Army, Marines choose new modular, multicaliber sniper rifle

BY SLOBODAN LUKIC
Stars and Stripes

The Army and Marine Corps want to buy a multicaliber sniper rifle that would provide improved accuracy at long ranges as part of modernization efforts aimed at maintaining parity with rivals like Russia and China.

Both services have allocated funding in the proposed 2021 budget for the bolt-action, modular Barrett Firearms Multi-Role Adaptive Design, or MRAD, which allows for quick barrel swaps to handle 7.62 mm NATO, .300 Norma Magnum and .338 Norma Magnum ammunition.

SEE RIFLE ON PAGE 4

World Health Organization appeals to governments to ‘pull out all the stops’ in containing virus

SEOUl, South Korea — After two more U.S. military dependents tested positive for COVID-19, the Army commander in the epicenter of South Korea’s coronavirus outbreak pleaded with his community Thursday to help maintain the “bubble” protecting the garrison as the new coronavirus spreads outside.

Confirmation that an active-duty American service member’s dependent and the spouse of a civilian Defense Department employee had been infected raised to six the number of confirmed cases affiliated with U.S. Forces Korea.

SEE USFK ON PAGE 9

าน World Health Organization appeals to governments to ‘pull out all the stops’ in containing virus

A South Korean soldier wearing protective gear sprays disinfectant as a precaution against coronavirus in Seoul, South Korea, on Thursday.

LEE JIN-MAN/AP

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SEE RIFLE ON PAGE 4
BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Note: Numbers were not available to us before press time.

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country | Unleaded | Super unleaded | Super plus | Diesel | Unleaded | Super unleaded | Super plus | Change in price
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---
Japan | $3.490 | $3.490 | $3.490 | $3.490 | $3.490 | $3.490 | $3.490 | 0.00
Okinawa | $2.479 | $2.479 | $2.479 | $2.479 | $2.479 | $2.479 | $2.479 | 0.00
Guam | $2.909** | $2.909** | $2.909** | $2.909** | $2.909** | $2.909** | $2.909** | 0.00

* Diesel EFD  ** Midgrade

For the week of March 6-11

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

WEATHER OUTLOOK

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

FRIDAY IN EUROPE

SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC

EUROPE

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EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates
Euro costs (March 6)  $1.1488
British pound (March 6)  $1.33
Japanese yen (March 6)  156.00
South Korean won (March 6)  1,150.00

Commercial rates
Bahrain (Dinar)  0.3770
British pound  1.2917
Canada (Dollar)  1.3480
China (Yuan)  6.9363
Denmark (Krone)  6.6763
Egypt (Pound)  15.6502
Euro  1.1080/0.8937
Hong Kong (Dollar)  7.8771
Hungary (Forint)  300.21
Israel (Shekel)  3.4716
Japan (Yen)  105.20
Kuwait (Dinar)  0.3058
Norway (Krone)  9.2816
Philippines (Peso)  50.79
Poland (Zloty)  3.84
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)  1.7529
Singapore (Dollar)  1.8527
South Korea (Won)  1,188.44

Switzerland (Franc)  0.9508
Thailand (Baht)  31.55
Turkey (Lira)  6.1069

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate  4.25
Discount rate  1.75
Federal funds market rate  1.50
3-month bill  0.70
5-year bond  1.64

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New line of plastic Army women to include Rosie

By Chad Garland

Little green plastic Army women shipping out later this year will include a military working dog and handler, a nurse and Rosie the Riveter on a pedestal inscribed with her signature slogan “We Can Do It!”

The toys are on track to be deployed ahead of Christmas, said Jeff Imel, owner of BMC Toys, in a Kickstarter post offering a look at some of the prototypes.

The BBC’s Women’s History Month kicks off, with the military celebrating the contributions of female soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, even as military women continue to mark “firsts” and take on roles previously restricted only to men.

The first collection of female versions of the classic green toy soldiers is also available for preorder in bagged sets of 36. Color options include tan and, somewhat controversially, pink.

Imel’s company, which has for years been producing lines of soldiers and other plastic forces from vintage molds, has sold pink Tim Mee brand Plastic Army Men since 2013, but that wasn’t what young Vivian Lord wanted when she wrote to Imel last year.

“These aren’t girls and people in the army don’t wear pink,” she wrote. “Some girls don’t like pink, so please can you make army Girls that look like women? I would play with them every day and my friends would, too.”

Inspired in part by the 6-year-old Arkansas girl’s letter, Imel started a crowdfunding campaign to help launch the new line of 2-inch toy soldiers. He decided to offer them in pink after receiving messages from military women asking for the option, he said.

Military women have been the main supporters of the project, Imel said in a livestream in the final hour of the Kickstarter campaign in December, as it surpassed an “insane” $55,000, nearly five times its initial goal.

“It’s meant a lot to military women who told me that you know they just want a little bit of recognition,” Imel said. “They’ve served for a long time in a lot of roles and sometimes they feel invisible.”

These aren’t the first plastic Army women, Imel said during the livestream, showing off a female nurse from a mid-20th century set.

At least some of the new poses are for now only available as women. Imel said in January that the dog handler and dog, for example, are not available in sets of plastic Army men.

The run was initially expected to include six poses: a Pathfinder captain with handgun and binoculars, standing and kneeling riflemen, a prone sniper, a grenade-throwing soldier and a kneeling bazooka operator.

As the campaign grew, more poses were added, including a running riflewoman, combat medic, low-crawling soldier, radio operator and a light machine gunner. Also planned is a wounded soldier, a stretcher and female medics to carry her.

BY WYATT OLSON

Roosevelt is 2nd carrier to visit Vietnam since 1970s

The USS Theodore Roosevelt arrived Thursday in Vietnam, becoming only the second U.S. aircraft carrier to make a port call there since the fall of Saigon in 1975.

The carrier, accompanied by guided-missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill, steamed into Danang, where they were met by Vietnamese and U.S. government and military officials, according to a 7th Fleet news release. Waiting to greet the vessels were Adm. John C. Aquilino, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Daniel Kritenbrink.

The port call by the Roosevelt and its strike group, a total of 6,500 military personnel, marks 25 years since the two former foes normalized their diplomatic relations.

Adm. Phil Davidson, commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, announced Tuesday that the Roosevelt would stay in Vietnam.

“It’s true. We do have TR pulling into Danang this week,” he said in response to a reporter’s question during 2020 West, a naval conference in San Diego.

The BBC’s Vietnamese language online news site reported that the Roosevelt would stay in port five days. The strike group crew is expected to take part in community service projects, sports competitions and other events, according to “7th Fleet. “The visit will not only serve to strengthen our bilateral defense relationship but also help further advance our cultural and professional ties,” said Capt. Brett Crozier, the Roosevelt’s commanding officer, according to the 7th Fleet.


The strike group also includes the guided-missile destroyers USS Russell, USS Paul Hamilton, USS Pinckney, USS Kidd and USS Rafael Peralta.

The carrier USS Carl Vinson made the first historic visit to Danang in March 2018.

Davidson remarked Tuesday on the growing importance of Vietnam’s support of U.S. efforts to push back on China’s broad but disputed claims of sovereignty over most of the South China Sea, which also borders Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Vietnam has been “quite vocal and supportive of U.S. freedom-of-navigation operations near islands claimed by China in its broader South China Sea claims of sovereignty over most of the South China Sea,” Davidson said.

“The Navy sails ships close to islands claimed by China in a subtle show of force during those operations. Vietnam is also chairing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations this year, thus taking the lead on negotiating a code of conduct with China for defined “rules of the road” for international air and sea traffic in the South China Sea, he said.

The U.S. has a growing interest in deepening military ties with Vietnam, a country that America was at war with in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Vietnam’s importance as a regional partner became even more relevant last month after Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte moved to terminate his country’s visiting forces agreement with the United States.

If Duterte follows through with that termination, “U.S. access to ports in Vietnam on a regular basis will become all the more urgent to support U.S. naval presence patrols in the South China Sea,” Carlyle Thayer, emeritus professor at The Australian Defence Force Academy, wrote Tuesday in a background brief for Thayer Consultancy.

The U.S. tried and failed last year to convince Vietnam to approve U.S. aircraft carrier visits on an annual basis, Thayer said.

“This proposal was part of a larger U.S. diplomatic initiative to raise bilateral relations to a strategic partnership,” he said.

“It is likely that China’s intrusion into Vietnam’s Exclusive Economic Zone in waters near Vanguard Bank for several months last year proved to be a tipping point,” Thayer said.

The Roosevelt’s visit is a signal by the U.S. that it “intends to remain the pre-eminent naval power in the Western Pacific and South China Sea,” Thayer said.

By granting the port call, Vietnam is indicating it supports the U.S. Navy in nearby waters “as long as it contributes to peace and stability,” he said.

BY NIKKI WENTLING

Trump to award retired general the Presidential Medal of Freedom

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump will award the Presidential Medal of Freedom next week to Jack Keane, a retired four-star general and former vice chief of staff for the U.S. Army.

The White House announced Wednesday that Keane would receive the medal, which is one of the nation’s highest civilian awards. It goes to individuals who’ve made especially meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the U.S., to world peace, or to cultural or other significant public or private endeavors.

Military commentator Keane has devoted his life to keeping America safe and strong,” the announcement reads.

Keane, 77, served as a paratrooper in the Vietnam War and later commanded American troops around the globe, including in Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia. He earned two Defense Distinguished Service Medals, five Legion of Merit, two Army Distinguished Service Medals, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star and the Ronald Reagan Peace through Strength Award.

The general retired in 2003 and is now employed as a network defense analyst. He also serves as executive chairman of a leading defense contractor and is a partner at a venture capital firm that specializes in the defense industry.

Multiple presidents have sought advice from Keane. In 2016, Keane said he declined an offer from Trump to be secretary of defense, but Keane still offers Trump his independent advice.

The announcement Wednesday comes exactly one month after Trump awarded his most recent Presidential Medal of Freedom, which went to conservative radio commentator Rush Limbaugh during Trump’s State of the Union address Feb. 4.
Space Force Leaders say branch will be kept small

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Space Force leaders on Wednesday testified the sixth military service would build up slowly and carefully during the next several years as it absorbs existing space service members and units from other services. Air Force Lt. Gen. David Thompson, who is assigned as the Space Force’s No. 2 general, told the House Appropriations Committee’s defense panel that space leaders were going to great lengths to avoid unnecessary buildup of the branch.

“There’s been tremendous pressure and tremendous drive from our leadership to hold down the bureaucracy of this force,” he told the subcommittee during Wednesday’s first hearing focused on the Space Force, which was established in December. “We are going through a number of initiatives to ensure we are agile, we are lean and we are mission-focused.”

One of those initiatives is establishing how existing space troops from the other services will be incorporated into the Space Force. The Space Force intends to start with Air Force space operators, likely with the first batch moving into the new service in September, said Air Force Maj. Gen. Clinton Crosier, the director of Space Force plans.

Planners have identified individuals serving in 16 Air Force specialties as troops expected to have an opportunity to transfer into the service, according to a defense official, who provided the list on condition of anonymity and cautioned that the military jobs available within the Space Force could change as plans are finalized. Those specialties are: 13S space operations, 13C space systems operations, 14N intelligence, 17C cyber operations officer, 17D computer systems operator, 22S cryptologic linguist, 62E development engineer, 62S material leader, 63A acquisition manager, 63G senior material lead, upper-chelon and 63S material leader.

While space operators will largely be expected to move into the Space Force, the service will seek volunteers to transition to the new branch for many of the other specialties, officials have said.

Crosier said he does not expect space operators now serving in the Army, Navy and Marine Corps to transfer into the Space Force until 2022.

The Space Force remains a one-person military service. Gen. Jay Raymond, the chief of space operations, is the only official member of the service. The general is expected to be joined in the Space Force later this month by its first senior enlisted leader, Roger Toebes, who is an Air Force chief master sergeant and the senior enlisted leader for U.S. Space Command at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado.

The Space Force generals in the two hearings Wednesday faced questions about the potential size of the service and about its plans for reserve components.

Lawmakers said they worried the service could balloon in size, comparing it to the establishment of the Director of National Intelligence’s office, which has grown from about 100 individuals in 2005 to more than 1,200.

Among the concerns raised by Rep. Peter Viscosky, D-Ind., was planning that would include two four-star generals and at least three three-star generals within the Space Force, which he said could make the small service “top heavy.”

Thompson said he understands the concern but defended the planning because an equal military branch requires a certain level of brass to ensure its standing among the services.

Ultimately, Thompson and Raymond said, separately, the Space Force would build up as planned over the coming years and then adjust as dictated by its mission set.

But there are many questions that remain about the service, ranging from what it will have a National Guard or Reserve element.

Thompson defended the Pentagon’s delay in making a decision about a Space reserves component, saying it will only happen if a National Guard official member of the service. The service has no need to review. Those files detailing the information that the service could balloon in size, and how it could be built differently from Guard and reserves components. National Guard officials, including top generals in charge of the service, have lobbied in recent weeks for the creation of a Space Guard.

Among several lawmakers to vocally support the immediate buildup of a Space National Guard, said he was “skeptical” about an ongoing study of the issue.

“By not doing it now does it make it easier just to never do it?” he asked. “It just makes sense that the Space Guard idea should have been part and parcel of the process from the beginning, and it should have been incorporated.”

Thompson argued the study was unnecessary because Womack it would be even harder to “uncrate a (Space) Guard.”

“What we don’t want to do is put blanders on,” the general said. “We want to allow ourselves full flexibility.”

DOD contractor charged with giving up secrets

BY ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Defense Department contract linguist has been charged with giving classified information, including the names of American intelligence assets, to a Lebanese national with ties to the militant group Hezbollah, the Justice Department announced Wednesday.

Federal prosecutors accused Mariam Taha Thompson, 61, formerly of Rochester, Minn., of turning over information that placed in danger those intelligence assets and American military personnel.

Thompson was due in court later Wednesday for an initial appearance. She was arrested last week on the espionage-related allegation.

Prosecutors said that during a six-month period beginning in late December, 2007, Thompson reportedly targeted Iranian-backed forces in Iraq, Thompson repeatedly accessed dozens of files that she had no need to review. Those files included the names of human assets, their photographs and cables detailing the information that the services provided to the U.S. government.

Prosecutors said that when officials searched her living quarters, they found a handwritten note in Arabic concealed under her mattress with information about Defense Department computer systems and warning of a Defense Department target.

They said she had given the information in the note to a co-conspirator, in whom she had a romantic interest. The co-conspirator, who was not identified, worked for the Lebanese government and “has personal connections” to Hezbollah, according to prosecutors.

They said Thompson, who had a top secret government security clearance, was arrested last Thursday at an overseas U.S. military facility. It was not identified.
Renaming air base meant to inspire future warriors

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE, Texas — All airmen aspiring to join one of the Air Force’s elite special warfare units will now begin their journey at a training complex named for Medal of Honor recipient Master Sgt. John A. Chapman.

Chapman’s widow and his daughter helped remove the tarp Wednesday morning to officially unveil the renamed Chapman Training Annex at Lackland Air Force Base to a crowd of hundreds of current, former and future special warfare airmen and local community members.

“All airmen who pass through this gate will gaze upon the sign of the Chapman Training Annex and know they may be called upon to be the next Chapman,” Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of the Air Education and Training Command, said during his remarks at the ceremony, which occurred on the 18th anniversary of Chapman’s death in combat on a snowy mountaintop in Afghanistan.

Chapman was the fourth enlisted airman to receive the Medal of Honor, and the training annex is only the second Air Force facility to be named in honor of an enlisted airman, according to service officials. The other is Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, which was named for Army Cpl. Frank S. Scott, a chief mechanic who, in 1912, became the first enlisted fatality in U.S. military aviation history, according to Air Force Magazine.

At the time of Chapman’s death, the then-technical sergeant was assigned to the 24th Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., and was a member of a reconnaissance team in Takur Ghar, Afghanistan, in conjunction with Operation Anaconda, according to the military’s online biography of Chapman.

On March 4, 2002, his unit’s helicopter was attacked by enemy fighters with heavy machine guns, throwing another service member from the aircraft. Chapman and his team volunteered to go back to save him.

Chapman charged uphill through thigh-deep snow to clear an enemy bunker. He then engaged another enemy machine gun but was shot. Despite his wounds, Chapman continued to battle multiple enemy fighters, which led to his death but allowed for another unit to pull casualties from the battlefield.

In total, seven service members were killed in the battle of Takur Ghar. “John died as he lived, as a man of tremendous character,” said Gen. Stephen A. Wilson, the Air Force vice chief of staff and keynote speaker for the ceremony. “He was a man who would stop at nothing to defend his fellow warriors.”

In August 2018, Chapman was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. His widow, Valerie Nessel, said Wednesday that she hoped renaming the Air Force’s Special Warfare Training Annex at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, in honor of her late husband would inspire and motivate the airmen who train at the facility.

Valerie Nessel, the widow of Medal of Honor recipient Master Sgt. John A. Chapman, said Wednesday that she hoped renaming the Air Force’s Special Warfare Training Annex at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, in honor of her late husband would inspire and motivate the airmen who train at the facility.

In August 2018, Chapman was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. His widow, Valerie Nessel, said that as airmen train at the facility in Texas, she hoped they would use her late husband’s story as motivation to continue when training becomes difficult.

Speaking to the dozens of airmen at the ceremony who are in training, she said: “Remember John on that mountaintop,” where, despite his injuries, he “somehow found the physical strength to take out the enemy.”

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Air Force is still short more than 2K pilots

By Corey Dickstein
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The general for the Air Force told House lawmakers Wednesday that his service remained short about 12,000 pilots, even after the years of attempting to curb aviator losses with large bonuses and increased time in the cockpit.

Gen. David Goldfein, the Air Force chief of staff, told the House Armed Services Committee that the service was “holding its own” in stabilizing its pilot shortfall and has improved retention rates among experienced pilots. But the Air Force — just like the other military services — has continued to struggle to attract and keep new pilots into its ranks and keep them flying military aircraft.

“This is a national-level issue, not an Air Force-level issue. The nation is not producing enough pilots,” Goldfein said during the hearing to defend the Air Force’s request for about $16.6 billion for fiscal year 2021. “We’re starting to see positive trends … but it’s too early to declare any kind of victory.”

Goldfein, who is a decorated career fighter pilot, said the Air Force needs 21,000 pilots in its ranks to meet estimated requirements in the 2018 National Defense Strategy, which commits the military to preparing to fight a major conflict against a potential adversary, namely China or Russia. The general said the service has about 19,000 pilots. It’s similar to what Air Force officials reported last year.

Military officials have blamed a combination of the lure of high-paying commercial airline jobs and low morale among pilots, who until the last few years saw training flight time reduced significantly amid shrinking military budgets and widespread issues with aircraft maintenance.

Goldfein on Wednesday thanked lawmakers for enabling him to offer large bonuses aimed at keeping trained pilots in the service. Last year, the Air Force offered pilots retention bonuses that could reach up to $420,000 in 12 years, for example.

But Goldfein expected increasing morale was more important.

“Most pilots are not truly motivated by money,” he said. “It’s very important to them, but they are motivated by quality of service, what we’re working as we fly in the U.S. Air Force is as rich an experience as we can imagine anything to be.”

That starts with pilots flying more, Goldfein said, adding the service has reported increasing training flight hours each year since 2018.

Pilots are now flying some 19 to 21 hours per month, which he characterized as a large increase from years past.

“Pilots came into the Air Force to fly,” Goldfein said. “If they don’t think that, we’re going to have serious about combat flight readiness they’re going to vote with their feet.

You want to find the highest morale in the United States Air Force, you go find the units with the highest readiness.”

Several lawmakers pointed to another issue plaguing Air Force pilots — a lack of diversity within the ranks. Rep. Anthony Brown, D-Md., said the Air Force has only 47 African Americans flying fixed-wing aircraft.

He described the number of women flying in the Air Force as also “disturbingly low.”

Brown largely blamed a cultural problem prevalent within the Air Force, citing a Rand Corp. study last year that found race and gender stereotyping were prevalent within the Air Force.

“We cannot be afraid of this. We have to take it head on,” Brown told Goldfein and Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett. “I implore you to take this on, and to ask Congress for help.”

The Pentagon announced this week that for the first time in history, the service has selected an African American to lead a military service with the nomination of Air Force Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown to replace Goldfein in the summer as the service’s top general. Brown is a career F-16 pilot, and Air Force officials have said privately his visibility in that position could spur minority recruitment.

Rep. Trent Kelly, R-Miss., had another suggestion to address the diversity issue, asking Air Force leaders to make public appeals directly to minorities and women.

“T he Pentagon announced this week that for the first time in history, the service has selected an African American to lead a military service with the nomination of Air Force Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown to replace Goldfein in the summer as the service’s top general. Brown is a career F-16 pilot, and Air Force officials have said privately his visibility in that position could spur minority recruitment.

Rep. Trent Kelly, R-Miss., had another suggestion to address the diversity issue, asking Air Force leaders to make public appeals directly to minorities and women.

“We’ve got to advertise — we need to make it that the young ladies and minorities see that TV commercial, and they want to go fly fighters for the United States Air Force,” Kelly said, who is also a brigadier general in the Army National Guard.

Barrett said she believed another change happening now within the Air Force was expected to boost interest in the service, including among minorities — the establishment of a new sixth branch of the military, the U.S. Space Force.

“Of the things that will help us even in the Air Force is the recent attention brought to the military service when the Space Force was stood up,” she said.

“There’s new excitement.”

Screenings at NAS Pensacola didn’t cover international students

By Nikki Wentling
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Pentagon procedures meant to detect and prevent threats at U.S. military bases didn’t cover international students, such as the Saudi officer who killed three military members at a deadly attack on Naval Air Station Pensacola last year, a defense official said Wednesday.

Screenings at NAS Pensacola didn’t cover international students, such as the Saudi officer who killed three military members at a deadly attack on Naval Air Station Pensacola last year, a defense official said Wednesday.

“Clearly, there are many ways this can happen,” Reed said. “The FBI is investigating into the attack in Pensacola, 21 Saudi students were expelled from the U.S. for having derogatory material” on their computers and phones, Barr said.

“DEFENSE SECRETARY ESPER directed my office to take steps in two areas — to strengthen the vetting process for international military students immediately and to conduct a comprehensive review of policies and procedures in place for screening foreign students and granting access to our bases,” Reed said.

To address the second mandate, Reed’s team produced a 12-page report about security in place for screening foreign students and making recommendations his team made in the classified report.

“We have a responsibility to the victims to learn all we can from the attack and to implement changes that will mitigate the risk of future occurrences to the greatest extent possible,” Reed said. “Despite the clear benefits, we must ensure that such training does not risk the safety of U.S. military personnel.”

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The hearing, led by Gen. Charles Hooper, director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, talked about the importance of allowing foreign military students to train in the U.S. The program helps build training relationships between the U.S. and its allies and exposes foreign military members to American culture and values, Hooper said.

When asked by Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., whether the U.S. military should limit or change its training requirements for international students, such as the Saudi officer who killed three military members at a deadly attack on Naval Air Station Pensacola last year, a defense official said Wednesday.

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Screenings at NAS Pensacola didn’t cover international students

By Nikki Wentling
Stars and Stripes

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“DEFENSE SECRETARY ESPER directed my office to take steps in two areas — to strengthen the vetting process for international military students immediately and to conduct a comprehensive review of policies and procedures in place for screening foreign students and granting access to our bases,” Reed said.

To address the second mandate, Reed’s team produced a 12-page report about security in place for screening foreign students and making recommendations his team made in the classified report.

“We have a responsibility to the victims to learn all we can from the attack and to implement changes that will mitigate the risk of future occurrences to the greatest extent possible,” Reed said. “Despite the clear benefits, we must ensure that such training does not risk the safety of U.S. military personnel.”

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Airman’s $15 gadget could save millions

BY CHRISTOPHER DENNIS
Stars and Stripes

RAF MILDENHALL, England — A $15 tool developed by an airman at RAF Mildenhall could save the Air Force millions of dollars a year by greatly reducing the time needed to find fuel tank leaks.

The 3D-printed, pressurized leak detection cup developed by Staff Sgt. Patrick Leach decreases by up to 75% the time it takes to detect leaks in fuel tanks, the 100th Air Refueling Wing said in a statement.

The new tool has been authorized for use on KC-135 refueler aircraft at RAF Mildenhall, where it’s estimated it will save $1.5 million a year in man hours.

It works like a “reverse tire leak check by sealing the area where a leak might be, and pushing air back up the pathway to cause bubbles and foam inside the fuel tank where the leak is,” Leach said in an interview Tuesday.

It cuts to about four hours the time it takes to find a leak, Leach said. Previously, it took eight to 12 hours and involved one airman spraying the outside of the aircraft with an air hose. Another airman wearing a respirator would be inside the tank, watching for bubbles or foam to form, indicating a leak.

The airman who had to crawl inside the fuel tank would “smell like fuel for a week,” Leach said.

The tool has been tested on a fuel cell trainer and in simulated environments since September, said fuel systems section chief Master Sgt. Jonathan Harper.

Besides Mildenhall’s KC-135s, Leach’s invention is being considered for use on other aircraft at U.S. bases across Europe, the 100th Air Refueling Wing statement said.

“The ultimate goal is to be able to shape this to any aircraft, even if the wing has a weird design or angles or small areas,” Leach said.

House Democrats push back on VA spending request

BY STEVE BEYNON
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — House Democrats on Wednesday blasted the Department of Veterans Affairs for requesting a large budget increase for 2021, calling the proposed boost in spending at the expense of cutting other agencies a political stunt.

“It’s not a good faith proposal,” said Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., chairwoman of the House Committee on Appropriations subpanel on military construction, veterans affairs and related agencies. “I know it is an election year and it is a fun and easy thing to ask for the sun and moon and the stars to help a veteran who deserves every bit of it. And we would be right there, if possible.”

Other Democrats on the committee also attacked the proposed increase, comparing it to President Donald Trump’s proposal for deep cuts to other federal agencies, including a 9% cut to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention amid a possible outbreak of coronavirus.

“This size of an increase ... it just really looks like the presentation of an unrealistic and political budget,” said Rep. Ed Case, D-Hawaii.

The VA is requesting a 14% increase in its 2020 budget to $243.3 billion for 2021 and is the only federal agency seeking a double-digit funding boost. The VA is the second-largest federal agency, second only to the Defense Department in size and budget.

The proposed budget is Trump’s fourth time requesting an increase for the VA, continuing a pattern set by previous administrations. The agency’s budget has increased consistently since the beginning of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

“In a perfect world, this essentially fantasy budget is a wonderful request. We would love to provide veterans with the best care and benefits money can buy,” Wasserman Schultz said during the hearing on the VA’s budget.

“However, the reality is we live in a world with budget caps. What is frustrating is the administration knows this, and they are essentially using our veterans as pawns in a political game.”

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie pushed back, noting the gains that the department has made in shortening wait times for medical appointments and hiring health care providers and administrative staff as well as technological innovations such as a 5G hospital in Palo Alto, Texas.

“VA is no longer a place where excuses and systemic failures rule the day,” Wilkie said. “[I was] asked to provide a budget to indicate to the country that veterans are a priority.”

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By Mike Corder
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — International Criminal Court judges authorized a far-reaching investigation Thursday of war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed by Afghanistan government forces, the Taliban, American troops and U.S. foreign intelligence operatives.

The appellate ruling marked the first time the court’s prosecutor has been cleared to investigate U.S. forces and set the global tribunal on a collision course with the Trump administration.

Washington, which has long rejected the court’s jurisdiction and refused to cooperate with it, condemned the decision while human rights groups and lawyers for victims applauded it.

“This is a truly breathtaking action by an accountable political institution masquerading as a legal body,” Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said at a State Department briefing. “It is all the more reckless for this ruling to come just days after the United States signed a historic peace deal on Afghanistan, which is the best chance for peace in a generation.”

His comments reflect long-held distrust of the ICC by the U.S. government. In 2018, then-national security adviser John Bolton said at the court established in 2002 to prosecute atrocities throughout the world “unacceptably threatens American sovereignty and national security interests.”

A five-judge appellate panel upheld an appeal by prosecutors against a pretrial chamber’s rejection in April last year of prosecutor Fatou Bensouda’s request to open a probe in Afghanistan.

While acknowledging that widespread crimes have been committed in Afghanistan, pretrial judges had said an investigation wouldn’t be in the interests of justice because the expected lack of cooperation meant convictions would ultimately be unlikely.

That decision drew fierce criticism from rights organizations who said it neglected the desire of victims to see justice in Afghanistan and effectively rewarded states that refused to cooperate with the Hague-based court.

Even though an investigation has now been authorized, the prospect of suspects appearing in court in The Hague any time soon remains dim. Like the United States, Afghanistan also opposed the investigation.

Rights groups, however, welcomed the decision. “The ICC Appeals Chamber's decision to green light an investigation of brutal crimes in Afghanistan despite extreme pressure on the court’s independence reaffirms the court’s essential role for victims when all other doors to justice are closed,” said Param-Preet Singh, associate international justice director at Human Rights Watch.

She added that the decision “is a much-needed signal to current and would-be perpetrators of atrocities that justice may one day catch up to them.”

At a hearing in December, prosecutors argued that pretrial judges at the global court overstepped their powers by blocking the investigation. The appeals judges agreed.

After a preliminary probe in Afghanistan that lasted more than a decade, Bensouda asked judges in November 2017 to authorize a far-reaching investigation.

She said there is information that members of the U.S. military and intelligence agencies “committed acts of torture, cruel treatment, outrages upon personal dignity, rape and sexual violence against conflict-related detainees in Afghanistan and other locations, principally in the 2003-2004 period.”

Bensouda alleges that the Taliban and other insurgent groups have killed more than 17,000 Afghan civilians since 2009, including some 7,000 targeted killings, and that Afghan security forces are suspected of torturing prisoners at government detention centers.

By John Vandiver
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Sailors aboard a U.S. Navy destroyer on patrol near the Black Sea this week saved three mariners from a burning Turkish civilian vessel and recovered two others who died, the Navy said.

USS Ross was passing through the Sea of Marmara on Tuesday morning when lookouts spotted plumes of smoke rising from a boat in the distance.

“Ross quickly deployed her small boat, outfitted with two search-and-rescue swimmers and one corpsman, to rescue distressed crew members and render assistance,” the Navy’s 6th Fleet said in a statement.

U.S. sailors rescued the mariners in distress and recovered the bodies of the two others, who were found dead at the scene. No further information was immediately available Wednesday on the deaths or how the boat caught on fire.

The survivors were provided immediate medical care while the USS Ross coordinated a transfer with the Turkish Coast Guard, the Navy said.

A fleet of Turkish patrol craft guarded USS Ross from the surrounding traffic while the rescued mariners were transferred to a Turkish search and rescue boat, which was to take them ashore for treatment, the Navy said.

“In accordance with international law of the sea and maritime custom, the U.S. Navy assists mariners in distress, just as any other mariner would,” said Cmdr. J.D. John, commanding officer of USS Ross, in a statement. “This demonstrates the multi-mission capability of Ross and our ability to respond rapidly to any situation.”

USS Ross had completed operations in the Black Sea and was heading south toward the Mediterranean Sea when the rescue occurred.

The Navy routinely operates in the Black Sea, a strategic waterway where NATO has sought to boost its presence as a way to reassure regional allies worried about a more aggressive Russia.

Tensions in the Black Sea have escalated in recent years with Russia, which in 2018 seized three Ukrainian ships in a clash that sparked worries from other Black Sea nations like Romania and Bulgaria.

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Court OKs Afghanistan war crimes probe

Pompeo: Afghan violence must ease for peace deal to advance

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Less than 24 hours after President Donald Trump said he had a “very good talk” with a Taliban leader and insisted the militants want to end the violence, a U.S. military drone targeted the group in retaliation for an uptick in attacks against Afghan forces.

It made clear the fragility of the U.S.-Taliban deal signed last weekend aimed at ending America’s longest war. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who witnessed the signing of that agreement in Qatar, said Thursday that the violence was not acceptable.

“We know that the road ahead will be difficult,” Pompeo told reporters at the State Department. “We expected it. We were right. The upsurge in violence in parts of Afghanistan over the last couple days is unacceptable. In no uncertain terms violence must be reduced immediately for the peace process to move forward.”

U.S. officials said Wednesday’s airstrike was intended as a message to the Taliban to cooperate with the Hague-based court to enforce a reduction in violence commitment they had agreed before their peace talks with the Afghan government that are supposed to begin next week.

Officials noted that the deal did not include a full cease-fire but left negotiations on a nationwide truce to the follow-up talks. It did not say that the truce or completion of a peace accord were required conditions for the withdrawal of American troops.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper told senators on Wednesday that the Taliban were honoring the agreement by not attacking U.S. and coalition forces, “but not in terms of sustaining the reduction of violence.” He added: “Keeping that group of people on board is a challenge. They’ve got their own hard-liners and soft-liners and so they’re wrestling with that too, I think.”

Esper said the document allowed the U.S. to act in defense of the Afghan forces. The peace deal says the U.S. must begin withdrawing more than 4,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan in the next week or so.

USS Ross sailors aid Turkish civilian vessel in flames

By John Vandiver
Stars and Stripes

The USS Ross conducts search and rescue operations in the Sea of Marmara on Tuesday. Three mariners from a burning Turkish civilian vessel were saved, and two bodies were recovered.
VIRUS OUTBREAK

WHO: ‘Pull out all the stops’ against coronavirus’ spread

Associated Press

BANGKOK — The global march of the new virus triggered a vigorous appeal Thursday from the World Health Organization for governments to pull out “all the stops” to slow the epidemic, as it drained color from China’s spring festivities, closed Bethlem’s Nativity Church and blocked Italians from visiting elderly relatives in nursing homes.

As China, after many arduous weeks, appeared to be winning its epic, costly battle against the novel coronavirus, the fight was raging up in newly affected areas of the globe, unleashing disruptions that profoundly impacted billions of people.

The U.N. health agency urged all countries to “push this virus back,” a call to action reinforced by figures showing there are now about 17 times as many new infections outside China as in it. To date, the virus has infected nearly 97,000 people and killed over 3,300.

“This is not a drill. This is not the time for giving up. This is not a time for excuses. This is a time for pulling out all the stops,” WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a daily briefing in Geneva. “Countries have been planning for scenarios like this for decades. Now it is the time to act on those plans.”

As Chinese manufacturers gradually reopened their factories, anti-virus barriers went up elsewhere.

In Italy, the epicenter of Europe’s outbreak, workers in latex gloves pinned “closed” notices on school gates, enforcing a 10-day shutdown of the education system. Italy’s death toll climbed Thursday to 148, and its confirmed cases to 3,858.

Iran, which has registered 107 virus deaths, has also closed schools and universities. Now it has introduced checkpoints to limit travel between major cities.

Iraqis were urged to reduce their use of paper money.

Virus fears also affected the joyful Indian celebration of Holi, in which Hindu revelers celebrate the arrival of spring with bursts of color, including bright powders smeared on faces. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders said they wouldn’t attend Holi events and the Holi Moo Festival in New Delhi was canceled.

In the United States, where 11 have died from the virus, hundreds of people were placed in self-quarantines due to cases in a New York suburb. A school district north of Seattle with 22,000 students announced it will close for up to two weeks because of coronavirus concerns.

Across the globe, travelers faced ever-greater disruptions, as countries sought to keep the virus out. But South Africa confirmed its first case Thursday, becoming the seventh African nation to report infections. Britain and Switzerland reported their first coronavirus deaths.

Palestinian officials closed the storied Church of the Nativity in the biblical city of Bethlehem indefinitely, weeks ahead of the Easter holiday.

USFK: S. Korean forces base has risk level at ‘high’, asks people to ‘protect bubble’

FROM FRONT PAGE

All were in the southeastern city of Daegu or surrounding areas, which have been hardest hit by the respiratory virus as South Korea’s overall toll increased to more than 6,000, with 40 deaths.

USFK, which commands some 28,500 American troops on the divided peninsula, has restricted access to installations, barred service members from nonessential outside activities and implemented health checks at entry gates to contain the virus.

The six cases, including a soldier and his wife, involved people who lived off post, officials said.

Col. Edward Ballanco, commander of the Daegu garrison, expressed concern that at least two civilians were not following advice to avoid city facilities and warned that entry privileges would be revoked if necessary.

“We absolutely don’t want to do that, but our priority is to protect the community,” he said Thursday during a Facebook Live update.

USFK has raised its coronavirus risk level to “high.” But Ballanco said that on post it’s “extremely low because we’ve created a bubble for our community.”

“We’ve got our bubble established,” he added. “It’s holding; it’s working; our community has not had an outbreak. We’ve had a couple isolated cases and that’s it.”

The service member’s dependent had been in self-quarantine since Feb. 26 and had not been in contact with any other USFK-affiliated person, so health authorities decided no probe into possible contact with others was needed, according to a press release.

The patient was in isolation under direct U.S. military medical care and supervision, it said.

The civilian dependent had been in self-quarantine since Feb. 26 and had not been in contact with anybody other than her spouse since then, USFK said, adding that both had been quarantined and their residences were secured.

South Korean and U.S. military health professionals were conducting a trace investigation to determine whether anyone else may have been exposed, according to USFK.

The woman said she hadn’t been on post since Feb. 21, and the Defense Biometric Identification System used to control access showed that to be true, Ballanco said.

However, further investigation showed that she had entered the commissary and post exchange on Feb. 27, according to scans of her ration card that’s needed for purchases, he said, without elaborating.

Both facilities had been temporarily closed, cleaned and reopened, he said.

The latest cases follow an announcement that an American soldier and his wife had been infected and placed in an isolation unit. They have a baby, but USFK has not provided information about the child’s condition, citing privacy concerns.

The widow of an American military retiree and a South Korean military retiree who lived off post, officials said.

The decision came as the U.S. military struggles to balance the need to protect its forces from the deadly virus while maintaining readiness against the growing nuclear threat from North Korea.

“They’re going to a military installation that is pretty well — as well as it can be — protected from what’s going on outside in the city of Daegu,” Maj. Gen. Patrick Donohoe, the Eighth Army’s commander for operations, told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday.

Stars and Stripes reporter Yoo Kyong Chang contributed to this report. gamerl.kim@stripes.com

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CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The Army garrison in Daegu, which is in the area at the epicenter of South Korea’s COVID-19 outbreak, launched a “kill the virus” poster contest and offered prizes for clever ideas to deal with confinement.

Pop-up yoga classes were held, and business was brisk at the stores and restaurants on Camp Humphreys, the American military’s headquarters here and the largest Army garrison outside the continental United States.

U.S. military families and civilian employees have been forced to get creative as South Korea’s coronavirus crisis enters a third week, leaving troops and their loved ones largely confined on bases across the divided peninsula.

“Usually I go to Seoul and stuff on weekends, but I haven’t gone out recently,” said Pvt. Dayzier Beale, 25, of Chester, Va., who arrived at Camp Humphreys in October. “Eventually it will get better, but I know right now it’s tough.”

Coping with confinement

By Kim Gamel
Stars and Stripes

The Daegu garrison, which comprises several installations, has a population of about 9,000, has been particularly hard-hit. The outbreak intensified on Feb. 18 when a 61-year-old woman who was a member of a religious sect in the city tested positive.

While other bases have restaurants and entertainment options, Daegu has largely closed its facilities except for takeaway as it battles to keep the virus off-post. It also was first to implement the precautionary restrictions and health screenings on Feb. 19.

U.S. Forces Korea, the main command of some 28,500 American troops stationed on Camp Carroll and Army surgeon.

He also addressed difficulties facing off-post residents who have been discouraged from visiting local grocery stores and so can’t buy the special trash bags required by South Korea as part of a mandatory recycling program.

“Big breakthrough on off-post trash bags,” Ballanco said, adding the garrison had to navigate alliance rules about reselling items purchased on the economy.

VIRUS OUTBREAK

By Kim Gamel
Stars and Stripes

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Exploring base

Humphreys garrison commander Col. Michael Tremblay and Command Sgt. Maj. Antonio Lopez, meanwhile, donned baseball caps and announced plans to hold sporting events this weekend.

Camp Humphreys, once a remote outpost, has been expanded into a small American town in a nearly $12 billion construction project largely funded by the South Korean government as part of the U.S. military’s consolidation south of Seoul.

It has an 18-hole golf course, a downtown area with a theater, commissary and the exchange mini-mail lined with fast-food restaurants that provided sustenance and entertainment for people who normally would be taking advantage of the local culture outside the gates.

Several soldiers wheeled out big-screen TVs in shopping carts from the post exchange Friday night.

Katelyn Burnett, 31, of McAlister, Okla., arrived at Camp Humphreys with her husband and 2-year-old son shortly before the South Korean outbreak began in mid-February.

“We got to explore two days before they told everyone not to leave the house, pretty much,” she said while standing in line at Taco Bell. “Now we’re not going anywhere. We just bought my son a Power Wheel so he can play in the yard.”

“We’ve been exploring a lot more on base. We basically spent the past two days at the PX … and just spent money for fun because it’s the only place we can go, that we feel safe,” she added.

Virtual worries abound in online updates and question-and-answer sessions by garrison commanders via Facebook Live, especially after the United States and other countries put restrictions on travel to and from South Korea.

President Donald Trump’s administration raised its travel advisory for Daegu specifically to the highest level, urging Americans not to travel to the area.

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WASHINGTON — The Pentagon will decide how to prepare for the upcoming military moving season with the outbreak of the coronavirus based on whether the new virus is still active, a military deputy said Wednesday.

Because the outbreak is from a new coronavirus, health officials said on Thursday, according to U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Paul Friedrichs, the Joint Staff surgeon, who spoke to reporters at the Pentagon on Wednesday about the Defense Department’s current response to the outbreak.

The primary season for service members and their families to move to domestic or international bases is from late spring through early fall.

If the virus tapers off … in the next six or eight weeks, then it’s not really going to be a huge issue in the summer. It’ll potentially come back in the fall and then we’ll have to deal with that in the fall,” Friedrichs said. “If it doesn’t taper off, then it absolutely becomes an issue. But this is part of that learning that we’re all going through.”

Friedrichs said that the Defense Department is looking at “a range of options, but it’ll really depend on what happens with the virus. And it’ll depend on where the disease is.”

If the virus is everywhere like the flu, Friedrichs said, “it’s not necessarily going to be as big of a challenge to come up with country-specific policies. But I think we’ll know more in a couple of weeks.”

The Defense Department is providing guidance about the coronavirus to commanders and local commanders to make decisions about their own communities, such as restricting voluntary nonessential travel to areas with outbreaks, Friedrichs said.

All new military recruits will be screened for the virus before entering basic training. Recruits will be asked questions on whether they have visited areas with documented cases, if the recruit has been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed, and whether they have any symptoms such as fever, coughing or shortness of breath.

“VA is requesting limited or no travel to countries with recently confirmed cases in the United States over the next 30 days after it began, over concerns about the new coronavirus. The decision to cancel Juniper Cobra 20, slated to run until March 13, was made in coordination with the Israeli Defense Force,” VA said in a statement Thursday.

The decision is in alignment with recent Israeli Ministry of Health guidelines on COVID-19, and a precautionary measure to ensure the health and safety of all participants,” VA said, referring to the disease caused by the virus.

On Wednesday, Israel added Germany to its list of countries from which visitors must be quarantined for 14 days. Since participating U.S. and Israeli paratroopers flew out of Germany, it was necessary to cancel, EUCOM said.

“Israel is one of several countries to restrict travelers from Italy, which has the highest reported number of coronavirus cases in Europe. There are thousands of U.S. service members, civilian workers and family members based in Italy.”

“This is a challenging exercise for the US military,” Friedrichs said, “but we’re prepared to do it.”

The decision to end the training early follows another cancellation in Israel, where about 60,000 other U.S. personnel are participating in the exercise last week because of concerns about the coronavirus. They were among 300 paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade planning to participate in an exercise with Israeli Schlesinger last week.

“We appreciate the hard work of our IDF partners in making this exercise happen,” EUCOM said. “We look forward to the next iteration of Juniper Cobra.”
NATION

Report: Russians continue to sow election discord

BY AMANDA SEITZ
AND BARBARA ORTUTAY
Associated Press

Four years after Russia-linked groups hacked divisions in the 2016 presidential election on social media platforms, a new report shows that Moscow’s campaign has only let up and has become harder to detect.

The report from University of Wisconsin-Madison professor Young Mie Kim found that Russia-linked social media accounts are posting about the same divisive issues — race, politics, gun laws and immigration — as they did in 2016 when the Kremlin polluted American voters’ feeds with messages about the presidential election.

Since then, however, the Russians have become better at imitating U.S. campaigns and political fan pages online, said Kim, who analyzed thousands of posts. She studied more than 5 million Facebook ads during the 2016 election, identifying Russia’s fingerprints on some of the messages through an ad-tracking app installed on volunteers’ computers. Her review is co-published by the Brennan Center for Justice, a law and policy institute, where she is a scholar.

The recent improvements make it harder for voters and social media platforms to identify the foreign influence, Kim said.

“For normal users, it is too subtle to discern the differences,” Kim said. “By mimicking domestic actors, with similar logos (and) similar names, they are trying to avoid verification.”

Kim’s report comes weeks after U.S. intelligence officials briefed lawmakers on Russian efforts to stir chaos in American politics and provide the type of disinformation that belittled the Democratic campaign in this year’s election.

The classified briefing detailed Russian efforts both on the White House bids of both Republican President Donald Trump and Democratic Sen. Bernie Sanders.

Last month, FBI Director Christopher Wray warned that Russia was still actively waging “information warfare” with an army of fictional social media personas and bots that spread disinformation.

In a rare, joint statement Monday, the leaders of America’s intelligence agencies cautioned that foreign actors were spreading false information ahead of Super Tuesday to “cause confusion and create doubt in our system.”

But intelligence officials have not released any details about the type of disinformation or explained how Americans should protect themselves from it.

Russia has repeatedly denied interfering in the U.S. elections and did so again on Thursday.

“You just want us to repeat again that we have nothing to do with the U.S. elections?,” Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

Facebook, which had not seen Kim’s report, had no immediate comment, though the company has insisted it is getting better at responding to the evolving tactics of foreign and domestic actors.

After getting caught off-guard with Russia’s 2016 election interference attempts, Facebook, Google, Twitter and others put safeguards in place to prevent it from happening again. This includes taking down posts, groups and accounts that engage in “coordinated inauthentic behavior,” and strengthening verification procedures for political ads.

Kim’s analysis found the accounts appeared to mimic existing political ones, including one called “Bernie2020,” that used campaign logos to make it seem like it was connected to Sanders’ campaign or was a fan page for his supporters, Kim said.

Elizabeth Warren ends her 2020 presidential bid

BY WILL WESSERT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Elizabeth Warren, who electrified progressives with her “plan for everything” and strong message of economic populism, dropped out of the Democratic presidential primary on Wednesday.

Warren said she was “not going to endorse anyone,” after a day in which former Mayor Mike Bloomberg of New York finished strong. It was a lasting difference. It’s not the scale of the difference we wanted

A collection of Instagram posts, seen on Wednesday, which Facebook, the owner of Instagram, yanked off the site in October after concluding that they originated from Russia.

Joe Biden, Joe Biden, Joe Biden, Joe Biden, Joe Biden. An ad-tracking app installed on volunteers’ computers

Trump cheers exit of ex-Mayor Bloomberg

By Jonathan Lemire
AND ZEKE MILLER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — While Super Tuesday left the Democrats with a pair of front-runners President Donald Trump believes he can define as a foil — Joe Biden and Elizabeth Warren — the former New York Mayor’s exit Tuesday was a personal blow, even some private worries in the White House.

There is concern that the Democratic messy nomination contest may end up producing an emboldened version of the very man who once worried Trump so much as a foe that it led to the president’s impeachment.

That would be Joe Biden.

There was plenty for Trump to like in Tuesday’s 14-state round of voting that transformed the Democratic race into a delegate shootout between an avowed proponent of democratic socialism (Bernie Sanders) and a longtime Washington insider (Biden). It banished from the race former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg, whose endless millions had gotten nothing from the president’s skin, and it pushed aside Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who could have proved to be a formidable rhetorical challenger against Trump.

That sets up Trump to run for reelection on familiar territory and allows him to revive some of the same attacks and lines of attack that proved successful in 2016.

The public reaction from Trump and his campaign on Wednesday was gleeful as Biden’s remarkable campaign comeback reset the Democratic nomination fight into a two-candidate contest with Sanders.

Those around the president have long asserted that Sanders, with his unapologetic support for “Medicare for All,“ free college and other wish list items, is not liberal for most of the nation. They also believe Biden has lost a step and is saddled with a sprawling political infrastructure that featured staffers on the ground across the country.

But former voting began in February, she never found a reliable base of supporters as Democrats coalesced around Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, his progressive rival, and former Vice President Joe Biden, who established himself as the leading centrist in the race.

“I refuse to let disappointment blind me — or you — to what we’ve accomplished,” Warren told her campaign staff on a call Thursday.

“We didn’t reach our goal, but what we have done together — what you have done — has made a lasting difference. It’s not the scale of the difference we wanted to make, but it matters.”

Outside her Cambridge, Mass., home Thursday, Warren said she wasn’t going to endorse anyone right away.

“I need some space and I need a little time right now,” she said, standing next to her husband, Bruce Mann, and golden retriever, Bailey.

Warren’s voice cracked when she talked about meeting so many little girls while campaigning around the country for the past year and knowing they “are going to have to wait four more years,” at least, to see a woman in the White House.

Warren’s exit leaves the Democratic field with just one female candidate: Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, who has collected only one delegate toward the nomination.

That is a frustrating twist for a party that once boasted the most diverse presidential field in history and garnered the votes and energy of women to retake control of the House, primarily with female candidates, in 2018.

Despite Warren’s disappointing finish, she offers the potential of a coveted endorsement to Sanders and Biden, who are effectively the last candidates in the Democratic contest.
DOJ watchdog: FBI domestic threat assessment lacking

By Matt Zapotosky
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department inspector general on Wednesday chided the FBI for failing to fix long-standing weaknesses in how it assesses possible homegrown terrorists — an area in which officials have been working to improve after several attacks by suspects previously known to law enforcement.

In a 44-page report, Inspector General Michael Horowitz wrote that while the bureau seemed to address suspicious things, it had “made insufficient action” to fix them.

For example, Horowitz wrote, the FBI issued a new policy in September 2015 requiring field offices to conduct specific database checks and interview subjects of counterterrorism assessments. But a review found that the field offices did not always comply.

In 2017, Horowitz found the FBI had “failed to initiate an investigation, in which the FBI can but ultimately decided the suspect’s behalf in Chicago federal court.”

Kelly pleaded guilty to an updated federal investigation in which the FBI did not “fully investigate” and includes multiple counts associated with the potential cross of threats, including multiple counts associated with the potential cross of threats.

In a letter included in Horowitz’s report, Suzanne Turner, chief of the FBI’s External Audits and Compliance Section, wrote that the bureau has “made changes to close identified gaps and make recommended changes.”

Horowitz also criticized the bureau for not developing strategies to address “the challenges associated with the potential cross over between terrorist threats and other categories of threats.”

In 2015 to December 2018, Horowitz noted that “the FBI had a high proportion of investigators who failed to take adequate action on nearly 40% of those cases for 18 months.”

“Horowitz wrote: “As a result, potential terrorist threats were not mitigated for more than 1 year.”

By Michael Tarm
Associated Press

COOKEVILLE, Tenn. — Moments after a tornado tore through his quiet Tennessee neighborhood, Darrell Jennings walked out his front door and heard screaming.

The house next door — and many others — had been leveled. The Jennings house suffered only a few broken windows.

It quickly became a shelter for those who were suddenly left with nothing. The next-door neighbors, who had miraculously survived, strapped over. Others joined them.

“It’s like we were a beacon,” Amy Jennings said in an interview Wednesday. “We had a house full of muddy people in their pajamas. A lot of babies were screaming. Our teenage kids were amazing. They went into action. They held those kids and got them calm.”

Jennings expects the Lansing school district to provide cold, icy Meals on Wheels to the Jennings and their neighbors.

Joseph Cojom shows the destruction his kitchen sustained in the recent Tennessee tornado.

Several neighbors said that they were helping to rebuild because the memories are too terrible. Amy Jennings said that she’s been helping people recover what they can, meanwhile. The personal items she’s found include stuffed animals that remained miraculously dry under a mattress and a statue of a husband and wife that looked totally untouched.

“The little things I salvage from their past can help them build their future,” she said.

R. Kelly pleads not guilty to reworked federal abuse charges

By Travis Loller
Associated Press

CHICAGO — R&B singer R. Kelly on Thursday pleaded not guilty to an updated federal indictment that includes sex abuse allegations involving a new accuser.

At a hearing, assistant U.S. Attorney Andrea Greenberg entered the plea on the 53-year-old singer’s behalf in federal court.

Kelly stood next to Greenberg in orange jail garb, holding his hands behind his back.

The 13-count superseding indictment was unsealed last month and includes multiple counts accusing Kelly of child pornography. It is largely the same as the original indictment — which also had 13 counts — but includes a reference to a new accuser, referred to only as “Minor 6.”

Prosecutors said during the hearing Thursday that it was likely they would file another superseding indictment against Kelly in the coming weeks, though they provided no details.

Kelly, who has denied ever abusing anyone, faces several dozen counts of state and federal sexual misconduct charges in Illinois, Minnesota and New York, from sexual assault to heading a racketeering scheme aimed at supplying Kelly with girls.

The Grammy-award winning musician was jailed in July and has been awaiting trial at a Chicago courthouse block from the courthouse where he attends pretrial hearings. He has participated in hearings in his New York case by video.

The federal charges in Chicago accuse Kelly of filming himself having sex with underage girls and of paying off potential witnesses in his 2008 trial — at which he was acquitted — to get them to change their stories.

U.S. District Judge Harry Leinenweber also moved the trial date from April to Oct. 13.
NATION

Five people were killed in a workplace shooting last week at the Milwaukee Coors facility in Milwaukee.

By Todd Richmond
Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — Someone placed a noose several years ago on the locker of a Wisconsin brewery employee who opened fire on his co-workers last week, the brewery operator said Wednesday. Police quickly warned that it's too early to conclude that racism was a factor in the attack.

Rebecca Ferrill, 28, and two co-workers were killed in a shooting at the sprawling Molson Coors brewery in Milwaukee, fatally wounding two others.

Two former brewery employees, Robert Powell and Lonnie Earl Jones, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel for a story published Tuesday that a few months after the noose was found, several racist notes were slipped into Ferrill’s locker.

The company on Wednesday confirmed that a noose was placed on Ferrill’s locker in 2015. Ferrill filed a discrimination complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

If approved by Congress and signed by President Trump, the bill “will be the most significant conservation legislation enacted by Congress in near-century,” Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn.

Alexander was one of 12 senators from both parties, as Trump tweeted support for the proposal despite repeatedly trying to slash spending for the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund in recent years.

The plan announced Wednesday would fully fund the conservation program and add $1.3 billion a year for deferred park maintenance. The proposed $900 million for land and water conservation is nearly double the $485 million Congress approved this year and 60 times larger than the $15 million Trump proposed in his 2021 budget last month.

Trump credited Republican Sens. Cory Gardner of Colorado and Steve Daines of Montana for his change of heart. “ALL thanks to @SenCoryGardner and @SteveDaines, two GREAT Conservative Leaders!” Trump tweeted.

Both Daines and Gardner are seeking re-election this year, and Gardner is considered one of the Senate’s most vulnerable incumbents. Gardner, who went to the White House with Donald Trump last week to lobby Trump on the bill, denied that politics played a role in the president’s reversal.

He and Daines said they showed Trump pictures and maps of their states, stressing the importance of conservation in the West. They also noted that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell backs the bill.

Trump also noted that the $2 billion was “at a time when we are getting ready to try to play politics or point partisan fingers,” Gardner told reporters Wednesday.

“I’m going to focus on the great things the Army does every day,” Daines told local media.

Daines also downplayed the bill’s politics, saying, “This is a bipartisan moment.”

“If this is about doing the right thing for America,” added Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., who had voted to confirm former oil and coal lobbyist David Bernhardt as interior secretary.

“Only President Trump would praise a record like this,” Hickenlooper said.

Trump predicted Congress would approve the plan, which helps address a $12 billion maintenance backlog of national parks.

“When I sign it into law, it will be HISTORIC for our beautiful public lands,” Trump said in a tweet.

DeA to return $82K life savings seized at airport, but doesn’t say why

By Justin Jouvenal
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Drug Enforcement Administration plans to return a man’s life savings seized from his wallet at an airport over the summer, according to a letter the agency sent to Justice for help, sparking an investigation into the facts of the incident. The DEA had seized $82,000 in cash from a man a year ago.

The case is one of many in which the DEA has seized large amounts of cash at airports over the summer, according to a letter a man who was traveling to Britain with $82,000 in his wallet.

The agency had seized the money from a man who was flying back from Japan.

“After further review, a decision has been made to return the property,” the letter read.

Senators reach $2B deal to boost conservation, parks

By Matthew Daly
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate leaders and the Trump administration have reached an election-year agreement on a popular conservation program and devote more than a $1 billion a year to clear a growing maintenance backlog at national parks.

The deal, announced Wednesday by senators from both parties, would spend about $2.2 billion per year on conservation and outdoor recreation projects and work maintenance across the country.

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Russia, Turkey: Cease-fire in northwest Syria

**BY VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV AND SUZAN FRASER**

MOSCOW — The presidents of Russia and Turkey said they reached agreements on a cease-fire to take effect at midnight Thursday in northwestern Syria, where escalating fighting had threatened to put forces from the two countries into a direct military conflict.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reached the deal after meeting in Moscow. "The world’s eyes are on us," Erdogan had said. "The steps we will take, the right decisions we will take here today will help ease (concerns in) the region and our countries."

The fighting in Idlib is the most severe test of Russia-Turkey ties since the crisis triggered by Turkey's downing of a Russian warplane near the Syrian border in November 2015. Russia responded then with an array of sweeping economic sanctions, cutting the flow of its tourists to Turkey and banning most Turkish exports.

Putin can’t afford a replay of that costly crisis, far less a military conflict with a nuclear power, but it has a strong position to bargain with. Moscow needs Ankara as a partner in a Syrian settlement and Russia’s supply routes for its forces in Syria lie through the Turkish Straits.

The talks in Moscow mark the 10th meeting in just over a year between Putin and Erdogan, who call each other “dear friend” and have polished a fine art of bargaining.

Both leaders had underlined the need to reach an agreement at the start of the Kremlin talks, which lasted more than six hours. One goal had been to prevent damage to their bilateral relations and blossoming Russia-Turkey trade.

The Russian and Turkish foreign ministers said the agreement involves a cease-fire that must be enforced starting at midnight, along existing battle lines. The deal also envisages setting up a 7-mile-wide security corridor along a strategic highway in Idlib province.

Putin voiced the hope the deal will serve as a “good basis for ending the fighting in the Idlib de-escalation zone, put an end to suffering of civilian population and contain a growing humanitarian crisis.”

Erdogan said he and Putin agreed to help refugees return to their homes. More than 900,000 people have been displaced by the fighting since the forces of Syrian President Bashar Assad launched an offensive in December.

Erdogan had said the Idlib offensive was a showdown but the sharply conflicting interests in Idlib province made it difficult to negotiate a mutually acceptable compromise.

A Russia-backed Syrian offensive to regain control over Idlib — the last opposition-controlled region in the country — has resulted in Turkey sending thousands of troops into Idlib to repel the Syrian army. Clashes on the ground and in the air have left dozens dead on both sides. Russia, which has helped Assad reclaim most of the country’s territory, has signaled it won’t sit by while Turkey routes his troops now.

The fighting has also pushed nearly 1 million Syrian civilians toward Turkey. Erdogan responded by opening Turkey’s gateway to Europe in an apparent bid to persuade the West to offer more support to Ankara.

Just before sitting down with Erdogan, Putin discussed the situation in Idlib with European Council head Charles Michel, who met the Turkish president in Ankara on Wednesday. The Kremlin said Michel informed Putin about the EU’s efforts to block the flow of migrants.

Putin offered Erdogan his condolences over Turkish losses in a Syrian airstrike but noted that Turkish troops also suffered heavy losses. Another Turkish soldier was killed in an attack in Idlib Thursday, raising the number of Turkish soldiers killed since the beginning of February to 59.

Russia and Turkey had last engaged in talks involving a cease-fire in March 2020. Putin and Erdogan managed to coordinate their interests in Syria even though Moscow backed Assad while Ankara supported the government’s foes throughout Syria’s nine-year war. Both Russia and Turkey were eager to avoid a showdown and the sharply conflicting interests in Idlib province made it difficult to negotiate a mutually acceptable compromise.

Workers of the national railway company SNCF check a high-speed TGV train after it derailed on a trip to Paris in Ingenheim, near Strasbourg, eastern France, on Thursday.

**High-speed train derailed in eastern France; 21 injured**

**Associate Press**

PARIS — One of France’s vaunted high-speed trains derailed Thursday morning on a trip to Paris, injuring 21 people including the driver, officials said.

The driver, who was seriously injured, managed to slam on the brakes and bring the train to a halt. It was the first derailment of a TGV train in nearly 40 years of commercial service.

Regional authorities said 20 other people also suffered injuries, some of them slight. Train operator SNCF said they included the train conductor, who suffered a back injury.

The train, carrying 300 passengers, was traveling from Colmar in eastern France to the capital and was racing along at 170 mph when it jumped the tracks.

The derailment opened a gash on the pointed nose of the sleek train, which stayed upright. Its side was scratched and some windows were cracked.

The SNCF said it was the first time that a commercially operated TGV train has derailed since the service was inaugurated in 1981, between Paris and the southern city of Lyon. TGV stands for "Train a Grande Vitesse," or high-speed train.

The seriously injured train driver was evacuated by helicopter.

Passengers told French media they felt a bang before the train slowed and stopped.

An investigation will determine whether the train struck an earth bank that collapsed close to the track.
UN agency: Iran’s uranium stockpile in violation of deal

Associated Press

VIENNA — Iran has nearly tripled its stockpile of enriched uranium since November in violation of its deal with world powers, U.N. atomic watchdog agency said Tuesday, raising new questions about possible nuclear-related activities and understated nuclear material at three locations.

The International Atomic Energy Agency made the statement in a confidential report distributed to member countries that was seen by The Associated Press. The agency said as of Feb. 19, Iran’s total stockpile of low-enriched uranium amounted to 1.1 tons, compared to 372.3 kilograms on Nov. 3, 2019, noted in its November report.

The current stockpile puts Iran within reach of the amount needed to produce a nuclear weapon, which it insists it doesn’t want to do.

The nuclear deal that Iran signed in 2015 with the United States, Germany, France, Britain, China and Russia, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, allows Iran only to keep a stockpile of 202.8 kilograms.

The JCPOA promised Iran economic incentives in return for the curbs on its nuclear program, but since President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the deal unilaterally in 2018, Iran has been slowly violating the deal’s restrictions.

As Iran has violated the deal, Tehran has said it hopes to put pressure on the other nations involved to increase economic incentives to make up for hard-hitting sanctions imposed by Washington after the American withdrawal.

In a second report issued Tuesday, the IAEA said it had identified three locations in Iran where the country possibly stored undeclared nuclear material or undertook nuclear-related activities without declaring it to international observers. It said it was unable to address the issue to Iran in three separate letters, but Tehran maintained it wasn’t obliged to respond.

The IAEA asked for access to two of the sites, but was denied. The activities at all three sites are thought to have been from the early 2000s.

According to the Washington-based Arms Control Association, Iran would need roughly 1.16 tons of low-enriched uranium — under 5% purity — and would then need to enrich it further to weapons-grade, or more than 90% purity, for a weapon.

The nuclear deal in place, Iran’s so-called breakout time — the period Tehran would need to build a bomb if it chooses — stood around a year. As Iran has stepped away from the limits of the 2015 nuclear deal, it slowly has narrowed that window.

However, that doesn’t mean that Iran would immediately rush toward a bomb if all materials were in place.

Prior to the nuclear deal, Iran enriched its uranium up to 20%, which is just a short technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

In 2013, Iran’s stockpile of enriched uranium was already more than 7.72 tons with higher enrichment, but it didn’t pursue a bomb.

Scientists: Half of world’s sandy beaches at risk from climate change

Associated Press

BERLIN — Scientists say that half of the world’s sandy beaches could disappear by the end of the century if climate change continues unchecked.

Researchers at the European Union’s Joint Research Center in Ispra, Italy, used satellite images to track the way beach changes over the past 30 years and simulated future global warming might affect them in the future.

“What we find is that by the end of the century, half of the beaches in the world will experience erosion that is more than 100 meters,” said Michalis Voudouris. “It’s likely that they will be lost.”

The study, published Monday in the journal Nature Climate Change, found that the extent to which beaches are at risk depends on how much average global temperatures increase by the year 2100.

Greater temperature increases mean more sea level rise and more violent storms in some regions, causing more beaches to wash beneath the waves.

“The projected shoreline changes will substantially impact the shape of the world’s coastline,” more than a third of which is sandy beach, the authors wrote.

Beaches are valuable for recreation, tourism and wildlife, while also providing a natural barrier that protects coastal communities from waves and storms.

Many coastal areas, including beaches, are already heavily affected by human activity such as seashore construction and inland dams, which reduce the amount of silt flowing into oceans that’s crucial for beach recovery.

Some countries will be more affected than others, the researchers said. Gambia and Guinea-Bissau in West Africa could lose more than 60% of their beaches, while predictions for Pakistan, the island of Jersey in the English Channel and the Coromoros islands are similarly dire.

Australia would be hardest-hit in terms of total beach coastline lost, with over 7,080 miles at risk. The United States, Canada, Mexico, China, Russia, Argentina and Chile would also lose thousands of miles of beach, according to the study.

Turkey deploying special forces to border amid migrant surge

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey said Thursday it would deploy special forces along its land border with Greece to prevent Greek authorities from pushing back migrants trying to cross into Europe, after Turkey declared its previously guarded gateways to Europe open.

Thousands of migrants and refugees have tried to cross into Greece from its land border to prevent Greek authorities from pushing back those attempting to cross.

“As of this morning ... we are creating 1,000 fully equipped special forces police (along) the Meric river system to prevent the push back,” Soylu said. “With the help of Zodiac boats they will (prevent) those who mistreat people.”

Soylu said Greece had tried to push back around 4,900 migrants in violation of international conventions, and accused the European Union and Europe’s border protection agency Frontex of remaining silent.

An estimated 4,000-5,000 people were near the Pazarkule border crossing, opposite the Greek village of Kastanies, and were being prevented from crossing, Soylu said.

“It is a border gate, they are obliged to take them in. They are obliged to take in asylum-seekers,” the minister said.

But he added the migrants were not obliged to use the official border crossing and could cross anywhere along the roughly 125-mile long border. Much of the border is demarcated by a river, and many migrants have tried wading, rowing or swimming across it.

“I want to say that there is no rule that says they have to cross from Pazarkule,” Soylu said.

The minister asserted that more than 130,000 migrants had crossed into Greece since Feb. 27, when Turkey made good on a threat to open its borders and allow migrants and refugees to head for Europe.
Every controversial topic has two sides. We look into the ones that matter to you.

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**American Roundup**

**Accent mark in official seal in wrong spot**

**NM** — An accent mark of the official seal of the capital city of the nation’s most Hispanic state is in the wrong spot.

The misplaced accent mark at the top of Santa Fe’s website was recently spotted by a reporter who uses an accent in his name, the Santa Fe New Mexican reported. On the website, the seal uses the official name of the city: La Villa Real de la Santa Fe de San Francisco de Asís. Reporters use the short form Santa Fe for short. But the seal on the city’s website puts the accent mark over the “i” instead of over the “i.”

**Cop accused of stealing during arrest, traffic stop**

**OH** — A Cleveland police officer stole roughly $1,800 from two people during two different incidents last year, authorities said.

Lorenzo Brazzell Jr., 32, faces two counts of theft in office in an indictment handed up Tuesday by a Cuyahoga County grand jury. Brazzell, who joined the force in March 2017, has been suspended without pay.

The first incident happened June 16, during the arrest of a 31-year-old man. Brazzell searched the man and took $2,100 in cash from his pockets, authorities say, then took some larger bills and kept them. On Aug. 14, another police officer stopped a vehicle following reports of shots fired. Brazzell drove up to the scene, authorities said. He entered the woman’s car under the guise of shutting it off so it could be towed, but authorities say he found $360 in the vehicle and stole it.

**Brawl involving crowbar leaves student injured**

**PA** — A dispute between two teenage boys on a school bus in western Pennsylvania ended in a street brawl involving a crowbar that left one teen critically injured, authorities said.

The two Highlands School District students, ages 14 and 17, were arguing on the bus Tuesday when the older teen opened the emergency exit and ran out when the bus stopped on a road in Fawn. The younger boy followed, grabbing a crowbar that was mounted near the bus driver, authorities said. The 14-year-old then hit the 17-year-old in the knee with the crowbar, authorities said, but the older teen soon got control of the crowbar. He then repeatedly hit the younger boy in the stomach and head, causing several skull fractures and other injuries.

Police charged the 17-year-old with attempted homicide and aggravated assault.

**Man pleads guilty to smuggling goods to Iran**

**NH** — A man pleaded guilty in federal court in New Hampshire to smuggling more than $100,000 worth of motors, pumps and valves from the U.S. into Iran. The U.S. attorney’s office said Aiden Davidson, also known as Hamed Aliabadi, 32, is a citizen of Iran and a naturalized citizen of the U.S. He lived in Tennessee. He was manager of a New Hampshire limited liability company called Golden Gate International.

Prosecutors said between December 2016 and August 2017, Davidson and Golden Gate smuggled goods from Savannah, Ga., to a company that operated an online resale business in Tehran, Iran. But documents related to the shipments falsely identified the recipient as a Turkish company. Davidson was accused of willfully evading national security controls related to transactions with Iran. Davidson pleaded guilty Monday.

**Goal of training not disguised**

Tyler Wozniak, 16, of Oakdale, Pa., wearing a wig and fake beard, listens as ushers and security volunteers decide whether they would let him into a church during a demonstration led by Terry Berringer, director of Church Emergency Consulting. The class, which teaches situational awareness to people working or volunteering in a church or school, was held at The Bible Chapel on Tuesday in Carnegie, Pa. In the wake of attacks in schools and houses of worship, the class aimed to teach people how to spot a suspicious person and how to respond.

**2 charged with theft of wire at cellphone tower**

**WV** — Two West Virginia men have been charged related to the theft of copper wiring from a cellphone tower, police said.

Charles Ryan Tucker, 42, of Mannmoth, and Jeremy Lane Johnson, 42, of Belle, were charged Tuesday with breaking and entering and damage to utility company property. Kanawha County Sheriff Mike Rutherford said in a news release.

The statement said deputies responding to a break-in at a cellphone tower site near Cedar Grove noticed copper wiring and other items were missing. Detectives obtained surveillance footage of the suspects and eventually found them.

**Solar array at school is pollinator-friendly**

**VA** — A solar array at a Virginia elementary school is the first to receive the highest possible designation under a new program that encourages pollinator-friendly solar development.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation announced Monday that Copley Elementary School in Westmoreland County had been awarded a Gold Certified Pollinator Smart Project label.

From wire reports
The dilemma facing liberal gun owners

By Lisa Marie Pane
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Like many liberals, Lara Smith considers herself a feminist, favors abortion rights and believes the nation’s immigration policies under the Trump administration have just been “vile.”

But when it comes to guns, Smith sounds more like a conservative. She opposes reviving the nation’s assault weapons ban, enacting red-flag laws or creating a registry of firearms. The 48-year-old California lawyer owns a cache of firearms, from pistols to rifles such as the AR-15.

Smith and liberal gun owners like her face a quandary as voting in the Democratic primary intensifies. They are nervous about some of the gun control measures the Democratic candidates are pushing and are unsure who to trust on this issue.

“You’re alienating a huge part of your constituency,” Smith says of the Democratic field’s gun proposals. “You have a huge constituency that is looking for something different and when you are talking about restricting a right which is so different than everything else you talk about, you are being anti-liberal.”

Gun owners have long been seen as a solidly Republican voting bloc, but there are millions of Democrats who own firearms, too.

Many of them are feeling increasingly disillusioned by their party as it lurches toward the left on the Second Amendment, but they’re also wary of President Donald Trump for a variety of reasons: his conservative leanings but a track record in office, his conservative leanings but a track record in office, his conservative leanings but a track record in office, his conservative leanings but a track record in office, his conservative leanings but a track record in office.

An estimated 23 percent of Democrats nationally lived in households with guns in 2018, according to the General Social Survey, which is conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago. And roughly 20 percent of gun owners — about 12 million people — identify as liberal, according to results from survey between 2014 and 2018. More than a third describe themselves as moderates while just under 45 percent call themselves conservatives.

The liberals who are opposed to gun control are at odds with a broad trend among Democrats when it comes to tougher firearms restrictions. According to polling by Gallup last year, 88 percent of Democrats who own firearms, 77 percent in 2015 and 63 percent in 2010, said polarization over the issue began in the 1970s in the wake of the Gun Control Act of 1968, which was enacted amid national outcry over the assassinations of Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

Subsequent efforts by the NRA to seize on gun rights as a partisan issue only heightened the divide.

Before that, gun politics wasn’t divided so sharply on political lines.

One Democratic president, John F. Kennedy, was actually a member of the National Rifle Association.

Liberal gun owners, Yamane said, are generally newer to gun ownership and are less likely to be the stereotypical face of gun owners: older, white men.

It’s a dynamic that doesn’t “get as much play because the public/political ‘face’ of gun owners for many remains Wayne LaPierre,” the firebrand leader of the NRA.

Yamane himself is part of the Democratic gun-loving public, describing himself as a “liberal snowflake gun owner.”

Kat Ellsworth, from Chicago, was firmly against firearms and favored gun-control until just a few years ago, when she went with a friend to a gun range and discovered a love for guns and shooting.

As she looks at the upcoming election, she’s torn as a self-described liberal and registered Democrat.

With the Illinois primary approaching in mid-March, she is leaning toward Sanders or Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a candidate whose gun-control positions she doesn’t believe are all that rigid.

“They were both slower than others to develop and make public their proposals for gun control policies, and I believe the reason is that both of them are really not as anti-gun as they are forced to show publicly,” she said.

If she could give Democratic presidential candidates any advice, she said, it would be this: “I feel like they would really gain a lot more votes if they would just drop the gun-control crap.”

The Democratic stance on guns is directed at multiple constituencies — suburban voters horrified by school shootings and urban voters fed up with gun violence in their neighborhoods.

When it comes to black voters, Kevin Dixie sees guns in a different light. An African American, Dixie grew up in St. Louis and experienced firsthand the toll of gun violence.

He believes that gun rights are about empowering communities of color and ensuring freedom is available to every American, regardless of race, ethnicity or gender.

He runs a firearms training business called No Other Choice.

One of his aims is to turn around the perception of firearms, especially within minority and urban communities, as being something that is only for criminals or police.

“This is much deeper than guns,” Dixie said.

“It’s not just about owning a gun, it’s about maintaining your freedom, and we shouldn’t be politicizing it.”

Ellsworth fires her Sig Sauer P320 X-Five Legion hand gun at the Caliber Tactical Gun Range.

Dixie poses for a portrait Feb. 9 at The Range, a firearms retailer and gun range in Ballwin, Mo.
Gene-editing tool used in body for 1st time

Scientists say they have used the gene-editing tool CRISPR inside someone’s body for the first time, a new frontier for efforts to operate on DNA, the chemical code of life, to treat diseases.

A patient recently had it done at the Casey Eye Institute at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland for an inherited form of blindness, the companies that make the treatment announced Wednesday. They could not disclose details on the patient or when the surgery occurred.

It may take up to a month to see if it worked to restore vision. If the first few attempts seem safe, doctors plan to test it on 18 children and adults.

“We literally have the potential to take people who are essentially blind and make them see,” said Charles Albright, chief scientific officer at Editas Medicine, the Cambridge, Mass.-based company developing the treatment with Dublin-based Allergan.

“We think it could open up a whole new set of medicines to go in and change your DNA.”

Dr. Jason Comander, an eye surgeon at Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary in Boston, points to a model of an eye during an interview in January. Comander’s hospital plans to enroll patients in a gene-editing treatment for blindness study.

So they’re aiming to edit, or delete the mutation by making two cuts on either side of it. The hope is that the ends of DNA will reconnect and allow the gene to work as it should.

It’s done in an hourlong surgery under general anesthesia. Through a tube the width of a hair, doctors drip three drops of fluid containing the gene-editing machinery just beneath the retina, the lining at the back of the eye that contains the light-sensing cells.

“One of the biggest potential interest in the new research is very high.

The people in this study have Leber congenital amaurosis, caused by a gene mutation that keeps the body from making a protein needed to convert light into signals to the brain, which enables sight. They’re often born with little vision and can lose even that within a few years.

Scientists can’t treat it with standard gene therapy — supplying a replacement gene — because the one needed is too big to fit inside the disabled viruses that are used to ferry it into cells.

Electric Merlin

Bikers Against Child Abuse, or BACA, is a nonprofit mission to help child abuse victims.

BY Marilynn Marchione
Associated Press

BENNINGTON, Vt. — A motorcycle organization is on a mission to make the world safer for victims of child abuse.

Members will stand guard outside a child’s home whenever they’re called, accompany the child for court appearances and be reachable to the child by phone 24/7. The child also receives a vest with the organization’s patch: a fist stamped with “BACA,” which stands for Bikers Against Child Abuse.

“Our whole mission is to make sure they are not afraid,” the president of BACA’s Vermont chapter, a woman who goes by the biker name Irish, said in a presentation at the Bennington Fire Facility Wednesday afternoon. The event was organized by the Bennington County Child Advocacy Center.

BACA aims to empower victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse — who are between 3 and 18 years old — by providing them with physical and emotional support. Members are all volunteers who apparently had to undergo background checks; anyone with an offense involving children or domestic abuse is barred from joining.

Founded in Provo, Utah, in 1995 by a licensed clinical social worker, BACA now has chapters in all but three states as well as overseas. They are funded through donations.

“Anywhere in the world a BACA kid goes, there is someone there to help,” Irish told an audience of around 25 people working with children, including representatives of the state Department for Children and Families, the Bennington County State’s Attorney’s Office, Bennington Police Department, other nonprofits and school counselors.

She said BACA’s capability to stand guard outside the home of a child who has expressed fear “fills a gap” in service that law enforcement, social workers or counselors don’t provide.

BACA members don’t give out their real names as a safety precaution, given the group’s work. Irish said. But they will provide their real names if the authorities ask, such as police, court officers and social workers.

BACA enters the life of a child when parents or guardians ask for its support — and the organization receives official documentation that the child is involved in an abuse case. But the decision whether to accept BACA’s support ultimately rests with the child, Irish said.

Members don’t call children by their real name, but rather give them a “road name,” Irish said, citing examples like Gremlin, Transformers and Snoopy.

One of four other BACA members present, called Ripley, said they don’t ask children for details about their case. If they want to talk, the bikers will encourage them to speak with their guardians or a trained professional.

And members exchange numbers with a child only with the permission of parents or guardians.

The organization has been working in Bennington since 2018, and members have shown up in criminal court to support child victims who were testifying before a jury.

“Even if the outcome is not what we hope,” Irish said, “when the child feels strong enough to tell their truth, that’s a win for us.”

BY Tiffany Tan
Bennington (Vt.) Banner

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Highly successful social experiment on virtual beings has reached 20 million unique players worldwide — and is still going strong

Pages 24-25
Fears about a coronavirus pandemic have prompted comparisons to the 2011 Steven Soderbergh thriller “Contagion.” Even Goop founder Gwyneth Paltrow, who starred in the movie, noted the parallel on social media recently, posting an Instagram photo of herself wearing a face mask, writing, “I’ve already been in this movie.”

In real life, the situation has caused serious problems for the global entertainment industry, especially in China, which is a critical place of business for Hollywood studios. Theaters in China, the world’s second largest box office market behind the U.S. and Canada, have almost entirely shut down. So have theme parks and film shoots. Travel bans meant to curb the global spread of COVID-19 have affected business conferences and live events, such as concerts. Measuring the long-term impact on the entertainment industry is impossible because it’s not clear when the spread of the disease will be contained, said Stanley Rosen, a USC political science professor and China film expert. “It’s an incredibly big deal, and we’ll have to see how long it takes to get back to what the Chinese call the new normal,” he said.

Here’s where the entertainment business is feeling the effects.

1. **Box office**

The closure of almost all movie theaters in mainland China — accounting for 70,000 screens — is a huge deal for the movie business. Last year, China’s box office hit a record $9.2 billion, more than 20% of worldwide revenues. During the 2019 Spring Festival holiday alone, box-office sales totaled about $1.5 billion. This year, the key holiday period, which ran Jan. 24 through Feb. 12, generated just $3.94 million in sales, according to Artisan Gateway, a consultancy that follows the Chinese film industry.

Several release dates for studio films, including Universal Pictures’ “Polite” and “1917,” Searchlight Pictures’ “Jojo Rabbit” and Paramount Pictures’ “Sonic the Hedgehog,” have been postponed indefinitely. Depending on the length of the closures, movies including Pixar’s “Onward” and Sony Pictures’ “Bloodshot” could also be vulnerable.

For Walt Disney Studios, it remains to be seen when the company will be able to release its high-stakes remake of “Mulan” in China. The big-budget film, featuring Wuhan-born star Liu Yifei in the title role, is set to open in the U.S. on March 27, but had not confirmed a Chinese release date. The movie filmed in New Zealand and China.

The major studios, which have offices and employees in the affected areas, are in a holding pattern as they wait to see how the virus alters release schedules. China’s government strictly controls the timing of releases there. Some delayed movies could struggle if they’re released in bulk after the epidemic subsides, creating additional uncertainty. “There’s no playbook for this,” one studio insider said.

What’s more, once theaters reopen in China, there’s no guarantee that patrons will flock back to the multiplex. Lingering fears of infection could keep people home, Rosen said. Beyond China, there are signs that the box office is taking a hit in other countries with coronavirus outbreaks, due to people wanting to stay out of shared public spaces to avoid infections, according to studio executives who were not authorized to speak publicly.

2. **Cinema’s Vegas confab**

It seems a given that events that rely significantly on overseas travel will feel the pain from the coronavirus’ spread. CinemaCon, the annual Las Vegas gathering of studios and theater owners, said last week that a number of Chinese companies had pulled out of the confab due to travel restrictions. Eight Chinese companies, all vendors that would’ve participated in the event’s trade floor, have said they will not attend, amounting to about 20 participants dropping out.

Nonetheless, CinemaCon’s organizers said the show will continue as planned at Caesars Palace, March 30 through April 2. CinemaCon director Mitch Neuhausser and National Assn. of Theatre Owners head John Fiction addressed the situation in a memo to attendees, saying they were in close contact with the CDC and Las Vegas health and safety officials.

“NATO and CinemaCon believe that our plans going forward should be based on logical risk assessments and advice from health officials, and not from fear,” the organizers said. “At the same time, we want to be sensitive to the legitimate concerns of those people and companies that have been affected by the virus, most notably in Asia and a few other affected territories.”

CinemaCon begins with an “international day,” reflecting the importance of foreign exhibition for the film industry.

3. **Theme parks**

Walt Disney Co. closed its themed resorts in Shanghai and Hong Kong while China deals with the epidemic, a move that is likely to hurt the company’s bottom line. In a recent earnings call, the Burbank entertainment giant said the closures would result in a roughly $1.75 million hit to operating income in its second fiscal quarter, assuming they shut down for two months.

The crisis represents an immediate challenge for new Disney CEO Bob Chapek, whose promotion was announced Feb. 25. He replaced Bob Iger, who is now executive chairman guiding creative endeavors after 15 years in the top job. Chapek was most recently head of Disney’s parks, experiences and products segment, overseeing expansions such as the 2016 launch of Shanghai Disney Resort.

In response to a question from CNBC's Julia Boorstin about the expected long-term challenges, Chapek said the company’s brands will “outlast” the virus.

“We’re deep in the fight,” Chapek said. “While this is certainly a bump in the road in terms of the coronavirus, we’ll come through this like we’ve come through every other challenge that we’ve had, and that affinity for the brand and our storytelling will make us strong. We’re confident that we’ll come through this like we’ve come through the rest.”

Chapek said.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 23**
‘Onward’

a sweet, fun romp

Elvin adventure will pull on heartstrings

By Katie Walsh
Tribune News Service

“Onward,” the newest animated adventure from Disney/Pixar, finally brings mainstream representation to a group previously relegated to the margins of popular culture: the fantasy-obsessed metalhead. In this warm tale of brotherly love forged during an epic coming-of-age quest, Chris Pratt voices older bro Barley, a burly chap (or elf, rather) in a battle vest with an affinity for all things Dungeons & Dragons and Magic: The Gathering, or rather, the generically branded versions. In his trusty steed Guinevere, an old purple van airbrushed with a mighty Pegasus (which Pixar may or may not have stolen from a local Bay Area artist, pending an intellectual property lawsuit), Barley blasts sweet heavy metal tunes about wizards and beasts and more. Barley is a blast.

This isn’t Barley’s story, though he’s an integral part. This is the story of his younger brother, Ian (Tom Holland), a shy young elf who discovers that he does, indeed, have a little magic in him. In this world of fantasy creatures (elves, pixies, ogres, centaurs, etc.), magic has gone out of fashion, replaced with the convenience of electricity and appliances, these magical beings having settled into a comfortable suburban domesticity. Ian has all the issues of any awkward teenager: an overbearing brother, crippling social anxiety, his mom’s boyfriend is a cop. Worst of all, he badly longs for a connection to his father, who died before he was born.

On his 16th birthday, a dejected Ian receives a gift from his father: a wizard staff and spell bestowed to both brothers with the hopes that they can conjure up Dad for one more day. Ian discovers he does in fact have the magic touch, but the brothers bungle it, bringing him only halfway back. They manage to manifest his legs before the rare Phoenix gem explodes, and so in hopes of completing the spell before he disappears at the next sunset, the brothers hit the road in Guinevere for a good old-fashioned quest.

This premise makes “Onward” potentially the most morbid example of the Disney Dead Parents trope, which they’ve relied on for decades. Dead parents have been the easy shortcut right to emotional stakes for the young characters, creating that potent blend of tear-jerking and cutey, culturally relevant humor. But “Onward” literally embodies this ever-present longing for a lost loved one, as Ian and Barley drag their father’s sentient legs around with them on their search for the gem, with Ian hoping for one moment with the father he never knew and Barley looking for some closure.

The fantasy characters allow for this magical experimentation, and if you can get over the sheer emotional terrorism contained in those legs, “Onward” is a fun romp supported by creative and clever world-building. Pratt’s vocal performance and the character of Barley are a necessary element in keeping things buoyant enough to bounce through this story, and a necessary tonic to offset Ian’s neuroses, which can explode into bursts of self-sabotage or outward anger.

But like any good adventure story, it’s clear that it’s never about the destination, but the journey itself, and fortunately, Ian comes to see that everything he was looking for in his father was with him all along. Coming from the Pixar poignancy factory, it’s no surprise that “Onward” plucks all the right heartstrings to produce many laughs and many tears too.

“Onward” is rated PG for action/peril and some mild thematic elements. Running time: 102 minutes.

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4. Productions
China’s government put an indefinite halt on all film production in the country as the death toll escalated. The pause in filmmaking is expected to have a significant effect on the movie business because the bulk of China’s box office is now generated by films produced there. In 2019, eight of the top 10 movies in China were local productions.

The government order, reported by local media, came after some major studios shut down operations. Those included Qingdao Oriental Movie Metropolis, a massive complex developed by Dalian Wanda Group, as well as Hengdian World Studios, based in the province of Zhejiang. Local production has been a priority for the government, especially patriotic films and co-productions that can stoke national pride and extend China’s cultural influence abroad.

“It seems to be that China’s going to prioritize its own films when things come back online,” Rosen said. As for Hollywood, Paramount Pictures has delayed its plans to film the seventh “Mission: Impossible” film in Italy, the location of one of the biggest outbreaks outside Asia. The Tom Cruise action film is expected to be released in July 2021.

MO and Universal announced it would be pushing the worldwide release date of the next James Bond movie, “No Time to Die,” from April to November.

5. Gaming and live music

While CinemaCon appears to be forging ahead, major companies in the gaming industry — an increasingly important part of the entertainment landscape — have canceled conference plans. Even before San Francisco declared a preventive local emergency amid coronavirus fears, the annual Game Developer’s Conference lost a number of major players. Sony Interactive Entertainment, Facebook Gaming and Facebook’s virtual reality arm Oculus were among those who initially balked at attending GDC, an annual event that’s one of the world’s largest professional gatherings of interactive industry talent. Those were swiftly followed by Microsoft, Electronic Arts and others. Microsoft in a blog post stated “after a close review of guidance by global health authorities and out of an abundance of caution, we’ve made the difficult decision to withdraw from participating at Game Developers Conference 2020 in San Francisco. The health and safety of players, developers, employees, and our partners around the world is our top priority.”

GDC is an especially noteworthy conference as it melds new tech with experimental games in addition to numerous talks and roundtables on important cultural issues affecting the industry. March’s event was hotly anticipated as the game industry is in a major transitional year, with new consoles from Sony and Microsoft in development and emerging technologies such as virtual and augmented-reality continuing to gain traction.

The increasingly global live music industry has also been affected, with multiple concerts canceled in Asia and other places, including Los Angeles. Organizers of the 18th Korea Times Music Festival at the Hollywood Bowl on Tuesday said the event was postponed, citing travel restrictions in Asia.

The festival, sponsored by the Korea Times news organization, promised the best in contemporary Korean music, with artists including Momoland, No Brain, Jo Jung-min, Ha Sung-woon and Kim Yeong-chil already announced. A rescheduled concert date was not given.
Playing

with life

How The Sims navigated 20 years of change to become one of the most successful franchises ever

BY ELISE FAVIS
The Washington Post

For two decades, the Sims franchise has answered this timeless question for hundreds of millions of players: if you could be anyone, who would you be? Today, the Sims 4 has reached 20 million unique players worldwide.

The soul of The Sims

Inspiration for The Sims came to creator Will Wright after his home burned down in the Oakland firestorm of 1991. Wright became fixated with humanity's affinity toward material things and whether happiness can be bought.

His studio, Maxis, had released SimCity to critical success in 1989, and he wanted to pivot that concept into something new but familiar. In 1997, Maxis was acquired by EA, giving the team funding for another project. Instead of managing an entire metropolis, the team wondered about controlling a singular neighborhood or building.

Mike Duke, senior producer of The Sims 4, has been working on the series for 13½ years. Although he wasn't employed by Maxis at the time of its acquisition, he's heard stories of its tumultuous beginnings from colleagues.

"I've definitely heard rumors of, 'The Sims was a game that was canceled and resurrected or, you know, often questioned,'" Duke said. "I think developing anything new, especially if it's not (replicating) something else that's already successful, there's inherent risk. And it's one of the hardest parts of innovation."

"They certainly had no way to foresee its success," Lyndsay Pearson, executive producer and general manager of The Sims said. "And while it was certainly against the grain of games at the time, the credit of overcoming those doubts goes to the early dev team and the support from EA to bring it to life."

Soon, what began as an architectural simulator morphed into an ambitious game focused on domestic life. "I think one of the things the team realized early on was, you can't really evaluate how good your space is until you put people in it," Duke said. "They added these Sims just to help validate if you succeeded or failed with this architectural tool. And I think they quickly latched on to the fact that you start to care for those little buddies."

In the year 2000, when The Sims came out, the PC gaming market was filled with action games. Diablo II had just released, and Half-Life mod-turned-game Counter-Strike would change first-person shooters for years to come. In a period when emphasis was placed on action-heavy gameplay, how did a game like The Sims kick off one of the most successful PC franchises of all time and remain wildly popular?

"The Sims has always been a game where players can play with life," Pearson said. "While the settings and themes evolve, at the core this need is still there. The need to explore, experiment, build a life and create — those activities resonate regardless of generation."

According to vice president and general manager of Maxis Joe Nickolls, what helped The Sims stand out was its "soul."

"The Sims always had this really kind of hilarious underside of humor, a little bit off and a little bit dark sometimes," he said. The Sims's malleable fiction gives players a blueprint to form their own emergent stories. Sims speak in a gibberish language called Simlish, and there's a goofy tone to the series with random occurrences such as alien abductions, supernatural phenomena and visits from a sociable Grim Reaper.

There's a darker side, too, with death looming in swimming pools or from something as innocuous as cooking a grilled cheese sandwich. Death could be comical, like being eaten by a cowplant (which is literally a cow-plant-hybrid that lures unsuspecting Sims into its chomps) or cursed by a mummy. You watch Sims react to absurd situations without fear of repercussion.

Nickolls compares The Sims — favorably — to 1950s toy chemistry sets, which were sold with hazardous chemicals included.

"No one actually thought (kids) would a) kill themselves or b) blow themselves up," Nickolls said, laughing. "But they used to sell these. And you could do whatever you wanted with those things; sometimes in peril. But in The Sims, you can do all the things that you want to do and not get hurt doing it."

Managing the demands of millions

The Sims 4 community is vocal, and at times demanding. Thousands are active in Sims-specific subreddits and forums, along with an online library called the Gallery that lets users share or download custom content. (It has more than 40 million player uploads.) Sims fans have one thing in common: They’re hungry for more.

"We recently ran a community survey where we asked about future gameplay features, and we let fans tell us how much they wanted them," Duke said. "The reality is, they wanted everything we said."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25
Many users have taken to making things themselves. One group of women modded new skin tones, hair and other custom items that better suited black female Sims. Custom content has been added since the original, and the wealth of content and creators has grown tenfold since, as creative tools improved.

“The network of everything from custom content, mods and community-created challenges helps to keep the game fresh time and time again,” Pearson said. According to Duke, the Sims team always wants “everything under the sun” to be included — even the pools and trees designers that the team didn’t have time to implement at the Sims 4 launch — but that’s not always possible. By the end of a meeting about a future game pack, whiteboards are filled with ambitious ideas. This ambition can be traced back as far as the first game. When it released, The Sims was ahead of the curve. Although PC expansion packs weren’t new — franchises like Diablo and Age of Empires sold them, too — The Sims took it to another level. Instead of just one or two expansions, the first Sims game had a whopping seven released in the span of three years.

Concepts like introducing pets, nightlife, exotic getaways and so on are often repeated and reconstructed in subsequent games, but ever since in a while, Maxis and EA take a risk. For the first time, at least in the mainline series, Strangerville and EA take a risk. For the first time, at least in the mainline series, Strangerville and EA take a risk. For the first time, at least in the mainline series, Strangerville.

Maxis and EA say they’ve taken great care in making a welcoming environment for people of different backgrounds and genders. In turn, this helps build a game that stays relevant to real-world societal shifts and cultures. Last year, for example, hijabs and kufi caps were added to The Sims 4. Maxis has also added content geared toward Caribbean culture, as well as celebrations like Diwali and Day of the Dead.

This diversity is also represented by the Maxis workforce. Nichols notes that within Maxis, “nearly half” of the leadership team is made up of women. Laura Miele, EA’s chief studios officer, also notes that gender representation has improved within The Sims studios.

Pearson said The Sims “could not be what it is today” if it wasn’t for EA and Maxis “constantly striving” to broaden their perspectives as a team. “That means we need voices from women, people who grew up all over the world and voices of underrepresented groups,” she said.

In 2019, EA partnered with the LGBTQ nonprofit It Gets Better Project, bringing Pride-themed clothing and flags and options for building gender-neutral bathrooms in-game. And while having a wide range of backgrounds, ethnicities and orientations within EA and Maxis helps bolster its games to be more inclusive, Miele says it also provides a healthier work environment.

“I think (having a diverse team) influences the process and influences how this team works,” Miele said in a phone interview. “That’s what I’ve observed in how they develop strategy and design and how they approach and think about creativity.”

The Sims team has been creative in reflecting real-life trends too. Sometimes this has been achieved by inviting singers like Lily Allen and Katy Perry to make “Simlish” renditions of their hit songs, so that they can seamlessly fit into the fiction of The Sims.

More recently, The Sims 4 riffed off phenomena like Star Wars (adding Baby Yoda as a statue in December, for example) and added a pack centered on tiny houses.
The great thing about the Resident Evil remake is that it gives Capcom a chance to improve on an already great vision. With the current hardware, developers are no longer constrained by technological limitations. They can put dozens of zombies on screen and improve their artificial intelligence to make them smarter. They can craft detailed environments that bring harrowing situations to life. The hardware can handle it all.

With the Resident Evil 3 remake, Capcom updates a classic that was ahead of its time. It carries over concepts of the original, following Jill Valentine as she tries to escape Raccoon City. At the time, that was a departure for the series. The previous games tended to be claustrophobic as players explored mansions, police stations and subterranean bases.

**Detailed environment**

Resident Evil 3 was different because it put Jill in an urban environment. She wandered alleys, catwalks and city streets. It’s wide open with more dangers on the screen as the undead pound on fences and lurked around corners. It’s an environment that begs to be explored, but players have to be cautious. They can easily meander down a dead-end alley, turn around to backtrack and find that zombies have followed Jill, essentially trapping her.

The game is full of these dangers, but it also gives players opportunities to fight back. Apparently in the rush to evacuate the doomed metropolis, authorities left barrels of gasoline and malfunctioning generators.

Expert players will conserve their ammo by using these environmental hazards to eliminate several zombies at once rather than pumping bullets into them one at a time. Players can shoot the barrels to ignite explosions killing surrounding undead. Meanwhile, firing at generators can disperse electricity to stun them. At that moment, Jill can knife them to death, but that takes time.

For players who want to save every bullet, they can also just avoid the undead altogether. It’s a viable solution in Resident Evil 3, and sometimes encouraged. It’s often better to lure zombies to one side of a rooftop in order to run past them on the other end. When being chased, players shouldn’t confront any undead and just use the dodge button to dip away from them.

Although the vessels and zombies look better, players can expect the same sort of puzzles as the previous entries. They’ll find random jewels in boxes and journal entries to help them open a safe or find a pivotal item. The problems aren’t difficult per se, but they’re easier if players pay attention to their environment.

**A nemesis called Nemesis**

Players have to deal with Nemesis. It’s essentially Mr. X from Resident Evil 2 on steroids. The tyrant variant follows Jill around Raccoon City and has more maneuverability and intelligence than the previous monster. In the demo I played, I found some protected zones in safe rooms, but that also meant I was technically trapped as it loomed behind the door.

One way to deal with Nemesis is to toss a grenade. It stuns him, and he also drops a supply box with goodies inside. Another way is to run with an obstacle between Nemesis and Jill. They just need to make sure that he can’t corner quickly while rushing toward players.

Further on, players will encounter tougher monsters than zombies in the sewers, and they’ll have to use the environment more to their advantage. I found that using corners helps when fighting these bigger creatures called Hunter Gammas. They’re also more deadly than the normal zombies because they can devour players in one bite.

The demo climaxed with a boss battle against Nemesis atop a building. This is a boss fight unlike any seen before, pitting him against Jill and a ragtag army of survivors. Players can use a flamethrower against Nemesis and Jill can climb using its tentacles. Players have to keep their distance and find its weak point to survive.

**Intriguing multiplayer**

The other major feature of Resident Evil 3 is an asymmetrical multiplayer mode called Resistance. It pits four players against one mastermind. The goal is for the four survivors to escape, or for the mastermind to discourage. Players need to use that guard at three ATM-looking machines to open a door to the third phase. The final section has the survivors looking for red canisters that they must destroy. If they can knock out three of them, they can escape and win.

Teamwork is mandatory. The mastermind can lock players in a room and turn off the lights, making navigation and fighting difficult. Survivors need to use their talents harmoniously to get out alive, but keep in mind, it’s possible that not everyone will escape. Some players could fall during the last stage of the battle and not make it out alive.

Built into Resistance is a progression system. The more players use a certain mastermind or survivor, the higher their level goes. It’s better than some of Capcom’s other Resident Evil multiplayer games. It feels like it could have been a full-fledged game on its own, but being packaged with the Resident Evil 3 remake makes the project an even better value for fans.

The Resident Evil 3 remake comes out April 3 on PlayStation 4, Xbox One and PC.

**Online:** residentevil.com/re3/us

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**By Gerson Cacho**

The (San Jose, Calif.) Mercury News

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Resident Evil 3 remake updates an innovative survival-horror classic
In a rain-soaked February afternoon, the House of Sustainability in this forest hamlet was a welcome refuge.

Inside, it was warm, dry and — despite the cloud cover — infused with natural light, owing to floor-to-ceiling windows and the natural wood decor.

The building is in the heart of some of the region’s best hiking and mountain bike riding, accessed by a network of trails in the Palatinate Forest, or Pfaelzerwald, about a 25-minute drive south of downtown Kaiserslautern at Johanniskreuz.

The house, run by the state government, serves as an information center for people who live in the region, said Helena Naumer, a staff member. It hosts events and exhibitions throughout the year to highlight a sustainable lifestyle and the work of local artisans and vintners.

Open year-round, the center’s Palatinate Forest Shop sells regional products from honey, wine and pasta to children’s toys and jewelry. The house sells topographic maps and is a good starting point for trekking, whether by foot or bike. Outdoor enthusiasts will find a variety of books geared for the region, such as guides for birders, rock hounds and mushroom hunters, but most are written in German.

A small cafe serves coffee and ice cream treats, making it a good place to kick up one’s hiking boots after a long day on the trail.

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The building itself is modern and energy-efficient, relying on solar power as its main energy source and rainwater for its plumbing, Naumer said. Built in 2004, the building was constructed with wood logged from the local forest, she said.

Visitors can meander the grounds, stroll across a foot bridge that looks over a fish-filled pond or hang out at the playground. They can also access the top of the building to see the green roof.

The next special event on the calendar is a plant exchange on April 19. Individuals can swap out plants, seedlings, offshoots and seeds, with the option of giving them away or selling for a small price. Garden tools, literature and pots can also be exchanged at the garden flea market. Participation is free, but registration is required at hdn@wald-rlp.de.

The annual jelly market in the fall and the forest Christmas market in December are also popular events.
Swiss bliss: Falling in love with the Matterhorn

On my two previous trips to Switzerland, as a tiny-but-touristy Zermatt, I failed to catch a glimpse of the glorious Matterhorn mountain that draws so many to the burg at its base on the peak. My third try was the charm, and now I have a confession: I'm in love with the Matterhorn. Now, I know why this mountain town of 5,800 people is so popular. There's just something about the Matterhorn, the most recognizable mountain on the planet. Just seeing the Matterhorn is one of the great experiences in Switzerland. And hiking with that iconic summit as a backdrop to your steps, Zermatt, which sits at 5,000 feet in the shadow of the 14,690-foot Matterhorn, is nestled at the dead-end of a valley in Switzerland's remote southwest.

While it's barely two hours from Bern and Interlaken by train or about three from Zurich or Lausanne, it's not quite on the way to anywhere. Especially considering its inconvenient location, many travelers find it overrated. But make the trek and find only cloudy weather, you may end up with a T-shirt that reads, "I went all the way to Zermatt and didn't even see the Matterhorn."

But in sunny weather, riding the high-mountain lifts, you'll pass through lost-in-time farm hamlets and ambling along on scenic hikes — all with that famous pointy mountain in view — make the trip worthwhile. And the town itself does have pockets of traditional charm, with streets lined with chalet after chalet and overflowed with flower boxes.

Stepping out of the train station, astute visitors notice that there are no gas-engine vehicles — only electric buses and taxis that slalom between the pedestrians like four-wheeled Vespas. (Drivers must stay to one side, with the pedestrians on the road.) Strolling up the town's main street, Bahnhofstrasse, is a joy. Even bikes are forbidden on the main drag; the street returns. (In winter, skiers take over the town, and prices jump even higher than in summer.) Zermatt has earned its reputation for unwelcoming weather — the valley can get completely soaked in any time of the year. While two good-weather days are enough to experience the highlights, add at least one buffer day to your itinerary as insurance against rain.

The Zermatt region opens three high-mountain summit stations linked by lifts and hikes: Matterhorn Glacier Paradise (closest to the Matterhorn), Gornergrat (with a historic cogwheel train that goes to 10,000 feet), and Rothorn (furthest up the valley from the Matterhorn). While prices are steep, the community has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in their mountain lifts in recent years. They're absolutely state-of-the-art, and experiencing them is unforgettable. Gornergret is my pick if you can fit only one high-mountain excursion, simply because it's a best-of-alls worlds experience: sweeping views from the top station, and my favorite hike in the region, between the Rottenboden and Riffelberg train stops. Whichever excursions you opt for, pay close attention to the weather — the lifts aren't cheap, and none of them is worth the cost if the Matterhorn is shrouded by clouds.

That said, don't wait for perfectly clear skies to head into the hills — even on bright, sunny weather, the Matterhorn loves playing peek-a-boo behind the clouds. If it's at least sunny-ish, get up the mountainside. Like me, you may find love at first sight of the Matterhorn.
Quaint as the Greek isles

Poseidon brings a taste of Greece to Wiesbaden

BY DAVID EDGE
Stars and Stripes

amined for the god of the sea, it’s fitting that with simple, welcoming decor, Poseidon Restaurant would remind me of the Greek islands.

Popular with both Germans and Americans, the restaurant sits at the edge of a quiet neighborhood about a half mile from Wiesbaden’s Autumn housing area. A quaint little place, it seats maybe 30 people at its wooden tables topped with squares of blue cloths with a traditional white meanders pattern tracing their borders. In nicer weather, a beer garden roughly doubles the dining capacity.

Ionic columns, statues of ancient gods and large bas-reliefs, including one of Alexander the Great astride his horse Bucephalus, decorate the dining room. Hanged on the white stone walls or displayed in cutout nooks are images and models of the blue-domed houses of the Cyclades Islands.

Poseidon’s large menu offers many Greek standards, as well as a few German items. A drink menu features more than 20 wines and eight beers.

From the array of appetizers, I chose the saganaki pikant, a baked slice of feta cheese with honey, in Savannah, Ga., notes Levy, who started her own line of organic honey. The honey is produced all over the world, so as we explore new cuisines, we’re seeing the many ways honey can be utilized.

Increased awareness of the importance of bees and pollination also has a lot to do with why people are seeking out honey, says Lori Jean Levy, CEO and owner of My Global Table, an importer of specialty goods. Bee populations have plummeted, she notes, threatening the food supply.

“This makes it a true current event issue,” she says. Honey is a sustainable and eco-friendly product at a time when many consumers are making that a priority.

Elyse Hohnerlein, operations coordinator for Savannah Bee Honey, in Savannah, Ga., notes that honey producers support “both the beekeepers and the bees.”

“If you don’t do what you can to protect them, you’ll be losing out on their honey,” she adds.

Maria Loi, chef and owner of Loi Estiatorio in New York City, started her own line of organic honey. She explains that raw, artisal honey is often monoflormal, meaning it comes from the flower or tree in New Zealand, which flowers for only six to eight weeks a year. There are different grades of manuka honey, including ones intended to be used as food and others for medicinal purposes.

Finally, honey is beautiful. It ranges from a pale golden color to a deep almost-black. Honeycomb is a companion to these items and popular addition to a grazing board. The lamb chops were medium-well and roasted with rosemary, thyme and oregano. The tzatziki was creamy and the soutesoukaiaia had feta cheese mixed into them.

At the end of the meal, patrons are offered a complementary shot of ouzo, Greece’s anise-flavored national liquor, which the manager said helps digest your food.

The prices are reasonable, with plates ranging anywhere from 12 to 24 euros, and the portions are big, so you get your money’s worth.

There’s a wide assortment of honeys with various colors and tastes at farmers markets, grocery stores and restaurants these days.

Honey an increasingly trendy, popular sweetener, side dish

BY KATIE WORKMAN
Associated Press

Honey isn’t just honey anymore. At farmers markets, grocery stores and restaurants, there’s a wide assortment of honeys in various colors and tastes, from far-away places and ones next door.

Why is a food that’s been part of the human diet for millennia suddenly so trendy?

First, of course, honey is delicious and versatile. It can be used in baking, dressings, marinades, sauces, cocktails — in all sorts of dishes both savory and sweet.

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The Ruhr region of Germany embraces a new and different future by finding uses for shuttered mines and factories.

**By Gabriel Popkin**
Special to The Washington Post

A hill emerges incongruously from the table-flat landscape east of the Rhine River near Bottrop, Germany. I climb a wide, graded path through young birch and cherry trees. The fledgling forest finally gives way to a barren plateau with sweeping views of the Ruhr region: steel foundries, one coal-fired power plant still pumping out smoke amid whirring wind turbines, the Rhine snaking its way northwest toward Rotterdam and the North Sea.

Looming in front of me is a 210-ton, off-kilter modern steel pyramid that looks a bit like a whimsical rocket ship poised for takeoff. It’s one of the region’s largest and most striking interactive public art pieces, visible from just about any other similarly elevated point. Vertigo sufferers beware: Next comes a 150-foot-high clanky metal staircase leading to a tilted circular catwalk in the structure’s interior.

The optimistic yet off-balance structure could be a metaphor for the Ruhr itself: a region careening from an industrial past to a very different future. This hill, like most of the Ruhr’s notable features, is human-made, literally the piled detritus of an industry that once powered much of Europe’s economy. Over five centuries, miners extracted 11 billion tons of coal, sinking the land up to 60 feet. But as the polluting, carbon-heavy fossil fuel has become unprofitable and unfashionable, the region’s mines and power plants have shuttered at a fast clip. Such economic disruption can cause unemployment and breed resentment — see, for example, Appalachia.

The Ruhr is modeling a different path. Instead of seeking a return to the past, the region has turned its industrial heritage into an asset and is inviting the world to enjoy the results. Decommissioned factories and power plants have become public parks and museums, or massive public investment began to give rusty factories and mines new life. Europe’s cultural capital in 2010 and its green capital in 2017.

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Though the flat, solidly middle-class Ruhrgebiet contrasts starkly with Appalachia in both geography and socioeconomic, some think the region could be a model for its American counterpart, struggling to diversify its economy and imagine life after coal. For travelers, meanwhile, the Ruhr offers a unique, off-the-beaten-path window into Europe’s natural, industrial and cultural history.

A land of picturesque castles, classical architecture and pastoral countryside, the Ruhr region is not. The densely populated area was built in a frenzy of industrial development beginning in the mid-1800s along the Ruhr, a Rhine tributary, and expanded northward, with functional but drab worker housing encircling city-size factories and mining complexes. Adding to the region’s aesthetic challenges, heavy World War II bombing demolished many historic city centers. Crucial to national recovery, industry roared back to life quickly and dirtily, soon employing more than a million people.

Yet by the late ‘60s, the Ruhr’s coal and heavy industry were approaching their expiration date. As factories and mines shuttered, the impulse was to demolish and forget, says Thomas Machoczek of Ruhr Tourismus, which promotes tourism in the region. “Everything that had to do with industry was dirty and ugly. Everything you could get rid of, you wanted to get rid of.”

Fortunately, an international building exhibition sparked pride in the region’s industrial heritage, and massive public investment began to give rusty factories and mines new life.

On a family holiday in December, I decided to take a more systematic look at the results. I started at the Landschaftspark (Landscape Park), just off the highway in north Duisburg. Until 1985, this 450-acre site was an ironworks owned by Thyssen, one of the few German firms still making steel. Now it’s a public park. It has been listed by the Guardian as one of the Europe’s 10 best public parks and attracts a million people per year. “This is an open museum,” explains Rainhard de Witt, who leads tours with the Regionalverband Ruhr and says it’s his favorite place to show visitors.

Factory buildings have become an indoor scuba diving

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31
FROM PAGE 30

center, a rock climbing wall and a discotheque. Those are closed for the season, so we climb more than 150 feet of stairs to a wind-whipped viewing platform atop the monstrous, rust-en crusted blast furnaces, which once brought molten iron to well above 1,832 degrees Fahrenheit and were known to swallow the occasional unfortunate factory worker, according to de Witt. Signs in German and English help me envision the clanking, dirty, dangerous yet prodigiously productive place this must have once been.

Touring the park by night is a different experience entirely. Subtle lighting designed by Jonathan Park of Pink Floyd and Rolling Stones concert fame adorns smokesacks and furnaces with red, blue, purple and green hues but leaves plenty of shadows, yielding an eerie feel. I imagine myself a wanderer among ruins of a civilization that practiced a strange, now-lost religion of metallurgy. The enormity of this enterprise, and its abandonment, feels much weightier at night.

The next day is typical German winter — cold, gray and drizzly. My parents and I drive to the Ruhr’s other crown jewel: the Zollverein. More polished than the Landschaftspark, the expansive complex is a stunning example of Bauhaus architecture — a modernist style that blossomed in Germany in the early 1900s and eschewed ornate design for clean, straight lines and functional buildings to fit the machine age. It’s the Ruhr’s only UNESCO World Heritage Site and has been called the world’s most beautiful coal mine.

A trip up a long escalator brings us to the former coal washing station. Orange lighting along the railings evokes the molten metal that once flowed in places like this. We buy tickets and enter the complex’s prime attraction: the Ruhr Museum. The museum, which opened in 2008 and attracts some 250,000 visitors per year, has helped the Ruhr’s people feel pride in their industrial heritage, says deputy director Frank Kerner; when mines and factories were shutting, people looked at the sooty, rusty remains with shame. “In the 1980s, a lot of people thought it was only a crisis,” he says. Now, “everybody is proud of the history of the miners.”

What impresses most in the Ruhr is the monumental scale: Coal mines and steel works evoke nature’s creations rather than the more modest structures we encounter in cities today. They represent the human impulse to extract, refine and combine Earth’s raw materials into an endless and ever-changing set of products — an impulse that has, for better and worse, touched nearly every place on Earth. All could learn from one of the first places to make it, mostly successfully, to the other side.

The underrated, understated Ruhr offers real life in abundance, courtesy of an unpretentious people who have been through the best and the worst of industrial capitalism and are embracing rather than shrinking from the challenge of figuring out what comes next.
A carnivore’s dream

Monster Grill in Tokyo offers a meaty challenge

By Theron Godbold
Stars and Stripes

The expensive Tomahawk steak from Monster Grill in Tokyo packs more than two pounds of flavor.

The expensive Tomahawk steak from Monster Grill in Tokyo packs more than two pounds of flavor.

When Ki-kunae Ikeda discovered umami and glutamates, he managed to extract something else from his kombu: monosodium glutamate, as known as MSG. It is about as close to an umami seasoning as you can get, and he parlayed it into a legendarily successful product.

“Irasshaimase!” reverberated like a chorus of welcome through Monster Grill, the so-called ‘fifth taste’ works wonders. Glutamates “are salts of glutamic acid, one of the amino acids when you’re building a stew. Just add an egg. Consome this mountain of meat, and the two pounds of rice on the side, within 35 minutes and the meal is free. If you don’t make it, you will pay the near $75 bill.

Champion carnivores earn bragging rights and their names for posterity on the restaurant website. I chose instead a lesser challenge, the Tomahawk steak, which, at 2.86 pounds and $75, I thought, why not?

My companion and I situated ourselves in the American-style furnishings as the sound of sizzling beef inundated our senses. It needed no further than the American-style furnishings as the sound of sizzling beef inundated our senses. quicker than expected, our waitress arrived carrying a flat-iron plate that hissed as its juices boiled.

“It’s hot,” she warned, as she placed it on the table in front of me.

My knife slid through the beautifully tenderized cut of meat. This steak was cooked to near perfection, with the right coloring and aroma. The first bite melted like butter in my mouth—just as it was intended. This steak was cooked to near perfection, with the right coloring and aroma. The first bite melted like butter in my mouth—just as it was intended.

“Irasshaimase!” reverberated like a chorus of welcome through Monster Grill, the so-called ‘fifth taste’ works wonders.
‘10 new Balis’
Indonesia hopes to boost tourism, diversify economy of Southeast Asia with new plan

By Karin Laub and Niniek Karmini
Associated Press

Hundreds of tourists, many of them young Westerners, sat on gray stone steps atop the world’s largest Buddhist temple, occasionally checking cellphones or whispering to each other as they waited for daylight.

Sunrise wasn’t spectacular on that recent summer day. But even an ordinary dawn at Borobudur Temple — nine stone tiers stacked like a wedding cake and adorned with hundreds of Buddha statues and relief panels — provided a memorable experience.

The 9th century temple is in the center of Indonesia’s Java island, a densely populated region with stunning vistas. Other highlights include the towering Hindu temple complex of Prambanan, which, like Borobudur, is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and Mount Merapi, the country’s most active volcano, whose lava-covered slopes are accessible by jeep.

While the two temples draw many visitors, other foreigners head to the relaxing beaches of Bali, just east of Java and by far the most popular tourist destination in a nation of thousands of islands and almost 270 million people.

Recently reelected President Joko Widodo wants to change this dynamic by pushing ahead with “10 new Balis,” an ambitious plan to boost tourism and diversify Southeast Asia’s largest economy.

Key to the plan is to upgrade provincial airports and improve access to outlying destinations, such as Lake Toba on Sumatra island, more than 800 miles from Jakarta, the capital.

Widodo, the president of the world’s most populous Muslim-majority nation, told the AP last year that he would like to see more business ties with the Middle East.

Muslim tourists, including from the Middle East, might be an easier fit for some of the more conservative areas earmarked for tourism development. Tourism officials have played down the possibility of cultural friction that might accompany the influx of more non-Muslim visitors, arguing that Indonesia’s brand of tolerant Islam can accommodate everyone.

“There are some particular locations that are very strict (religiously),” said Hiramsyah Thaib, who heads the “10 New Balis” initiative. “We believe we won’t have any problems. Sometimes we have problems in the media, but not in reality.”

One of the 10 sites earmarked for development is the Borobudur Temple area and nearby Yogyakarta, a city of several hundred thousand people that is embedded in a large metropolitan area. The city is a center of Javanese culture and a seat of royal dynasties going back centuries.

In 2017, former President Barack Obama and his family visited the city, where his late mother, Ann Dunham, spent years doing anthropological research. Obama, who lived in Indonesia as a child, toured Borobudur and Prambanan during the nostalgic trip.

But while the Obamas got around with relative ease, including private jet travel, ordinary visitors struggle with congested streets packed with motorbikes weaving in and out of slow-moving traffic.

Travelers hoping to be in place at Borobudur just before sunrise need at least 90 minutes to get there from Yogyakarta, a journey of 24 miles. A 140-mile round trip to the Dieng highlands, with terraced fields, small temples and a colorful volcanic lake, requires a full day of travel, some of it on bumpy back roads.

Jan Tenbrinke, 37, from Zottele in the Netherlands, said Bali is the next stop for his family of four, but that he hoped to get a better sense of Indonesian culture in Yogyakarta.

In the city, tourists can visit workshops for Batik textiles, silver jewelry and Kopi Luwak — coffee made from partially digested coffee cherries that were eaten and defecated by wild tree cats, or civets. Billed as the “world’s most expensive coffee,” Kopi Luwak became known to a wider audience in the 2007 Jack Nicholson-Morgan Freeman movie “The Bucket List.”

Local museums, including two royal palaces and a former Dutch fort, pose a challenge for foreign visitors eager to learn about local history and culture because they mostly lack easily accessible explanations in English.

Thaib, the tourism official, acknowledged that there is room for improvement. He said Indonesia is determined to catch up to other Asian nations, including Thailand, which he said began developing their tourism industries much sooner.

“There is still a lot of work,” he said of his nation’s efforts. “We believe we are on the right track.”

By Karin Laub
Associated Press

Tourists inspect a Buddha statue Aug. 12 at Borobudur Temple in Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia. The temple is adorned with hundreds of Buddha statues and relief panels.

Local tourists take a selfie Aug. 6 with the background of Mount Merapi in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
GO IT ALONE

Increasingly, people with incurable wanderlust and slightly more mercurial partners just go it alone, blasting off to Bhutan with a friend or joining a group tour to Papua New Guinea or New Mexico.

According to a 2019 survey by YouGov, 47% of people who travel alone do so because they want the “freedom to choose my itinerary without input from others”; 32% say they choose solo trips because “certain destinations are appealing to me, but not to my family/friends/partner.”

“The majority of my clients are women who have a partner at home,” says Erin Lewis, founder of travel company Eat Pray Move, who leads small-group retreats combining yoga sessions with visits to historic sites and spas in destinations such as Italy, Iceland and Indonesia. “Sometimes their spouse has a crazy job, or maybe they’re afraid to fly. Trips like this are a way to go by yourself but not be completely alone.”

Lueck counsels couples to try alternating who chooses destinations or daily activities — Monday is yours; Tuesday is my partner’s. This year you plan the vacation, next year your spouse does. If that doesn’t work, you can create a Harry Potter-esque sorting hat by tossing slips of paper with destinations or activities on them, then drawing one at random and booking tickets.

“Maybe your husband wants adventure, and you just crave downtime with no distractions. It’s often about figuring out how to meet in the overlap.”

Shauna Springer
psychologist, author

TALK IT OUT

Our therapist had us both talk honestly with her about our frustrations and then try discussing them without going into battle. She had us make “I” statements (“I’d like you to come with me on this trip”) as opposed to “you” ones, which she said often turn into accusations. (“You never go where I want to go.”) We also explored whether my “Thailand-or-bust” campaign brought up other things we should work on. Was I being controlling? Did his stubbornness mean he felt I wasn’t listening to what he wanted? We resolved to try to look deeper into what was going on before fighting about travel.

“It’d be bad to make your spouse continually just go on vacations or do what you want, say, zip-lining or even going to art museums,” Lueck says. “You don’t want them to feel de-selved, like they’re living your life.”

Our eventual solution was to book a trip to Argentina, which intrigued us both.

And though he hates horseback riding, Callan went riding with me near the foothills of the Andes and was rewarded with a rare condor sighting. Sports bore me, but I helped my soccer-mad husband buy Boca Juniors soccer gear in Buenos Aires, and we went to see the team’s snug “Bombonera” stadium. The next spring, I went to Thailand and Cambodia with my buddy Deepa, and Callan was okay by my spending the money on a solo trip.

Still, he’s gunning for his Alaskan vacation, and I’m dreaming of Japan. Think there’s a cruise ship that visits both in one trip?
The end of the swipe
Online dating moving beyond the app screen

BY LOUISE DIXON  
Associated Press

While taboos surrounding online dating are long gone, some of today's app users are sick of the endless swiping and virtual pen-palling that leads nowhere when it comes to long-term relationships, according to industry leaders who are responding with new ways to get users off their phones and out meeting people in the real world.

David Vermeulen is one such leader. His Inner Circle, launched in 2012, is more closely curating with new ways to get users off their phones and streamline the experience, including helping set up face-to-face meetings.

It’s not just the newer generation of apps that are adapting to changing dating attitudes. OKCupid is one of the original dating sites, started by two Harvard math graduates in 2004. Beginning life as a desktop website, it developed into an app with the advent of smartphones. Today, OKCupid boasts that it sets up 50,000 dates per week.

The site enforces certain restrictions to try and weed out those not interested in getting to that date. The company insists that users post more than one photo and puts them through a list of localized timely questions before a profile can be set up. So if you thought you should avoid talking politics or religion on a first date, it seems the tide is turning. Users can filter based on their views from climate change to Brexit.

“In the U.S., we may ask you, how do you feel about the United Kingdom?” said OKCupid’s global chief marketing officer, Melissa Hobley.

According to a Pew Research Center study last year, 3 in 10 Americans have used a dating site or app and 12 percent have married or have been in a committed relationship with someone they met through online dating.

Hobley said one of the most exciting developments as digital dating moves into the 2020s is emerging markets including India, Indonesia, Turkey, Thailand, Malaysia, Japan and South Korea, where dating hasn’t always been so easy.

In India, for example, a new generation of women are “going to university, and they’re working, and they’re saying arranged marriage is not for me, and I want the ability to find my own person, and for my marriage to be a choice that I make,” she said.

Hobley has also seen strides in inclusiveness and support throughout LGBTQ communities, creating a safe space to express gender and sexuality preferences and to meet potential partners.

“The 70 to 80 percent of LGBTQ relationships started on a dating app,” she said.

For Hobley, the love doesn’t stop there. She said she gets an average of 5 to 20 wedding emails and invites a week.

“I will crash your wedding,” she jokes, “but we also send a gift.”

The Eufy Security Wi-Fi Video Doorbell has a simple installation to your existing doorbell's wiring and is packed with great home security features. At 4.8-by-1.7-by-0.9 inches, the Eufy security camera doorbell ($199.99) is similar in size to other video doorbells but includes 4GB of built-in storage. This allows up to 30 days of video with a standard of 30 videos a day of 30 seconds each, to be stored and accessed from the companion app.

There’s no monthly fees or cloud subscription, and your data is stored with Eufy security. According to Eufy, the military-grade AES-256 chip ensures data is encrypted on transmission and storage.

The Eufy Security Wi-Fi Video Doorbell is similar in size to other video doorbells, and includes 4GB of built-in storage.

The video doorbell comes with a pair of mounting plates and connects to your existing Wi-Fi with a provided wireless router. It functions as a standard doorbell with a purse ring and sends the ringing alert to the included wireless electric chime in addition to sending a smartphone notification letting you instantly and securely see who’s at the door. Each doorbell can be connected to up to four chimes.

When someone is at the door, you’ll see them through the Eufy Security app on your smartphone and respond live with two-way audio or send a pre-recorded response you previously set up back to your subject at the door. Up to three instant responses can be stored and sent upon your command.

Videos stored actually give you an additional three seconds of footage before the initial alert sets off the recording. This can often give insight into who’s approaching or other aspects of the situation.

The 260-degree angle of view camera has HDR imaging, which allows it to adjust for low light or backlit situations. The image is captured in a 4:3 aspect ratio for a much bigger image compared to others offering a 16:9 ratio and a resolution of 2560 x 1920.

During setup, you can customize the activity zone, which tells the camera where to detect motion. The camera has technology to detect human faces and body shapes so you don’t get an alert when neighborhood pets go running by.

The Eufy Security Wi-Fi Video Doorbell also connects to Alexa and Google Voice Assistant so you can check live views with a voice command.

As battery-powered, the installation is easy, but you are dealing with live wires for power from your existing doorbell, so use caution. A battery-powered model with many of the same features is also available ($199.99).

Online: eufylife.com
‘Break Shot’

James Taylor reflects on the first crazy 21 years of his life in new audiobook memoir

BY AMY KAUFMAN
Los Angeles Times

Even here, in the stillness of the Berkshires forest, James Taylor grows anxious. He has to be conscious of how he enters his days, since he most often experiences stress during the first six hours of being awake.

“I was glad to get a chance to see my shrink. I haven’t seen her since before the break,” he says.

“I think any attempt at mental health is an excellent idea. It’s a little bit self-centered and navel-gazing, to a certain extent, to focus on yourself to that degree. But some of us need to become conscious of what we’re doing that we need to stop doing.”

It’s early January, and the 71-year-old, who has just driven the mile of his maple-lined entry after visiting with his therapist, walks into TheBarn — his recording studio, a building just a few paces from where he sleeps — and takes off his coat. He keeps on his trademark newsboy cap while tending to the fire in the wood-burning stove.

It’s difficult to imagine a more tranquil environment. But in recent years, Taylor says, he has found his anxiety becoming “a bear.” From the inception of his career, the musician has been open about his mental health struggles. In his senior year of high school, he spent 10 months at Boston’s McLean Hospital during his first depressive episode. A couple of years later, he checked into another residential treatment center in an attempt to kick his heroin addiction. It was there that he composed the majority of his first hit record, 1970’s “Sweet Baby James” — a story he shared whenever he spoke about his songwriting.

Which is why, when Taylor has been asked by publishers over the years to write his memoirs, he has declined. Because he finds it redundant to talk about this and that, he has declined. Because he finds it redundant to talk about his music — “it should be listened to, and it either connects or it doesn’t” — he’s been more forthcoming about his personal struggles since he became famous 50 years ago.

Then, last summer, Audible approached Taylor about collaborating on a project. Because he was preparing to release an album of classic covers — “American Standard,” which was released Feb. 28 — his manager thought that teaming up with the audio company might help to promote the new music.

Initially, Taylor envisioned creating something for Audible that would focus on his songwriting. He planned on selecting six of his tunes and talking about the process of writing them, their meaning and reception. But when he began talking to the project’s producer, Bill Flanagan — an author and television executive who oversaw VH1’s “Storytellers” and CMT’s “Crossroads” — a different idea emerged.

“We talked on the phone about the parameters — about 90 minutes of James talking about something — and the best idea that came up was his detailing the first 21 years of his life,” says Flanagan, who has known Taylor for 35 years. “In the years I was at VH1 and MTV, he never wanted to do a ‘Behind the Music’ special — he could never be talked into it. So it was interesting to me how fully committed and into this he was once we started going. He told me a lot of stuff I never knew. And he’s one of the only rock stars you’ll ever meet who speaks in full paragraphs.”

Taylor decided to call the audio memoir “Break Shot: My First 21 Years.” The title is a reference to the first shot of a billiards game, when the cue ball slams into the other balls, sending them off into various directions. For Taylor, that moment occurred when he left his Massachusetts boarding school, Milton Academy, and went to McLean. But “it had been building,” he says, “to a real disconnect.” His father’s alcoholism had reached a critical point. His parents’ marriage was coming to an end. The Vietnam War was underway. John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated. The U.S. was living under the threat of nuclear annihilation amid the Cuban Missile Crisis.

He was on the precipice of adulthood, but he didn’t have any direction. Growing up, Taylor often felt crushed by the weight of his family’s unspoken expectations. His father was, as he puts it, “the ultimate academician” — a star student who went from Harvard Medical School to head resident at Massachusetts General Hospital. When Taylor and his four siblings were still kids, their father uprooted them from the Northeast to North Carolina, where he would later become dean of the University of North Carolina Medical School.

But as he remembers in “Break Shot,” Taylor wasn’t getting any clear instruction from his parents on how to achieve such success — how to apply to college or pursue a career. He grapples with his relationship to his parents throughout the audio memoir, which he says he largely felt comfortable making at all because his parents are no longer around.

“I wanted to be careful not to drag other people’s business into the street — people who are my contemporaries and my siblings — anyone who’s still alive,” he explains.

Less than a month before the Jan. 31 release of the Audible project, Taylor is still uneasy about the prospect of sharing it with the world. Because the final touches had yet to be put on the audio version of the story, his representatives would allow The Times to review only the manuscript of “Break Shot” — and to read it on Taylor’s property.

The singer-songwriter says his hesitation came from a fear that someone might “furiously read it and mine it for its prurient or sensational aspects” before release. The abbreviated memoir does delve into his infamous drug use — he didn’t get sober until his mid-30s — and in one scene, he recalls how he accidentally gave John Lennon a dose of methadone “too big to be taken by a civilian. … I am sure glad I...
Nashville finds a playful side
City known for country music now a hotbed of game soundtrack production

BY KRISTIN M. HALL
Associated Press

Nashville is already known as Music City, but a new wave of music being recorded there for video games and movies could earn it a new title as Soundtrack City.

The city has a reputation for high-quality studio musicians that can play just about any genre, including country, pop, rock, gospel and more. Nashville musicians have also been behind the soundtracks for some of the biggest video game franchises including Madden, FIFA, Call of Duty and Star Wars.

And more production companies have been bringing their film and TV soundtrack recordings to Nashville, including Netflix, Showtime, Sony and Focus Features, thanks in part to an incentive program enacted into law last year.

“Nashville has become one of the two or three major places to record in the world for film, game and television,” said Steve Schnur, president of music for Electronic Arts, the popular video game company.

Schnur’s background includes working at MTV and record labels such as Arista and also working as a music supervisor on films prior to joining EA. He’s been a sort of Pied Piper for soundtrack recording in Nashville. “I’ve been preaching Nashville for quite some time and initially it was met with a little cynicism,” he said. “Nashville? Don’t they make country records there?”

For a long time, EA recorded soundtracks for their games with orchestras in Los Angeles, London and eastern Europe. That changed about seven years ago when Schnur came to Nashville to record music for a trailer for a game called Dragon’s Age Inquisition.

“It was like the world’s greatest band,” Schnur said of the 60-member orchestra assembled for the recording. “It really supported what Nashville is: a collaborative place.”

Even more so, Nashville’s musicians were both fast and accurate, even on complicated scores written by acclaimed composers such as Hans Zimmer, Lorne Balfe, Jeff Russo and John Debney.

“This is a first-take town,” said Schnur. “You go to Prague, you’re doing six or seven takes.”

Now, Schnur estimates 90 to 95% of EA’s scores are being recorded in Nashville, with the rest recorded in London.

The music of video games often is integral to the gameplay in creating both emotion and attachment to the characters and storyline. Kris Bowers, the composer and pianist behind the Oscar-winning film “Green Book,” came to Ocean Way Nashville Recording Studios to record the soundtrack for Madden NFL 20.

Bowers said he can still recall exactly the music of the games he played as a child, such as GoldenEye 007 on Nintendo 64 or Super Smash Bros. and Zelda.

“I think the music immediately connects you, especially when there are strong themes or these melodies that you can’t forget. It’s the same thing as hearing a John Williams score. You hear it and you’re immediately transported to your childhood,” Bowers said.

Bowers also explained that because video games are non-linear, meaning the player’s decisions can take the game in different directions, he had to compose music in a totally different way than he does for films or TV.

“For each of these different endings or different iterations of the storyline, or the way that it branches out, there will be a different piece of score,” Bowers said.

“For myself, thinking as more of a film composer, how do I make each branch feel similar, like they are related, but obviously matching the emotional tone of the story at that moment?”

That also means a lot more music to record compared to a feature film. Schnur said video game scores can range between an hour to 300 minutes of recorded music.

Bob Raines, executive director of the Tennessee Entertainment Commission, said that when Tennessee has to compete with neighboring states like Georgia and Louisiana for film and TV production, music production was their competitive advantage.

Raines notes that Tennessee has the highest concentration of musicians in the country and is the second in the country for concentration of sound engineers.

About five years ago, Raines said they started seeing growth in the scoring sector, so the state started working on an incentive program.

In just six months, they brought five new musical scoring projects to Tennessee that likely would have gone to eastern Europe, with companies such as Netflix, Showtime Networks, Focus Features, Sony and EA, Raines said.

“We have a legacy of music as a state brand so it was easy to promote,” said Raines.

Schnur said now the problem isn’t bringing projects to Nashville, it’s finding the studio space and time to record them.

“Nobody second guesses coming to Nashville,” said Schnur. “The only question now is there’s not enough space and we need more.”

FROM PAGE 36 didn’t kill John Lennon that day,” he says.

But, as promised, he never reveals much about his intimate relationships with other living public figures.

His only: “Our romance did not last that long, but our friendship continues. We still make a point of being in each other’s lives. And when he listens to music — which is, in fact, a rarity, because he prefers silence so he can “put something together” in his head — he finds himself returning to favorites from his childhood. “American Standard,” which he began work on in 2018, includes 14 guitar-centric arrangements of songs he treasured as a boy: “The Surrey With the Fringe on Top” from “ Oklahoma,” Henry Mancini’s “Moon River,” Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught.”

“Not only do these songs inform my music, but very early on, they were what I was playing,” he says. “Those songs were so smart and so capable and so well done that as songs, they need to have a presence in the life of music. I think it’s good to reiterate them. Bill Evans played these songs so beautifully. He threw them into a whole new light on the piano that inspired an entire generation of jazz players. I’m not saying that I’m as capable as he, but the thing is, it’s worth doing if you bring something new to it or see it in a new light.”

In May, Taylor will embark on a 26-date U.S. tour with Jackson Browne to promote the new music. He is rarely at home for more than a month, but tries to balance his touring schedule just enough so that he doesn’t tire of it.

“In its season, there’s nothing like it,” he says of being on the road. “I don’t know if I’ve got another studio album in me of my own material. It’s hard to know what will happen in the next 10 years. I’m still writing. I feel as though I’ve done this all my life, and I just want to take it as far as I can go.”
By Dennis Drabelle
Special to The Washington Post

Takers and birders tend to warm up fast to others of their kind. Anyone who shares your willingness to trek for miles in the wilderness or rappel down a cliffside to count the birds in a nest is bound to be simpatico. This prejudice helped Jeffery Lendrum, the title villain of Joshua Hammer’s entertaining and illuminating new book, “The Falcon Thief,” to maintain a dandy of a reputation: heroic birdler and merciless thief.

As a boy in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), the morming and athletic Lendrum keened interest in birds and his readiness to volunteer on their behalf made him a favorite at clubs devoted to matters avian. Behind his winning facade, however, lurked a poor student who failed at almost everything he tried — except stealing eggs, eggs out of nests, a skill taught him by his father.

Young Lendrum’s prowess earned him a Thiefs preeminence among his peers. One of his boyhood friends recalled climbing a tree to pilch sparrow hawk eggs only to find a nest with two things in it, a common chicken egg and a message left by the competitive Lendrum: “Too late, sucker.”

Lendrum fell under suspicion when, time after time, he would report having seen a clutch of eggs only to have another birder check his work and find an empty nest. In 1983, a police raid on the family home uncovered a cabinet full of eggs, jumpers from endangered species. Lendrum’s father claimed that he and the lad were illegitimate and this was “just a schoolboy collection.” The cops were having none of it. Father and son were convicted on multiple counts of theft and illegal possession, fined the equivalent of $2,500 each, and sentenced to suspended jail time. While pretending to be a changed man, Lendrum turned his specialty into a commercial enterprise. Delivered to the right parties, stolen bird eggs or chicks can bring handsome sums, all the handsomer for species protected by international law. In some cases, the eggs themselves are valued, as objects of striking beauty — although because it’s illegal to possess them without a permit, they must be kept hidden in drawers or attics.

In other cases, live eggs or chicks are sold to recipients who hope to raise rare birds in captivity. As the mainstay of a sport going back at least to 700 B.C., falconry got into the latter category when a security breach became the adult Lendrum’s crime of choice. The United Arab Emirates purchased a major source of his frequent-flier miles. The tricky chore of smuggling contra-band across international borders became even dickerier after 9/11, and the methods Lendrum devised for the catchphat he possessed. Once, for example, while transporting falcon chicks, Hammer explains, Lendrum removed the birds from his bag at the airport, “to avoid the baggage scan machine, where their bones would be broken.” Also carefuliy in the pockets of his fleece, and walked them through the metal detectors, ducking into a bathroom, Lendrum put the chicks back in his rucksack and boarded his flight. He stored the bag in the overhead compartment, listened for the birds’ cheeps when they got hungry, and took the rucksack into the nearest toilet, where he fed his charges. Lendrum was apparently motivated as much by the thrills he felt as by the money he made.

For all of Lendrum’s bravado, now and then he got caught. One time, he was nabbed because he went into an airport shower room; stayed 20 minutes, trying the patience of janitors who tried to get in and mop the place up; and emerged without leaving a single drop of water behind. The other time, he was pointed out to security officers, who apprehended Lendrum, who had eggs hidden in the clothes he’d changed into.

He finally met his match in Andy McWilliam, a British cop who was getting bored with police work until he realized that his hobby of birdwatching made him a natural at catching egg thieves. What he learned of culprits like Lendrum “reinforced McWilliam’s view that the act of collecting was an act of pure selfishness, an attack on the sanctity of the wild.”

How McWilliam finally nailed his man should be left for author Hammer to tell, which he does in high style.

——— Tracey M. Herbaugh/AP

‘Falcon Thief’: True tale of adventure, treachery

BY DENNIS DRABELLE

Strung Out
Erin Khar

A 13-year-old girl in Los Angeles started using opioids she stole from a family member’s medicine cabinet. Then she was bold enough to try heroin. Heroin changed her cine cabinet.

There are plenty of addiction memoirs on the market, but Khar’s book tells the story of a privileged girl growing up with a circle of friends and taking horseback riding lessons. From the outside, she seems to have it all. But for Khar, “it’s all a facade.”

The book is Khar’s reflection of what she remembers as her “new self” a letter each year of her “old” self and the changes that come with leaping another year older, but “old” on the outside, she’s still her future in her 51-year-old body. A kind stranger named Kenzie explains, Lendrum removed the birds from his bag at the airport, “to avoid the baggage scan machine, where their bones would be broken.” Also carefully in the pockets of his fleece, and walked them through the metal detectors, ducking into a bathroom, Lendrum put the chicks back in his rucksack and boarded his flight. He stored the bag in the overhead compartment, listened for the birds’ cheeps when they got hungry, and took the rucksack into the nearest toilet, where he fed his charges. Lendrum was apparently motivated as much by the thrills he felt as by the money he made.

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——— Tracey M. Herbaugh/AP

On the Bright Side
Melanie Shankle

With the craziness of today’s society, it’s essential that we figure out a way to ground ourselves in what is truly important in life. Shankle uses personal narratives to navigate the constant ups and downs of this world.

Shankle has a gift for storytelling. Her pop culture-infused essays portray a woman who is living in a digital age of comparison and competition. Is your metabolism supposed to mock you? Does anyone else even watch British shows streaming on Netflix with subtitles? Why is the local oldies station playing songs from the 2000s like a tourist on a package tour?

With each passing year, Oona turns another year older, but hopes to a different age. Oona never knows which outside age she will encounter next. She must learn to navigate the challenges that come with leaping another year older, but “old” on the outside, she’s still her true age on the inside.

——— Lincee Ray/AP

Oona Out of Order
Margarita Montimore

Oona Lockhart is ready to begin her adult life when she turns 19 at the stroke of midnight. At a New Year’s Eve party, she wonders what her future holds as the clock counts down the final moments of 1992.

Instead of blowing a horn and kissing her boyfriend, Oona faints and awakens 32 years in the future, in her 31-year-old body. A kind stranger named Kenzie explains to Oona that she’s a time traveler and in one case, he tells the kids to call him the Midnight Man. Each event starts the same way. The person breaks into the house, kills the husband and wife, and then finds the children.

In other cases, live eggs or chicks are sold to recipients who hope to raise rare birds in captivity. As the mainstay of a sport going back at least to 700 B.C., falconry got into the latter category when a security breach became the adult Lendrum’s crime of choice. The United Arab Emirates purchased a major source of his frequent-flier miles. The tricky chore of smuggling contra-band across international borders became even dickerier after 9/11, and the methods Lendrum devised for the catchphat he possessed. Once, for example, while transporting falcon chicks, Hammer explains, Lendrum removed the birds from his bag at the airport, “to avoid the baggage scan machine, where their bones would be broken.” Also carefully in the pockets of his fleece, and walked them through the metal detectors, ducking into a bathroom, Lendrum put the chicks back in his rucksack and boarded his flight. He stored the bag in the overhead compartment, listened for the birds’ cheeps when they got hungry, and took the rucksack into the nearest toilet, where he fed his charges. Lendrum was apparently motivated as much by the thrills he felt as by the money he made.

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——— Tracey M. Herbaugh/AP

The Dark Corners of the Night
Meg Gardiner

A killer that targets families by attacking them in the middle of the night tests the abilities of FBI profiler Caitlin Hendrick in Gardiner’s latest thriller.

Each event starts the same way. The person breaks into the house, kills the husband and wife, and then finds the children. In one case, the Midnight Man scares the traumatized children and in one case, he tells the kids to call him the Midnight Man. Each event starts the same way. The person breaks into the house, kills the husband and wife, and then finds the children. In one case, the Midnight Man scares the traumatized children and in one case, he tells the kids to call him the Midnight Man. Each event starts the same way. The person breaks into the house, kills the husband and wife, and then finds the children. In one case, the Midnight Man scares the traumatized children and in one case, he tells the kids to call him the Midnight Man.

——— Jeff Ayers/AP

The Warsaw Protocol
Steve Berry

Poland becomes a battleground between several other countries, and only a former agent for the U.S. has a chance to make things right in Berry’s latest adventure starring Cotton Malone.

Historical artifacts related to Christ’s crucifixion are stolen from places around the world, and these relics, collectively known as the Arma Christi, are being used as an entrance fee to a secret auction. Cotton reluctantly agrees to represent the U.S. in the bidding process, but that means he needs to steal a religious symbol that also has spiritual meaning to the inhabitants of Poland.

The president of Poland is in a tumultuous re-election campaign, and it seems that even his supposed allies don’t want him to win another term. The winner of the election will receive personal details that could be used to blackmail the Polish leader, but will also shift the balance of power in the region. The reverberations would be felt all over the world.

Berry blends a fascinating history of Poland and its neighbors and weaves it a bit to deliver a novel that is both thrilling and timely.

——— Jeff Ayers/AP
**NEW ON DVD**

"Uncut Gems": Howard Ratner (Adam Sandler) is a wildly chaotic jewelry dealer and gambler, always trying to talk his way into making bigger bets (or maybe more accurately, out of the latest mess he’s created). The latest is moving black market Ethiopian opals in New York in latest is moving black market way into making bigger bets (or gambler, always trying to talk his Ratner (Adam Sandler) is a Stewart, Naomi Scott and Ella ing a new energy source. Kristen sinister entrepreneur from abus- tective agency team up to stop a women working for a private de- tal in "Breaking Bad," which almost every- in his life known, minus his co-worker/girlfriend (Julia Fox). But Sandler’s performance makes it a thrill.

In his review, Los Angeles Times critic Justin Chang wrote, "In recent studio misfires the actor's familiar shtick has seemed to arise not from a place of gutsy transgressive comedy, but from a zone of laziness and complacency, as if he couldn’t even muster enough energy to laugh his way to the bank. 'Uncut Gems' reignites his fires and then some, partly because he’s playing someone so driven, who adores the thrill of the chase and takes an almost sexual ecstasy in every payoff. But it’s also partly because Howard — flamboyant, shameless, boorish and intermittently lovable — charges so many of Sandler’s familiar expressions and gestures with searing new energy and pur- pose.

Also available on DVD  "Bombshell": Fox News’ Gretchen Carlson (Nicole Kid- man), Megyn Kelly (Charize Theron) and a young newscaster (Margot Robbie) grapple with coming forward with sexual harassment allega- tions against founder Roger Ailes (John Lith- gow).

"Spies in Disguise": A spy- turned-pigeon must rely on his awkward tech counterpart for an important mission in this computer-animated fi lm. Voice talents include Will Smith, Tom Holland and Rachel Brosnaham.

"Charlie’s Angels": Three women working for a private de- tective agency team up to stop a sinister entrepreneur from abus- ing new energy source. Kristen Stewart, Naomi Scott and Ella Balinska star.

"Chesapeake Shores: Season 4": The Hallmark Channel hit drama series follows ex-New Yorker Abby O’Brien (Meghan Ory) as she faces characters from her past.

"Inherit the Viper": An Appa- laxious (Josh Hartnett) at- tempts to quit dealing opioids but is met with increasing threats and violence.


"The Affair: Season 5": The Hallmark Channel hit drama series follows the after the affair off for more than a year. The bad news is that "Better Call Saul" — which will air its sixth and final season in 2021 — traces the evolution of well-inten- tioned attorney Jimmy McGill (Bob Odenkirk) into shady criminal lawyer Saul Goodman of "Breaking Bad."

That development means that Seehorn, who plays McGill’s principled but increas- ingly conflicted girlfriend Kim Wexler, is growing closer to learning the fate of her character, who was not in "Breaking Bad."

Given that McGill/Goodman is coming ever nearer to connecting with criminal masterminds Walter White and the lethal underworld at the core of "Breaking Bad," speculation has been steadily rising among the show’s devotees that Kim might very well meet a bad end.

Of course, there’s always a chance that things may not turn out as bad as fans fear, and Kim may walk away (relatively) unscathed. But the universe of "Breaking Bad" is notoriously treacherous. Whatever happens, Seehorn finds the anticipation thrilling.

"People are very concerned for Kim," Seehorn said with a laugh. She said fans approaching her on the street and on social media are worried about the character and want to save her before it’s too late.

"They speak about her with me like she’s this mutual best friend we both have," Seehorn said. "They’re so protective. They said, ‘What are we going to do? Should we call her?’ Let’s have an intervention.”

Kim is often positioned as the moral cen- ter in a world populated by unscrupulous lawyers, drug dealers and vicious wrong- doers. While she has demonstrated her determination to be an upstanding lawyer, her loyalty to McGill, with his questionable ethics and talent for scams, has at times put her unimpeachable reputation in jeopardy. (She’s even been his occasional accomplice.) This season, Kim’s values are on a collision course with Goodman’s darkening nature.

"Kim is a real complex character, but so are human beings, and that’s what (ex- ecutive producers) Peter Tolan and Vince Gilligan and our brilliant writing staff are so adept at showing," she said. "Her ability to compartmentalize has now become a flaw for her. It used to be a superpower, but now we see it’s going to become very dangerous.”

Seehorn said she has been given no clues on what awaits Kim. But while Seehorn like the show’s fans — knows the truth about what Saul Goodman becomes, Kim is in the dark.

"They tell me nothing. All I ever have is the script in front of me," Seehorn said. "The good news is, I don’t know where the series is going, but I’m enjoying it, and from the perspective of a fan, I really want to see how the great writers are going to put together this jigsaw puzzle." Kim was left shell-shocked at the conclu- sion of last season: She and McGill had cooked up an elaborate plot to get his lawyer’s license reinstated. She was moved during a reinstatement hearing as McGill spoke of being traumatized by the suicide of his older brother, Chuck (Michael McKean). But she was sent reeling at the end when she found out that his emotions weren’t real and were instead part of a scheme on his part.

She was further shocked after he told her that he planned to practice law under the name Saul Goodman. Kim felt that Jimmy deserved to practice law, that he was a good person," she said. "But the reveal that he was scamming ev- eryone—a scam she wasn’t part of—floors her. That’s a much scarier thing than being part of it.”

And while the protagonist remains Good- man, Seehorn said her character will come much more into focus this season. Kim’s past, and how that has shaped her, has been one of the intriguing mysteries propping up "Saul’s" central drama. Although she seems to be professionally competent and gener- ally in control, her considerable vulnerabili- ties will be uncovered.

"We’re going to look at who you are when you’re alone as opposed to how you are because of someone else," Seehorn said. "It goes both ways. A lot of people think Jimmy affects Kim, but she also affects Jimmy. It’s reciprocal. And we’re going to see what it looks like when you keep the lid on for so long that you can’t stop it from shaking," like exploring who she was before we met her, who she is and what she is becoming.

You can’t stay that tightly coiled unless you have something that you want to keep coiled without it taking a toll. There’s a price to pay for that.”

Odenkirk understands why viewers are drawn to Kim. “She’s actually more of a mystery now than Saul is,” he said in a phone interview. “With the choices that she makes, I want to know who she is. The more we see of the story, the more we see there’s a big part of her personality that is OK and even familiar with what Saul is doing. The name of the show should be changed from ‘Better Call Saul’ to ‘Who the Hell Is Kim?’”

The actor highly praised Seehorn’s por- trayal: “Kim is as multidimensional a char- acter as you’ll ever see, and Rhea just brings all these sides to the screen. I’m astounded by the mix she is able to portray.”

Asked about how she thinks she will feel when the end finally does come of Kim — good or bad — Seehorn paused.

"It will be a sad goodbye for me, for sure," she finally said. “This has been my favorite character that I’ve ever played, on screen or stage. But I will also be excited to learn how this great mystery ends. I don’t know if there’s anyone better than our writers room to be trusting. It will be the perfect ending for her, whatever it is.”

"Better Call Saul!" airs Wednesdays on AFN-Spectrum.
Thirsting for a better solution
Experts warn that ‘dry fasting,’ or abstaining from water, is a terrible idea

BY JESSICA ROY
Los Angeles Times

A new fad diet making the rounds on wellness influencer Instagram won’t actually help you lose weight. And it could cause dehydration, urinary tract infections, kidney stones, organ failure — even death.

It’s called “dry fasting.” It goes beyond what most of us would consider fasting — abstaining from solid food or liquid calories — and requires consuming no water or liquids of any kind for many hours or even days at a time.

Instagram and other social media sites have provided a glossy new platform for extremely dubious health and nutrition claims. Posts about dry fasting often tout their potential to burn toxins, or fat, or inflammation, or that dry fasting forces your body to make you look a bit more toned, because your body is using up the water in your cells for energy.

Even more dubious claims suggest that dry fasting forces your body to burn toxins, or fat, or inflammation, or tumors. It does not. When you stop feeding your body calories, it breaks down muscle and fat. The toxic byproducts of that breakdown process build up in your system, requiring extra hydration to flush them out.

In other words, if you’re abstaining from food, your body needs more water, not less.

Experts agree: There is no dietary or nutritional reason to go on a “dry fast.”

“I don’t recommend it at all,” said Dr. Pauline Yi, a physician at UCLA Health Beverly Hills who regularly treats patients in their late teens and early 20s. She said intermittent fasting and other fasting-type diets are a popular topic with patients, and she has no problem with people trying them out.

“But I also tell them when you’re fasting, you have to drink water,” she said. “You cannot go without hydration.”

The majority of the human body is water. Your individual water consumption needs depend on your height, weight, health and the climate, but generally speaking, Yi said people should be consuming at least 68 ounces — almost nine cups — of water every day.

Cary Kreutzer, an associate professor at USC’s schools of gerontology and medicine whose area of expertise includes nutrition and diet, says digestive systems aren’t meant to have extended “breaks.” She likened making your kidneys go without water to letting your car’s engine run out of oil. “You can basically burn out some parts of the car that you’re going to have to get replaced,” she said.

“You don’t want those replacement parts to include your vital organs.”

Another unintended consequence of dry fasting: It sets your body in water-conservation mode.

“You’re going to cut back on water, your body will produce hormones and chemicals to hold onto any water,” said Yi. “It’s like yo-yo dieting in fast motion.”

Dry fasting is not the same thing as intermittent fasting, which has become a popular fad diet in recent years. There are different variations of intermittent fasting, but most people start with 16 hours of fasting followed by eight hours of eating. Martin Berkhan created the “LeanGains” 16:8 intermittent fasting guide and is widely credited with popularizing the diet. On his website, leangains.com, Berkhan writes that during the 16-hour fasting window, coffee, calorie-free sweeteners, diet soda, sugar-free gum and up to a teaspoon of milk in a cup of coffee won’t break the fast.

The subreddit for fasting, r/fasting, has an “Introduction to Intermittent Fasting” guide that contains the following tips for surviving the fasting portion of your day:

- Drink lots of cold water
- Always carry water, a canteen, a bottle, or keep a full glass within sight
- Water, water, water, water

Valter Longo has studied starvation, fasting and calorie restriction in humans for nearly 30 years. He’s currently the director of the Longevity Institute at USC and a professor of gerontology.

Fasting-type diets have grown in popularity in recent years for a simple reason, he said: “Because they work.”

But he said he’s not aware of any reputable studies about the effects of dry fasting, and said he wouldn’t even consider putting one together, also for a simple reason: It’s incredibly dangerous.

“For sure, the body needs to rest, but there are safe ways of doing that, and dry fasting is not one of them,” Longo said. “We require water.”

His work has involved looking at how cultures and religions have engaged with starvation and fasting throughout history, and says he hasn’t heard of any that involved extended fasting without water.

The closest is Ramadan, during which observers go without food or water during daylight hours — but at most, that lasts for 16 hours, and it’s preceded and followed by extensive hydration.

If someone tries dry fasting for a full day, Longo said, they risk side effects like developing kidney stones. Longer than that, and you start risking your life.

Some proponents of “dry fasting” eschew water but recommend hydrating with fresh fruits and vegetables. Hydrating with fruit is certainly better than not hydrating at all. An orange has about a half-cup of water in it; to get to the recommended 68 ounces of water a day, you’d have to eat around 17 oranges. That’s a lot of peeling.
Build resilience by taking mindful, not fearful, approach

By Ned Johnson
Special to The Washington Post

The coronavirus is coming! You might be finding yourself vacillating between thoughts of “I can handle this,” and a voice imploring you to run for the hills.

With the sense that my kids are watching me, I am aiming for prudent caution and measured calm. Stress is contagious, and I’m keenly aware that there are things beyond viruses we can infect one another with.

Researcher Sonia Lupien observes that the causes of stress fit into the acronym NUTS: Novelty, Unpredictability, Threat (or perceived threat); (low) Sense of Control.

Pandemic viruses hit on all of those stressors, more so for the young, for whom the novelty is higher and a sense of control lower.

Neuroscience shows that it is adversity in life, dealing with tolerable stress, that increases our sense of control.

So, while ideally we will be spared the power of those concerns and free up cognitive resources.

3. Assign kids something to do.

Parents want to make kids feel safe. But it’s better if we make them feel brave. Protecting them makes us feel better by increasing our sense of control, but works against their feeling a sense of control.

4. Teach kids where to get help.

When my daughter was 5, she wandered away from us in a crowd. When we reunited, we waited for her to calm down and then talked about what she could do if that happened again.

With a plan, she felt more confident and less afraid. Certainly, it was not the plan that she again become separated from us. But we also didn’t want to her feel fearful, or that she had to cling to us even more closely. By engaging in that conversation, she engaged her prefrontal cortex and its problem-solving facilities, calming her amygdala (her stress response) and strengthening the connections between the two.

5. Teach kids how to help.

When kids can see washing hands as something that helps others and not just themselves, it increases their sense of control. Hygiene becomes a superpower!


We can effectively create herd immunity by being unflappable in a calamity. If people see others reacting calmly in times of stress, it could help them realize that reacting fearfully won’t do any good.

7. Make an effort to recognize things you cannot control.

Hypercritical vigilance is exhausting, so don’t see every person as a sick person.

8. Take the long view.

We can remind ourselves of the difficulties we and our families have weathered in the past. It engages our coping skills, helping us better figure out how we will get through this challenge if it comes our way.

9. Talk back against your own fear.

For example: “It is really scary that so many people are sick. It’s all they want to talk about on the radio. But I know that the news doesn’t talk about the fact that everyone else is doing fine, or all the people who are only a little sick. And I know that if one or more of us does get sick, we have a good plan and other people looking out for us.”

Much of who contracts the coronavirus will come down to luck. But after this virus has run its course, not only will we have a greater herd immunity to virus (through exposure), we may have greater herd immunity to the stress. And if we handle it properly, our children will, too.

The place where our family lived the longest was Virginia Beach, Va. Our first house, a vinyl-sided Dutch Colonial on a cul-de-sac, was close enough to the elementary school to hear the morning announcements from our porch.

Despite deployments that took my husband away, we spent nine wholesome, grounding, family-oriented years there, growing roots, making friends and providing stability for our kids.

But according to the newly-released 2019 Blue Star Military Family Lifestyle Survey, many military families don’t find the sense of belonging that is key to overall quality of life and well-being. Forty-seven percent of military families said that their local communities lacked awareness of their lifestyle and did not offer respect, understanding and support.

So, while ideally we will be spared close attention to military matters during moments of crisis,” says Thomas Brody, a student journalist at University of Amherst.

Compounding concern over the growing disinterest in military issues is decreasing interest in military service.

According to the survey, the number of Americans who serve has dropped to roughly 0.5%. Furthermore, the most significant recruiting factor today is whether one comes from a military family. In 2019, 79% of those enrolled in the Army had a family member.

Considering that the number of young adults who have parents who served has decreased from 40% in the 1990s to 15% today, it doesn’t take a military analyst to see a problem with the sustainability of our all-volunteer force.

“If we’re not able to reverse these trends ... what is it going to look like when today’s youth become the parents and today’s parents become the grandparents?” asked Katherine Helland, Director of the Department of Defense’s Joint Advertising and Research Studies center.

Helland said that while Gen Zers know that military service is risky, their family members don’t teach them the “value proposition” of serving their country.

Retired Maj. Gen. Dennis Laich, director of the Patriots program at Ohio Dominican University, told Fortune magazine that the draft will return because the Pentagon is already spending too much money on new enlistment bonuses and recruiting strategies.

“We say that it’s an all-volunteer force, but we’re paying huge sums of money to induce people to join.”

The Blue Star report recommends that civilian and military leaders, schools, employers, corporations, philanthropies and military families take action — but what, specifically, will end this conversation?

Knocking on a new military family’s door? Inviting a civilian family to dinner? Asking the new military kid to eat lunch at your table? Advising high school students on the honor of serving one’s country? Whatever it is, we need to do it before the idyllic military lifestyle we had in Virginia Beach becomes an anomaly.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari’s columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com

Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

If trend continues, is draft inevitable?

Lisa Smith Molinari
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

RESOLVED

BY SOPHIA AND DAVID MAYMUDES / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Friday, March 6, 2020

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NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD
**Keeping it personal**

Dixie Chicks pull no punches with ‘Gaslighter’ as band releases its first new song in 14 years

By Emily Yahr

The Washington Post

It took about 14 years, but we finally have a new song from the Dixie Chicks.

On Wednesday, the groundbreaking country music trio dropped a new track, "Gaslighter" — reportedly also the name of their upcoming studio album due out this year — and, as their history and the title suggest, they did not hold back.

The term "gaslighting," or manipulating someone by making them question their own reality, has experienced a resurgence in recent years due to the current political climate. While there are some political images in the new music video, the scathing lyrics appear to be deeply personal, and about an unnamed unrepentant liar.

Given that lead singer Natalie Maines’ album in its entirety is "the most personal and autobiographical" the group has ever been, and she had a lot to process after her divorce, there's a good chance her experience supplied the subject of the song.

Maines, who officially split from actor Adrian Pasdar last December, pushed back on this battle, kicking it off: "We moved to California and followed your lead. I believed you when you made me to / I swore that night they'd take it all / But you lie - lie - lie - lie, lie - lie, lie, lie, lie."

The upbeat anthem goes on to eviscerate this person ("Give all my money, you'll gladly walk away, whatever is to beiter, doing anything to get your ass farther... repeating all of the mistakes of your father") while acknowledging that their heart was devastated ("I'm broken, you're still sorry, and there's still a chance for me.

The no-holds-barred lyrics should be familiar to listeners: "Gaslighter" is the first music released from the group since May 2006, when they dropped their extremely candid album "Taking the Long Way," a response to the controversy that engulfed their career in the wake of then-President George W. Bush on the eve of the Iraq War, telling a "Lone Star" concerto, "We do not want this war, this violence, and we're ashamed that the president of the United States is from Texas.

The fallout — the blacklisting from country radio stations, lost sponsorship deals, death threats — still looms in country music today, as artists are warned about the perils of speaking up about political opinions lest they get "Dixie Chicked."

But even after the backlash, they were largely beloved by fans and the music industry. The multi-platinum-selling "Taking the Long Way" won album of the year at the 49th annual Grammy Awards, while the fiery single "Not Ready to Make Nice" won song and record of the year.

Afterward, they took a break. Maines released a solo rock album, while sisters Martie Maguire and Emily Robison started a duo called the Court Yard Hounds. When the three of them reunited in 2016 for a tour, their history and the title suggest, as they performed in sold-out arenas throughout the U.S. and Europe.

FACES

Clinton discusses highs and lows in documentary series ‘Hillary’

By Jake Coyle

Associated Press

Since losing the 2016 election to Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton has released a memoir about that defeat, launched a political action committee and penned another book about "gutsy women" with her daughter, Chelsea. But Clinton's most prominent return to the public eye has come in the form of a new four-hour documentary series.

Some, Clinton is aware, thought she would shrink away after 2016.

"Yes, they did, didn't they?" says Clinton. "Well, that was never an option."

"I will do whatever I can to support [the view that things are going well]."

A recent analysis of the public opinion shows that Clinton's brand has not been helped by the controversy that engulfed her career in the wake of then-President George W. Bush on the eve of the Iraq War, telling a "Lone Star" concerto, "We do not want this war, this violence, and we're ashamed that the president of the United States is from Texas.

"There is this criticism that she's always been a reality TV star," Clinton said. "Now I think she's inspiration, in the politics of gender."

"I'd be lying if I said the journey has been easy. There have been some good days, but a lot of not-so-good days," the longtime "Jeopardy!" host said in a video message posted online Wednesday. "I'll be back with friends that "the cancer is gone, all I have to do is talk to me, the chemo treatments will," Trebek said.

"I'm broken, you're still sorry, and there's still a chance for me."

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Craigslist reveals real coronavirus craziness

By Theresa Vargas

The Washington Post

B y now, most of us have seen them — the bizarre and often Online searches about items that didn't seem hoard-worthy until suddenly they did. Maybe we've made a few of these purchases, and found yourself wondering whether your neighbors have lost their minds. Or maybe you've seen one show up in your own mailbox, tucked into your already-filled cart, and found yourself wondering whether you have lost your mind.

A region's paranoia is a hard thing to measure in the face of uncertain threats. And in recent days, images of those eerie empty shelves have become iconic. They have come to symbolize our collective hysteria in response to the coronavirus outbreak, as supplies are increasingly hard to find across the world and at least 11 people in the United States so far.

Those images show that even if we aren't wearing face masks by the masses in public yet, we are buying them as fast as stores can get them in stock (despite officials pleading for people to stop doing that). They also show that we're buying a lot more than face masks: everyday things like buying toilet paper, canned goods, and, of course, more hand sanitizer than we have hands.

But looking at the picked-over aisles of Big Box stores, even if you order via online delivery, there are still many gaps in our supply chain. This is a crisis that will persist long after the virus is no longer a threat.

A search for the term "face mask" on Craigslist shows that we are buying everything from $45, they get a 16-ounce jar of vodka with two ingredients. Double or triple that price and you get a 1-quart jug of Tito's hand sanitizer. The market for hand sanitizer is described as including "an internal feed system" and "a pump that allows for more than 6 hours of use."

"Coronavirus-Free Aircraft." What better promise could you get off one another's anxieties go on full display during times of crisis. I went to a place where decisions have to be made about everything, including whether you need a mask or not. And so, we turn to each other for answers, and sometimes, those answers are wrong.

Craigslist is the perfect example of homelessness, for now, differs across regions. A search of listings in the District of Columbia and Maryland, for example, shows a wide range of prices for hand sanitizer. One person — in a post that warned "be prepared now before it's too late" — was selling a case of MREs for $100. Nobody wants to pay that much for hand sanitizer, but some are willing to pay high prices for any item that looks like a cure-all.

"Are you concerned about airborne virus transmission? Pay $5 more, they can get a "BABYSIT-ER" Gas Mask Hood for Infants."

"Surgeon-General's recommendation on hand-washing."

"Coronavirus vaccine Kvid -19 — $800," reads the title of one post. The description claims that the vaccine comes "directly from the manufacturing plant." From there, the description dissolves into broken, nonsensical sentences. Of course, there is not yet an approved vaccine for the coronavirus.

"Theresa Vargas is a local columnist for The Washington Post. He is the author of "Rise to Greatness: Abraham Lincoln and America's Most Perilous Year.”
What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Desire to bring troops home can't give Taliban free rein
The Washington Examiner

On Wednesday, the United States-Taliban peace deal signed last weekend in Qatar. They see a war that has lasted nearly 20 years, taking the lives of nearly 3,600, wounded tens of thousands more, and cost trillions of dollars. They see a Taliban force that has grown stronger in the absence of territorial control and financial strength. They see, in short, a war that has lasted too long and doesn't seem winnable.

As it happens, there is a seemingly never-ending conflict is understandable, but we urge caution to our fellow citizens and President Donald Trump. For all the failings and frustrations in Afghanistan since October 2001, the U.S. mission there has accomplished some notable achievements. We should not become an excuse to abandon Afghanistan, which would be a terrible mistake.

This isn't about nation-building but rather a matter of national security. The Trump administration must hold firm to a goal of reducing America's footprint in Afghanistan. The Taliban live up to their word, the U.S. should do the same. If the Taliban break their word, which is increasingly likely in the second half of the deal's implementation, Trump or his successor must be ready to cancel some, or all, of the $20 billion the U.S. has spent and exert renewed military pressure on Taliban forces.

As structured, the deal holds the U.S. to an unrealistic timeline for troop drawdowns. The U.S. is pledged to reduce its force level to 8,600 over the coming 135 days. But, if the Taliban conform with their own obligations to suspend attacks and obstruct terrorist groups such as al-Qaida, the U.S. will follow their lead. This process leaves open the possibility that the Taliban forces over the next 9½ months. This adds up to a 14-month timeline for total withdrawal of all American forces.

It is possible that the Taliban and their Haqqani network allies will abide by their obligations in the second half of this agreement. But there's reason to doubt the Taliban's ability to maintain their current level of cooperation and commit to a sharp timeline for troop drawdowns.

The Taliban and the Afghan government must be held to a responsible timeline for troop drawdowns. The Taliban must be made to pay the price for their continued cooperation and must demonstrate their commitment to the agreement. The U.S. must ensure that the Taliban fulfill their obligations and that the peace deal is sustained.

The current system is practically devised to spread infectious disease. Among the people least likely to have paid sick days, and therefore most likely to work through illness, are fast-food workers and home health care aides. (Those workers also are less likely to have health insurance, which complicates the situation.)

Most developed nations require employers to provide some form of paid sick leave, and the United States should do so, too. Medicaid is a program that already mandates sick leave, and a recent study found that the adoption of such laws reduced cases of influenza by 11% in their first year. Whatever the course of the coronavirus, mandatory sick leave for American workers would improve the lives of families and insulate the economy against pandemics.

If Congress cannot bring itself to do the right thing, however, it will help by mandating sick leave specifically for this coronavirus. A 2013 study of workers in Allegheny County, Pa., estimated that allowing them to take up to two paid "Illness Days" would have reduced workplace transmission of the flu by roughly 39%.

Employers sometimes argue that sick leave policies encourage malingering. But studies show that even accounting for work-leaves and employer and home health care aides. (Those workers also are less likely to have health insurance, which complicates the situation.)

Most developed nations require employers to provide some form of paid sick leave, and the United States should do so, too. Medicaid is a program that already mandates sick leave, and a recent study found that the adoption of such laws reduced cases of influenza by 11% in their first year. Whatever the course of the coronavirus, mandatory sick leave for American workers would improve the lives of families and insulate the economy against pandemics.

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**Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

**ACROSS**
1. Hit with a ray gun
4. “Now, where — ?”
7. Links
12. Mil. morale booster
13. Lab eggs
14. Proportion
15. “Incidentally,” in a text
16. Aerobic fundraiser
18. Anger
19. Incline
20. Par
22. Poem of praise
23. Regarding
29. No-elevator multistory building
31. Tabriz native
34. Entices
35. Type of clinic
37. Zodiac animal
38. Makes a choice
39. Have debts
41. Shrek, for one
45. Canyon
47. Young bloke
48. Feel elated
52. Kimono sash
53. Physicals
54. Evening hrs.
55. “Shark Tank” network
56. Wade through mud

**DOWN**
1. Maestro Mehta
2. Houston player
3. — to the people!
4. Amazes
5. Arthurian isle
6. Leaky lunch
7. Unruly kid
8. Granola
9. To the — degree
10. God, to Galileo
11. Junior
12. Recognized
14. 36 Lunch hour
15. Junior
21. Monastery dwellers
26. Chances, for short
28. Nintendo console
30. Lawyers’ gp.
31 — Jima
32. Knock
33. PC key
36. Lunch hour
37. Ruling group
40. Under — (hidden)
42. Twilight, poetically
43. Temple leader
44. Decree
45. “Holy cow!”
46. Gaelic
48. Director Craven
49. Rocker Rose
50. “7 Faces of Dr. —”
51. Metric distances
23. Texas landmark
24. Enjoy the Alps
25. Boy king

**Answer to Previous Puzzle**

**CRYPTOQUIP**

```
E G Y B Z V Z F X E G Q ’ R Z
J Q K G Y M E Z B K R Y B K M X P B K Q
S Q N B U Y M F Q? U Z M F Z J Q J.
```

Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: FILM ABOUT A FELLOW WHO IS COMPelled TO WANDER ABOUT SEARCHING FOR GENIUSES: “BRAINSPOTTING.”

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: V equals L
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UNBIASED NEWS WHATEVER WAY YOU WANT IT.
Amari Pyatt, Sigonella

By Gregory Broome
Stars and Stripes

The impact Amari Pyatt had on the Sigonella wrestling program will be felt long beyond the two memorable years he spent with the Jaguars.

Pyatt, the 2020 Stars and Stripes wrestling Athlete of the Year, has “definitely raised the bar for our wrestling program,” Sigonella athletic director Michelle Chandler said. His remarkable two-year run “has sparked interest” in the Division III program, Chandler said, both among Pyatt’s Sigonella classmates and younger potential prospects in the community.

Those future Jaguars wrestlers will have a lot to live up to.

Pyatt won his second straight DODEA Europe championship in the 170-pound bracket in February, completing one of the more impressive seasons in recent memory. The senior won all 25 of his matches — 23 by pin and the other two by technical fall.

But Pyatt’s dominance was even more thorough than that suggests. Sigonella coach Justen Estes pointed out that none of his opponents earned an offensive point against Pyatt this season; the only points those overmatched foes recorded were conceded by Pyatt in the interest of setting up further attacks.

That overwhelming offense is by design, as Pyatt’s title defense this winter was paradoxically built around relentlessness.

After initially adopting a more reactionary, defensive posture on the mat, Pyatt and his coaches quickly adjusted to a more proactive approach.

“I realized that that’s not going to play in my favor,” Pyatt said. “We changed the goal from defending to going to get another one, which means that I can be the offensive player and I can go chase after what I want.”

What he wants now is to succeed at the next level. Pyatt recently accepted an offer to wrestle at Iowa Wesleyan University, an NCAA Division III program. It’s a comfortable fit for Pyatt, who spent time in neighboring Nebraska before moving to Sigonella and has been on the radar of the Wesleyan coaching staff for years.

Whatever he achieves beyond DODEA Europe, Pyatt’s legacy at Sigonella is secure. Estes said the Jaguars captain logged “countless hours” bolstering the skills and confidence of his teammates and “leading by example” with his own brilliant efforts on the mat.

“I feel like I represented the school very well,” Pyatt said.

Chandler Pigge, Baumholder

By Gregory Broome
Stars and Stripes

Having already established himself as the best player in DODEA Europe boys basketball, Baumholder junior Chandler Pigge has been more interested in what he needs to improve.

Focused strictly on the DODEA Europe level, there’s not much to critique. Pigge averaged a 28-point, 12-rebound double-double this season, adding six assists, five steals and a blocked shot per game. His efforts led Baumholder to a third straight DODEA Europe Division III championship. And for a second straight season, Pigge is the Stars and Stripes boys basketball Athlete of the Year.

But Pigge has larger goals in mind. The 6-foot-4 guard will move to Texas after the end of the current school year, immersing himself in high-level statewide travel ball before suiting up for Second Baptist, an accomplished private-school program in Houston. That path potentially leads to the rarified next phases of Pigge’s promising hoops journey.

Pigge knows what it will take to get there. He’s spent his time at Baumholder preparing for the opportunity even as he carried the school’s hoops program to unprecedented heights. He entered his final season with the Bucs with concurrent but seemingly conflicting goals — to fully realize his power to control the game while maintaining the humility to address his remaining flaws.

“Coming in and continuing to be aggressive, but at the same time realizing that I can still get better in other areas of my game,” Pigge said.

That dynamic played out constantly throughout the season. With the ball in his hands on nearly every possession, the Bucs star managed to strike a healthy balance between domination and distribution.

“Knowing when to attack, when to take over, and then when to get my teammates involved,” Pigge said.

Having ushered in a nascent dynasty in Baumholder, Pigge’s focus is now completely on the future, both the immediate and the more distant. Pigge said he’d like to upgrade his “quickness, speed and lateral movements on defense” as he heads into a “full summer of basketball” against opponents that are his equal in skill and athleticism.

Long-term, Pigge is well aware that outside shooting is a growing point of emphasis at every level of basketball he’s pursuing, and he’s intent on bumping up the 31 percent rate at which he made three-pointers this season.

“People say when you can shoot the ball it’s very hard to guard you,” Pigge said. “If I can add my shot into my attacking, my passing ability, I feel that I can be a very dominant player at whatever level I play.”

Roxanne Sasse, Naples

By Gregory Broome
Stars and Stripes

Naples junior Roxanne Sasse does so much on a basketball course that it can be difficult to summarize her impact on a game. Sasse herself does the best job of articulating it.

“Making plays work out,” she said.

That as good a synopsis as possible for a player whose presence is felt on every possession. Things just work out better when Sasse, the 2019-20 Stars and Stripes girls basketball Athlete of the Year, is on the court.

That was proven again in the most important game of the Wildcats’ season, the Division II European championship game Feb. 22 against rival Vicenza. Sasse led her squad on a 22-4 third-quarter run to erase a narrow halftime deficit and deliver the title for Naples.

“We really came out and did our stuff,” Sasse said after that championship-winning rally.

For Sasse, that stuff includes a little bit of everything. She averaged 15 points, three assists, four rebounds and six steals a game this winter while spearheading the Wildcats’ efforts on both sides of the ball. Sasse was just as likely to force a momentum-changing turnover or dive for a loose ball as she was to knock down a timely bucket.

“(She) can completely turn the game around,” said Naples coach Tim Smith, whose team didn’t lose this season with Sasse in the lineup.

Sasse immediately ranked among DODEA Europe’s best as a freshman, but she’s consistently added new facets to her game to get even better. This season, Sasse said she stepped up her ability to drive to the hoop and draw fouls to complement her outside shot and, having grown a bit since her high school debut, is now “more aggressive under the hoop” in pursuit of rebounds and defensive stops.

Sasse’s development into a full-fledged star also required a more complicated adjustment. After a couple of years of deferring to older and more experienced teammates, Sasse seized a more vocal leadership role this winter.

Once largely quiet on the court, Sasse became comfortable “controlling the court and helping everyone get all set up on defense.”

The point guard took ownership on both sides of the ball, calling for defensive shifts and targeted pressure on opposing ballhandlers as readily as she ran the Wildcats offense.

“I had to grow into it,” Sasse said of her new leadership role.

“This year, I picked it up a little bit.”
DODEA PACIFIC ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

Casey Cox, Kadena

BY DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

KADENA AIR BASE, Okinawa — Since losing the Far East Division I Tournament final to Seoul American three years ago, Casey Cox said it had been his mission to make up for that defeat and he took dead aim at his senior season to do it.

Through no fault of his own, though, he never got the chance. It was my senior year.”

Still, the season wasn’t a total loss for Kadena, which went 21-3 in the just-completed season, two games coming in the American School In Japan Kanto Classic in January and the other to a Japanese team in December.

The Panthers finished second in the Kanto Classic, won the Okinawa-America Friendship Tournament for the second straight season and came away with two wins in January’s Taipei Basketball Exchange, winning one of the games in double overtime.

Through it all, Cox averaged 11.2 points, 11.8 assists and 3.4 steals a game, shooting 42% from three-point range.

“Once I became a senior-Korea player in four years to be named Stars and Stripes’ Pacific’s boys basketball Athlete of the Year.

“Anything I needed Casey to do, Casey got it done,” Panthers coach Antwon Tucker said. He was like having another coach on the floor. He never complained. He was one of the best captains I ever worked with in all my years of basketball. He gave us the competitive edge we needed.”

Cox said two things stood out about the just-completed season: Reaching the finals of the ASL Event on Jan. 25, in which the Panthers lost 53-45 to Father Duenas of Guam; and Kadena’s 86-79 double-overtime win over Taipei American on Friday, March 6, 2020

Photo by DAVE ORNAUER/Stars and Stripes

Jan. 18

“...a lot of teams there, different competition, and for us to make it all the way to the (Kanto Classic) final, that was a big thing,” Cox said.

Kadena led much of the way in the extra-time game against Taipei, which clawed back to outscore the Panthers 23-16 in the fourth quarter to send the game to overtime.

The adrenaline was pumping every minute. It was everything he wanted and more. And the next day, we blew them out,” Cox said of the Panthers’ 65-36 win over the Tigers on Jan. 19.

If there’s anything that Cox says he would like to leave behind, not just for future Kadena players but for anybody playing high school ball, he says it’s that one never knows what might happen from one day to the next.

“Always stay hungry,” Cox said. “Every game counts. Make the most of it. Play every game like it’s your last one.”

Stripes All-Far East teams

Division I: Kadena: Casey Cox, Blake Dearborn; Humphreys: Junior Gregory, Myles Johnson; St. Mary’s: Aidan O’Flaherty, Alden Jones; Kinrick: Darryl Williams, James Mincey; Kubasaki: Dylan Canias; Father Duenas: Matthew Figurugur


Chloe Sterling, Zama

BY DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

CAMP ZAMA, Japan — It wasn’t that Zama had any less talent last year than during the just-concluded season, Chloe Sterling said of her team.

The main difference was the confidence they gained by winning the last two tournaments they entered in the 2018-19 season, the DODEA Japan and Far East Division II tournaments — the first time the Trojans had won either tournament.

It was the main reason, Sterling said, that the Trojans went unbeaten in 23 games on the court, won two tournament titles and the first two games of the truncated Far East Division II Tournament on Okinawa. They’ve won 30 of 31 games on the court dating back to last season.

“We had already done it,” said Sterling, Zama’s sophomore point guard, of the confidence the Trojans brought with them to the court each game.

“The philosophy is, I feel like we’re always on fire. Everybody had a job. We all held each other accountable. We knew what we were supposed to do. We worked on those things in practice and executed in during the games.”

The result — a 23-1 record (the only loss a forfeit to Nile C. Kinnick for not having the required 10 practices), Zama’s second straight DODEA Japan tournament title and the first American School In Japan Kanto Classic title in school history.

Through it all, Sterling averaged 24.5 points per game, 4.2 assists and 5.2 steals, and has earned Stars and Stripes Pacific girls basketball Athlete of the Year honors for the second straight season.

Besides her ability on the court, Sterling has exhibited “a tremendous amount of growth” from last season to this season, Hayes said.

“Her determination, hustle, heart and passion and love for the game,” Hayes of Sterling, adding that she would push her teammates in practice to “pay attention” so they would execute better during games, and would involve her teammates more in games.

“She would rally her teammates, give them their moment to shine, pass the ball to them, getting her teammates more involved,” Hayes said.

Zama lost five games a season ago, and with each of those defeats, the team would become stronger and more motivated to do better in the next, Hayes and Sterling said.

The same held true of the season-opening forfeit loss, which Sterling said she and her teammates simply clicked aside.

“Everybody knew” that it wasn’t an on-court loss, Sterling said. “That just fueled our fire. The fact that it didn’t get rescheduled made us more motivated.”

Though they didn’t get a chance to finish the Far East tournament and get their shot at repeating that title, Sterling said she and her teammates exited the season believing they were still champions.

It was also her last time in Zama uniform; she and her family leave for Atlanta later this month.

“...I’ve been materialistic,” Sterling said. “It would have been nice to have, but we didn’t need it. We left those courts and the season with no regrets.”

Stripes All-Far East teams

Division I: Nile C. Kinnick: Erimesta Roberts, Madelyn Gallo; Kadena: Kyleigh Wright, Lydia Rice; Humphreys: Acacia May, Jarynn Knight; Kubasaki: Ari Gieseck; Seisen: Sarah Pianacco; American School Bangkok: Keishema Lucas, Bua Rojasanoonthorn.

Division II: Zama: Chloe Sterling, Jessica Atkinson, Kirari Smith; Daegu: Bemia Newbold, Jaya Van; E.J. King: Avanni Gardner, Edgren; Shikayla Ray; Osan: Kenneth Liddell, Perry: Jia Asper; Christian Academy Japan: Anna Stoesz.

Marshall China, Perry

By Dave Ornauer
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — For 38 straight wrestling matches, Marshall China appeared to have all the right moves.

The Matthew C. Perry senior heavyweight became renowned for not just victories, but for big throws on opponents, lifts that appeared practically impossible given the size of the wrestlers.

But it was when China had his back to the virtu- al wall, brought to his back by Osan senior rookie Myles Bradley in the Far East tournament final, that he scoured what he and his coach called the true test of a champion.

“It was good for me; I needed the experience of approaching his senior year about how there might be somebody better out there and that winning three straight Far East titles was not a fait accompli.”

China was voted the Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament, the first from Perry to be so honored in the 43 years of Far Easts. He has also been named Stars and Stripes Pacific’s wrestling Athlete of the Year.

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Photo by BRENNA MCNEIL/Special to Stars and Stripes
No stopping these Bucks

By Tim Reynolds
Associated Press

It’s reasonable to think Milwaukee is not going to win all 20 of its remaining games, which means not all is lost for the Golden State Warriors. They’ll be the only team in NBA history to win 73 games.

The Warriors were a record 73-9 in the 2015-16 season, and the Bucks are 53-9 after their win over Indiana on Wednesday. But there’s still a chance Milwaukee could be able to make a case as the most dominant team in league history in one regard — margin of victory.

This season’s Bucks are outscoring teams by 12.4 points per game. That’s the best pace in NBA history, just ahead of the mark of 12.28 set by the 1971-72 Los Angeles Lakers — a team with a Hall of Fame coach in Bill Sharman, four Hall of Fame players in Wilt Chamberlain, Gail Goodrich, Elgin Baylor and Jerry West, and a player who would become a Hall of Fame coach in Pat Riley.

And the Bucks are in that stratosphere.

“We’ve still got a lot more basketball to play,” guard Wesley Matthews said. “And we know where we’re at and where we want to be. It’s a pretty special thing to be where we’re at in the standings.”

Matthews then offered a sentence that should send shudders across the rest of the NBA: “There’s a lot of room for improvement and growth.”

The way the Bucks are going, they’ll have the No. 1 seed in the Eastern Conference race sewn up by the last week of March and the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference, a dream scenario for the 2015-16 Golden State Warriors this season.

The goal for the Bucks is clear — win 16 games in the playoffs.

“They’ll have the No. 8 spot in the West, with a .500 record. The worst team in NBA history has been even better this season, averaging 29.6 points, 13.8 rebounds and 5.8 assists.

The Milwaukee Bucks’ reigning NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo has been even better this season, averaging 29.6 points, 13.8 rebounds and 5.8 assists.

The need to be playing the right way when the playoffs start in basically a month and a half. “It’s a fine line to walk,” he said.

Only three teams were better through 62 games than Milwaukee: The 2015-16 Warriors were 56-6, the 1995-96 Chicago Bulls were 55-7 and the 1996-97 Bulls were 54-8. There have been four other teams to start 53-9, most recently the 2015-16 San Antonio Spurs.

“At the end of the day you’re going to win some games and lose some games,” Bucks star and reigning NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo said. “We’re not going to go 82-0.”

The goal for the Bucks is clear — win 16 games in the playoffs. The rest, to them, doesn’t seem to matter much.

Not bad enough

The worst team in NBA history to make the playoffs, in terms of won-lost record, is the 1987-88 San Antonio Spurs. They went 31-51.

That dubious mark won’t be caught this season. Well, probably not, anyway.

For the first time since 2015, a team — maybe more than one — with a losing record is likely going to get into the post season. Orlando and Brooklyn are both below the .500 mark and yet still have comfortable holds on what would be the last two playoff spots in the Eastern Conference. Memphis has the No. 8 spot in the West, with a .500 record.

Since the league went to 30 teams for the 2004-05 season, only 10 of the 240 playoff qualifiers have finished the regular season with losing records. The worst in that span: the 2007-08 Atlanta Hawks and the 2010-11 Indiana Pacers, both 37-45.

And the last time three sub-.500 teams went to the playoffs was in 1997: Phoenix was 40-42, Minnesota was 40-42 and the Los Angeles Clippers were 36-46.

It could raise questions about why the NBA would want an expanded postseason format, the so-called “play-in” notion where the No. 9 and No. 10 teams from each conference would have a shot at making the field through a mini-playoff.

It could make for drama but such games would also open the door to more bad teams getting into the playoffs.
## NHL

### Scoreboard

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Around the league

Rebuilding coaches stay positive

**By Joe Reedy**

Associated Press

Buffalo Sabres goaltender Jonas Johansson top gives up a goal to the Coyotes’ Clayton Keller, as Coyotes left wing Taylor Hall watches during the third period on Feb. 29 in Glendale, Ariz.

### Leaders

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### Game of the week

Late-season games between the Washington Capitals and Pittsburgh Penguins always carry high stakes and Saturday’s will be no different. The Capitals lead the Metropolitan Division, but both teams have three points in the division.

### Around the league

### Rebuilding coaches stay positive

Buffalo’s Ralph Krueger, Anaheim’s Dallas Eakins and Los Angeles’ Todd McLellan had no illusions about quick fixes in their first seasons. But in a league that has seen plenty of coaching changes the past couple of seasons, all three have remained consistent in their message since taking charge.

“Have we not discussed in our room anything beyond what we can take care of today. We’ve done this since September and we’re going to continue to do it, so, really, those are big-picture discussions,” Krueger said.

When it comes to this season, the Sabres, Ducks and Kings will not make the playoffs. Los Angeles and Anaheim once again are in a battle for the bottom of the Western Conference, but have shown strides in implementing more up-tempo styles of play.

Of the three teams, the Sabres have shown signs of the most improvement, despite losing their last four. After winning 10 straight to match a franchise record in Nov. 2018, Buffalo proceeded to win just 16 of its remaining 57 games (16-33-8), leading to Phil Housley being fired.

General manager Jason Botterill then went outside the box in hiring Krueger. The 60-year-old had extensive coaching experience abroad but had been out of hockey for five years, serving as a director and president of Southhampton of the English Premier League.

Krueger has brought in a philosophy of wanting his team to “play connected,” meaning all five skaters working as one. It’s an attacking approach that emphasizes always moving the puck toward the opponent.

“It’s not like last year,” forward Jack Eichel said. “We’ve been through these times where we take a couple of hits at this time of year ... and then all of a sudden the wheels fall off. That’s not happening here.”

Eakins was promoted to Anaheim’s top bench spot after four seasons with its San Diego AHL affiliate. He has characterized the organization’s philosophy as transitioning instead of rebuilding, equating it to the process Boston went through a couple of years ago.

While Eakins has been pleased with his team’s effort and being more aggressive on the forecheck, the main thing he has been stressing the past couple weeks is trying to rush the net and getting more goals that might now show in highlights.

“It doesn’t have to be a clean shot on the net. If you watch the highlights every night, there are a whole lot of dirty goals being scored everywhere,” he said.

“That’s how we’re going to have to keep committing to getting puck into the zone in front of the net. The biggest thing is not to be frustrated by it, dig in and stay after it.”

McLellan has always had the toughest rebuilding job of all. The Kings are hampered by veterans with large contracts while trying to slowly work in younger players.

Los Angeles Kings head coach Todd McLellan has the toughest rebuilding job of all. The Kings are hampered by veterans with large contracts while trying to slowly work in younger players.

The last quarter of the season will be an evaluation period for everyone.

“This is the group that is going to move the needle, as we talked about. Individually and collectively. It’s time to dig in,” he said.

“The people that are in that locker room right now, the older players and veterans, we’ve addressed a lot of them and are aware what their roles could be and how hard they have to play in practice so everybody else can keep their eyes on them. Then there are the followers. The leaders and the followers have to do it all together.”

### Edmonton connection

McLellan, Kreuger and Eakins share one thing in common — they all coached Edmonton. Of the five teams with first-year coaches, the Oilers are the only one that may make the playoffs, as Dave Tippett has them second in the Pacific Division.

Joel Quenneville has had Florida in postseason contention for most of the season, but the Panthers are five points out of a wildcard spot.

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**Ross D. Franklin/AP**

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AP hockey writer John Wawrow contributed to this story.
NCAA moves case on Memphis to an independent review

By RALPH D RUSSO
Associated Press

Memphis' NCAA case involving the recruitment of star basketball player James Wiseman will go through the association's new independent investigation arm.

The NCAA announced Wednesday that Memphis' infraction case was referred to the Independent Accountability Resolution Process. This will be the first known case to be handled by the IARP.

The University of Memphis released a statement acknowledging its case had been referred to the IARP.

"The University is committed to compliance with NCAA regulations and will continue to fully cooperate with this process, which includes withholding further comment until the process is complete," the school's statement said.

The NCAA suspended Wiseman 12 games early this season because the former five-star recruit's family received $11,500 from former Memphis player and current Tigers coach Penny Hardaway to assist in a move from Nashville to Memphis in the summer of 2017.

Although Hardaway wasn't Memphis' coach at the time, the NCAA ruled the payment wasn't allowed because he was a booster for the program. The former NBA All-Star gave $1 million in 2008 to his alma mater for the university's sports hall of fame.

After the NCAA ruled Wiseman had to sit out 12 games and donate $11,500 to charity to regain his college eligibility, he left Memphis in December.

The IARP was created last year to handle some high-profile cases involving potentially serious infractions. The process includes investigators, advocates and decision-makers with no direct ties to NCAA member schools.

Creating a new process for dealing with some infractions was one of several recommendations made in 2018 by the Rice Commission on college basketball recruiting, concluded the NCAA's existing investigation and enforcement structure was rife with potential and perceived conflicts of interest.

The process uses the Complex Case Unit featuring outside investigators before going to the Independent Resolution Panel, which would select five of its 15 members — who have legal, sports or regulatory backgrounds — to issue a final decision that is not subject to appeal.

Kentucky at Florida
7 p.m. Saturday CET
3 a.m. Sunday JKT

On AFN

Seton Hall at Creighton
AFN-Sports 2
10:30 p.m. Saturday CET
4:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

UCLA at USC
AFN-Atlantic
9:15 p.m. Saturday CET
5:15 a.m. Sunday JKT

Louisville at Virginia
AFN-Sports
10 p.m. Saturday CET
6 a.m. Sunday JKT

Year after winning Pac-12, Huskies are in the basement

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Until just a couple of weeks ago, the only loss on Baylor's resume had come at the hands of Washington.

Until the end of December, the Huskies and their talented group of freshmen were ranked in the bottom half of the AP Top 25.

But as Washington begins its final road trip of the conference season this weekend at Arizona schools, the Huskies find themselves stuck in last place in the Pac-12. They are 3-11 in conference play, a dismal record that included a nine-game losing streak and a series of unfathomable losses.

Unless Washington can sweep Arizona and Oregon State loses its last two games, the Huskies will finish in last place a year after winning the conference tournament in Las Vegas.

"Experience matters. And that's a big thing," Washington coach Mike Hopkins said. "We haven't pulled off games due to a lot of different kind of scenarios," Washington coach Mike Hopkins said. "It could be foul shooting one game and not the other. It could be your defense was a little bit worse. It could be a great player shoots at the end of a game when guys take over. ... You can't rush the process. We are who we are, we just got to try to get better when guys take over. ... You can't rush the process."

"It just takes a little bit of a spark. And, unfortunately, we've had a lot of opportunity to get that spark and we haven't," Hopkins said. "But at any time we can get it. Get some momentum going in the right direction. And that's when magic happens."

The Huskies are in the basement of Washington.

Hameir Wright are one of the few upperclassmen on the team. Below: Washington State's CJ Elleby, left, dunks in front of Washington's Sam Timmins on Feb. 28.
Daytona shakes up schedule

First NASCAR race of 2021 will take place on Speedweeks

**BY MARK LONG**
Associated Press

NASCAR will hit the road for its first race in 2021, part of a schedule shakeup that starts at Daytona International Speedway. The track announced several changes to the start of the annual racing season Wednesday. They include running the exhibition Busch Clash on the 3.56-mile road course that winds through the Daytona infield and packing seven races, including the Daytona 500 pole qualifying into a six-day span.

The tweaks eliminate two traditional “dark days” at the track during Speedweeks and should provide a better fan experience leading into NASCAR’s premier event, the Daytona 500.

“This has been in the works with NASCAR for a while,” track President Chip Wile told The Associated Press. “We really want to continue to evolve. Obviously, there’s a lot of fan interest around road-course racing. We’ve had a road course here since 1959 and we feel like what we’re trying to showcase the property and differentiate that race even more from the Daytona 500 than running the road course under the lights.”

NASCAR teams have pushed for a shorter season for years, arguing that the 12-week offseason is too short given how little down-time there is during the racing calendar.

“We’ve been talking about making significant changes to its 2021 schedule, which could include more short tracks, midweek races and double-headers. Overhauling Speedweeks is the first of what’s expected to be many new looks ahead.

The week will shape up like this: The Clash will run Tuesday night, Feb. 9, followed the next day by Daytona 500 pole qualifying that sets the front row for “The Great American Race.” Qualifying races that set the rest of the field, called the “Duels,” will remain a Thursday staple and be run under the lights for the eighth consecutive year.

The Tracks Series season opener will run Friday night, as usual, with the ARCA and second-tier Xfinity Series openings running as a double-header Saturday. Practices, qualifying runs and Daytona 500 media day will be sprinkled in throughout the week.

Pole qualifying, the Clash and the ARCA race typically run on Speedweeks, but NASCAR is starting the Daytona 500 a week earlier than normal in 2021. It will run on Valentine’s Day, one week after the Super Bowl.

Shiffrin returns to World Cup ski circuit following death of father

**VAIL, Colo. — Mikaela Shiffrin is returning to the World Cup ski circuit in Europe, even though she might not be ready to race after a month-long absence following the death of her father.**

The American skier announced in a video posted on Instagram that she is flying to Scandi-navia on Thursday. A three-race meet starts one week later in Are, Sweden.

“I have no promises if I’ll actually be able to race,” Shiffrin said in a six-minute video message that addressed the emotions about her father, Jeff, who died on Feb. 2.

“There is no doubt that we are broken,” she said of her family’s grief. “Accepting this new ‘reality’ is going to take a long time, and maybe we never truly will, maybe we don’t have to.”

Shiffrin said she had trained a little but with difficulty.

“It has been a slow process, I have struggled with being able to maintain my focus,” she said. “I am an Olympic gold medalist and three-time defending overall World Cup champion.”

“It has been therapeutic to be on the mountain. I’ve found training to be a place where I can feel closer to my dad.”

Mikaela Shiffrin, on returning to competition after the death of her father, Jeff, last month
Sans fans: Italy restricts sports

**By Daniella Matar**  
Associated Press

MILAN — All sporting events in Italy will take place without fans present for at least the next month due to the virus outbreak in the country, the Italian government announced on Wednesday. That will likely see the Italian soccer league resume in full this weekend with the calendar pushed back a week. Italy is the epicenter of Europe’s coronavirus outbreak. More than 100 people have died and more than 3,000 have been infected with COVID-19. The Italian government issued a new decree on Wednesday evening, with measures it hopes will help contain the spread of the virus.

All sporting events in the country must take place without fans present until April 3. Schools and universities have been ordered closed until March 15.

Premier Giuseppe Conte posted a five-minute video on his Facebook page, reassuring people and saying that the decree was a way of assuring “responsible behavior.” He said banning crowds at sporting events would help “prevent further opportunities of infection.”

Key games during the period includes Juventus’ Champions League game against Lyon. The second leg of the round-of-16 match is scheduled for March 17 in Turin.

Inter Milan and Roma also have Europa League games scheduled, against Getafe and Sevilla, respectively. Inter played Ludo-

**LETTER FROM ITALY**

**By Arnie Stapleton**  
Associated Press

**INDIANAPOLIS**

Mark Brunell would love to see the members of 2020 class of quarterbacks have a long career like him. What doesn’t want them to do is start out like he did.

“We know that this is very disappoming to many, but feel that this is the prudent course of action taking all variables into consideration,” Clemmons said.

DODEA Europe had previously canceled a handful of March 14 games in Italy, where schools are closed in response to the outbreak of the virus, before expanding the cancellations organization-wide Thursday.

Clemmons said that schools that remain open “should continue to hold practices for all teams as previously scheduled,” even as games are removed from the schedule. No makeup dates for the canceled games have been announced, though the organization’s weekend-by-week schedule makes that unlikely.

DODEA Europe’s spring season runs through May 23.

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DODEA Europe cancels sports for 2 weeks

DODEA Europe has canceled the first two weeks of its upcoming spring sports season due to concerns over the spread of the new coronavirus.

The decision was made “out of an abundance of caution and with the health and safety of our students and staff in mind,” Kathleen Clemmons, athletic director of DODEA Europe, said in an email statement Thursday.

The decision cancels all games scheduled for the weekends of March 14 and 21, which includes the first two weeks of the soccer season and the first week of baseball and softball. Track and field, the remaining spring sport, is due to start March 29.

Clemmons added that DODEA Europe “will reevaluate the conditions” in the coming weeks before making a decision about the season beyond the first two canceled weekends.

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**Giving back**

**Mentors guide NFL Draft prospects**

**By Arnie Stapleton**  
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS

Martin Okudah was not Oklahoma’s best defensive back, but he’s the one the Vikings drafted in the first round of the NFL draft.

He talks to John Randle. I can talk to stars of the future 2020 class of quarterbacks have a long career like him. What doesn’t want them to do is start out like he did.

The former Jaguars star just wrapped up his fifth season serving as a mentor at the NFL scouting combine, where he and fellow QB alum Chad Pennington guided the soon-to-be rookies through the week as they were prodded, prodded, and tested and interrogated.

This is the most important job interview of their lives and a lot of them come in with obviously high expectations. They’re nervous, they’re overwhelmed, they’re stressed out because they realize how many sets of eyes are on them: GMs, personnel guys, coaches,” Brunell said.

“They’re being evaluated in everything they do, so they’re trying to put their best foot forward and we try to help them.”

These tips are more about sitting up straight than reading a Cover-2.

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These tips are more about sitting up straight than reading a Cover-2.
League, players at odds over ban of in-game video

By Mark Didtler
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Major League Baseball has proposed banning player access to video during games, according to New York Yankees pitcher Zack Britton, but the union wants to allow it with protections that would prevent catchers’ signs from being visible.

Players’ association head Tony Clark met with the Yankees for three hours Wednesday and discussed negotiations for new video rules in the wake of the Houston Astros’ sign-stealing scandal.

“Right now, MLB’s proposal would be like a blackout. There would be no access,” Britton said.

“That’s a pretty extreme stance because of one team, that everyone else is punished. So, hopefully, we can find some common ground, but definitely before opening day. Guys would like to understand what we’re going to be allowed to use and what we’re not going to be allowed to use before opening day.”

Houston violated rules by using a camera in the outfield to steal catchers’ signs during its run to the 2017 World Series title and the team was stripped of its Commissioner’s Trophy players were not penalized.

MLB also is investigating whether Boston broke rules.

Under the union’s proposal, hitters would still be allowed to review video of their at-bats during games and pitchers would be allowed to look over their mound performance.

“The view that the players have is one that is concerned about where the game is and where it’s going. So everything that we’ve slid across the table in regards to proposals on technology has been a reflection of that,” Clark said. “And that we’ve slid across includes access to technology, certain technology during the course of the game. There’s systems that allow for access to your at-bats, and or your time on the mound. Having access to those videos even with certain criteria in place to protect the integrity of those videos is what has been in the proposals.”

Clark said there are a number of ways to implement it, including in-house monitoring. The clips would not show catcher’s signs.

“The video person would be entrusted with cutting those clips, and you would look to have a central place that allows for review, as well.”

Clark said the union is open to setting rules for player discipline for future technology rules violations. Players will not be punished for violations in the Boston and Houston investigations, baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred has said.

“We’d be willing to have that conversion, and that’s what happening as we speak,” Clark said. “Some players were angry Astros players were not penalized.”

“The stance of the guys pretty much in here is more frustration about the individual clips sent to a central place that allows for review, as well.”

Clark said there are a number of ways to implement it, including in-house monitoring. The clips would not show catcher’s signs.

The Astros’ George Springer, above, says he’s looking for a smoother, more consistent swing this season, one more like four-time All-Star teammate Michael Brantley, pictured below.

Springer’s consistency goal: Be more like Mike (Brantley)

By Chuck King
Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — George Springer’s goal for 2020 has the ring of a 1980s shoe marketing campaign.

“I want to be like Mike,” the Houston Astros slugger said, referring not to Jordan but to teammate Michael Brantley.

Brantley has a smooth swing when he is healthy.

“I just want to be consistent,” he said. “I don’t want to be hot, cold, hot, cold, hot, cold.”

A four-time All-Star, Brantley has finished among the top 10 in batting average four times in 10 full seasons.

Houston signed Brantley as a free agent before the 2019 season.

“T’ll be annoying you this year because I need the help,” Springer told Brantley last year.

“T want to be consistent like you,” Springer said. “I don’t want to be hot, cold, hot, cold, hot, cold.”

“I’m just as consistent as you,” Brantley said.

In his next at-bat, Springer struck out on a wild swing and lost balance on the follow-through. Brantley is 5-for-11.

“T think it’s going to be hot, cold, hot, cold, hot, cold,” Springer said. “I’m just a guy that wants to be consistent like you.”

Notes: Battling an illness, Jose Altuve returned to the Astros complex, a day after being told to stay home on Tuesday. Altuve wasn’t expected to play again until Friday. Yordan Alvarez continues to rest his ailing knees and is at least two days from returning to the lineup.

New York Yankees pitcher Zack Britton said players are hoping for a less draconian measure than MLB’s proposal to ban their access to all in-game video.

George Springer
Houston Astros outfielder

In his next at-bat, Springer struck out on a wild swing and lost balance on the follow-through.

The third-inning hit was only Springer’s third of spring training. Brantley is 5-for-11.

Even if Springer doesn’t match Brantley’s consistency, new Astros manager Dusty Baker doesn’t plan on pulling him from the leadoff spot.

“If it’s not broke, don’t fix it,” Baker said. “It’s good the way it is. I told Springer the other day he reminds me of past leadoff hitters Bobby Bonds, Felipe Alou, Tommy Agee. These were hitters and sluggers at the same time. He can either get on base or it’s 1-0 our favor. This guy, he’s one of the best.”

Frank Franklin II/AP

New York Yankees pitcher Zack Britton said players are hoping for a less draconian measure than MLB’s proposal to ban their access to all in-game video.
Extending the count
Spring training rosters rife with aging players looking for opportunity

BY WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

BRADENTON, Fla. - Arroz Dyson kept waiting for the phone to ring. As December faded and the hot stove cooled, one thought kept running through the free agent outfielder's mind.

"You mean to tell me I can't help nobody win?" said Dyson, who stole 30 bases for Arizona in 2019 before hitting the open market last fall.

Dyson's won plenty. He offers the World Series ring he earned while playing for the Kansas City Royals in 2015 as proof. He appeared in 130 games at age 34 last season for a Diamondbacks team that hung around the playoff picture until the final week of the season. He's been part of a rebuilding projects and raucous October celebrations. Now in the final innings of a decade-long career, he wouldn't mind another shot at a playoff run.

Yet the only palatable job offer Dyson received came from Pittsburgh. The Pirates are in need of a stopgap in center field after dealing Gold Glove Starling Marte to Arizona last month. So Dyson signed for one year and $2 million. Sure he considered the final free agent outfielder's mind.

"It takes time but it wasn't necessarily something you love to do a labor of love is no labor at all. I'm having a blast. It was a joy."

At least Pence has a guaranteed roster spot. Sandoval and Kemp, not so much. Both players headed to their respective camps as non-roster invitees, baseball code for "show us you've still got it." Kemp, a three-time All-Star, insists he still does. If it has to be with the perennially irrelevant Marlins, so be it.

"This is a redemption year," Kemp said. "I had 40 at-bats last year. I was an All-Star in 2018. Seriously, I can still play."

The 35-year-old Kemp believes he's still got at least three or four more seasons left. The addition of a 26th roster spot this season may turn out to be the lifeline players of his generation need. In a league that's getting ever younger, having one slot slatted for someone with an impressive resume and the consummate swag that goes with it could prove to be valuable.

"We need leadership with our young guys," said Marlins manager Don Mattingly, whose relationship with Kemp dates to 2008, when both were with the Los Angeles Dodgers. "Matt was second in the MVP (in 2011). A lot of us thought he should have won the MVP that year. He was one of the top players in the game, maybe a bag away from being a 40 (home run)-40 (steal) guy. Matt has done a lot of things in the game. That's one of the things he brings to the table."

None of that will matter, however, unless Kemp rakes this spring. For a player with a 12 years service time who is financially near miss stoked the fire to keep pushing. Other than that, you're going to find it difficult to get a job. We're going to grind to stay in uniform."

And teach while they do it. Maybin understands what it's like to be a rising prospect on a team spinning its wheels. He's here to do the same. "It's kind of messed up, the direction it's going," Dyson said. "I can't be sitting at home waiting on a playoff team to call me. The Pirates gave me an opportunity. I'm going to take advantage of it."

Dyson is hardly alone. Scan down (way down in some cases) spring training rosters and you'll find names that look out of place. All-Stars, postseason heroes and established veterans just trying to stay off the next phase of their lives on teams where expectations (and in most cases, payroll) are modest.

Matt Kemp in Miami. Cameron Maybin in Detroit. Hunter Pence and Pablo Sandoval back in San Francisco, where the Giants are in the midst of a massive youth movement that likely won't be completed until well after the millennium.

Pence has made more than $125 million during a career that includes winning a pair of World Series with the Giants in 2012 and 2014. That didn't stop him from spending the offseason giving his eccentric swing a massive overhaul last spring.

"It takes time but it wasn't necessarily hard," Pence said. "Because when you're doing something you love to do a labor of
Bauer: Attention from pitch tipping is great

By Gary Schatz
Associated Press

GOODYEAR, Ariz. — Trevor Bauer thinks his decision to tip pitches for a Los Angeles Dodgers batter during a spring training game and the resulting attention are good for baseball.

The Cincinnati Reds’ outspoken starter signaled pitches to the Dodgers’ Matt Beaty during a game on Monday. Bauer flicked his glove toward the catcher before each pitch — a sign a fastball was coming — and Beaty eventually lined out to center field.

Bauer has criticized the Houston Astros over their sign-stealing. Major League Baseball’s investigation found Houston broke rules by using electronics to steal catchers’ signs en route to their 2017 World Series title and again in 2018.

Bauer told reporters on Wednesday he was just having fun, and the pitch tipping wasn’t intended to help the team that lost to the Astros in the World Series.

“It wasn’t team-specific,” Bauer said. “I did it a couple times last season in games. There are a lot of interesting outcomes from it, psychologically and competitively. Spring training is time to work on things.”

Teammate Derek Dietrich told FOX Sports during the game that Bauer was responding to the sign-stealing scandal.

“Trevor’s not too fond of it, so he figured he’s going to try something new this season and he’s going to start telling the batters what’s coming,” Dietrich said. “That way there’s no ifs, ands or buts about what’s going on, just here it comes, try to hit it.”

Dietrich noted Bauer’s propensity to do unconventional things to make a point.

“You never know,” Dietrich said. “Trevor’s always going to do something nuts. We enjoy him.”

Bauer appreciated Dietrich’s take on the pitch tipping.

“I’m not surprised it blew up on social media,” Bauer said. “Derek dumped a bunch of gasoline on a fire, which I thought was pretty funny. It’s good for baseball overall.”

Bauer met Wednesday with baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred.

“I’ve been publicly critical of Rob Manfred before, but I have to give him props. He said he’d meet with any players who had further questions and he was a man of his word this morning,” Bauer tweeted. “We had a very productive meeting about a wide range of topics.”

The Milwaukee Brewers are reportedly working on a new contract with star slugger Christian Yelich. It’s an encouraging sign for Milwaukee after it lost a couple of key players to free agency.

Yelich mum about contract situation

By Jay Cohen
Associated Press

PHOENIX — Christian Yelich is staying quiet when it comes to his contract situation with the Milwaukee Brewers.

While Yelich is brushing off questions about his new deal, his teammates are all-too-happy to sing his praises.

The 28-year-old is reportedly a man of his word this morning,” Bauer tweet-

“At the outset of it and made the best of it and found a place that he really likes to play.”

Yelich was building a case for a second straight MVP award before he broke his right kneecap on Sept. 10, sidelining the outfielder for the rest of the year.

The 25-year-old is reportedly the NL with a .326 batting average, .598 slugging percentage and 1,000 OPS while helping the Brewers make it to the NL Championship Series in his first year with the team. He hit 44 homers and won another NL batting title with a career-high .329 average last season.

Bauer delivers a pitch during Monday’s game against the Los Angeles Dodgers in Goodyear, Ariz.
Ready to go

No. 1 seed on line for fifth-ranked Aztecs in conference tournament

BY BERNIE WILSON
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO

San Diego State forward Yanni Wetzell said he could practically sense when the calendar turned to March.

“I felt this little edge about me,” the big New Zealander said Tuesday before the No. 5 Aztecs held their first full practice for their Mountain West Conference Tournament opener on Thursday in Las Vegas, against ninth-seeded Air Force.

“It’s just this feeling inside of me, just I’m ready to go,” said Wetzell, who along with fellow transfers Malachi Flynn — named MWC Player of the Year on Tuesday — and KJ Feagin have lifted the Aztecs from no postseason appearance last year to the cusp of being a No. 1 seed for the first time.

“It’s the month we’ve been all working for, for all our whole lives, almost,” said Wetzell, a graduate transfer who suffered through 20 straight losses to end last season at Vanderbilt. “For all of us, we’re all very excited to get going and get this conference tournament under way.”

For top-seeded SDSU (28-1), it will be the chance to hang another banner. They