and he was next scheduled to appear Friday in Grand Rapids, Mich.

He wrote “I’ll be back.”

Nelson was due to perform at the Farm Aid concert with John Mellencamp, Dave Matthews, Neil Young and Bonnie Raitt on Sept. 21. His tour was scheduled to end Nov. 29 in Thackerville, Okla.

Nelson canceled his appearance at the Outlaw Music Festival due to illness last summer. He also was forced to cancel several dates in 2018.
Crash scatters wine bottles on freeway

CHICAGO — A crash involving two semi-trucks scattered hundreds of bottles of wine on a freeway in Chicago. The crash happened along a stretch of Interstate 94 named the Bishop Ford Freeway on the city’s South Side. One of the trailers carrying cases of wine was ripped open.

The Chicago Sun-Times reported one person had minor injuries from the crash.

Attorney wants jurors who won’t judge tattoos

LA BATON ROUGE — A defense attorney for a man charged with murder wants jurors who won’t judge his client because of his face and neck tattoos.

Jarvis Antonio Bottoms Jr.’s tattoos.

Bottoms is charged with second-degree murder in the 2017 deaths of two men.

Town’s wood chipper stolen, old one left

PA WEST PITTSTON — Police in Pennsylvania said someone swapped their old wood chipper for the town’s wood chipper.

West Pittston police posted photos of the chipper that was left behind at the public works department. Police said someone dropped it off and stole the town’s wood chipper.

Liquor group celebrates tax-free status with sale

NH CONCORD — To highlight New Hampshire’s tax-free status and to thank out-of-state customers, the state liquor commission is offering them discounts at its liquor and wine outlet stores.

The “No Taxation on Our Libations” sale is providing customers from Massachusetts a 13 percent discount, Vermont a 12 percent discount and Maine an 11 percent discount, double each state’s sales tax rate.

Customers from New Hampshire and all other states will be eligible for a 13 percent discount.

Worker charged after toddlers’ legs broken

FL PANAMA CITY — A worker at a Florida day care center faces child neglect charges after four toddlers suffered broken legs on the same day.

The Panama City News Herald reported that Christina Marie Curtis, 25, was arrested recently after the May 21 incident at Kids Discovery Learning Center in Valparaiso.

An arrest report said all four young boys were fine the morning of the incident. Later that day, they were having difficulty standing or walking and medical personnel determined they had all suffered leg fractures.

Visitors stranded by strike paint fence

AK KODIAK — Visitors stranded by an Alaska ferry strike kept busy by painting a church fence.

The Kodiak Daily Mirror reported that David and Joanne Wiik, of Anacortes, Wash., helped repaint the fence at the Holy Resurrection Cathedral.

The couple had to extend their RV camping trip to Kodiak due to the Alaska Marine Highway strike by the Inland Boatmen’s Union of the Pacific, which ended Aug. 2.

They offered their services to the cathedral and took up an invitation to paint.

Chief apologizes after cops lead man by rope

TX GALVESTON — Galveston’s police chief apologized after two white officers mounted on horseback led a handcuffed black trespassing suspect by a rope through downtown streets.

Photos of the incident went viral on social media. The two officers linked the rope to handcuffs worn by criminal trespass suspect Donald Neely, 43, and led him around the block to a mounted patrol staging area.

In a statement, Police Chief Vernon Hale said “this is a trained technique and best practice in some scenarios,” such as with crowd control. However, he said he believes his officers “showed poor judgment in this instance and could have waited for a transport unit at the location of arrest.”

2 arrested in burning of dog at beach

CT WEST HAVEN — Police in Connecticut arrested the owner of a dog whose remains were found after a fire in the parking lot of a West Haven beach on Independence Day.

Authorities found the dog’s charred carcass after they were called to Sandy Point Beach on July 4 and put out a small fire.

Police on Monday arrested the dog’s owner, Latrice Moody, 35, of West Haven and issued a warrant for another town resident, Maurice Jackson, 41.

They face charges of breach of peace, illegal dumping and open burning. Moody also is charged with animal cruelty.

Police say they believe her dog, an older terrier, was dead before it was set on fire.

Van mysteriously returned to book center

MD BALTIMORE — A van that was stolen from a Baltimore center that donates free books to children was returned nearly two weeks after it went missing, covered in spray paint, adorned with reproductions of Vincent Van Gogh’s art work and needing thousands of dollars in repairs.

Last month, Kimberly Croust, of the Maryland Book Bank, said the van disappeared from outside its warehouse and workers suspected a thief was to blame.

The van reappeared at the center almost unrecognizable. Photos taken by WJZ show it was covered in gold spray paint, with copies of Van Gogh’s art pasted to its sides and the phrase “van go” written on the hood. It also had a shattered window and no keys.

Thief crashes into store, steals lottery tickets

CA MISSION VIEJO — Southern California authorities were looking for a thief who used a stolen car to smash through the doors of a liquor store and make off with trays of lottery tickets.

The Orange County Sheriff’s Department said the crimes occurred in Mission Viejo.

Video shows the silver Mercedes crash through the store’s doors and security gates, then back out and park. A figure clad in dark clothing crawled through the mangled entryway, disappeared from view and then emerged with trays and fled.

From wire reports
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Hosted by Michelle Harven and Air Force veteran Desmon Farris.
Samsung ditches headphone jack in new Note

By ANICK JESDANUN
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Samsung executives have long poked fun at rivals for ditching the headphone jack in smartphones. With the new Galaxy Note 10, the company will now be doing the same thing.

The Note 10, announced Wednesday, squeezes in more battery power and other goodies, but at the cost of the familiar jack. So now the company is doing an about-face and declaring that many people use wireless headphones anyway.

Samsung, which for years has pushed bigger and bigger displays, is also introducing a smaller version of the Note for those who think phones have just gotten too big.

The new Note models will come out Aug. 23. The main model is being called the Galaxy Note 10 Plus and will have a display measuring 6.8 inches diagonally. Though the display is bigger, the overall size is about the same as last year’s 6.4-inch Note 9. To accomplish that, Samsung shrunk down even more of the bezel surrounding the display.

The smaller, 6.3-inch version will be called the Note 10 and will sell for almost $950, or $150 less than the Plus. It’s designed for those who want the Note’s signature stylus without its once-signature size.

“You hit a certain point where you can’t get much bigger without being physically too large to hold,” Technalysis Research analyst Bob O’Donnell said. “That’s the challenge they are running into.”

Hardware innovation in mobile devices has been slowing for years. Samsung is addressing that with a foldable model, with twice the display when unfolded. The Samsung Fold is coming in September after Samsung made a few design changes to address problems with reviewers’ phones breaking.

Apple is expected to release new iPhones next month. A version that works with next-generation 5G cellular networks isn’t expected. Samsung will have a 5G version of the Note 10 Plus starting at almost $1,300.

The Note 10 Plus will have a 7.5% boost in battery capacity over the Note 9, though Samsung’s high-end phones have already been promising all-day battery life. Samsung referred to the headphone jack during its 70-minute announcement event in New York.

Samsung officials told reporters separately that while the 3.5-millimeter headphone jack might seem small, every smidgeon of saved space can help extend battery life. Samsung is including wired headphones that plug into the phone’s USB-C data and charging port. An adapter for other wired headsets is sold separately for $10. Apple and Google also have ditched the standard headphone jack.

But O’Donnell noted the irony: “If you guys gave everybody else grief for doing it, why are you doing it?”

Beyond that, the Note 10 phones introduce new stylus features, including the ability to flip through pages on paper documents by gesticulating with the stylus in the air.

The phones bring a wider-angle lens already found in the S10 and use software to make audio appear louder — and thus closer — in video recordings when zooming in. And by connecting a Note 10 to a Windows or Mac computer with a USB cable, users can interact with phone apps there and drag and drop files between devices.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella appeared briefly to expand on a partnership with Samsung. The collaboration includes giving Note users the ability to receive and respond to text messages and take phone calls from a Windows computer. Apple has long offered similar features, but only for its own devices such as the iPhone and Mac.

The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.
Trump adept at attacking cartoon enemies

**BY VIRGINIA HEGFERNAN**  
*Los Angeles Times*  

With more than 30 civilians murdered last week in massacres in California, Texas and Ohio, the United States across the country have been widely denounced as terrorism. On Sunday, federal officials announced they were treating the El Paso shootings as “a domestic terrorism case, and we’re going to do what we do to terrorists in this country, which is deliver swift and certain justice.” Ivanika Trump used even more sinister language: “White supremacy, like all other forms of terrorism, is an evil that must be destroyed.”

It is impolice to equate an ideology, white supremacy, which apparently motivated at least one of the attacks, with a tactic, terrorism. But it is also understandable. Terrorism is a notoriously slippery word. When police use the term in the heat of the moment, the word “terrorism” briefly to signal their outrage and outrage.

So is it useful to call the mass murders in the U.S. terrorism? The three gunmen were certainly un-acceptable aberrations using violence against civilians.

They also professed or had studied extreme religious dogmas, which they may have held. The suspect in El Paso posted a manifest recently saying the war was a “response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas,” according to reports.

The Dayton, Ohio, gunman played in a “paranoid” brand that performed misanthropic songs with themes of gore and sexual assault. He also reportedly kept a “rape list.”

But does committing violence against civilians and possessing an extremist ideology automatically make someone a terrorist?

The tactic of terrorism has generally been used by terrorists, not by a government or an occupying army.

During the First World War, terrorism, political violence by the labor classes was part of a campaign to panic the upper classes and shake the mon- archy out of power. In Northern Ireland, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) regularly committed violence against the British army, whom it considered occupi- ers, as well as Protestant civilians, whom it perceive its targets.

In this context, the narrative of recent mass murderers in America is supremely inaccurate.

That is, unless there is an imagined oc- cupation in the U.S.: a cultural one, if not a political one.

In the El Paso suspect’s online writing, he expressed a fear that Trumpanism wasn’t long for this world. “The Democrat party,” he wrote, “will own America and they know it.”

The Gilroy gunman complained that nature had been destroyed and was now re-wparing it with an “American idea of nature,” and Silicon Valley white people (though he used a gendered epithet for “people”).

Though the Dayton shooter described himself as a liberal, the extremist, on the upsurging, all of these three men last week seemed to believe that some group of in- terlopers — either people of color or femi- nized elites or both — had seized control of the country.

The panic about a phantom occupa- tion cuts across the political spectrum. It doesn’t matter who’s in power in Washing- ton, the thinking goes. American culture is increasingly drained by a myth that overclass, imagined variously to be head- quartered in Silicon Valley, the banks, the media, major American cities, academia and Hollywood.

In the U.S., one common catchall word for the enemy is “political correctness.”

Last week in an article in Politico, Tim Chumash, the former executive director of Heritage Action for America, a conservative lobby- ing group, cited polling that found a strong aversion on the part of most voters to “political correctness” as the source of — well — everyone; 80% of voters in the middle of the spectrum, according to polls, are aversive to a “move that has changed media.”

Political correctness is an imaginary ideology espoused by exactly no one. It’s said to have something to do with Marx- ists taking over, with identity politics’s, the nightmare of many Marxists. As nebulous as it is as a concept, it’s the name for a secular Satan — for whatever occult force has seemingly hijacked the nation. Women, people of color, and certain white male elites (disparaged with emancipating language) have, however, been targeted frequently and the once targeted frequently by mass murderers.

What makes the attack on political cor- rectness so disturbing is that the ideology doesn’t exist anywhere but in the reactive and unreflective.”

In the past three years, President Donald Trump has taught Americans of every stripe to ignore our actual interests — peace, prosperity, education, the mer- ory — in favor of shadowboxing with cartoon enemies that dance around in his head. For instance, suppose that, for three years, extremists have blown past shadowboxing and taken up arms against the “sharia” phantom.

But because these figures don’t exist, they’ve had to shout citizens at random, and tell themselves they’re part of a revolution.

Virginia Hegfernan is a contributing editor at Wired, a columnist at the Los Angeles Times and a co-host of Trumpcast.

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**OPINION**

**THE BEST THING SAUDI ARABIA, IRAN COULD DO FOR WOMEN**

**BY BOBBY GHOSH**  
*Bloomberg Opinion*

The Middle East’s two most im- portant countries have recently announced reforms that bring hope to the many women with men. In Saudi Arabia, women may now leave the country, without permission of a male relative. In Iran, the supreme court has ordered that women be award- ed the same “blood money” as men in in- stances of death or bodily harm.

Women’s rights activists have responded with, at best, caveat-levenean optimism.

They have pointed out that other aspects of Saudi Arabia’s repressive “guardianship” laws remain in force — for instance, women must get permission from a guard- ian before they can marry. In Iran, the court has ordered that women who violate laws giving women only half the blood money given to a man in similar circumstances; it recently even decreed that women should be set up to fund a pay out the remaining half.

But the more pertinent reason to be cau- tious about the changes is the manifest bad faith behind governments in Riyadh and Tehran toward female activists, some of whom have long campaigned for these very reforms.

As rights groups have pointed out, Saudi Arabia imprisons many female activists; some of them have reportedly been sub- jected to electric shocks, whippings and the threat of sexual violence. The most prominent of these women is Loujain Al- Hathloul, the charges against her include such bizarre accusations as communicat- ing with diplomats and journalists.

In May, before the reforms were an- nounced in the week of Al-Hathloul’s 30th birthday might be a capricious coincidence. But even more perverse is that under one of the unchanged guardianship laws, she would be prevented from leaving her detention without the permission of a male relative.

Al-Hathloul’s Iranian sister-in-activism is Nasrin Sotoudeh, a human rights lawyer jailed for defending those protest the regime. She has been used by those resisting a government the political spectrum. It doesn’t matter who’s in power in Washing- ton, the thinking goes. American culture is increasingly drained by a myth that overclass, imagined variously to be head- quartered in Silicon Valley, the banks, the media, major American cities, academia and Hollywood.

In this context, the narrative of recent mass murderers in America is supremely inaccurate.

That is, unless there is an imagined oc- cupation in the U.S.: a cultural one, if not a political one.

In the El Paso suspect’s online writing, he expressed a fear that Trumpanism wasn’t long for this world. “The Democrat party,” he wrote, “will own America and they know it.”

The Gilroy gunman complained that nature had been destroyed and was now re-wparing it with an “American idea of nature,” and Silicon Valley white people (though he used a gendered epithet for “people”).

Though the Dayton shooter described himself as a liberal, the extremist, on the upsurging, all of these three men last week seemed to believe that some group of in- terlopers — either people of color or femi- nized elites or both — had seized control of the country.

The panic about a phantom occupa- tion cuts across the political spectrum. It doesn’t matter who’s in power in Washing- ton, the thinking goes. American culture is increasingly drained by a myth that overclass, imagined variously to be head- quartered in Silicon Valley, the banks, the media, major American cities, academia and Hollywood.

In the U.S., one common catchall word for the enemy is “political correctness.”

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Women’s team gives equal pay issue a valuable assist

Los Angeles Times

Women's soccer players know, as the female players who are embroiled in a legal fight with the U.S. Soccer Federation over claims that the winning women’s team is paid less than the less victorious men’s national soccer team. For what it’s worth, the freshly crowned World Cup champions last week welcomed President Donald Trump in an open letter that, actually, women have been doing substantially the same job that male administrators and staff, broken down by gender, are required to do. But sometimes it’s just because an employer could get away with paying female workers less than men. That’s wrong and these measures could translate into substantive action that benefits women everywhere.

 Threats to Amazon rainforest are bad for planet’s prospects

The Washington Post

One of the easiest ways to combat climate change is to stop tearing down old trees. This is why it’s everyone’s problem. But sometimes it’s just because an employer could get away with paying female workers less than men. That’s wrong and these measures could translate into substantive action that benefits women everywhere.

Case 2

Brazilian Environment Minister Ricardo Salles gives a presentation during a news conference on deforestation in the Amazon rainforest at Planalto presidential palace, where President Jair Bolsonaro was in attendance, in Brasilia, Brazil, on Aug. 1. (Eraldo Peres)

Red flag laws worth pursuing to prevent mass shootings

Boston Herald

Bullet-resistant backpacks are now being sold in major retail stores. The idea is that when the next school shooter opens fire in the hallway, fleeing children who are shot in the back will have a better chance of surviving. It is a new consideration that children and parents need to make in 2019: Is my child dressed for style? Is she dressed for weather? Is she dressed for war?

Solution to mass shootings because so often we hear afterward about the myriad warning signs that potential shooters typically display before they strike.

But since so many weapons are obtained legally, law enforcement needs a tool to temporarily take away access to them. The idea of “red flag” laws would be to allow law enforcement, family or a household member to report an at-risk individual to the courts for a temporary restriction from firearms. Red flag laws form a critical part of the solution to mass shootings because so often we hear afterward about the myriad warning signs that potential shooters typically display before they strike.
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## College football

### Amway Top 25

The preseason Amway Top 25 football poll is decided by the College Football Writers Association, which consists of 65 members. The Association selects 25 teams to receive points, for place through one point for 25th, and last year’s national champions.

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### AP sportlight

1936 — Jesse Owens becomes the first American to win four Olympic gold medals as the United States sets a world record in the 4x100 relay at the Berlin Games.

### AP sportlight

Comcast-owned NBC Sports is the exclusive broadcast partner of the NFL, the NBA, and the NHL. (via @NFL on Twitter)

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American League

East Division

New York

Boston

Toronto

Philadelphia

Baltimore

Central Division

Chicago

Cleveland

Detroit

Minnesota

West Division

Houston

Oakland

Toronto

Los Angeles

Seattle

National League

East Division

Atlanta

Washington

Miami

New York

Philadelphia

Central Division

Chicago

Cincinnati

Milwaukee

Pittsburgh

West Division

Atlanta

Houston

Los Angeles

San Diego

Seattle

Philadelphia

Arizona

Arizona

Baltimore

Chicago

Colorado

Cincinnati

Cleveland

Detroit

Kansas City

Los Angeles

Miami

Minnesota

New York

Oakland

Philadelphia

Pittsburgh

San Francisco

Tampa Bay

Tuesday’s Game

Kansas City at Detroit

Wednesday’s Games

N.Y. Yankees vs. Baltimore

Kansas City at Minnesota

Chicago Cubs at St. Louis

Washington at Milwaukee

Colorado at Los Angeles

New York at Chicago

Philadelphia at San Diego

Toronto at New York

Pittsburgh at Kansas City

Kansas City at Minnesota

Thursday’s Games

N.Y. Yankees at Baltimore

Kansas City at Minnesota

Chicago Cubs at Philadelphia

Washington at Milwaukee

Colorado at Los Angeles

Kansas City at Los Angeles

Kansas City at Minnesota

Chicago at Philadelphia

Friday’s Game

Kansas City at Minnesota

San Francisco

Colorado

Arizona

San Diego

Seattle

Chicago

San Diego

Texas

Milwaukee

New York

Boston

Los Angeles

Pittsburgh

Tampa Bay

Baltimore

Cincinnati

Cleveland

Detroit

Kansas City

Los Angeles

Miami

Minnesota

New York

Oakland

Philadelphia

Pittsburgh

San Francisco

Tampa Bay

MLB scoreboard
By Greg Beacham  
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — As the Los Angeles Dodgers’ oldest player, Russell Martin figures he has an extra appreciation for this club’s remarkable string of impossibly dramatic victories at Chavez Ravine.

When the veteran backup catcher got a chance to contribute to this season of walk-off wonder, he didn’t waste it.

“Let the old guys get hot, too, you know?” Martin said with a grin.

Martin drove a two-run, two-out single up the middle for the Dodgers’ 10th walk-off win of the season. Los Angeles swept the St. Louis Cardinals with a 2-1 victory Wednesday.

The 36-year-old Martin delivered after a frustrating offensive day for the Dodgers, who have won five straight despite the best efforts of Jack Flaherty. Los Angeles couldn’t score during seven brilliant innings of four-hit ball by the Cardinals starter in his hometown ballpark, but the Dodgers still came through against St. Louis’ bullpen.

Andrew Miller hit Corey Seager with a pitch with one out in the ninth, and Carlos Martinez (2-2) gave up pinch hitter Will Smith’s single. After Martinez threw a wild pitch to move up both runners, Martin bounced a two-strike single through the middle, and Smith sprinted home with the winning run.

“You just shorten up your swing, try to touch the ball, and let destiny happen,” Martin said.

Martin hadn’t had a walk-off hit since May 2016 in Toronto, and he hadn’t delivered a walk-off hit for the Dodgers since April 2007. He’s batting .219 this season, but he still helped Los Angeles post its major league-best 77th win.

Casey Sadler (2-0) pitched the ninth for Los Angeles, which avoided its first shutout loss since May 15 with its final swing.

Los Angeles improved to 46-15 at home while hitting double digit walk-off hits in the majors.

The Dodgers’ Corey Seager, right, gets hit by a pitch with St. Louis Cardinals catcher Matt Wieters watching during the ninth inning of Wednesday’s game in Los Angeles. The Dodgers won 2-1.

## Roundup

### Yanks extend winning streak to 8 with rout of Orioles

Associated Press

Baltimore — Gio Urshela and Kyle Higashioka each hit two home runs, and the Yankees’ long-ball outburst against the Baltimore Orioles reached historical proportions Wednesday night in a 14-2 blowout that extended New York’s winning streak to eight games.

Urshela had a pair of two-run drives, and Higashioka totaled five RBIs with his two shots. It was the first career multihomer game for both players.

The Yankees have 11 players with multihomer games against Baltimore this season, breaking the record of 10 set by San Francisco against the Dodgers in 1998.

Cammy Maybin also went deep for the Yankees, who tied a major league record with 16 home runs in a three-game series.

New York has hit 52 homers against the Orioles this season, breaking its own major league mark of 48 against the Kansas City Royals in 1996.

The frustration of being dominated in this lopsided three-game series reached a boiling point for the last-place Orioles in the middle of the fifth inning. After manager Brandon Hyde leaned over and said something to Chris Davis, the first baseman hurled in Hyde’s direction and had to be restrained by teammate Mark Trumbo and hitting coach Don Long.

James Paxton (7-6) allowed one run (a homer by Trevor Minor) over 6½ innings to help the Yankees roll to their 15th straight victory at Camden Yards and 12th in a row overall against the Orioles.

John Means (8-7) took the loss.

**Mets 7, Marlins 2:** Michael Conforto homered twice, Pete Alonso and Jeff McNeil hit two-run shots and host New York completed a four-game sweep of Miami.

The Mets posted their sixth straight victory, winning the 13th time in 14 games.

**Braves 11, Twins 7:** Ozzie Albies homered twice in his second straight four-hit game, Ronald Acuna Jr. and Freddie Freeman both went deep, and visiting Atlanta beat Minnesota.

Max Fried (13-4) used a season-high 10 strikeouts to win his fourth consecutive start, pitching into the sixth inning.

The New York Yankees’ Cameron Maybin gestures after hitting a solo home run off Orioles pitcher Tom Eshelman during the ninth inning Wednesday in Baltimore.

**White Sox 8, Tigers 1:** Ivan Nova pitched eight scoreless innings, and visiting Chicago beat Detroit.

Nova (7-4) allowed five hits, walked three and struck out one as he picked up his third win in four starts.

**Blue Jays 4, Rays 3:** Reliever Nickoglu allowed two hits over four scoreless innings in his debut with his new team and visiting Toronto beat Tampa Bay.

**Braves 10, Athletics 1:** Ian Happ hit a two-run homer with two out in the first inning and his second homer, the 13th of his rookie season, was a solo shot in the fifth. He also had a double in the third inning for the Brewers, who moved past the St. Louis Cardinals into second place in the NL Central.

**Cubs 10, Athletics 1:** Ian Happ hit his second career grand slam, Jose Quintana (10-7) tossed two-hit ball through seven innings to win his sixth straight and host Chicago routed Oakland.

Kyle Schwarber hit a three-run homer, Victor Caratini connected and Javier Baez kept up his latest hot streak with two hits and two RBIs for the Cubs. NL Central-leading Chicago took two of three from the A’s and won its fifth in six games.

**Mariners 3, Padres 2:** Mallex Smith doubled leading off the eighth inning and then Daniel Vogelbach beat out a potential inning-ending double play, and host Seattle snapped a five-game losing streak.

**Indians 2-5, Rangers 0-1:** Jose Ramirez homered, his team’s bullpen combined on a four-hitter and host Cleveland swept a doubleheader against Texas.

In the opener, Ramirez connected off Ariel Jurado (6-7), who held the Indians scoreless on two singles before allowing the third baseman’s 15th homer.

**Nationals 4, Giants 1:** Gerardo Parra hit a three-run homer against his former team, Joe Ross pitched six shutout innings of three-hit ball and visiting Washington completed a three-game sweep of San Francisco.

Parra broke camp with the Giants but was designated for assignment on May 3. His seventh homer came in the third inning off Shaun Anderson (3-4) and made it 4-0.

**Diamondbacks 6, Phillies 1:** Zack Godley threw five scoreless innings and helped himself with a run-scoring sacrifice bunt in his debut with his new team and host Arizona beat Philadelphia.

Gallen (2-3) allowed just one hit with three walks and six strikeouts.
COLUMBIA, S.C. — Clemson’s national championship football program was flagged for eight secondary NCAA violations during a yearlong period from July 2018 through this past June.

The school’s athletic department released a summary of the infractions Wednesday:

None of the violations were considered major and all issues about the penalties have been resolved, according to the school.

Names of athletes, coaches or staffers involved in the infractions were not in the summary provided to The Associated Press by Clemson. The month and day when the violation occurred was blacked out in the report.

The football violations reported by the school included a homeowner allowing a player to drive the going rate for work around the home on three separate occasions. Two violations involved players on social media in a promotional capacity.

The other five infractions were committed by football staffers and included running an athlete for ground transportation expenses above the school’s mileage rate.

Others involved the school publicizing the signing of a football recruit before he had signed with the program. Another was for the football staff impermissibly mailing out a printed questionnaire to 221 prospects about life-skills programming before Sept. 1 of their junior years in high school.

Penn State linebackers Ellis Brooks and Micah Parsons participate in a tug-of-war contest during the annual Penn State Lift for Life in Holuba Hall last month in State College, Pa.
RB Dillon aiming to carry BC to bigger things

Assistant coach keeps hitting jackpot with QBs and playmakers

By Ken Poytk
Associated Press

BOSTON — Boston College running back AJ Dillon was slowed by an ankle injury last season that cost him two games and limited his speed.

“I would say last year was a humbling experience,” Dillon said Tuesday. “I felt like it taught me a lot about myself, obviously I’m not invincible. You’ve got to protect your body.”

It even brought him back to reality, a bit.

“If I had any coach come in, I still think we’d have to all be comfortable with what he has to bring to the table. It’s just a different way of learning.”

“Just being 100 percent truthful,” he said. “I honestly couldn’t play my kind of football at all during the regular season after the injury.”

Boston College coach Steve Addazio knows how important Dillon is to the team’s success and figures to watch his workload. If he’s healthy, Addazio’s team may finally get past seven wins, its total in six of his seven seasons at the school.

“I think we’ll monitor him,” he said. “There are going to be games where he’s going to just — you know, if he’s healthy, he’s going to carry a huge load. That’s what great tailbacks do, but we will be conscious and pick and choose.”

Coming off a freshmen season when he piled up nearly 1,600 yards in 13 games, Dillon wants to carry BC to bigger things.

“My goal is always to be the best on the field no matter who I’m out there with,” he said.

Sarkisian inherits loaded ’Bama offense

Assistant coach keeps hitting jackpot with QBs and playmakers

By John Zenor
Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Steve Sarkisian keeps hitting the jackpot when it comes to quarterbacks and other offensive playmakers.

A former USC and Washington head coach, Sarkisian left the Crimson Tide after the national championship game in January 2017 to head to the NFL. He took over an offense led by reigning NFL MVP Matt Ryan and All-Pro receiver Julio Jones. Before that, he arrived at USC in 2005 with Matt Leinart returning after winning the Heisman.

Mike Locksley directed the nation’s No. 3 scoring offense last season before leaving to become Maryland’s head coach. Even with the departure of tailbacks Josh Jacobs and Damien Harris to the NFL, Sarkisian has a bountiful selection of offensive playmakers. The backfield still has former five-star prospects Najee Harris and freshman Trey Sanders and a bulldozing Brian Robinson Jr.

And Sarkisian said his offensive philosophy starts with running the ball.

Sarkisian brings a familiarity with Tide coach Nick Saban and his program — and with Tagovaloa. He recruited the quarterback when he was at USC and the left-hander from Hawaii was a 10th grader.

Following his firing at USC, Sarkisian worked in the 2016 season as an offensive analyst at Alabama. He took over as coordinator in 2017 when Lane Kiffin left for Florida Atlantic before the national championship game.

Then Sarkisian left for the Falcons, where he and the defensive and special teams coordinators were dismissed following a disappointing 2018 season.

“It’s great to see coach Sark come back,” Tagovailoa said. “I have built a relationship with him since I was being recruited by my sophomore year of high school. I think if we had any coach come in, I still think we’d have to all be comfortable with what he has to bring to the table. It’s just a different way of learning.”

Learning from Saban was a big reason why Sarkisian made his initial stop in Tuscaloosa in 2016. He wanted to get a firsthand view of how Saban ran his program and what things he emphasized.

In the spring, he wasn’t hearing those messages for the first time. It just brought back a lot of thoughts and reminders and I was able to go back through some notes of why those things are important and start to emphasize them on our own even on the offensive side of the ball to support that message,” Sarkisian said. “So I think it was big.”

He returns to the college ranks after two seasons in the NFL — much like Saban did after his foray with the Miami Dolphins.

The Falcons ranked fourth in the NFL in passing but 27th in rushing last season.

“I always had a lot of respect for Sark,” Saban said. “He’s very well-organized and does a good job with the players. He’s a good teacher. He’s got a really good personality. He’s easy to work with.

“He does a great job of managing the staff. I can’t really speak for him and how that helped his development as a coach, but my time in the NFL was very beneficial to me and how you are going to bring personnel to your team. And when you do that all the time, I think you get better at it.”
Balancing act: Biles mixes rage, grief and healing

By Will Graves
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The mix of rage, disappointment and grief are still there. Just under the surface.

And while Simone Biles tries to stay focused on the healing process more than 18 months after the Olympic gymnastics champion revealed she was among the hundreds of athletes abused by disgraced sports doctor Larry Nassar, there are times when the massive systemic breakdown that allowed Nassar’s behavior to run unchecked for years becomes too much.

“I don’t mean to cry,” the typically poised Biles said through tears days before attempting to win her sixth national title. “But it’s hard coming here for an organization having had them fail at us so many times. And we had one goal and we’ve done everything that they’ve asked us for, even when we didn’t want to and they couldn’t do one damn job. You had one job. You literally had one job and you couldn’t protect us.”

Biles is in therapy to help deal with the emotional fallout, well aware that progress will never be linear and that a full recovery might not be possible.

“Everyone’s healing process is different, and I think that’s the hardest part,” she said. “Because I feel like maybe I should be healed or this or that. But I feel like it will be an open wound for a really long time and it might not ever get closed or healed.”

So Biles is doing what she can, trying to find a balance between her pursuit to become the first woman in more than 50 years to repeat as Olympic champion while using her status as the face of her sport to effect change.

“When we tweet, it obviously goes a long way,” she said. “We’re blessed to be given a platform so that people will hear and listen. But you know, it’s not easy coming back to the sport. Coming back to the organization that has failed you. But you know, at this point, I just try to think, ’I’m here as a professional athlete with my club team and stuff like that.’ Because it’s not easy being out here. I feel every day is a reminder of what I went through and what I’ve been through and what I’m going through and how I’ve come out of it.”

The process in some ways is getting easier. There were days early in her return to training in the fall and winter of 2017 and early 2018 when she would quit in the middle of practice and walk out of the gym without a word to coaches Cecile and Laurent Landi as to why.

“Those days are gone. Biles says therapy has helped her rediscover her joy for the sport she is redefining at every meet. Still, the effects of her experience with Nassar, combined with the inability of USA Gymnastics, the USOPC and the FBI to act decisively when athletes alerted them about his conduct, linger. She can feel it when she is introduced to a new staff member at USA Gymnastics and sense it in her reluctance to meet with trainers after practice.

“How can we trust them?” Biles said. “They bring in new people all the time and I automatically put my foot up because the people that I had known for years had failed us.”

Asked if she’s optimistic that USA Gymnastics — which is on its fourth president and CEO since March 2017 and filed for bankruptcy last fall in an effort to halt the decertification process — can find a way forward, Biles shrugged.

“Yes, the organization has taken several steps in addressing what it acknowledged was a toxic culture that played a role in Nassar hiding in plain sight, including updating its Safe Sport policy to provide better protection for athletes and clearer guidelines for coaches, parents and trainers on what constitutes abuse.”

Yet Biles is wary. She has watched for the last three years as every step forward by USA Gymnastics is met with a step backward. Biles is intent on making sure she leaves gymnastics in a better place. She hopes the organization she competes for is sincere in its attempts to do the same.

For now, she doesn’t sound convinced.

“All we can do at this point is have faith that they’ll have our backs, they’ll do the right thing,” she said. “But at the end of the day it’s just a ticking time bomb. We’ll see. It’s a waiting game.”

NCAA’s agent certification draws concern, criticisms

By Aaron Beard
Associated Press

There are concerns about the NCAA’s new requirements allowing men’s basketball players to sign with an agent during the NBA Draft process while maintaining their college eligibility.

The measures — which notably now include requiring agents to have a bachelor’s degree — have drawn criticism from an attorney who has worked on numerous NCAA eligibility cases, at least one agent and NBA All-Star LeBron James via Twitter, among others.

“Frankly I think some of the efforts to control student-athletes and coaches, I think some of those actions are illegal,” Alabama-based attorney Don Jackson said Wednesday. “But now they’re attempting to engage in conduct where they’re going to assert economic control over people that they have no real right to regulate.”

The entity that actually has the responsibility of certifying contract advisers in basketball would be the National Basketball Players Association, not the NCAA.

The NCAA rule permitting Division I men’s players to obtain an agent yet still return to school after withdrawing from the draft was part of recommendations from the Condoleezza Rice-led Commission on College Basketball, which was formed in response to a federal corruption investigation into the sport.

The change took place last August, with the first wave of early draft entrants allowed to sign with an agent certified by the NBA players union in the spring. The NCAA added an additional layer of restrictions that control who players can sign with while preserving their college eligibility when the governing body created its own certification program that was announced this week.

The NCAA released a statement Wednesday night, saying that it “as a higher education organization. … values a college education and continues to emphasize the importance of earning a degree.” It also noted that Rice’s commission had recommended that the NCAA’s certification process “should be more stringent.”

The application process now also requires agents seeking the NCAA’s certification to take an in-person examination and go through a background check. Agents must also pay a $250 application fee and an annual $1,250 certification fee separate from any fees and requirements for the NBA certification.

James was one NBA player who felt the educational requirement targeted his agent, Rich Paul — who does not have a bachelor’s degree. Paul has become one of the most powerful agents in the NBA with a star-studded client list that includes James along with Anthony Davis.

James made that connection, tweeting Tuesday night “TheRichPaulRule” then followed 2 minutes later: “Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop! They BIG MAD and Scared. Nothing will stop this movement and culture over here. Sorry! Not sorry!”

I feel like it will be an open wound for a really long time and it might not ever get closed or healed.

Simone Biles
Aussie rugby league star Holmes tackling NFL dream

By Dennis Wazak Jr.  
Associated Press

Valentine Holmes was as massive a star in Australia as he could have ever imagined. The standout winger and fullback for the Castleford-South Sydney Rabbitohs National Rugby League Side was recognized wherever he went, with die-hard fans donning his team's jersey and wide-eyed youngsters wanting to play just like him.

Holmes is in training camp with the New York Jets competing for a roster spot as a running back, wide receiver and return specialist. It's a long shot, but players can earn a place on the 53-man active roster if they don't, they are eligible for a practice squad exemption. They wouldn't count against the team's allotment of 10 non-active roster players.

"I'd say it's been kind of like a roller-coaster," Holmes said. "Obviously, I've had some ups and downs. Learning the playbook and getting stuff wrong is not always good, just making mistakes on the field or even in the classroom. And then, also making good plays and making good stops is also a possibility next to the tackle."

Without a proven third wide receiver, Holmes has shown flashes in recent days after a back ailment limited him early in camp. He had a 50-yard touchdown catch in a drill Monday that had his teammates fired up.

"He's picking up the offense," Jets coach Adam Gase said. "That hasn't really been his issue. It's just if everything starts moving super-fast, he's trying to get used to that and I think it's starting to work for him. He's slowing down for him and I think it just keeps slowing down.

"I'm excited to see him get to play in some games and just kind of see how he reacts to all that."" Holmes might get that chance Thursday night in the Jets' preseason opener against the Giants.

Holmes is in training camp with the Jets, trying to fulfill a dream of playing American football in the NFL.

"I was a big fish in Townsville, but then when I went over to Sydney, it was 10 times bigger and a lot more competitive because they had a lot more people," he said. "I worked my way up there."

Holmes had one year left on his contract with the Sharks, but instead had the team release him, passing up about $720,000, to pursue the NFL.

Some speculated Holmes is merely passing time in the U.S. until next year when he could potentially make big-time bucks as a highly coveted free agent in rugby league.

"It wasn't really about my situation financially or anything," said Holmes, who would earn $129,000 on the Jets' practice squad. "The opportunity came up and I'm sure a lot of people would take it if they wanted to and if they could. It's also kind of creating a pathway for other guys who'd like to do that in the future."

What Holmes is attempting is not unprecedented, but is uncommon. Jarryd Hayne was the first rugby league player who never previously played American football to make it onto an active NFL roster when he spent the 2015 season with San Francisco as a running back and return specialist.

Offensive lineman Jordan Mailata became the second after being drafted by Philadelphia last year in the seventh round, although he didn't play in any games as a rookie.

Holmes is on his way to forging his own legacy, but he refuses to look too far ahead. There's no time for that. He's living his dream right now.

"I'm just trying to focus on being healthy and staying fit, and the longer I do that, maybe the more time I get on the field and maybe that helps my chances," Holmes said. "I'm not really worried about the future of myself at the moment. I'm just kind of worried about what I'm doing now and getting to better at learning the playbook and needing to get better on the field."
By Ralph D. Russo
Associated Press

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — Micah Parsons could hardly wait to see his face on the massive video board atop Beaver Stadium. He imagined how cool it would be to hear 107,000 fans roar when he was announced as a starting linebacker for Penn State — as a freshman.

Parsons rolled into Happy Valley last year with much fanfare and no shortage of confidence. A five-star prospect whose roller-coaster recruitment was laid bare on social media, he had much to prove as a player and a person. Parsons won over the skeptics, coming off the bench in 12 of 13 games and still putting together the greatest freshman season by a linebacker at the school that proudly touts itself as Linebacker U.

It has been 19 years since Penn State had a linebacker selected in the first round of the NFL Draft. Parsons has all the attributes to end that drought.

“He’s a generational player,” said LaVar Arrington, the last Penn State linebacker to be a first-rounder.

Parsons is still waiting for that first home start, though. Despite being the first player to lead the team in tackles as a freshman, Parsons had a lot to learn. It was not enough to practice hard. He needed to focus when he was not participating. Parsons could make plays because of his freaky athleticism, but after playing defensive end in high school he was taking introductory courses at linebacker.

Penn State defensive coordinator Brent Pry said Parsons was at the 100-level last year and is now working on 200.

Parsons disagrees.

“Oh, yeah, I’m definitely 200-level. I would say I’m pushing 300-level. I’m probably 300-level, to be honest with you,” Parsons said.

Definitely no shortage of confidence. Parsons’ father, Terrence, said his son needed to be humbled last year.

“And he was a little bit, you know, not happy at first because again this kid has always been the star. Always been on the forefront,” Terrence Parsons said. “Now it was like, hey, everybody’s a