By J.P. Lawrence
Stars and Stripes

Soldiers of the future may be eating bacon and egg breakfasts via tiny food bars due to a new technology that shrinks meals to a fraction of their normal size.

Thinks sous vide, but for tactical quiches that may end up in your next Meal, Ready to Eat.

‘A complete meal in a bar, that’s my goal.’

Tom Yang
U.S. Army senior food technologist

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

“A complete meal in a bar, that’s my goal,” said Tom Yang, senior food technologist at the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Research, Development, and Engineering Center.

Yang and other food scientists at Natick are researching the Army’s new generation of portable rations. On the menu of the future are MRE pizzas, portable fruit and a lightweight ration for soldiers on the go.

Yang’s bars may soon be found in the new ration, the Close Combat Assault Ration, which is supposed to contain three times the nutrition of normal MRE while being lighter and smaller. Prototypes for the new ration are about one-third the weight of similar MREs, an Army statement said.

The military is trying to figure out how to feed small, isolated units who may go up to a week without

SEE SHRINKS ON PAGE 7
BY THIS TIME LAST YEAR, the squadron had made 10 survivor recoveries and received 22 emergency calls, according to a July 26 Navy statement.

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

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

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

Before Tuesday’s recovery, the squadron’s last rescue took place July 24 after a civilian was hurt sailing three days before in a severe thunderstorm about 100 nautical miles west of Guam, according to a July 25 Navy statement. The man’s condition had deteriorated over the three days, but the crew stabilized him with IV fluid during the flight back to Guam.

“HSC-25’s ability to launch our aircraft on a moment’s notice for a SAR or MEDEVAC is astounding,” HSC-25 commanding officer Cmdr. Frank Loforti said, according to a news release.

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

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Army eyes tokens for communications in field

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

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

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

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

The new technology under development at the Army’s Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland would be largely an adaptation of commercially developed wireless payment products — Apple Pay, for example — and flexible hybrid electronics, said Ogedi Okwudishu, the Army engineer leading the project, known as the Tactical Identity and Access Management, or TIDAM, program. The tokens could be placed in a soldier’s pocket or worn on the wrist similar to a Fitbit fitness bracelet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

-MILITARY-

Marine Corps mascot Chesty XV promoted to lance corporal

BY ROSE L. THAYER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Marine Corps mascot Chesty XV celebrated with an extra treat at dinner. The nearly 2-year-old pedigreed English bulldog is the mascot of the Marine Corps.
Esper visits Mongolia to strengthen bonds

By Lolita C. Baldor
Associated Press

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

“I’d like to name this fine-looking horse Marshall, after Gen. George Marshall,” Esper said Thursday as he was presented with a 7-year-old buckskin during a time-honored traditional ceremony at Mongolia’s Ministry of Defense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

His stop in Mongolia was less than 24 hours long, but Esper told his defense counterpart, Battulga, the first since 2011. In March, Mongolia’s president, Khaltmaa Battulga, met with President Donald Trump last week. The country is looking to diversify its trade and is explicit in outlining Mongolia’s importance, stating that the primary goals of U.S. assistance are to “ensure the United States remains a preferred partner over geographical neighbors Russia and China.”

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

The U.S. is open to helping Mongolia expand its access to the trans-Siberian pipeline, thereby allowing a route for shipping goods to the West other than through China.
Report: VA wrongfully denied $53M in emergency care claims

By Nikki Wentling
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs wrongfully rejected thousands of emergency care claims during a five-month period, sticking an “undue financial burden” worth millions of dollars on some veterans, a federal watchdog agency reported Tuesday.

The VA Office of Inspector General released findings that VA supervisors pressured staff to quickly decide claims and some staff members said they were encouraged to deny claims to maximize productivity.

The errors affected an estimated 17,400 veterans who were stuck with a total $53.3 million in medical bills that the VA should have paid, the IG reported.

During visits to nine offices nationwide, inspectors found stacks of unsent decision letters — many of them containing time-sensitive information — that were up to two months old.

Claims examiners were encouraged to move quickly — rejecting 31% of veterans’ emergency care claims from April 1 to Sept. 30, 2017.

In one case, a veteran went to a non-VA emergency department after a seizure. The claim for reimbursement was inappropriately denied, leaving with the veteran with a potential $15,000 bill.

In addition to the wrong decisions, veterans whose claims were rejected didn’t receive complete and accurate information about their denial, limiting their ability to appeal, the IG wrote. During visits to nine offices nationwide, inspectors found stacks of unsent decision letters — many of them containing time-sensitive information — that were up to two months old.

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

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

“Constant nonstop intimidation. The atmosphere is terrible. I think it is more that processors just rapidly slop claims through as fast as they can just to hit their numbers,” the examiner wrote in the survey.

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

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Veteran dies by suicide at VA parking lot in NC

By Nikki Wentling
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A veteran died by suicide Sunday at a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital in North Carolina, adding to a string of similar deaths at VA hospitals across the country.

The veteran, who has not been identified publicly, died just before 9 a.m. in the visitor parking lot of the Charles George VA Medical Center in Asheville, N.C., according to a statement from the hospital. The Asheville Police Department is investigating.

“We are saddened by this loss and extend our deepest condolences to the veteran’s family, friends and caregivers,” the hospital’s statement read.

Multiple veterans have died by suicide at VA facilities this year, including three suicides in five days in April — two in Georgia and one in Texas.

The rash of suicides caught the attention of Congress. Hours before House lawmakers held a hearing in late April about the tragedies, another veteran died by suicide on a VA campus in Cleveland.

Nineteen suicides occurred on VA property between October 2017 and November 2018, according to VA data obtained by The Washington Post.

Those suicides include that of Justin Miller, a Marine Corps veteran who went to the emergency room at the Minneapolis VA in 2018, struggling with suicidal thoughts. He shot himself in the parking lot after he was discharged from a four-day stay at the inpatient mental health unit.

The VA Office of Inspector General later determined Miller was not provided with an adequate treatment plan and staff didn’t find out with certainty whether he had access to a gun.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order in March creating a Cabinet-level task force that he promised would “mobilize every level of American society” to address suicide by veterans.

This week, the task force ended a public comment period during which it asked for feedback on how to improve research and how to use it to reduce suicide by veterans.

Veterans and servicemembers facing mental health crises can talk to emergency responders at the Veterans Crisis Line. To reach the hotline, dial 800-273-8255 and press 1, text 838255 or open an online chat at VeteranScrisisLine.net.
Airmen build bombs to test conflict capabilities

BY NORMAN LLAMAS
Stars and Stripes

AVIANO AIR BASE, Italy — Working around-the-clock under searing heat and high humidity, airmen built bombs and loaded them onto fighter jets during a five-day exercise that tested how rapidly an Air Force wing can meet its ammunition needs in times of conflict.

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

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

Instead of the F-16s taking off and releasing the bombs, in this exercise, the munitions were unloaded from the fighter jets and taken to a repack building. “At this assembly line, up to six airmen partake in the tearing down of the bombs and repack them for storage,” said Master Sgt. William Dunston, a munitions stockpile section chief with the 731st Munitions Squadron at Camp Darby.

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

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

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

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

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

FROM FRONT PAGE

resupply, Yang said. Currently, a soldier would need 21 MREs to survive that week. “No one wants to carry that much MREs,” Yang said. “The number one feedback from the field. We need to be able to reduce the weight.”

The secret for losing weight — for food, if not the people who eat it — may be a technology known as vacuum-microwave drying. The method involves placing food into a dryer, sucking all the air out of the container, then dehydrating the food until it shrinks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yang said he recently shrunk cheesecake into portable bar form, which made him happy. He noted that while the technology has been around for decades, the shrinking machines used to be too large and bulky. But as the dryers have shrunk, their utility has grown.

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

“Every ounce counts in a backpack you’ll be carrying for three or more days,” she said.

Marx de Salcedo keeps up with military food innovation and the ways the technology and foods reach the public. She noted the Army has tried other forms of shrinking food in the past, sometimes with not so great results.

“It reminds me of another feeding system the Army thought was going to be a big hit back in the 1950s and ‘60s: freeze dehydration, which removes almost all water. Boy, were they wrong,” she said.

The new vacuum-dried rations may prove more edible, but Marx de Salcedo pointed out that the new CCAR hasn’t been field tested yet.

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

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

Navy SEAL’s ex-attorney is seeking up to $1M

By Andrew Dyer
The San Diego Union-Tribune

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

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

Gallagher signed the document Oct. 11. Vokey represented Gallagher until mid-March, when another civilian defense attorney, Timothy Parlatore, joined the case.

Parlatore called Vokey’s move “grotesque” in comments to the Union-Tribune on Wednesday.

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

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

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

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

In a post on their joint Instagram account, Gallagher’s wife, Andrea, said her family was “tried to push the trial out to November or later,” she said in the post.

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

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

Although Vokey began representing Gallagher as early as spring 2018, any contract signed before October was not included in the complaint.

According to the October contract, Vokey and co-counsel Philip Stackhouse were to be paid $400 per hour. However, it also says that Gallagher was approved for financial support through United American Patriots, a nonprofit that helps fund legal costs for servicemembers.

“Client has applied for and been accepted for financial support from United American Patriots to cover attorney fees and case expenses,” the contract states.

Vokey is listed on UAP’s website as a member of its advisory board.

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

On Wednesday, the Navy SEALs Fund has collected almost $750,000 in donations for Gallagher’s case.

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

“This letter is a Notice of Lien and another claim for payment,” Van Shaw wrote in the email.

Please confirm you will pay the legal fees & expenses of my clients regarding Edward Gallagher ... If this Lien is not honored ... I will take the necessary action to hold the Navy SEALs Fund responsible.”

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

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

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

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

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

Naval Academy appealing reinstatement of fired professor

By Brian Witte
Associated Press

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

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

Andrew Phillips, the academy’s academic dean and provost, wrote to Fleming on Wednesday saying he had been reinstated with all pay and benefits to which he is entitled.

Phillips wrote for Fleming to report to the academy Monday to receive assignments “such as scholarly research and writing and service to the school.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“They will lose the appeal,” Fleming, who became a professor at the academy in 1986, said.

Fleming has criticized the academy’s administration for years, publishing op-eds in prominent newspapers and other publications.

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

By Albert Ajai
Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — Damascus and Ankara's agreement to form a coordination center to set up a safe zone in northeastern Syria only helps “the stage for all-Afghan negotiations. However, the Taliban, which ruled the country under a hardline, repressive regime from 1996 to 2001, has dismissed the current Afghan government as an American puppet. Rahmani said there’s no way to carry out any kind of negotiated peace if the Afghan government is sidelined.

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

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

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

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

**By Jennifer H. Svan**

**Stars and Stripes**

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Nearly a quarter of the Air Force’s fleet of C-130 Hercules is being grounded after “stubby” cracks were found on wing joints during routine maintenance, Air Mobility Command said.

AMC Commander Gen. Mary-anne Miller ordered the temporary removal of 123 of 450 total C-130s, effective immediately, the command announced late Wednesday.

The cracks on the lower center wing joint were discovered on an Air National Guard C-130 H-model at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., during depot maintenance, Alexandra Soika, an AMC spokeswoman, told Stars and Stripes in a statement.

As of Thursday morning, eight C-130 aircraft were inspected and had returned to service, Soika said.

At Ramstein Air Base, only one C-130J assigned to the 86th Air-Lift Wing was identified for closer inspection, officials said.

Maintenance personnel “inspected the aircraft today and found no defects,” spokesman Kilian Blasmein said Thursday, adding that the aircraft was deemed safe for operations.

The upper and lower rainbow fittings on the C-130 connect the outer wings with the center wing box, which sits over the fuselage.

In 2006, the Air Force began replacing center section C-130s after the boxes began showing cracks earlier than expected. The replacement program was to ensure the viability of the C-130 Hercules fleet through 2030 and beyond, the Air Force said. It included all C-130 models except the J-model, the newest model in the fleet.

Those aircraft being pulled for closer inspection include C-130H and J-model aircraft that have not received the extended service life center wing box and have more than 15,000 equivalent flight hours, AMC said in a statement.

The inspections will be carried out at the aircraft’s current location. Each inspection takes about eight hours, Soika said. If cracking is identified, AMC said a depot-level replacement of the rainbow fitting will be required.

Those aircraft found to have no cracking are to be immediately returned to service, Soika said.

Eventually, each aircraft will undergo the inspection before returning to operations, but the service’s ability to support overseas contingency operations will not be affected, Soika said.

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**Navy: CBD products remain under ban**

**By Joshua Karsten**

**Stars and Stripes**

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

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

Low-THC hemp was removed from the Controlled Substances Act, which bans cannabis with higher amounts of the chemical, by a 2018 farm bill President Donald Trump signed in December allowing the cultivation and interstate transfer of the plants and permitting hemp-derived products to be sold commercially in the U.S.

The Food and Drug Administration doesn’t evaluate or certify THC concentrations in such products, meaning they could contain more than 0.3% by dry weight that’s allowed under the new legislation, the office of the Chief of Naval Personnel said Wednesday in a statement announcing the policy.

Sailors and Marines cannot rely on the packaging and labeling of hemp products in determining whether the product contains THC concentrations that could cause a positive urinalysis result,” the Navy said.

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

The other services already ban the use of such substances among their members.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**By Brian Ferguson**

**Stars and Stripes**

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

The Air Force asked in its initial alert for airmen not to submit formal queries until after Aug. 15.
Texas governor: No ‘red flags’ from suspect

NRA warns Trump on checks

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

Trump, speaking to reporters Wednesday before visiting Dayton, Ohio, and El Paso, Texas, where weekend shootings left 31 dead, said that "we should have great appetite for background checks" amid an outcry over government inaction in the face of repeated mass shootings.

Trump's previous declarations of support for tougher gun controls, including after the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, have foundered without a sustained push from the president and support from the NRA or Republican lawmakers. Even Trump's advisers question how far he will go on any effort.

NRA chief executive Wayne LaPierre spoke with Trump on Tuesday and offered the president "an opportunity to reassert America's position as an honest broker who spoke on the condition of anonymity to freely discuss internal talks." The president has pushed back against the bill's merits, they said.

The NRA, which opposes the legislation sponsored by Sens. Patrick Toomey, R-Pa., and Joe Manchin III, D-W.Va., declined to comment.

Trump has waffled, current and past White House officials say, between wanting to do more and growing concerned about doing so, with a veto threat from the political base. Some even suggest the leaders of gun owners who spoke on the condition of anonymity to freely discuss internal talks. The president's focus has been on the political fallout from the tragedy.

Trump's political footing on guns has been damaged significantly by the occurrences of mass shootings, and his public approval ratings have dipped in recent weeks in the wake of the El Paso and Dayton attacks.

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

Republicans are trying to build support for modest measures, including so-called red flag bills, which allow friends and family members to petition authorities to keep guns away from people deemed a threat to themselves or others.

NRA officials have said they want Trump to strike a delicate balance in his public statements, avoiding appearing too soft on gun owners while not seeming too hard on gun control.

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Mayors press Senate for action on gun bills

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Republicans are trying to build support for modest measures, including so-called red flag bills from Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., which allow friends and family members to petition authorities to keep guns away from people deemed a threat to themselves or others.

But those efforts are also running into trouble from conservatives who worry about due process and infringing on gun owners’ rights.
The county is also part of a national trend affecting people’s food on a global scale. The sharing economy is reshaping the way people eat, grow food and manage their food waste. Scientists have warned that climate change is a threat to food security, with rising temperatures and changing weather patterns affecting crop yields and food availability.

Human-caused climate change is dramatically degrading the Earth’s land and the way people use the land is making global warming worse, a new United Nations scientific report says. That creates a vicious cycle that is already making food more expensive, scarcer and less nutritious.

“We need to act urgently,” said NASA climate scientist Cynthia Rosenzweig, a co-author of the report. The threat of climate change affecting people’s food on their dinner table is increasing.

But if people change the way they eat, grow food and manage forests, it could help save the planet from a far warmer future, scientists said.

Earth’s land masses, which are only 30% of the globe, are warming twice as fast as the planet as a whole. While heat-trapping gases are causing problems in the atmosphere, the land has been less talked about as part of climate change.

A special report, written by more than 100 scientists and unanimously approved by diplomats from nations around the world Thursday at a meeting in Geneva, proposed fixes and made more dire warnings.

“The way we use land is both part of the problem and also part of the solution,” said Valerie Masson-Delmotte, a French climate scientist who co-chairs one of the panel’s working groups.

“The science of climate change is now more certain than ever,” she said. "We need to act urgently."
Biden says Trump ‘fanning flames of white supremacy’

By Steve Peoples and Bill Barrow

Associated Press

BURLINGTON, Iowa — Joe Biden on Wednesday accused President Donald Trump of “fanning the flames of white supremacy” in his most aggressive attack yet on the character of the man he would like to defeat in 2020.

“Trump offers no moral leadership,” Biden declared in Burlington, the president’s “seems to have no interest in unifying the nation.”

Biden’s remarks, which have been echoed in some form by most of the Democratic presidential candidates, signaled how sharp and bitter the nation’s cultural and political divisions will be on the long road to Election Day. They also marked a moment of unity for Biden and his presidential rivals, who have turned on each other in recent weeks.

On Wednesday, they were nearly unanimous in their support of an aggressive plan to confront gun violence just days after another series of mass shootings elevated the issue to the forefront of the party’s presidential primary.

Virtually all of them vowed to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, while some, including Biden, are quiring all gun owners to obtain licenses.

Hours before Biden lashed out against Trump in Iowa, Booker spoke in Charleston, S.C.’s Mother Emanuel Church, where a white supremacist shot to death nine black parishioners four years ago. The New Jersey senator demanded bold action to stop gun violence.

“We must act to get weapons off our streets, out of our grocery stores, our bars, our temples and our churches by banning assault weapons once and for all,” a solemn Booker said.

While many Democrats have yet to take a firm position on licensing, their willingness to lean in on gun control marks a definite shift for the party.

Democrats with national ambitions have traditionally feared alienating millions of gun owners by embracing plans to enact drastic changes to the nation’s gun control laws.

As recently as 2013, President Barack Obama’s White House released a photo of the Democratic shooting a rifle. Former Democratic presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter were also eager to be photographed holding firearms.

But on Wednesday, even red-state Democrat Steve Bullock, the Montana governor, backed gun control measures, insisting in a Washington speech that gun owners are worried about their families’ safety just like everyone else. He called for universal background checks, a ban on assault weapons, and so-called “red flag” laws aimed at restricting gun ownership from high-risk individuals.

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

Such positions may not be so politically risky.

The 2020 aspirants on the Democratic side are all outmuscling each other to see who can have the most aggressive program on the issue of gun safety. That’s a seismic shift from past presidential cycles, said John Feinblatt, president of Mayor’s Against Illegal Guns, which is hosting a presidential forum on gun control in Iowa this weekend.

Despite the shifting political dynamics and surge in mass shootings, Republican leaders in Congress have blocked efforts to enact significant gun control legislation, including a relatively modest plan to require universal background checks.

Trump has periodically expressed support for gun control measures, but his administration has not followed through and his political party in Congress has shown no appetite to address the issue.

There were early signs this week, however, that a bipartisan proposal by Sens. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., to adopt “red flag” laws is gaining some traction. The still-emerging plan would create a federal grant program to encourage states to adopt laws to take guns away from people believed to be a danger to themselves or others.

Candidates face pitfalls at Iowa State Fair

By Thomas Beaumont and Andrea Jaffe

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Howard Dean took one bite of a deep-fried Oreos and dismissively pitched the rest into the garbage.

Mitt Romney famously flipped a pork chop right into the gravel. And John Kerry capped his Iowa State Fair fare with a strawberry smoothie, rather than a cold beer.

And John Kerry capped his Iowa State Fair fare with a strawberry smoothie, rather than a cold beer.

Former Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney cooks in 2017 at the Iowa State Fair, where presidential hopefuls face possible pitfalls as well as opportunities to connect with voters.

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

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

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

The candidates this year may be better prepared than others.

Former Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper will avoid Kerry’s oversight. Bill Hickenlooper, who founded a successful brewery, will pour beers for fairgoers at the craft beer tent.

On Wednesday, Sen. Amy Klobuchar joked about her love of a good state fair, noting she attends the fair in her neighboring home state of Minnesota every year.

Despite the minefield the fair presents, candidates can gain something beyond a strategic advantage in Iowa if they listen to the people they meet, said veteran Republican strategist Bob Haus.

“People are honest. They’ll tell you what they think because they’re on their turf, and often have a few beers in them,” Haus said. “So you honestly get feedback. A lot you like, and some you may not.”

Hannity and de Blasio go at each other in interview

By Verena Dobnik

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York City’s Bill de Blasio sparred, clashed and laughed with Fox News host Sean Hannity on Wednesday when the Democratic presidential hopeful faked the conservative TV titan who has disparaged him for years.

For one hour on cable news’ top-rated show, their raised voices overlapped as they disagreed on taxation of the wealthy, gun control, abortion laws, policing, the environment — and just about everything else.

Hannity summed up the encounter by telling the mayor: “I’m never going to agree with you. You drive me crazy!”

De Blasio is among a wide field of Democrats seeking the nomination to take on Republican President Donald Trump in next year’s election.

The host took aim at de Blasio’s vow to “tax the hell out of the wealthy” to address income inequality.

“Do you think that my money that I’ve earned and saved is in the wrong hands?” Hannity asked.

The mayor countered: “Do you think right now your viewers feel that it’s OK that the wealthy have as much as they have and pay as little in taxes as they do? Do you think it’s OK that big corporations pay nothing in taxes? Ama- zon is one.”

De Blasio wants wealthy Americans to pay 70% of income taxes.

Hannity challenged de Blasio to explain why the mayor favors offering tax-funded health care to immigrants in New York City who are in the United States illegally.

“I want everybody who’s here (in New York) to get health care because what’s happening right now? Folks go to the emergency room because they don’t have a doctor, and who’s paying for it?” the same taxpayer,” he said.

Hannity has often taken shots at the liberal mayor of the nation’s largest city, dubbing him “conrarde de Blasio” and blasting his approach to matters ranging from the economy to Trump.

De Blasio, meanwhile, has criticized Fox News, which he sees as divisive.

But the mayor said earlier this week that he would appear on “Hannity” in hopes of reaching Americans of all political persuasions. The channel’s viewers tend to be conservative.
Latest governor of Puerto Rico facing protests

By Danica Coto
Associated Press

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

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

— Wanda Vazquez

Vazquez, who has worked in the government for more than 30 years, stepped into the position Wednesday when Puerto Rico's Supreme Court declared that the assumption of the office on Friday by Rossello's pick, Pedro Pierluisi, was unconstitutional.

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

The new governor did not speak about possible legal ramifications in a ceremony accompanied by her daughter and her husband, Judge Jorge Diaz. But in her televised statement, Vazquez said she would be working for all Puerto Ricans.

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

"I demand that the people who choose the governor, not the party," Vazquez said. "Those who oppose the new governor also mention how the Office of Government Ethics received a complaint in November about possible ethical violations by Vazquez, who was accused of intervening in a case involving a suspect charged with stealing government property at a home where her daughter lived. She appeared in court to face charges including two violations of a government ethics law, but a judge ruled in December there was no evidence for her arrest."

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

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

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

Largest US immigration raids in a decade net 680 arrests

By Rogelio V. Solis
and Jeff Amy
Associated Press

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

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

"On a day when we seek unifying words and acts to heal the nation's broken heart, President Trump allows so many families and communities to be torn apart," said Angelica Salas, executive director of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights.

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

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

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

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

"It was a sad situation inside," Candelaria said.

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

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

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

Asked about their coinciding with Trump's visit to El Paso, Albence responded, "This is a long-term operation that's been going on."

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

The companies involved could be charged with knowingly hiring workers who are in the country illegally and will be scrutinized for tax, document and wage fraud, Albence said.
Hundreds arrested since change in Kashmir’s status

Associated Press

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

Pakistan, which claims the divided Himalayan region together with India, on Thursday suspended a key train service with India as tensions between the rivals soared.

India’s government this week revoked the special status of Kashmir as local residents can’t even use phones to ask for medical help.

It’s hell,” a patient told the television channel.

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

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

Hundreds arrested

The WHO issued a statement Wednesday saying it has an ongoing investigation into its Yemen office after an internal probe found irregularities in the region’s future.

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

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

WHO: Yemen probe ongoing

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

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

The WHO said it “moved quickly to address audit recommendations.”

On Monday, the AP revealed investigations by the WHO and UNICEF into operations in Yemen that found some U.N. officials had been profiting off the massive humanitarian aid program aimed at keeping Yemenis alive.

Backers help ex-Kyrgyz president elude arrest

Associated Press

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Addressing an emergency parliament session called to discuss the crisis, Jeenbekov said Atambayev should face charges for firing at police.
Japan OKs first S. Korea export under new law

By Mari Yamaguchi
Associated Press

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

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, under a new law implemented Wednesday, said it was sending reinforcements to South Korea's trade status beginning later this month.

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

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

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

South Korean President Moon Jae-in remained cautious, saying it was an attempt to calm increased tensions with Seoul.

“Our government has planned for a worst-case situation since Japan converted export approvals of the three materials to a case-by-case basis,” said a senior government official in charge of preparing and announcing both short-term and long-term measures,“He said, “Of course, Japan may not proceed with export restrictions and there might not be any actual damage caused (to South Korean companies). But what hasn’t changed is that uncertainty is still alive.”

South Korea says Japan is using trade to retaliate against Tokyo’s decision ordering Japanese companies to compensate Koreans for forced labor during World War II when the Korean Peninsula was under Tokyo rule.

Japanese officials have denied the export controls were retaliation for the court rulings, insisting that South Korea export control officials may not be able to include shipments of sensitive materials to third countries.

“The move by Tokyo’s position and warned of the possibility of adding more items in addition to the three chemicals if export control officials suspect Seoul of inappropriate shipments.”

Rome bans sitting on famous steps

By Natalie B. Compton
The Washington Post

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

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

According to a news release from the Italian news wire service Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata, police have begun to impose 250 to 400 euro fines on tourists who fail to comply with the new law.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Israeli troops search West Bank after soldier stabbed to death

By Ilan Ben Zion
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israeli troops raided a Palestinian village on Thursday and the military said it was sending reinforcements to the West Bank, hours after a 19-year-old soldier with stab wounds was found near a Jewish settlement.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denounced the killing as a terrorist attack and vowed the killers would be brought to justice.

A Iranian stabbing threatened to inflame tensions between Israelis and Palestinians just over a month before Israel’s parliament elections. In response to the incident, Netanyahu’s nationalist allies called for further West Bank settlement construction and a heavy-handed response.

The soldier was identified as Dvir Sorek, 19, from the West Bank settlement of Ofra, north of Jerusalem. He was a student at a pre-military Jewish seminary in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, south of Jerusalem. His body was found on the side of a road near the seminary.

Army spokesman Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus said the soldier was neither armed nor in uniform when his body was found. He said the military was investigating the circumstances of his death and searching for suspects.

As part of the searches, a colonel from the forerunners of the settlement movement, who was killed by a Palestinian gunman near the West Bank city of Nablus in 2000.

Netanyahu said in a statement that security forces were “in pursuit now in order to capture the despicable terrorist and bring him to account.”

Speaking at the inauguration of new settlement homes in Beit El, north of Jerusalem, Netanyahu said Israel “will reach those who seek to harm us; we will strengthen our roots in our homeland.”

President Reuven Rivlin offered his condolences and said the security forces were “pursuing the murderers and will not rest until we find them.”

“Our prayers this morning are with the family of the murdered soldier and our hearts grieve for the life cut short,” Rivlin said.

“We fight terrorism without compromising to ensure the security of our people.”

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

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

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

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

Attorney wants jurors who won’t judge tattoos

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

The Advocate reported that most of the potential jurors attorney Jarvis Antoine spoke with said they don’t have a problem with William Bottoms Jr.’s tattoos.

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

Town’s wood chipper stolen, old one left

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

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

Liquor group celebrates tax-free status with sales

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

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

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

Worker charged after toddlers’ legs broken

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

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

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

Visitors stranded by strike paint fence

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

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

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

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

Chief apologizes after cops lead man by rope

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

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

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

2 arrested in burning of dog at beach

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

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

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

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

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

Van mysteriously returned to book center

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

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

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

Thief crashes into store, steals lottery tickets

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

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

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

From wire reports
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Samsung ditches headphone jack in new Note

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

The smaller, 6.3-inch version will be called the Note 10 and will sell for almost $950, or $150 less than the Plus. It’s designed for those who want the Note’s signature stylus without its once-signature size. “You hit a certain point where you can’t get much bigger without being physically too large to hold,” Technology Research analyst Bob O’Donnell said. “That’s the challenge they are running into.”

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

Apple is expected to release new iPhones next month. A version that works with next-generation 5G cellular networks isn’t expected. Samsung will have a 5G version of the Note 10 Plus starting at almost $1,300.
Creators of ‘Dora and the Lost City of Gold’ hope Hispanic-heavy cast can make inroads into Hollywood diversity.

Pages 24-25
Beyond fun and games

App changes lives by teaching adults to read

BY JORDAN WELKERSON

The Dallas Morning News

Don Richardson, a Dallas resident in his mid-20s, tried attending Eastfield College in 2013. But he faced a hurdle so big that he eventually had to leave: He could barely read.

The college recommended he try Literacy Instruction for Texas, or LIFT, a nonprofit organization that teaches thousands of adults. At the time, Richardson used his smartphone to find where in Dallas that LIFT was located — and which bus would take him there — so he could get help improving his reading. More recently, though, Richardson found a more direct way to get literacy instruction from smartphones.

He downloaded a free learning app, Codex: Lost Words of Atlantis. The app, created by Southern Methodist University professors Corey Clark, left, and Tony Cuevas, introduced the cybersecurity firewall home device perfectly when she said: “You’ll have to be living under a rock these days to not be aware of the data breaches that occur on a regular basis.”

This is so true, and for the most part, any and all we can get for your security and internet control is welcome. Alas, digital information is invisible and cannot be tracked by security cameras, window sensors or other physical means of security.

The Firewalla is a small home device (1.2-by-1.2-by-0.25 inch) designed to set up a security barrier around your home network. It plugs into your existing router and monitors all devices, including smartphones, tablets, computers and smart home devices (it blocks outside access to your security cameras).

The simple plug-and-play setup is ideal, and you don’t have to be an IT specialist to access any advanced settings. There’s also no paid subscription service.

When activated, the Firewalla blocks social media access and all major social networks for one hour with a simple tap of a button allowing for traditional face-to-face family time rather than FaceTime.

Apps (iOS and Android) monitor the activity you choose. Setup, including setting up a firewall around your network, is done automatically.

Firewalla enables you to see who’s on your system that’s being visited, and which shouldn’t — such as gaming, gambling or porn — with full customization for website blocking. There’s also a built-in VPN server for access when you’re away from home.

Rules can be set to completely block sites, limit the access or cut off all internet access.

Alarm and app notifications can easily be set for big situations such as possible cyberattacks or as small as a video game being played on the network.

Online: firewalla.com; $108 for Firewalla Red (100 MB), $179 for Firewalla Blue (500 MB)

If you’re like me, you have an iPad, Galaxy Tab, Google Chromebok or one of many tablets up to 11 inches that satisfy your non-work-related needs, and you tug it along in a big bulky backpack.

Here’s something to make your travels a bit lighter, and it incorporates spacesuit technology. The Phoozy calls itself the world’s first sleeve that protects against everything, including heat, cold, water and those dreaded “oops” moments.

No matter where you live, the hot or cold protection will work. For protecting against the heat, a patent-pending Chromium Thermal Barrier reflects more than 90% of the radiation generated by the sun to help prevent overheating.

This same barrier insulates your tablet or small laptop from the cold, which will extend its battery life.

Five layers of water-resistant materials and an IP66 water-resistant rating will keep it somewhat safe from wet conditions. (It does have a sinkproof technology.)

It’s water-resistant, but not waterproof. The Phoozy will certainly protect your device from water damage if you’re caught in a storm, or splashed pool water even from a quick dunk in water.

Other features include a HydroGuard two-way zipper with pulls, detachable shoulder strap, cushion-lined pockets and a pocket for an Apple Pencil or another stylus.

The Phoozy is available in two sizes; iPad Capsule ($59.99) for tablets up to 11 inches and the iPad/MacBook Capsule ($69.99) for bigger tablets and other laptops up to 13 inches. Both have color choices of cosmic black, iridium silver, iridium gold and real tree timber.

Online: phoozy.com

ON THE COVER: Isabela Moner plays the teen explorer in “Dora and the Lost City of Gold.” Paramount Pictures
wayne “The Rock” Johnson is now on screens in “Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw.” In honor of the return of Luke Hobbs, the impossible-to-kill character Johnson’s now played in five increasingly and enjoyably frenetic installments (the last one was so fast and furious it even had Helen Mirren in a cameo), here’s a quick appreciation of the massive wrestler-turned-actor. Johnson always plays more or less the same character — and he always saves the day.

The men Johnson plays are masters of transportation. There is nothing that a character played by Johnson can’t drive. While he mostly sticks with cars in the F&F movies — which he drives with a cool nonchalance, like the vehicle is a mild annoyance that must be dealt with — he is also good with helicopters (“San Andreas,” “Rampage”), boats (“San Andreas”), construction cranes (“Skyscraper”), taxis (“Return to Witch Mountain”), and, probably, Quidditch brooms, unicycles and space shuttles. Just wait.

Johnson’s characters have superhuman powers. To my knowledge, Johnson has never played an actual superhero, but he nonetheless can fly. Watch him in “Skyscraper,” jumping from said construction crane — a mere mortal would plummet, but Johnson soars. (To be fair, he tries something similar in “The Other Guys” and things don’t work out quite so well, but that was 2010 and he wasn’t quite as big a star yet. Superpowers take time.) He is also an animal whisperer (“Rampage”), a manly time traveler (“Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle”), and a person capable of redirecting a torpedo with one hand (“Fate of the Furious”). Somebody give this man a cape.

His pectoral muscles are mesmerizing and cannot be contained. If you are a character played by Dwayne Johnson, and you are in a hospital with your arm in a cast and you want to get back to action, you simply flex your muscles and off pops the cast. (This happens in “Furious 7,” but I bet Johnson does it at parties.) If you try to imprison him, he will throw the guards around like tennis balls (“Fate of the Furious”); if you think an earthquake of massive proportions can stop him from saving his family AND getting his ex-wife back (“San Andreas”), you haven’t seen enough of his movies.

His characters also always know what to say. Let’s be honest here: Johnson is not the most nuanced actor working today. His range is basically a combination of Seething Wide-Eyed Glare, Serious I-Got-You Nod and Quietly Smoldering Intensity, interspersed with the odd roguish grin. But this is a man who can assure a child who’s about to walk across a plank 100 stories above Hong Kong that everything will be OK (“Skyscraper”), and you believe him, absolutely. This is also a man who, in “Furious 7,” announces his arrival with “Woman, I am the cavalry.” Bow down.

In case of disaster, he’s your man. When the apocalypse comes, I hope I’m standing near The Rock. Because he will not only prevail against all odds (Enormous mutant animals! Towers aflame! Tsunami! Vin Diesel!), he will make you feel better while he does it. This is Johnson’s great gift as a performer: He’s a charmer whose charisma is as big as his biceps ... and that is pretty big indeed.
Hoping for a breakthrough

Featuring an almost entirely Hispanic cast, ‘Lost City’ has potential to become rare Latino hit

BY RAFER GUZMAN

When 8-year-old Evelyn Morales immigrated to Hampton Bays, N.Y., from Argentina with her family, she couldn’t speak a word of English. School, she says, typically included tears of frustration and various excuses to hide out in the nurse’s office. That is, until she discovered the Nickelodeon cartoon series “Dora the Explorer,” about a young Latina who embarks on whimsical adventures while teaching her viewing audience how to speak Spanish and English.

“I give Dora a lot of respect and credit for me learning English,” says Morales, 25, who graduated from LIU Riverhead with a degree in communications and now works as a nanny and part-time entrepreneur. “I just repeated things, even though I didn’t understand. I would say a word, and people would start to understand me. And then I’d realize I was doing it right.”

The animated, bilingual explorer is making her big-screen debut with “Dora and the Lost City of Gold.” It’s a live-action adaptation that seems sure to appeal to Dora’s young fans, though the character is no longer a little girl but a high schooler played by Isabela Moner (Broadway’s “Evita”). Perhaps most importantly, “Dora and the Lost City of Gold” marks the rare Hollywood release with an almost entirely Hispanic cast. Moner’s co-stars include Michael Pena and Eva Longoria as Dora’s parents; Eugenio Derbez as a hapless adventurer; and Benicio Del Toro as the voice of Swiper, the thieving fox.

“I’ve never seen such a big cast full of Latinos, and they’re headlining it, really carrying the show. And the movie does include a lot of Spanish. There’s a bit of breaking the fourth wall,” says Moner. As an actor, she adds, “It’s very rare. You’ll see things on the screen that might seem fleeting, and make it a lasting thing. But it’s up to the audience to go and support it.”

Isabela Moner on Hispanic representation in the new film, “Dora and the Lost City of Gold” market. In the late 1990s, Nickelodeon’s “Blue’s Clues,” the popular educational series about an animated dog, the team reportedly kicked around several character ideas — a rabbit, an alien, a girl named Tess — before a Nickelodeon executive suggested making the heroine a Latina. Cultural advisers were brought in. And in June 1999, Nickelodeon aired the pilot for “Dora the Explorer.”

With her talking backpack and map, plus a loyal monkey named Boots, Dora became a runaway success. “Dora the Explorer” spawned the usual merchandise — dolls, board games, clothing, handbags — along with Lego kits, video games and a book series. There have been several touring stage productions. The show has been translated into scores of other languages, including French, Swedish, Russian and Chinese. A spinoff, “Go, Diego, Go!” based on Dora’s cousin, launched in 2005.

If “Dora the Explorer” was a hit, “Dora and the Lost City of Gold” marks the next step for the franchise. With its built-in brand recognition, popular stars and an official news release encouraging Latinos to see the film, “We’ve got to show that there’s money in doing this, because that’s the only thing that’s going to break their habit,” says Nogales. “We’re going to applaud the film and ask our community to go and see it.”

There are reasons Hollywood has long ignored the Latino market, says Derbez, whose 2015 comedy “Instructions Not Included” became the highest-grossing Spanish-language film in the United States. For starters, he says, Latino films often focus on downbeat subjects such as crime or immigration, which drive audiences away. And while Hispanic actors are given roles, it’s without much awareness of their backgrounds. “You’ll see a movie where it’s supposed to be a Mexican, but he sounds like a Colombian,” Derbez says. “And we can tell the difference.”

Finally, when the movies underperform, Hollywood throws up its hands, according to Derbez. “They end up saying, ‘No, the movies for Latinos don’t work. It’s not good business; they don’t show up.’ ”

“Dora and the Lost City of Gold” may be poised to change that. With its built-in brand recognition, popular stars and an official stamp of approval from a Hispanic advocacy group, “Dora” has potential, at least, to become a rare Latino hit.

“It’s recently become quite trendy to be a minority and have your story told,” says Moner. As an actor, she adds, “It’s our job to take advantage of this thing that might seem fleeting, and make it a lasting thing. But it’s up to the audience to go and support it.”
A (Milo Ventimiglia) stars in “The Art of Racing in the Rain.”

By Katie Walsh

Tribune News Service

“These days, there’s no intellectual property that hasn’t been mined for a big-budget, live-action Hollywood remake. But the adaptation of the popular educational kiddie cartoon “Dora the Explorer” into the summer-friendly romp “Dora and the Lost City of Gold” is a new trainer. The beloved character of Dora, with whom Gen Z grew up, becomes a winning 21st century heroine in this perky action-adventure flick that pulls heavily from the Indiana Jones movies and other kid-friendly action-adventure classics.

To adapt the interactive kiddie show into something a bit more sophisticated to appeal to the preteen set who are no longer the preschool set, director James Bobin and co-writer Nicholas Stoller (who cut their teeth in comedy) have brought a healthy dose of irony to the format. Their leading lady, Isabela Moner, proves to be more than up to the challenge of balancing sincere and silly. Can you say “nutenotically”?” she asks the audience in one of Dora’s signature direct addresses to the camera, with a wide-eyed and slightly manic enthusiasm that lets us know we’re all in on the joke.

Dora falls into that grand cinematic tradition of brave naiads who embark on big adventures (see: Herman, Pee-Wee). Dora has been brought up in the jungle by her professor parents (Eva Longoria and Michael Pena), and she knows everything about her surroundings. She just doesn’t know much about other people. Her parents ship her off to “the city” to live with her aunt, uncle and cousin Diego (Jaleel White) to study the indigenous culture of American high schools and pick up some social skills while they go off in search of Parapata, an ancient Incan city of gold.

The hero, completely guiltless Dora might be able to survive the elements, but it’s questionable whether she’ll survive high school. Diego is embarrassed by her, queen bee Summy (Madeleine Madden) is threatened by her, and the school nerd (Nicholas Coombe) is enamored of her. The quartet gets separated from the pack on a field trip, then kidnapped to South America by a group of bounty hunters hoping to use Dora to find her parents and swoop in on the treasure. Alejandro (Eugenio Derbez), an academic friend of Dora’s parents, rescues the kids, and they make a break for it into the jungle.

Modner’s layered comedic performance, which at one nods at the “Dora” formula while acknowledging the conceit, is deceptively difficult and nuanced. She willingly sings songs about doing your business in the jungle while boating a shovel and breathlessly offers up fun facts. She’s delightfully dorky, a rare commodity in this day and age of sarcastic, wise-beyond-their-years teens.

The action in this live-action adaptation issandboxed and decidedly safe. Bobin loses the geographical thread in the film’s climax in and around Parapata, but it’s never about the visual thrills, it’s about the girl at the center of it. When Dora explains they’re not treasure hunters but explorers there to learn, the jungle puzzle all clicks into place. Dora, with her backpack, sunny outlook and multiculural perspective, is truly the hero we need for this century.

‘Dora’ gives its own delightfully dorky Indiana Jones

By Katie Walsh

Tribune News Service

‘The Kitchen’ is a pale shadow of similarly themed ‘Widows’

By Ann Hornaday

The Washington Post

A bunch of guys try to pull off a heist, which goes drastically wrong. The women they leave behind pick up the pieces to embark on a life of crime that’s as cathartically liberating as it is morally corrupting. Isn’t “Widows” the one here.

In “The Kitchen,” a pale, wildly uneven shadow of last year’s superior film, Melissa McCarthy, Tiffany Haddish and Elisabeth Moss play three women whose husbands are serving time for robbery. Unhappy with the money they’re receiving from the men’s mob bosses, they decide to strike out on their own, offering genuine protection to local businesses and, eventually, taking even more territory.

Set in 1970s Hell’s Kitchen and thinly based on the notorious Irish crime gang the Westies, “The Kitchen” resuscitates the grumpy, trash-strewn dead-end- ness of Manhattan during that era, when Times Square was still sleazy and when polyester and pay phones were still a thing. Adapted by writer-director Andrea Berloff from a comic book series by Ollie Masters as Miriam Kick, the reality-adjaacent version of the period — when the Westies were believed to have committed as many as 100 murders in a 20-year span — plays the brutishness for the baroquely vengeful pleasure and few mildly amusing laughs. As Kathy, whose mother’s side of the family goes way back with the Irish mob, McCarthy brings a dimply, maternal gravitas and subversive charge that characters that some would hope to be screaming a tearjerker, is a very strange movie. The film makes frequent reference to said art of racing in the rain, the skill Denny has mastered as a race car driver in Seattle. It seems to be the idea of anticipating the skid so you can create and therefore control the skid, to eliminate unpredictable variables. The metaphor doesn’t neatly track onto the life lessons presented, but it offers the characters a chance to speak often about manifesting their own reality. It’s heay but incredibly vague, and the unpredictable variables thrown Denny and Enzo’s way are doozies: a romance and marriage with the beautiful Eve (Amanda Seyfried), the birth of Zoe (Ryan Kiera Armstrong), terminal illness, litigious in-laws, custody battles, and announce’s he’s lying in “a puddle of my own making.” A believer in Mongolian dog mysticism, Enzo announces that when he comes back as a human, he’s going to remember everything he’s learned as a dog living with his owner, Denny (Milo Ventimiglia).

“The Art of Racing in the Rain,” while a tearjerker, is a very strange movie. The film makes frequent reference to said art of racing in the rain, the skill Denny has mastered as a race car driver in Seattle. It seems to be the idea of anticipating the skid so you can create and therefore control the skid, to eliminate unpredictable variables. The metaphor doesn’t neatly track onto the life lessons presented, but it offers the characters a chance to speak often about manifesting their own reality. It’s heay but incredibly vague, and the unpredictable variables thrown Denny and Enzo’s way are doozies: a romance and marriage with the beautiful Eve (Amanda Seyfried), the birth of Zoe (Ryan Kiera Armstrong), terminal illness, litigious in-laws, custody battles, and announce’s he’s lying in “a puddle of my own making.” A believer in Mongolian dog mysticism, Enzo announces that when he comes back as a human, he’s going to remember everything he’s learned as a dog living with his owner, Denny (Milo Ventimiglia).
In Bloodstained: Ritual of the Night, players assume the role of Miriam, an orphan scarred by an alchemist’s curse that slowly crystallizes her body.

The difference this time around is that there are a frankly huge number of Shard abilities to find. While players are always free to experiment, there’s little doubt that only a handful of powerful or particularly useful attacks will take preference over essentially all the others. Given that many of the attacks or powers are slight variants of other abilities, this is to be expected. Still, all of those Shards are out there waiting to be found, and each one has something a little unique to offer. Players will immediately notice that there are very few powers or weapons in Ritual of the Night that can’t be upgraded. Not only can players craft their own weapons or armor, they can use those crafted items to create even more powerful weapons and armor. In fact, some of the most powerful weapons in the game are only available after crafting and combining several other high-level weapons. Techniques are also available for specific weapons, and if players put in the time needed to master them, they can be used by any weapon of the same type. The result is that players really can deck out their character for whatever need they choose.

Of course, all of the fancy new features wouldn’t count for much if the gameplay was boring. Thankfully, this is not the case. Things are naturally a bit slow from the start, as Miriam isn’t as agile or as powerful as players might expect. Over time, though, she becomes a force to be reckoned with, able to double jump, invert her own personal gravity, zoom across the map, jet around underwater, and make use of screen-filling abilities that rain destruction down upon enemies.

Players shouldn’t jump into Ritual of the Night expecting a totally flawless experience. One of the first things I tested was the game’s save and resume feature, which upon reloading my save resulted in a broken model for Miriam with a missing head. There are also a few issues with typos in written dialogue, or discrepancies between what’s displayed on screen and what’s heard spoken aloud. These are relatively few and far between. With that said, players are likely to encounter a few instances where attacks that should have landed seem to miss or enemies who land hits they shouldn’t have.

Through it all, though, the game looks, sounds and feels great. Many players have expressed their distaste for the game’s art style, but nothing I’ve seen in my two complete runs through the game so far has managed to turn me off. I personally wouldn’t have complained if the game appeared to be pulled straight from the 16-bit era, with pixelated sprites and jagged polygons, but if you ask me, this new style strikes the perfect balance of old-school and new.

In Bloodstained: Ritual of the Night, players assume the role of Miriam, an orphan scarred by an alchemist’s curse that slowly crystallizes her body.
Germany’s hottest summer on record has meant more family trips to the local swimming pool than years past, but repeated dips in familiar water can get old.

On a recent scorcher, we went in search of someplace new for a temporary respite from the latest wave of insufferable weather.

About a one-hour drive northwest of Stuttgart, we found what we were looking for. In the village of Forst, a lake called Heidesee is a great spot to swim and sunbathe in a bucolic setting.

There are large waterslides on the grounds with a combined length of 225 meters. With two beach volleyball courts, a children’s pool and a playground for younger kids, there are entertainment options for everyone.

The lake, which is about the size of 35 football fields, is colder than your average pool. My teeth chattered just a little. The lake is divided into sections, with a roped-off shallow area that is 3 feet deep. Beyond the rope you can also swim freely in deeper water, and fishing is also possible. There is also a sandy beach where kids can dig. Next to the beach are manicured lawns, with shade for spreading out in comfort. About 30 acres of grassy area surrounds the lake, which means bumper-to-bumper bodies can be avoided.

On our recent weekend visit, there were surprisingly few visitors despite the heat. We sprawled out on a prime piece of shady turf and meandered back and forth for leisurely plunges in the cool lake water. The lines at the snack bar on our visit were short, and the food was cheap. An overflowing portion of fries and a large bratwurst cost less than 5 euros. There is also an Italian restaurant on the grounds that sells pizza.

Another convenience: free public parking with 500 spots on-site.

Given the relatively convenient location — roughly halfway between the military communities of Kaiserslautern and Stuttgart — Heidesee is worth a visit for anyone in search of a new place to dip.

Heidesee lake offers swimming, waterslides in a bucolic setting

**ON THE QT**

**DIRECTIONS**
From Kaiserslautern, take the A6 east, picking up the A5 south just past Hockenheim and take the exit for Forst. From Stuttgart, there are multiple routes. It is best to consult a GPS for the fastest route based on traffic conditions.

**Address:** 1 Weiherer Strasse, Forst 76694

**TIMES**
Monday- Friday, 11 a.m.- 9 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 9 a.m.- 7 p.m.

**COSTS**
Adults: 6 euros; children: 3 euros; children under 6: free

**FOOD**
There are snack bars, a beer garden and an Italian restaurant at the complex.

**INFORMATION**
Phone: 07251 780-0; Online: heidesee-forst.de

— John Vandiver
Portugal’s Douro Valley the place for port

one of Portugal’s most endearing slices is the Douro River Valley, the winding, terraced region that produces the country’s beloved port wine. This is Portugal’s answer to Germany’s romantic Rhine River Valley. But unlike the Rhine, the Douro was never a strategic military location. So, rather than castles and stony ramparts, visitors encounter farms and sleepy villages. The only thing fortified here ... is the wine.

The Douro region, where port is produced, stretches along the river of the same name, about 60 miles inland from the city of Porto. (The second largest city in Portugal, Porto is where the Douro River spills into the Atlantic Ocean.) Joy— the city of Porto. (The second largest city

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

An Italian saint’s star-studded feast day

In many places in Italy, Aug. 10 is celebrated as the Feast Day of San Lorenzo, or Saint Lau-

rerence. Thought to have been born in Valencia, Spain, Lorenzo was one of the seven men serving under Pope Sixtus II in Rome and martyred during the persecution led by Emperor Valerian in the year 258. His legend is at once grisly and fascinating. Lorenzo’s role in the church was to look after its assets and distribute alms to the poor, which the acting Roman prefect took to mean that he controlled a great fortune. When Lorenzo became aware of his imminent execution, he asked for three days to gather up the church’s wealth. After selling off its valuables and giving the money to those in need, he gathered up the church’s assets and was put to death atop an iron stake. This is what gives port its signature sweetness.

After fermentation, port traditionally stays in the Douro Valley for one winter after it’s made, as the cold temperatures encourage the wine and brandy to marry. It’s then transported by truck to port-wine lodges in Porto, where the more humid, mild climate at sea level is ideal for aging.

The best way to fully experience the Douro Valley is to rent a car to visit several quintas. While some are private, many welcome travelers. Of the quintas that are open to the public, most offer a tour, followed by a tasting of several wines. Some rent out rooms.

Without a car, a slow but scenic way to visit is to take a boat from the heart of the Douro (a seven-hour trip). There are also trains that run between Porto and the two main towns in the region: Peso da Regua and Pinhão. Neither town is particularly exciting, but both have hotels and make a decent home base for visiting the area’s quintas. Regua, which feels more urban and functional of the two hubs, is home to two main streets and the Douro Museum, which exhibits that explain the landscape, industry, culture and geology of the region. A rabelo — the traditional flat-bottomed boat that was once used to transport barrels of port downriver from Douro to Porto — is permanently moored to the rooftop.

Touring the Douro Valley for the first time can be daunting. After all, there are so many ports to choose from, and it’s hard to know where to start. Luckily, there are plenty of resources to help plan your trip. One of the best ways to see the Douro Valley is by renting a car and driving through the winding, terraced region that is known for its production of port wine.

The hillsides of Portugal’s Douro River Valley are lined with stepped terraces built over the centuries. The scenery changes color with the passing seasons.
Beware of hidden dangers when using frozen berries

**By Sally Squires**
Special to The Washington Post

When North Carolina State University microbiologist Benjamin Chapman makes a smoothie, he — like many of us — uses frozen berries. But first, Chapman microwaves his frozen berries to boiling and then refreezes them again before tossing them into the blender.

Why the extra steps? Chapman wants to be sure that there are no pathogens in the frozen berries that could cause a foodborne illness.

“What I am doing may be overkill, but it makes me feel good,” says Chapman, who has been making smoothies this way for the past eight to 10 years, since his children were infants and toddlers. “I don’t have any thoughts that the berries are super high-risk to making us sick. But to me, it is something that is quick and easy to do. It’s my own risk management.”

Nor is he alone in taking extra precautions with frozen berries. In May, the Food and Drug Administration announced that it began sampling frozen berries last fall to look for hepatitis A and norovirus, two of the most common foodborne illnesses. The federal agency said that it plans to test 2,000 samples over the next 18 months from both domestic and imported sources, including food processors, distribution centers, warehouses and retailers, such as grocery stores.

As a result of this effort, there have already been two recent recalls of frozen berries announced by the FDA. They involved frozen blackberries and blended berries that were found to contain parts of the hepatitis A virus. These products were made by Townsend Farms and sold by Kroger and Costco. No outbreaks of hepatitis A have been linked to the frozen berries.

Nor does the recall mean that any of the berries contained whole, live hepatitis A virus. “These are tests for the DNA of these organisms,” said microbiologist Donald Schaffner, director of the Center for Advanced Food Technology at Rutgers University. “It is not an indication that these berries contain the living or intact virus that can make people sick. That said, a recall is the right thing to do.”

Schaffner would hate for consumers to think that frozen berries are not safe. “We want people to eat more fruit and vegetables,” said Schaffner. “We want people to eat berries. I am not going to change my berry-eating consumption because of this because we know that these are safe, healthy foods.”

When it comes to foodborne illnesses, most people think of the culprits being undercooked hamburgers or fresh produce, such as spinach, romaine and cantaloupe. All have been fingered as the sources of recent foodborne outbreaks.

It might seem that freezing should kill these sometimes deadly diseases. But cold temperatures are actually how microbiologists preserve hepatitis, norovirus and other foodborne microorganisms to study in the lab. “Freezing doesn’t kill them, and they die very, very slowly in the freezer,” Schaffner said.

So what can you do to reduce your risk of contracting a foodborne illnesses from frozen food? Here are five tips:

1. Use a probe digital thermometer to check the internal temperature of all foods to ensure they reach the recommended internal temperatures.
2. Follow the cooking instructions on all frozen food and always cook frozen vegetables, meats and blended berries that were found to contain parts of the hepatitis A virus. These products were made by Townsend Farms and sold by Kroger and Costco. No outbreaks of hepatitis A have been linked to the frozen berries.
3. Keep your freezer packed tight with frozen food. This will help keep them at a constant temperature and less airflow, which can warm foods.
4. Microwave frozen fruit to boiling, stir and check that the temperature reaches 121 degrees before using in recipes or refreeze, especially when using in foods served to the very young, elderly, pregnant women or anyone with a compromised immune system.
5. Download the free USDA Foodkeeper app available for iOS and Android devices.

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**By John Vandiver**
Stars and Stripes

The temperature was over 90 degrees outside, and it felt even worse in the stuffy Stuttgart home where we reside without air conditioning like the natives. In dog days like these, it’s best to head out for dinner — preferably someplace green and lush.

On other visits, the menu differed. On this visit, the menu featured kebabs, goulash, for instance. The salads were filled with surprises, often herby, seedy and decorated with edible flowers. There also is a selection of wines from the region, as well as beers and cocktails.

Our recent visit with friends, however, the typically soothing atmosphere was jolted by a man swarm. The extreme heat had driven others in the neighborhood from their homes, which in all likelihood lacked air conditioning as is the German way.

Lines were long. The staff was friendly, but slightly overwhelmed. And the wait was

**INS BLAUE**

**Location:** 40 Wartbergstrasse, Stuttgart
**Hours:** 2-11 p.m., Wednesday-Sunday; Noon-11 p.m., weekends.
**Dress:** Casual
**Prices:** Around $10
**Contact:** 0711-988-6485
— John Vandiver

**PHOTOS BY JOHN VAN DIVER**
Stars and Stripes

Ins Blaue, a restaurant on Stuttgart’s north side of town, offers unique dishes in a garden-like setting.

The menu at Ins Blaue isn’t extensive, but the meals are creative. Among the offerings are a stew of lentils and sausages with tasty spices, watermelon salad and chicken served in a peanut sauce.

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**A cool place to eat**

Stuttgart’s Ins Blaue a tasty haven from summer heat

**By John Vandiver**
Stars and Stripes

It’s got outdoor benches like a beer garden, but a flair that is smaller indoor dining section. It’s got curving trails and steps, offers soothing background music, hipster-looking staff and a chef who can change the menu the way we reside without air conditioning as is the German way.

On dog days like these, it’s best to head out for dinner — preferably someplace green and lush. "Prost!"

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Some food safety experts recommend that we boil and refreeze frozen fruits and vegetables before we eat them.
Although Sedan is somewhat removed from France’s main tourist routes, a visit to this industrial town near the Belgian border is a must for military history buffs.

It was in a little chateau on Sedan’s outskirts that the Franco-Prussian war ended. There is no plaque marking the Chateau Bellevue, now a private residence on the side of a quiet country road. But this is where a dejected Napoleon III surrendered on Sept. 2, 1870, together with the fortress of Sedan and its 100,000-strong garrison.

The resounding Prussian victory resulted in the unification of Germany, changing the balance of power on the Continent and leaving Germany as the strongest nation in Europe.

This led to the creation of rival alliances that would eventually clash in World War I.

At the beginning of World War II, Sedan also found itself playing a key role in the struggle between the Allied armies and the German Wehrmacht.

Although World War II started in September 1939, there was initially little military action on the Western Front, where the French and British armies relied on the supposedly impregnable Maginot Line of fortifications along the German border to stop any Nazi attempt at a breakthrough.

But the German high command had adopted a bold new plan of attack, with the main thrust going through the Ardennes Forest in Luxembourg and Belgium.

The Ardennes were lightly defended because the Allies were convinced the hilly, heavily forested terrain could not be crossed by tanks. They left just two second-rate divisions composed of older reservists manning a handful of bunkers in the Sedan sector just past the northern end of the Maginot Line.

Only two days after launching the all-out offensive through the Ardennes on May 10, 1940, Gen. Heinz Guderian’s Panzer corps reached the Meuse river at Sedan with no sign of French opposition. On the morning of the 13th, a bombardment by 1,500 German aircraft paved the way for crossing the Meuse, with Hitler’s elite Grossdeutschland Panzer-Grenadier regiment leading the amphibious operation.

French machine-gunners, dazed by the aerial and artillery pounding, fought back and inflicted heavy casualties on the first wave of boats crossing the river. But they could only delay the inevitable.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31
Within a day, German armor streamed across a pontoon bridge into the heart of France, racing for the coast to encircle Allied forces in Belgium. The fate of France was sealed on May 20, when the German tanks reached the sea near Dunkirk.

The disaster at Sedan and the inability of the British and French allies to stop the German blitzkrieg set the course of WWII, until the eventual Allied invasions and liberation of Europe.

Today, the L’Esperance textile mill on the right bank of the Meuse, which Guderian used to mask preparations for the amphibious assault, is closed and abandoned.

On the left bank, the remains of the French bunkers are hidden in the thick undergrowth along a winding bike path just west of the city’s Pont Neuf bridge. A plaque explains the tactical situation during the decisive battle in English, French and German.

Another interesting site worth visiting is the village of Stonne, on a hill about 15 miles south of Sedan. There, French tanks attempted to regain the initiative during a three-day battle in which the village changed hands 17 times, with the Germans suffering heavy casualties.

Although the little Maginot Line fortification of La Ferte, about 12 miles south of Sedan, was not directly involved in any world-shaking events, no battlefield tour of the area would be complete without a visit.

The fort, the smallest and weakest, located at the end of the fortified line, was an afterthought built in the late 1930s to cover the border with Luxembourg and Belgium. Left without artillery support from the other fortifications in May 1940, it was encircled and its fighting blocks were badly damaged. The entire 105-man garrison perished from carbon monoxide poisoning after they took shelter in a passageway deep beneath the ground.

The site is preserved as it was in 1940 and includes a memorial, small museum and a small cemetery where the defenders are buried. Unlike most Maginot Line forts, which were stripped by the Germans of most weapons and steel fittings later in the war, La Ferte was preserved during the occupation and shown off to foreign visitors to highlight the power of the German army.

Finally, a visit to the area must include a stop at the Chateau de Sedan, Europe’s largest medieval fortress. Towering above the center of town, the immense structure features a large museum with lifelike dioramas depicting the lives of the lords of the manor during the Middle Ages, along with ordinary folks and soldiers. A tour of the battlements offers excellent views of the area. There is also a section dedicated to the Franco-Prussian War, the only one in the immediate area dealing with 1870, with paintings of the key events.

The fortress also contains an excellent 4-star hotel for those wanting to spend a night or two in Sedan. A former barracks and warehouse, it was remodeled retaining some of the old walls and other features of the former building.
Education is fun at the South Korea’s Gwacheon National Science Museum

By Matthew Keeler
Stars and Stripes

Tell the kids you’re taking them to spend a day at a museum and, if they are anything like mine, they will probably wish they had get-out-of-jail-free cards in their back pockets. However, the Gwacheon National Science Museum in Seoul turned out to be so much more than just a leisurely stroll through countless halls past endless placards and countless relics.

Located just south of the Han River, the two-story complex features 10 themed halls and hundreds of exhibits that take visitors back to the formation of the galaxy and into the future.

Along this journey, visitors can explore all areas of natural science and understand the scientific principles that are hidden in our daily lives.

The Basic Science Hall is a great place for parents to introduce young minds to basic principles and theories of natural science using their eyes, ears, hands and body. It consists of 110 exhibits that dabble in physics, chemistry, biology and earth science.

Among them are more than 70 hands-on exhibits that encourage interaction, especially the earthquake and typhoon simulators. Expect to get soaked in the typhoon experience, but, thankfully, full-body rain suits are available.

The centerpiece of this hall is a Tesla coil that generates 4 million volts. Each hour, a staff member will give a very brief lesson for visitors. Although the lesson is in Korean, hang around for the finale as the coil discharges its enormous energy out to surrounding rods that act as grounds.

So much time could be spent in the basic hall, but don’t neglect the other areas, such as the Natural History Hall. Here, you will be transported through the birth and evolution of the universe and life itself.

On display is a 90 percent authentic fossil of an Edmontosaurus dinosaur as well as additional skeletal structures of dinosaurs and mammals from the same period.

There is so much to see and do, including eight more exhibit halls in the main building alone.

Visiting a museum of this magnitude could be exhausting not just for the mind, but also the body. Fortunately, a food court offers Korean-style rice and noodle meals, hamburgers and a selection of frozen sweets and candy for that additional energy pop.

Outside the main hall, visitors will find a dinosaur park, a planetarium, a full-sized South Korean Naro-1 rocket and an insectarium.

If the kids like all things icky, be sure to visit this exhibit, which features beetles, worms, bees, spiders and more. One exhibit allows you to place your arm into a swarm of bees. Apparently, they don’t have sting- ers, but I wasn’t willing to test that.

The show inside the planetarium included a tour of the constellations within our galaxy, although the presentation is in Korean, as are all the museum shows.

At just 4,000 won (about $3.50) per adult and 2,000 won per school-age child, this museum is an absolute educational family fun day.

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ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS
By train, take the No. 1 line to Geumjeong Station and transfer to the No. 4 line to Seoul Grand Park. Take exit 6 at the station.

TIMES
9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Sunday to Saturday; closed Mondays, Jan. 1, Lunar New Year and the Chuseok holiday.

COSTS
4,000 won for adults; 2,000 won for children ages 7-19; free for kids younger than 6.

FOOD
A food court is available on the second floor with Korean-style rice and noodle meals, and a hamburger stand. Outside is a lounge that offers fresh sandwiches.

INFORMATION
Phone: 02-3677-150
Online: sciencecenter.go.kr/scipia/?lang=en

— Matthew Keeler
LUCY'S homemade lemonade, Marcie's waffle chicken and chocolate brownies named after Charlie Brown. Every menu item, every decoration and even the paper napkins at the Peanuts Diner adhere to the “Peanuts” theme.

The restaurant, at the waterfront shopping area in Yokohama, opened two years ago and was inspired by the comic strip made famous by Charles Schulz. At the entrance, a drawing of Snoopy standing on his doghouse wearing his feeding bowl on his head welcomes customers. Next to the entrance is a souvenir shop that sells such items as cookies with various Peanuts characters printed on them, or plates and bowls bearing Snoopy’s image.

The restaurant has large windows that allow in lots of sunlight. Its decor was modeled after a beachside diner in California, where Schulz the cartoonist lived and worked.

When I went there on a weekday for lunch, the restaurant was half-full of young couples, mothers and their small children. The kids were posing in front of large paper panels that had figures of Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus and Snoopy’s red doghouse.

“Peanuts” comic strips are drawn on the restaurant walls and shelves are filled with old “Peanuts” toys.

The theme is repeated throughout the restaurant. You can find the “Peanuts” characters under the glass tabletops on the buffet table or on coasters and forks. Even the light cover hanging from the ceiling had a zigzag line drawn just like the one on Charlie Brown’s shirt.

The lunch menu consists of a handful of dishes, including several types of ham-burg steak (a Japanese dish of a ground beef patty covered with a demi-glace sauce), pasta and soup.

The meals are named after the “Peanuts” characters. Marcie’s waffle chicken is fried chicken served over a waffle with maple syrup sauce.

Joe Preppy’s bread bowl clam chowder was named after Snoopy, who took on various personas in the comic strip, including the Red Baron, Joe Cool and Joe Preppy. The classic soup dish suits Joe Preppy, who dressed in a classic jacket.

For an additional fee, diners who order a main dish may add a trip to the Peanuts Gang’s Slider Bar, which is a buffet that includes salad, small burgers, appetizers, fries, drinks and dessert.

Children can order just the buffet for 800 yen (about $7.40), and children 3 and under younger can get the buffet free. Adults may order just the buffet 5-9 p.m. for 1,500 yen (about $13.80).

My children and I ordered the Supper-time Tomato and Green Pepper Hamburg Steak (1,550 yen and 2,550 yen with slider bar) and Spike’s chili con carne casserole (1,450 yen and 2,450 yen with slider bar).

The hamburg steak was tasty and came with rice and french fries served in a warm miniature frying pan.

The chili con carne casserole was what I imagined, chili served over penne and then baked with cheese on top. But the chili in the casserole had chickpeas with kidney beans and a strong, fresh tomato taste rather than a chili taste. The crispy cheese with breadcrumbs on top of the casserole was very good.

The slider bar consisted of various dishes, such as miniature burgers, french fries, corn dogs, corn with Cajun sauce and coleslaw. The burger had mashed pumpkin and pulled pork sandwiched between buns. I enjoyed the dessert-like burgers with peanut butter and jelly or chocolate and banana. The buffet also had fresh fruits and a white chocolate fountain, in which you may dip marshmallows or pretzels.

The lunch menu also had various desserts and drinks. Desserts included a chocolate brownie sundae and apple pie served with vanilla ice cream. Milkshakes and homemade lemonade are also available. We were too full to try any of the desserts or drinks, but all of the pictures on the menu looked delicious.

We arrived in the later hours of lunch time, so the restaurant staff was slow to refill some of the plates at the buffet table and the servers did not come to pick up empty plates from our table.

It seemed like you could be seated for lunch without a reservation, but the restaurant staff recommended that customers make reservations for weekend lunch and dinner. You can make a reservation through the restaurant website.

The Peanuts Diner had very relaxing atmosphere and my children enjoyed looking for the “Peanuts” characters throughout the restaurant. If you like the comic strip, it is definitely an enjoyable place to go.
For most of us, the accepted norm for an elevator ride is this: Get in and position yourself as far from others as possible, face forward, be still, stand up straight and stare silently at the door, or your cellphone, until you get to your floor. Is that really how it should be?

The maker of the world’s first sideways elevator thinks not. ThyssenKrupp Elevator has issued a challenge to us all: Start talking.

Seven billion elevator trips happen every day, according to a survey by the company, and two-thirds of the people surveyed said they preferred that over talking to a stranger. An elevator ride can “create shared experiences that go some way to eliminating this loneliness that people may feel in a built-up environment,” ThyssenKrupp said in a statement.

But not every elevator manufacturer wants their product to become a venue for chitchat. Mowrey Elevator offers a guide to elevator etiquette with advice on when it’s OK to talk.

“Elevators are a different kind of animal. It’s not a one-size-fits-all situation,” she said. The atmosphere in an elevator may depend on the building it’s serving. Is it an office, a restaurant, a sports stadium, a hospital? The mood in each may be different, she said. In each case, it’s important to “read your environment,” Gilbert said.

It’s ultimately the awareness of others, and their needs, that contributes the most to the well-being of both the person who is willing to strike up a conversation in a small space and the person they talk to.

Cortney Anderson-Sanford, an etiquette expert who splits her time between Seattle and Baltimore County, Md., warns us not to let our protective bubbles get too big.

“When I teach my classes, I really get into the fact that we are an isolated society and have lost the ability for polite and meaningful conversation,” Anderson-Sanford said.

She tells people who are willing to open up to the world to make eye contact, smile, hold their head and shoulders up and to put their devices away.

“You don’t have to have a big, cheesy, Joker look on your face,” she said, “But you never know who you will smile at that needs an uplift.”

A landmark study of Chicago commuters by Nicholas Epley and Juliana Schroeder found that people were overwhelmingly mistaken when they believed they preferred silence and isolation to an interaction with a stranger.

“To examine the experience of connecting to strangers, we instructed commuters on trains and buses to connect with a stranger near them, to remain disconnected, or to commute as normal,” the authors wrote in a paper.

“In both contexts, participants reported a more positive (and no less productive) experience when they connected than when they did not. Separate participants in each context, however, expected precisely the opposite outcome, predicting a more positive experience in solitude. This mistaken preference for solitude stems partly from underestimating others’ interest in connecting, which in turn keeps people from learning the actual consequences of social interaction.”

Shawn Horn, a Spokane, Wash.-based psychologist who specializes in shame, said some of the reasons behind our closed and wary behavioral norms around elevator use may have biological and neurological roots.

“We are bio-neurologically hard-wired to survive,” she said. “The elevator is an intimate, closed container with no escape, and if you are stuck with someone you don’t want to talk to and you can’t leave, it does not feel safe. We’re vulnerable and may go into a protective position, standing face-forward, waiting.’’

It’s one thing to enjoy a moment of quiet mindfulness on an elevator, she says, but if you’re shutting down because you’re worried people might judge you for talking to them, that limits your opportunities to connect with people.

An elevator ride can “create shared experiences that go some way to eliminating this loneliness that people may feel in a built-up environment,” ThyssenKrupp said in a statement.

But not every elevator manufacturer wants their product to become a venue for chitchat. Mowrey Elevator offers a guide to elevator etiquette with advice on when it’s OK to talk.

“While exchanging quick pleasantries with other passengers is considered well within the range of good elevator etiquette, striking up awkward conversations with strangers or carrying on conversations with your friends in a loud manner is not OK,” the company writes.

And if you’re having a conversation with someone before you get on the elevator? Put it on pause until you’re out of “the sanctity of an elevator car,” Mowrey advises: When the doors shut, so should your mouths.

Renee Gilbert, a Bellevue, Wash.-based clinical psychologist, said that while it’s true that casual, friendly encounters on an elevator can have benefits for the participants, elevators can be tricky.

“Elevators are a different kind of animal. It’s not a one-size-fits-all situation,” she said. The atmosphere in an elevator may depend on the building it’s serving. Is it an office, a restaurant, a sports stadium, a hospital? The mood in each may be different, she said. In each case, it’s important to “read your environment,” Gilbert said.

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Cortney Anderson-Sanford, an etiquette expert who splits her time between Seattle and Baltimore County, Md., warns us not to let our protective bubbles get too big.

“When I teach my classes, I really get into the fact that we are an isolated society and have lost the ability for polite and meaningful conversation,” Anderson-Sanford said.

She tells people who are willing to open up to the world to make eye contact, smile, hold their head and shoulders up and to put their devices away.

“You don’t have to have a big, cheesy, Joker look on your face,” she said, “But you never know who you will smile at that needs an uplift.”

Research from ThyssenKrupp Elevator found that 66% of people riding in elevators around the world — 7 billion elevator trips every day — do not speak to each other while in the elevator.
The way of the sword

Ancient art of Kendo emphasizes harmony of weapon, body and mind

BY ALAN BERNER
The Seattle Times

There is no trash-talking in kendo. But there is intimidation — even through the metal grille of the helmet, called a men. The opponent can see the eyes, very well. And body posture establishes a presence.

Kendo means “the way of the sword” and has evolved from the days of the samurai warrior. In kendo, trash-talking would be considered disrespectful not just to the opponent, but to this centuries-old Japanese martial art.

The purpose of the sport is vigorous, disciplined training, along with honor, courtesy and respect. Those goals could seem at odds in a contact sport. But Seattle Kendo Kai lays it out simply and directly on its website: “Manners are paramount. Without etiquette and respect, we are just a bunch of people hitting each other with sticks.”

“Kendo teaches you how to live and do your best,” says Haruka Takano, 61, who adds that he has no pain because the sport keeps him young and free of stress. “If you tried your best, you succeeded.”

Takano, who arrived early to begin practicing strikes with a dummy called the uchikomi dai, says, “Apply yourself, concentrate — hitting is cathartic.”

Seattle Kendo Kai holds practices in St. Peter’s Episcopal Church gym on South King Street near the Chinatown International District two or three times a week, with sessions running at least 90 minutes (Sunday practices are 2½ hours). The gym is old-school, the precursor of a multipurpose auditorium. There’s a modestly lit basketball court with just a few feet of space beyond the nets. A raised stage is on one end. There’s a spectator area on another side, also raised, for at most 20 or so visitors.

Practice is not a casual visit to a fitness center with high-decibel music and a treadmill session. It’s quiet, and many people briefly meditate, maybe just 10 seconds, bowing to the banner on the stage. Students and sensei bow to one another. Announcements are made.

And they begin: swinging arms, and working on posture and breathing. Then running in a counterclockwise direction. Then sparring, emphasized with shouts called the kiai. This is to concentrate the mind, the body and the sword during a strike.

Swords here are actually four pieces of bamboo bound together with leather. One is called a shinai, and is less dangerous than a metal or solid wood sword.

Harry Goh, both teacher and student, says, despite all the sword strikes, “This is mental martial arts, rather than physical. The physical aspect is necessary to know how to control an opponent.”

Goh, 58, has three decades of experience with kendo but says, “I’m still a student. I still have to learn more.” He has learned to induce an opponent to attack by speaking with his posture. But, when his opponent lunges, he responds and is able to strike first.

Opponents are not separated by size, height, weight or age. Most of the participants are men, but there are several women at each session.

“There’s a consistency of character in kendo. Youth and fitness give way to experience and wisdom,” says Michael Mabale, 44. “There’s a mirror in front of you — a mirror of your own strengths and weaknesses. The goal is that each person get better. You try to elevate each other.”
The summer megahit “Old Town Road” set a record last week for longest-running No. 1 song after 17 weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 list. But the “country trap” tune, with its southern twangs and cowboy imagery, didn’t have the same influence on the country music chart, from which it was dropped earlier this year.

Billboard asserted that the song, by black rapper Lil Nas X, “does not embrace enough elements of today’s country music.” But today’s country music, critics say, has lost sight of its history, rooted in black instruments and traditions. Singer-songwriter Valerie June said that “Old Town Road” is just one of many tracks that call back to black Americans’ involvement in early country music.

“You do know the banjo is an African instrument, right?” June said she often tells people.

Dr. Dina Bennett, senior curator at the National Museum of African American Music in Nashville, said country music can trace its roots back to 17th-century slave ships, where captors made Africans bring instruments from their homeland. The akonting, an early folk lute version of the American banjo, came from West Africa, for instance.

“They would have them perform and play the instruments...to exercise them,” Bennett said. “That was called ‘dancing the slaves.’”

Later, these instruments would be used to entertain in slave masters’ homes, at dances and at other events. Enslaved people also performed privately for each other. An archival recording from the 1920s shows Uncle John Scruggs, born into slavery in 1855, playing the banjo next to a sharecropper shack.

“So how did country music become a genre associated with white people?” Bennett said. “African Americans recorded music that marketers put a label on, and they would call that race music.”

Blues, jazz, and gospel were categorized as “race records” while “hillbilly” music was made by white people, who assumed the title of country music’s early stars.

One prominent black country singer, Charley Pride, was very popular in the 1970s, but was marketed in a very specific way.

“When he first started out, they did not reveal or print anything with his face on it, so most people didn’t even know he was African American,” Bennett said. “And they didn’t want him to record any love songs. We can’t have him singing to these blond-haired, blue-eyed chicks out here.”

Bennett also said that people, both black and white, seem to have forgotten that the black experience is rooted in rural culture, where country music comes from. Her own family still wears cowboy boots and hats, works on a farm and lives the country life.

June is frustrated that many black Americans have forgotten that history because the music industry erased it. But she believes that’s slowly change as her audience has become more racially diverse.

“White people are the ones that are buying the tickets to come see my shows,” June said. “There’s just starting to be a beautiful group of very magical black people that are actually following and coming out to my shows, and it’s exciting.”
WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

The Bird and the Bee
Interpreting the Masters, Volume 2: A Tribute to Van Halen
(No Expectations/Release Me Records)

An album of Van Halen covers without guitars. Wait, what?
Singer Inara George and producer-keyboardist Greg Kurstin, who make up The Bird and the Bee, carry off the intriguing concept with plenty of fun, grace and aplomb, focusing mostly on Van Halen’s debut album and some of the band’s other big hits from the David Lee Roth era, as well as a fresh take on their own homage to the spandex-clad vocalist.

Opener “Runnin’ With the Devil” is elevated by George’s multi-tracked vocals on the refrain — a reminder of the greatness of ex-Van Halen bassist Michael Anthony’s backing vocals — and a just-right combination of the original’s stomp with a lighter touch. “Panama” gets a dancefloor makeover and what sounds like a solo of tuned bottles.

Kurstin, a seven-time Grammy-winning producer who has worked with everyone from Adele to Sia to Beck, has a wild piano solo on “Hot for Teacher,” which features a spoken-word cameo by Beck. That leads right into “Eruption,” where Kurstin turns Eddie Van Halen’s flurry of notes into a quasi-classical piano piece.

The thing is, Childers seems almost incapable of writing anything trite. So whether he’s singing a loving tribute to his used camper, as he does in the title song, or tracing the school bus route of his youth on “Bus Route,” it’s clear he’s not following any path but his own.

That’s how it is with an artist who’s so already established that he’s far more likely to lead. And make no mistake, his path is winding out of the eastern Kentucky hills.

— Pablo Gorondi
Associated Press

Tyler Childers
Country Squire (Hickman Holler/RCA)
The list of country artists making groundbreaking music these days isn’t as long as it should be, but it has to include Tyler Childers. And he’s at it again on “Country Squire,” a worthy successor to the breakthrough “Purgatory.” That album, which appeared on a lot of 2017 “best of” lists, was so firmly set in Kentucky that you could breathe the fumes from the coal trucks.

The new record rises from the same Appalachian roots. And the fact that Childers keeps doing things his way, experimenting fearlessly with influences that feel like they were born in him, makes this as good as anything coming out of Nashville these days.

“Country Squire” was produced by Sturgill Simpson and David Ferguson, the same duo Childers worked with on the earlier album. The sound takes traditional Appalachian instruments — and it’s the fiddle-playing and Childers’ plaintive singing that plant this album most firmly in the mountains — and amps them up in unexpected ways.

The thing is, Childers seems almost incapable of writing anything trite. So whether he’s singing a loving tribute to his used camper, as he does in the title song, or tracing the school bus route of his youth on “Bus Route,” it’s clear he’s not following any path but his own.

That’s how it is with an artist who’s so already established that he’s far more likely to lead. And make no mistake, his path is winding out of the eastern Kentucky hills.

— Scott Stroud
Associated Press
Bushnell’s new book looks at midlife dating

By JANCEE DUNN
Special to The Washington Post

I t takes a minute to sink in that “Sex and the City,” the debut book from 21-year-old Candace Bushnell that spawned the HBO hit series and two movies, was published in 1996 — nearly a quarter century ago. Based on a series of columns she wrote for the New York Observer, the book was a frothy, decadent take on being a young single woman in New York City. Conceived just before the Internet had really started, it dealt with the artists whose dreams were about to be crushed, or who were trying to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, or who had already found their great moment together in their lives, bringing an end to all of them. Now she has returned to where it all began — and a dating scene that has undergone as many changes as possible — “Is There Still Sex in the City?”

This time around, she is wary and bruised. By the time you reach middle age, she writes, “some real stuff has happened to you.” In Bushnell’s case, divorce from a ballet dancer she married in 2002 and the death of her mother, Vivian, who was never meant to be “man-free,” she flees urban life to her second home in the country. But as she approaches 60, she misses the pulsing excitement — and men — of New York City.

And so, four years after I’d left, I returned to my old stomping grounds. As I entered the swanky, middle-aged, single white woman doing a sensible SUV with two large standard poodles in the back, I had to ask myself a peski- some question. Is there still sex in the city?"

As with SATC’s “toy boys” and “modelizers,” there’s a new tax: “singles with money problems.”

The pursuit of older women by younger men, or the middle-aged madman, a late-onset midlife crisis for women. She also updates a chapter on “bicycle boys” — then, the charmingly rumpled literary types on vintage bikes, now wealthy guys in Lycra.

Because so much of contemporary dating begins online, Bushnell secures a magazine assignment to document her first foray onto Tinder. For research, Bushnell assembles a group of “Tinderellas” in their 20s and early 30s to fill her in. Their feedback is grim. All the guys on Tinder, one tells her, take prescription drugs. “They’re like: ‘The reason I can’t text you back is because of ADD.’ ”

But Bushnell gameously goes on a Tinder date with 31-year-old Jude, the first guy she met online (online dating was in its infancy when “Sex” was published). It’s pleasant enough, but the next time around he stands her up after a dinner. Jude scoffs. What are those? One woman describes a typical outing, in which a man messaged her to meet him at a restaurant at 8 p.m. “It turned out he was interested to meet at the restaurant to pee, and then we went to a Starbucks where we didn’t even get a coffee,” she says. Finale: “We get kicked out.”

In Bushnell’s case, divorce makes her feel child-free, wonders who will take care of her eventual funeral expenses. At another, the New York City woman who is an unabashed Tomboy. Middle-aged drumbeat of terror — it’s all downhill from here! — was pulsing in my head, she writes. “I was convinced that nothing good would ever happen again, that age was about to take away all of life’s excitments and pleasures.

This dread of irrelevance is worth exploring in greater depth. Instead, she backs away and pivots to a story — a plodding 17-page story about being hoodwinked into buying $4,000 face cream. It’s a missed opportunity, one of several in the book.

‘The Chelsea Girls’
Fiona Davis

Best friends Hazel and Maxine met during World War II. Both were USO actresses in Italy. Set during World War II, set in a time when America was plunged into darkness as the stress of looming layoffs after the war began to set in. Hazel and Maxine meet during a team-building session. They will be summoned on a Friday night to a compulsory meeting.

‘The Escape Room’
Megan Goldin

Investment bankers Vincent, Julie, Sylvie and Sam work long hours for the Wall Street firm of Santander, sacrificing personal time and relationships for their jobs. They are committed to a “long-term experience” with their boyfriends, but their relationship’s foundation is vulnerable.

‘The Helpline’
Katherine Collette

When she loses her job at an insurance company, Germaine is forced to take whatever position she’s offered. Not many mathematicians have answered calls at the Senior Citizens Helpline, but Germaine is determined to make her mark at City Hall.

‘The Russian’
Ben Coes

When two American politicians are assassinated by the Russian mafia, the sitting U.S. president whips out a super-secret codicil to the U.S. Constitution authorizing him to ignore the laws of the land. His plan: create a clandestine hit squad to hunt down and kill those responsible.

The Chelsea Hotel, a place she knew as a child, is now a run-down slum. Hazel is poised to open that door. But instead of the billionaire who inhabits the penthouse, she finds a drug dealer, a hit man, and a Russian mafioso, the sitting U.S. president, all of whom are looking for her special project.

The oppressive elevator delivers a pinched, narrow mirror. He now spends his days in a hospital bed after a drug overdose lands him in the hospital. Hazel is poised to open that door. But instead of the billionaire who inhabits the penthouse, she finds a drug dealer, a hit man, and a Russian mafioso, the sitting U.S. president, all of whom are looking for her special project.

‘The Deep Dive’
Chris Knopf

Sam Acquillo’s past lives as a professional boxer, negligent husband and corporate engineer have long been in his rearview mirror. He now spends his days as a professional boxer, negligent husband and corporate engineer have long been in his rearview mirror. He now spends his days working as a corporate engineer. And he has a wife and kids. But his past as a boxer haunts him. The oppressive elevator delivers a pinched, narrow mirror. He now spends his days in a hospital bed after a drug overdose lands him in the hospital.

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His characters are stereotypes, and often cartoonish. Some of his action sequences are so confusing that it’s hard to figure out what’s going on.

Friday, August 9, 2019
“Plus One”: It’s been a long time since two actors have brought so much energy and life to the romantic comedy genre as delivered by Jack Quaid and Maya Erskine in “Plus One.” They play two close friends, Ben and Alice, who spend every weekend attending the nuptials for a friend or family member. The endless stream of invites pushes the pair to an act of emotional desperation where they finally agree to be each other’s plus-one to help get through wedding day blues.

The film from writers/directors Jeff Chan and Andrew Rhymer could have used a little more satire and wit in terms of the weddings. Most of the situations in which Ben and Alice find themselves fall along normal lines. That’s not a major problem, as the weddings do not end up being too far removed from the film’s heart and soul. It still would have been nice if at least one or two of the ceremonies went to some extremes.

The wedding of strong actors with a solid script is what makes “Plus One” worthy.

**NEW ON DVD**

**“The Curse of La Llorona”:** In 1973, Los Angeles social worker Anna Tate-Garcia (Linda Cardellini) finds herself dealing with a mother (Patricia Velasquez) who has turned her home into a fortress and locked her son in a closet. The social worker sees it as abuse, but the real reason is to keep La Llorona from taking her children.

Director Michael Chaves shows his lack of original thinking with every shot. Young horror film directors tend to fall into a monotonous pattern when trying to set up scares. The tendency is to have someone stand with their back to a dark space. The first time the camera turns toward the actor, there is nothing. The second time, also nothing. It is on that third time that the sound gets cranked up and the creature leaps out of the darkness.

This predictability is like a stake in the heart of a zombie. It is a killer.

What keeps the movie from falling apart is the casting of Linda Cardellini and Raymond Cruz. They are dealing with an uninspired script and a director who needed a few more projects under his belt, but they both turn in believable performances.


On a sunny summer day in the United Kingdom, cast and crew can be found inside a studio—sprinkled with snow. It’s the seasonal disorder of television shows and films. It’s been a long time since two actors have brought so much energy and life to the romantic comedy genre as delivered by Jack Quaid and Maya Erskine in “Plus One.” They play two close friends, Ben and Alice, who spend every weekend attending the nuptials for a friend or family member. The endless stream of invites pushes the pair to an act of emotional desperation where they finally agree to be each other’s plus-one to help get through wedding day blues.

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The wedding of strong actors with a solid script is what makes “Plus One” worthy.

**ENDLESS FESTIVE TV FARE**

Endless festive TV fare in December requires crews to stay as busy as elves in summer

By Hilary Fox

On a sunny summer day in the United Kingdom, cast and crew can be found inside a studio—sprinkled with snow. It’s the seasonal disorder of television shows and films. In order to order endless winter holiday fare, productions must create Christmas in July. But with the record-breaking temperatures this year in Europe, wearing heavy Victorian-era winter garb and appearing festive takes perseverance and a bit of ingenuity. Here’s a look at how some pull it off.

On the set of the joint FX/BBC “A Christmas Carol,” a London street has been decorated with snowflakes to provide a Victorian winter feel. The Charles Dickens’ reinterpretation will be a TV miniseries.

Guy Pearce stars as Ebenezer Scrooge, and along with Andy Serkis, Stephen Graham, Charlotte Riley and Joe Alwyn are all wrapped up in layers of hand-sewn period costume.

There’s no compromise to the hot temperatures outside the studio when it comes to making the scenes look accurate on screen, costume designer Joanna Eatwell said. They just have to sweat.

“If you have period costumes, it’s incredibly heavy,” Eatwell said. “Guy, I mean gosh, he’s in every single scene and every single day,” and he has started coming up with clever ways to beat the heat.

One of Pearce’s cool tricks involves identifying when he can wear sandals with his winter woolens, if he keeps his summer footwear just out of the shot. The cold-weather mood doesn’t let up when it’s time to eat. For one of the final production days, the catering team provided a Christmas-type lunch with turkey, stuffing, roast vegetables and pigs in blankets with gravy.

A Victorian-theme winery Netflix original film starring Forest Whitaker is also in production in the U.K.

“Jingle Jangle” is a magical tale about a toymaker set in the imaginary town of Cobbleton. The cast includes Keegan-Michael Key, Hugh Bonneville, Patricia Rashad and Anika Noni Rose.

The cast has to sing and dance as well as get into the Christmas spirit, all during record-breaking summer temperatures.

There’s been heat, but there also have been blizzards — more precisely, “vans and vans” bringing the fake snow to the set that gets everywhere, producer Lyn Sisson-Talbert said.

“All I know is that shower at night was amazing because it’s everywhere, it’s in your ears, it’s in your hair and when you have afro hair like mine it sticks. That’s not a five-minute shower, it’s an all-night ordeal,” she laughs.

The film requires the cast to dance in the heat and deal with their 19th-century outfits. How do they do that? “Very carefully,” Sisson-Talbert said, adding “you definitely don’t want to be smelling that costume afterwards.”

“Jingle Jangle” is expected to hit screens in 2020.

“The Great American Baking Show: Holiday Edition” was filmed at Pine- wood Studios in Buckinghamshire during a heat wave last summer.

While the tent was decorated with baubles, snowflakes, fir trees and fairy lights, contestants had to sweat it out to craft warm winter treats like fruitcakes, gingerbread and Santa Claus-themed 3D bread showstoppers.

And when they weren’t in the hot tent filled with working ovens, the judges and presenters — Emma Bunton, Anthony “Spice” Adams, Paul Hollywood and Sherry Yard — were sheltering outside under the shade of trees. Small hand-held battery-operated fans were a must-have accessory.

The tents were intense, Adams said.

“You’re in a whole new different environment and you’re cooking outside. So, it could be humid one day, it could be raining, it could be sunshine, you don’t know; you have to make the adjustment.”
Mind your step

While fitness trackers are helpful, the 10,000 daily goal is overblown

BY BRUCE HOROVITZ
Special to The Washington Post

When Sonia Anderson got her first Fitbit step tracker, her poor pooch, Bronx, had no idea of all the steps that were coming. The device — which counts every step Anderson takes and displays those steps on an app — was a Christmas gift from her daughters two years ago.

At the time, Bronx, a Yorkshire terrier, was younger and could still manage the additional walks up and down the trails along the sprawling apartment complex in Alexandria, Va., where Anderson lives. Anderson was on a mission to clock 10,000 steps a day.

More recently, as Bronx hit age 13, the dog started coming to dead stops during these long treks as if to ask: What’s going on here? Like many other folks 50 and older, the 63-year-old Anderson has been commandeered by the step-tracker craze that began about a decade ago, and her dog is an unwilling victim.

Anderson has bought into the $26 billion global step tracker industry and matches her daily count with her Fitbit-wearing friend, Landy Sorensen, 43. The two women have become inseparable Fitbit fanatics and competitors at the Arlington Food Assistance Center, where they amass additional steps every Friday morning while volunteering in the food bank. Now, they diligently count each other’s steps on their cellphone apps in real time — and compete to record just one more step than the other.

“My Fitbit made me a friend I’d have never had,” Anderson said.

It might also help her live longer, according to a recent Harvard University study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. The study concluded that among older women, as few as 4,400 steps per day helped to lower mortality rates. With more steps per day, mortality rates decreased before leveling off at 7,500 steps, the study found.

In other words, the magic marketing number of 10,000 daily steps embraced by so many wearers of these devices — from Fitbits to Garmins to Samsungs to Apple Watches — may be about 2,500 steps more than necessary.

Truth be told, even the woman behind the study — who conceded that she, too, is enamored of her tracker — can’t say how many steps are the right number for each walker.

“No one size fits all,” said I-Min Lee, an associate epidemiologist at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston and a professor at Harvard Medical School.

But no matter how many steps you take, merely wearing and using a fitness tracker — particularly for older women, older men and other people who tend to be somewhat inactive — “can be beneficial not only to your health but to your quality of life,” Lee said.

Of course, some folks go over the top with their trackers — and proudly post their more unusual stats on social media sites such as Reddit. Like the vegan fitness buff who posted a video about logging 50,000 steps a day for five days. And the warehouse worker who said that he slogged 20,000 steps a day on the job. And there’s also the guy who credits his Fitbit for helping him slim his 40-inch waist to a svelte 34 inches.

“Clocking miles is even popular with workers who are on the clock. The C-SPAN network, for instance, ran a month-long walking challenge sponsored by its health insurance plan, Cigna. The step competition among C-SPAN departments, which ended July 3, totaled nearly 23 million steps walked by 74 participants from 12 teams, or about an average of 9,966 steps per day per person, spokesperson Howard Mortman said. More specifically, he said, that’s a total 1,028,805 calories burned — and 294 pounds lost. (For the record, the cable network’s digital media team won.)

For Anderson and Sorensen, fitness tracking has created a special bond — and a way to keep close tabs on each other. Like the day when Sorensen noticed that Anderson had suddenly doubled her step output. She immediately texted her and discovered that Anderson was on a European vacation and that her sightseeing had doubled her daily count. Another time, when Anderson noticed that Sorensen had barely logged 2,000 steps, she sent a concerned text asking: “Are you OK?”

Sorensen averages about 15,000 steps daily — roughly between five and seven miles — and often tucks her early generation Fitbit into a specially designed gold bracelet, so folks can’t even see she’s wearing one. When she wears this bracelet to formal affairs, no one suspects she’s tracking her footwork, she said.

Harvard’s Lee said she first got interested in wearable devices five years ago during a workplace program that promoted healthy lifestyles for doctors. Lee received a free device — whose familiar brand name she prefers not to publicize — and was asked to form a team of walkers. Lee, 59, is hesitant to discuss her step count because she believes the sheer act of regularly exercising is far more important than the sum total of steps. But after some coaxing she said she averages about 15,000 steps per day.

Studies show that 150 minutes of moderate activity, such as walking, can lower the risk of heart disease and stroke, improve sleep, help reduce weight gain and improve bone health.

“Perhaps no one knows that better than Tom Holland,” he said.

He’s an exercise physiologist and sports nutritionist who has regularly appeared on “Good Morning America” as a fitness coach. He also has worked as a personal trainer with thousands of clients — many of whom use step trackers. He’s a huge fan of fitness trackers because they get people moving.

“The fitness tracker is the first step to getting people off the couch,” he said. At the same time, he is put off by the much-ballyhooed 10,000-step daily goal, which he said is arbitrary.

“We need real numbers to shoot for,” he said. Holland prefers recommending smaller amounts of exercise — not big feats such as 10,000 steps. “I’m a big believer in excessive moderation. Don’t do a lot a little bit — do a little bit a lot.”

Unless, of course, it involves himself.

Like the 70,000, or so, steps he clocked in a recent 50-kilometer trail run. Because Holland also is a triathlete, he not only uses a Fitbit from time to time but also sometimes slips on “smart” sunglasses or T-shirts that shorts that track fitness data. Most often, however, he wears a Garmin fitness tracker that measures his steps, his sleeping habits and his heart rate.

“I’m not an addict,” he said jokingly, “but if you see me passed out on the side of the road, check my tracker, please.”
Reading like a girl

Study suggests new explanation for gender gap in STEM fields

By Stephanie De Marco
Los Angeles Times

W

y don’t more girls grow up to become scientists and engineers? It’s not that they’re bad at math, a new study argues. It’s that they’re even better at it, the researchers said. In addition to assessing students’ math, reading and science skills, it asked them about their intent to take advanced courses in each of those subjects in the future. It also asked students how they felt about their math skills.

The researchers found that on the whole, boys had a stronger attraction to math classes than girls did. For instance, the proportion of boys who said they wanted to take more math classes instead of more reading classes was nearly 8 percentage points higher than it was for girls. In addition, the proportion of boys who said they intended to “study harder” in math than in reading was almost 6 percentage points higher than it was for girls.

In just a few countries, including Turkey and Malaysia, the proportion of girls interested in studying math was higher than it was for boys. But in most other countries, boys had the edge over girls — and the gender gap was much bigger. The most extreme example was Switzerland, where 68% of boys and 47% of girls said they were willing to take additional math classes, Napp said.

The researchers wondered whether this difference could be linked to students’ math ability. In other words, are boys simply better at math than girls? Sort of. On both math and reading tests, the average score for boys was about 10 points higher than for girls.

Meanwhile, on the reading test, the average score for girls was about 30 points higher than for boys, the researchers said. In both cases, these differences accounted for less than 10% of the gender gap in math interest.

Then the researchers decided to compare each student’s math skills with his or her reading skills. Here, the gender difference was more stark. In looking across the 64 countries, they saw that 55% of boys were better at math than at reading, and that 74% of girls were better at reading than at math, Breda said.

This difference could explain 78% of the gender gap in students’ intent to take more math classes in the future, the economist found.

The results clearly refute the idea that girls don’t have what it takes to succeed in technical careers, Riegle-Crumb said.

“It’s not that they can’t do math,” she said. “It’s that they have some skills and some interests in fields that are even greater than that.”

The economists also wondered how many of the students who said they intended to study math actually went on to do so. So they questioned about 12,000 15-year-olds from Paris who had taken the PISA survey in 2015. It turned out that about 78% of students who said they intended to pursue advanced math courses did enroll in them the following year.

What’s more, each student’s relative strength in math versus reading was a good predictor of whether they intended to — and ultimately did — enroll in courses that emphasized math.

What the data could not explain was what caused the students to have differences in math and reading ability in the first place.

The old game’s daunting “Day of Reckoning” has now been replaced with an anti-climactic choice between a tornado, jury duty, poison ivy and poor relatives. But if you got rich, there was no shame in rewarding yourself with yachts and trips to Monte Carlo. Simply put, wealth had ample chances to “Spin again if not in the lead.”

But players in The New Game of Life get money for playing The Game of Life, which they had received for Christmas that year. A few minutes later, I heard their banter coming from the dining room.

“Supercar? Nope. Ooh, I got $5,000.”

“Cycle to work.” Ha! I got $10,000!”

“What’s this — ‘Countryside Acres?’ What happened to the Fair Farm? And are these minivans? You get money for that? What’s this?”

I called my mother, who like me is unable to get rid of anything. She found The Game of Life my brother and I used to play and read to me from its faded game board.

“Big day at the races. Collect $80,000.”

“Find Uranium deposit. Collect $100,000.”

“Pay $5,000 for toupee.”

“Buy rolls-Royce. Pay $16,000.”

“Buy racy coat. Pay $500.”

“Approach the Red House. Pay $75.”

“Play $5,000 for toupee.”

“Find Uranium deposit. Collect $100,000.”

“Pay $5,000 for toupee.”

“Buy racy coat. Pay $500.”

“Approach the Red House. Pay $75.”

“Wealth has no meaning in and of itself,” said sociologist Catherine Riegle-Crumb of the University of Texas at Austin, who was not involved in the study.

“When making a (career) decision, it’s about weighing all of those things,” she said. “A lot of past research either hasn’t acknowledged that, or in some cases hasn’t had the data to be able to tease those things out.”

Breda and Napp were able to find that kind of data in a survey called the PISA for International Student Assessment, or PISA. Administered every three years to 15-year-olds in countries from Argentina to Vietnam, PISA catches them before they have to decide which subjects they want to focus on.

The PISA survey administered in 2012 was of particular interest to the economists. In addition to assessing students’ math, reading and science skills, it asked them about their intent to take advanced courses in each of those subjects in the future. It also asked students how they felt about their math skills.

The researchers found that on the whole, boys had a stronger attraction to math classes than girls did. For instance, the proportion of boys who said they wanted to take more math classes instead of more reading classes was nearly 8 percentage points higher than it was for girls. In addition, the proportion of boys who said they intended to “study harder” in math than in reading was almost 6 percentage points higher than it was for girls.

In just a few countries, including Turkey and Malaysia, the proportion of girls interested in studying math was higher than it was for boys. But in most other countries, boys had the edge over girls — and the gender gap was much bigger. The most extreme example was Switzerland, where 68% of boys and 47% of girls said they were willing to take additional math classes, Napp said.

The researchers wondered whether this difference could be linked to students’ math ability. In other words, are boys simply better at math than girls? Sort of. On both math and reading tests, the average score for boys was about 10 points higher than for girls.

Meanwhile, on the reading test, the average score for girls was about 30 points higher than for boys, the researchers said. In both cases, these differences accounted for less than 10% of the gender gap in math interest.

Then the researchers decided to compare each student’s math skills with his or her reading skills. Here, the gender difference was more stark. In looking across the 64 countries, they saw that 55% of boys were better at math than at reading, and that 74% of girls were better at reading than at math, Breda said.

This difference could explain 78% of the gender gap in students’ intent to take more math classes in the future, the economist found.

The results clearly refute the idea that girls don’t have what it takes to succeed in technical careers, Riegle-Crumb said.

“It’s not that they can’t do math,” she said. “It’s that they have some skills and some interests in fields that are even greater than that.”

The economists also wondered how many of the students who said they intended to study math actually went on to do so. So they questioned about 12,000 15-year-olds from Paris who had taken the PISA survey in 2015. It turned out that about 78% of students who said they intended to pursue advanced math courses did enroll in them the following year.

What’s more, each student’s relative strength in math versus reading was a good predictor of whether they intended to — and ultimately did — enroll in courses that emphasized math.

What the data could not explain was what caused the students to have differences in math and reading ability in the first place.
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

ANAGRAMMAR
BY CHRISTOPHER ADAMS / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Christopher Adams, 37, of Iowa City, Iowa, is a crossword constructor for mainstream markets (The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Los Angeles Times and others) and for recirculated indexes — including his own website, where he frequently posts unsolvable puzzles free. In his spare time, he hosts, writes and plays trivia at local bars. — W.S.

ACROSS
1. Menth attractor
6. Rescue site for a polar bear
10. “Hold it right there!”
14. Word with grand or identity
19. Netfix crime drama set in a small town in Missouri
20. “Habalahhabah!”
21. Blacken on the barbecue
22. Bun, prefix
23. Changes, as a hotel snack
24. Aura
27. Wesley family owl in the Harry Potter books
28. “You wish”
30. It’s of the Pyrenees
31. “Give me an example!”
32. Designates for a specific purpose
35. Big things in D.C. and Hollywood
36. Source of the line “A hog of War, a Loaf of Bread” — Shakespeare
37. Real nostalgia trip
40. Mobile
42. Mao ______ (Chinese leader)
43. L.G.B.T. History Mo.
46. Bite-size chocolate candy
47. Home for doves and pigeons
48. Home for herons and egrets
50. “In case you didn’t hear me...”
52. Group on the dark side of the Force
54. “Alien!” in Austria
55. Generally speaking
59. Not only that but also
60. Possum possum
62. Varietal product
63. Eye-catching print pattern
65. Creature slain in the Miles of Media by Gandalf
66. “A Little Night Music” composer
70. Award for technological development since 1995
71. Shed, as feathers
73. Individually
75. Sometimes collaborator with William Shakespeare, per the Oxford University Press
81. Deeper lake in the U.S. after Great Crater Lake
83. Place where musical talent may be wasted?
84. Assembly
87. Burns, in a way
89. Comics debut of 1965
90. Important topic in golf instruction
91. It’s all downhill from here
92. Easy way that might lead to error
99. Priming measurement
100. Dead letters?
101. “It’s all blood, and dirt...”
102. Ethnologic” enjoyment
103. Miss, say
104. Girl’s name that’s also a state abbreviation
105. Some laughable language mistakes — as found literally in crosswords (letters in 24, 37,
55, 75, and 95-Across)
109. Small, rectangular candy
110. Cocktails with gin, vermouth and Campari
112. Gave the pink slip
113. Organism that grows on another plant conceptually
115. Pinning with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame
116. Statistician Silver
117. Dog to beware of
118. Anthropology insets
119. Big 12 college town
120. Bounty hunter shot by Bob Fosse in “Star Wars: A New Hope”

DOWN
1. One-named singer of the 2017 No. 1 album, “Melodrama”
2. Longtime Honolulu model
3. God, with “the”
4. First words
5. Business with perpetually high sales?
6. Glaried-eyed look
7. CFR administrator
8. Malick who won a Best Actor Oscar for “Bohemian Rhapsody”
9. Dimwit
10. Easily split rock
11. Which train goes to Harlem, in song
12. Something to dip in the water
13. Wedding agreement
14. Title movie role for Jon Cryer
15. “I’m not what you’re looking for!”
16. Jane Eyron’s son
17. Skark’s love
18. “For rent” sign
25. Beehive State bloomer
26. Occasion for a high school after-party
28. “...or...”
30. Org. in a 1976 sports merger
32. Be on the court for tipoff, say
33. Precis
34. Brazilian-Island base
35. Mythic
36. Drink stirred with a spoon, a Kind of alcohol used as biofuel
37. It breaks the Soez Canal
38. Premium movie channel
39. “I like that!”
40. Cheerleader or cheerleader
41. Sleeve-opening
42. What keeps athletic tape from sticking to the skin
43. “...or Watchman” (Chaplin Lee novel)
44. Target of a spy
45. One of two in “The Grapes of Wrath”
46. Film-staging rig
47. “For shame!”
48. “Like the verb “to be”!”
49. Purse for a celebration
51. Stable period from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius
52. Amendment, controversial 1978 Congressional measure
53. Stunned... just stunned
54. Alteration of a video game in popular lingo
55. “I like that!”
56. Rolled-up poster
57. What helps a book store
58. Trenchcoat and field training
59. Propelling (up)
60. Lead role in “Chicago”
61. Nov., 13, e.g.
62. “...Watchman” (Chaplin Lee novel)
63. “...or Watchman” (Chaplin Lee novel)
64. “...Watchman” (Chaplin Lee novel)
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119. “...Watchman” (Chaplin Lee novel)
120. “...Watchman” (Chaplin Lee novel)

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.
Swift to perform at MTV VMAs

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

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

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

Swift is tied with Ariana Grande for the most nominations at this year’s award show with 10. Her nominations include video of the year and song of the year for “You Need to Calm Down.”

Willie Nelson cancels tour

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

The 86-year-old singer apologized on Twitter late Wednesday, writing “I need to have my doctor check [the problem] out.” Nelson had just finished performing with Alan Krauss in Toledo, Ohio, and he was next scheduled to appear Friday in Grand Rapids, Mich.

He wrote “I’ll be back.”

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

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

Fox: Smollett won’t be on final season of ‘Empire’

From wire reports

Fox Entertainment chief Charlie Collier says Jussie Smollett won’t be back on “Empire.” Collier, speaking to TV critics Wednesday, affirmed series co-creator Lee Daniels’ decision to drop Smollett from the drama’s upcoming final season.

Daniels had initially supported Smollett after the actor claimed he suffered a racist and anti-gay attack in Chicago.

But when Smollett faced charges for allegedly fabricating the attack, Daniels said the matter had become painful and frustrating for him and the “Empire” cast.

Prosecutors dropped the charges against Smollett in March, but a special prosecutor could charge him again.

Asked why Fox had extended Smollett’s contract through the sixth and last season, Collier said the network wanted to properly assess the situation before deciding.
OPINION

Trump adept at attacking cartoon enemies

BY VIRGINIA HEFFERNAN

Los Angeles Times

With more than 30 civilians murdered last week in massacres in California, Texas and Ohio, the sheer scale across the country has been widely denounced as terrorism.

On Sunday, official federal officials announced they were treating the El Paso shootings as a “domestic terrorism case, and we’re going to do what we do to terrorists in this country, which is deliver swift and certain justice.” Ivanka Trump used even more sinister language: “White supremacy, like all other forms of terrorism, is an evil that must be destroyed.” It is impervious to equate an ideology, white supremacy, which apparently motivated at least one of the attacks, with a tactic, terrorism. But it is also understandable. Terrorism is a notoriously slippery word, and political analysts often use the term to signal their outrage and a desire for action.

So is it useful to call the mass murders in the U.S. terrorism? The three gunners were certainly unlaunched, unembattled mounts against violence using civilians against civilians. They also confessed or had studied extremist ideologies as a step closer to an ideology. The suspect in El Paso posted a manifesto saying the attack was “a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas,” according to the police, and talked about the need to “terrorize” the Dayton, Ohio, gunman played a “pornographic” role that performed misogynistic songs with themes of gore and brutal violence. He also reportedly kept a “rape list.”

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

The tactic of terrorism has generally been used by the residents of a government or an occupying army.

During the French Revolution, when terror was given its name, political violence by the lower classes was part of a campaign to panic the upper classes and shake the monarchy out of power. In Northern Ireland, the Provisional Irish Republican Army regularly committed violence against the British army, whom it considered occupiers, as well as Protestant civilians, whom it perceived as the enemy.

In this context, the narrative of recent mass murderers in America is sufficiently inspired.

That is, unless there is an occupied occupation in the U.S.: a cultural one, if not a political one.

In the El Paso suspect’s online writing, he expressed a fear that Trump wasn’t long for the world. “The Democrat party,” he wrote, “will own America and they know it.” The Gilroy gunman complained that nature had been destroyed and was now “knowing” it was reawarded. The San Francisco Giants and Silicon Valley white people (though he used a gendered epithet for “people”). Though the Dayton shooter described himself as a left-wing “radical,” he was the one who performed a terrifying uprising, one of these three men last week seemed to believe that some group of interlopers — either people of color or feminized elites or both — had seized control of the country.

The panic about a phantom occupation cuts across the political spectrum. It doesn’t matter who’s in power in Washington, the thinking goes. American culture is increasingly dragged by an overclass, imagined variously to be headquarted in Silicon Valley, the banks, the media, major American cities, academia and Hollywood.

The best thing Saudi Arabia, Iran could do for women

BY BOBBY GHOSH

Bloomburg Opinion

The Middle East’s two most important countries have recently announced reforms that bring their laws closer to equality with men. In Saudi Arabia, women may now leave the country, without permission from a male relative. In Iran, the supreme court has ordered that women be awarded the same “blood money” as men in instances of death or bodily harm.

Women’s rights activists have responded, with at best, caveat-leavin-speaking.

They have pointed out that other aspects of Saudi Arabia’s regressive “gender-shi" laws remain in force — for instance, women must get permission from a guardian before they can marry. In Iran, the court’s decree that the state awards women only half the blood money given to a man in similar circumstances; it requires women to consent to set up a fund to pay off the remaining half.

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

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

But while the likes of Loujain Al-Hathloul and Nasrin Sotoudeh, a human rights lawyer jailed defending those who protest the rules imposing headscarves on women, she recently spent her 56th birthday in prison, where, in addition to incarceration, she was offered 48 lashes for the temerity of her challenge to theocracy. (If lashing seems medieval, consider that the Iranian regime calculates “diyeh,” or blood money, according to the market price of 100 camels, 100 cows, 1,000 sheep, 200 suits made of Yemeni cloth, 1,000 gold coins or 10,000 silver coins.)

Even as news of the new blood money ruling began to trickle out of Iran, a “revo- cation” of the law requiring women to 55 years in prison — again, for defying the compulsory hijab, although the formal charges included such fabrica- tion as “encouraging and preparing the grounds for corruption and prostitution.”

And, for good measure, the authorities announced that anybody posting pho- tos or videos of women removing their headscarves on social media would face up to 10 years in prison. This ruling is directed at women inspired by the activist Mash Alinejad, whose campaigns (“White Women’s硒mless Health Project”) have encouraged women to defy the Islamic Republic’s dress code.

In Iran and Saudi Arabia alike, the per- suasion that the political rights activists shows the ruling patriarchy’s un- changing attitude toward women. Sure, the reforms announced in Riyadh allow Saudi women to hope that one day they will have the same rights as women in other Muslim countries — and eventually, women in the rest of the world. Optimists may even glean some reassurance from the willingness of Iranian jurisprudence to deem women human beings.

But while the likes of Loujain Al-Hathloul and Nasrin Sotoudeh remain in prison, the reforms will suffer from a deficit of credibility, haunted by the frightening possi- bility that the whim of a king, a crown prince or a supreme leader can undo them. If “political correctness” is anything, it is the ability to give women their rights, they should start by giving these courageous activists their freedom.

For now, however, they should allow the Al-Hathloul and Sotoudeh to lead the reform process as monitors of changes already an- nounced and advisers on the next wave of necessary reforms.

Bobby Ghosh is a columnist and member of the Bloomberg Opinion editorial board. He writes on foreign affairs, with a special focus on the Middle East and the wider Islamic world.
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.

**Women's team gives equal pay issue a valuable assist**

*Los Angeles Times*

Moments after Brazil's national soccer team beat the Netherlands 2-0 and secured its fourth Women's World Cup victory this month, the crowd in Lyon, France, erupted in cheers — and began an unusual chant that might have been more typical of a baseball game.


The apparently spontaneous reaction was a call for a solution to the gender wage gap among female players, who are emblazoned in a legal fight with the U.S. Soccer Federation over claims that the winning women's team is paid less than the less victorious men's national soccer team. (For what it's worth, the female players' demands appear to have been supported last week when President Carlos Cordeiro said in an open letter that, actually, women had been paid more by the U.S. team in 2019 than by the men in 2017 and 2018. Both the women's team and the national men's team say that's not true.)

The stadium in France soon emptied, but the discussion about gender pay disparities and, hopefully, solutions continues. And the chant may reverberate. That's due in large part to the players themselves, and particularly the team's brightest star, Megan Rapinoe, who continued to push the public discussion about gender pay disparities and, hopefully, solutions. She's happening and the chant may reverberate. "I'm going to fight for equal pay every day for myself, for my team, and for every single person out there," Rapinoe said earlier this month. That's right, and it's happening.

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**Threats to Amazon rainforest are bad for planet's prospects**

*The Washington Post*

One of the easiest ways to combat climate change is to stop tearing down old trees. This is why it is everyone's problem that new Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro seems determined to chop away at the Amazon rainforest, the world's greatest reservoir of old-growth forest.

According to a recent analysis in The New York Times, ‘enforcement actions by Brazil's main environmental agency fell by 20 percent during the first six months of the year, compared with the same period in 2018.’ Fines, warnings and the elimination of illegal equipment from protected areas are among the measures Brazil's authorities are using less often.

The drop means that vast stretches of the rainforest are being cleared, with less resistance to be found. The upshot is that the world's lungs, life on the planet is under threat.

**Red flag’ laws worth pursuing to prevent mass shootings**

*Boston Herald*

Bullet-resistant backpacks are now being sold in major retail stores. The idea is that when the next school shooter opens fire in the hallway, fleeing children who are shot in the back will have a better chance of surviving.

It is a new consideration that children and parents have to make in 2019: Is my child dressed for style? Is she dressed for weather? Is she dressed for war?

The present condition is unacceptable. High-profile mass shootings have become a normal occurrence, and last weekend brought the scourge front and center when 31 were shot dead and more than 50 injured in Texas and Ohio. Those were not just random events, but the result of extensive planning and execution. The message is clear: we need to take action to prevent these atrocities from happening.

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**ACROSS**
1. UFO crew
2. “Frozen” snow queen
4. Lawman Wyatt
8. Nanny’s headache
12. Grazing land
13. Bring up
14. Roof overhang
15. Sea of the North Atlantic
17. Apple tablet
18. Melodious
19. Junior
21. Workout unit
22. Sea off Greece
26. Cut off
29. Auction action
30. Depot (Abb.)
31. Yale students
32. Twitch
33. Whirl
34. Estuary
35. Shore conceiver
36. Blitzen’s boss
37. Sea off Poland
39. That guy
40. “Shark Tank” network
41. Hearth remains
45. Latin love
48. Sea east of Italy
50. Fascinated by
51. Implement
52. Buckeyes’ sch.
53. Body
54. Staffer
55. Profit

**DOWN**
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27. Director Kazan
28. Test tube
29. 32
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39. 46
40. 47
41. 48
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47. 54
48. 55

**Answer to Previous Puzzle**

**CRYPTOQUIP**

SRBNJLWBZVKLRRUJWXKBSUUJVLDTXSDPKUJCLVJ

LUVPPZTAFSTSJKSL

KFMMZKJBNJC’VJAJDMLUK

Yesterday’s Cryptopu: AT THE MOLLUSKS’ SALON, ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR COCKTAILS THEY OFFER IS A RUSTY SNAIL.

Today’s Cryptopu Clue: A equals B
Eugene Sheffer Crossword

ACROSS
1 Borneo ape, for short
6 Polar buildup
12 Reply to “Have a nice day”
13 Make into bundles, as grain
14 Boxing combo
15 Elora Silas
16 Ganges wrap
17 Woodland grazer
19 Dr. of hip-hop
20 Buffalo Bill
22 Sample
24 Small ammo
27 Bank charges
29 Abba of Israel
32 Woodstock, and the like
35 Mayberry lyke
36 Accomplishes
38 — Paulo
40 Cracker name
42 Sit-up targets
44 Hammer part
46 Old U.S. gas brand
50 Nikita’s successor
52 Laundromat machine
54 Leatherneck
55 Shrewd
56 “Persuasion” author Jane
57 Affirmatives

DOWN
1 Chaplin of “Game of Thrones”
2 Contri one
3 Top story
4 Promptly
5 Act of kindness
6 “Woe—!”
7 Presentation aid
8 Always, in verse
9 Wonka creation
10 Say it’s so
11 Father (Fr.)
12 Casual greetings
18 Ugly building
21 Not on
23 Gun the engine
24 Buddy
25 Conk on the head
26 Cutting tool
28 Big name in pianos
30 Pub order
31 Code-breaking gp.
32 Mauna
34 Follower (Suff.)
39 Speak one’s mind
40 Orange peel scrapings
42 — mater
43 Boyfriend
45 Paradise
47 Actress Elisabeth
48 Collections
49 Tramcar contents
50 Little louse
53 Enzyme ending

Answer to Previous Puzzle

ETS EAHH BRAT
LEAH REAR EAVE
SARGASSO IPAD
ARIO SCOSSEN
REP MEGAN
SEVEN BITTA KAT
ELISTIC SPIN
RITA FOG SAHTA
BALTIC HIM
ABACEMBERS
AMO RABDRIAT
INTO TOOLS OSU
LQOT AIDE NET

8-10 CRYPTOQUIP

TUT ZVM WUSR WSTPKWFKZK
EDU ZMUKPW NOWD WSAD ZW
GRSPNOV, JPRUENOZ VIZM
ZRGZAUOP: FSVZ FSKVPK.

Yesterday’s Cryptquip: IF THE ACTORS AFFLECK, STILLER AND KINGSLEY ARE ALL GOOD BUDDIES, I SUPPOSE THEY’RE BEN PALS.

Today’s Cryptquip Clue: T equals P
Oh! The Places You’ll See with

Stars and Stripes

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Tennis

Pro baseball

Pro soccer

Deals

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL

USA BASEBALL — Named Joe Girardi manager of 2020 USA Baseball National Team.

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF BASEBALL — Suspended Texas Rangers M Jurickson Profar for 10 games andfinite ban for violating MLB’s substance abuse policy.

COLUMBUS CUBS — Traded OF Cory Vaughn to Colorado Rockies.

COLUMBUS BULLDOGS — Announced风电 contract with goaltender Emile Bembridge.

MINNESOTA TIMBERS — Signed M Robert Makar for 8 years (5 years) and $35 million.


CINCINNATI REDS — Signed RHP Brad Birdsell to minor league contract.

TENNESSEE VOLUNTEERS — Signed M Hunter Johnson to a minor league contract.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Signed M Matt Strahm to a minor league contract.

CINCINNATI REDS — Signed LHP Tyler Mahle to a minor league contract.

LA DODGERS — Traded OF Portugal’s with DODGERS.

CINCINNATI REDS — Recalled RHP Jordan Lyles from Triple-A Nashville.

CLEVELAND INDIANS — Placed OF Jordan Luplow on the 10-day IL.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Optioned RHP Michael Kopech to Triple-A Chicago.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Placed OF Justin Morano on the 10-day IL.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Placed RHP Jeff Bruneteau on the 10-day IL.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Recalled RHP Carlos Rodon from Triple-A South Bend.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Recalled RHP Spencer Adams from Triple-A Charlotte.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Recalled RHP Ryan Harris from Triple-A Charlotte.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Recalled RHP Joe Panik from Triple-A Charlotte.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Recalled RHP Carlos Rodon from Triple-A South Bend.

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Commissioner has overseen league’s growth in stature

By Ronald Blum
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Don Garber keeps a fireman’s hat in his office.

“When you’re running a business like this, you are a fireman. You’re putting out fires every day,” he said.

Garber’s 20th anniversary as Major League Soccer’s commissioner was last Sunday, and the league’s challenge these days is growth, an upward trajectory that will be boosted when the U.S. co-hosts the World Cup in 2026.

He was senior vice president of the NFL’s international division when he was hired in 1999 to replace Doug Logan, who had run the league since its launch in 1996. MLS has doubled in size to 24 teams under Garber’s leadership, plays primarily in soccer specific stadiums and maintains an average attendance among the top 10 soccer leagues in the world.

Yet, it has not caught up with the NBA or NHL for television attention and averages fewer viewers on U.S. English-language television than the Premier League, despite more favorable time slots.

“When I hear stuff from my bosses at ESPN saying we’re not going to show that game because we can make more money putting a 5-year-old rerun of the World Series of Poker on, then we’ve got a big problem,” said former U.S. goalkeeper Kasey Keller, an ESPn analyst.

Now 61, Garber recalls being approached about MLS at an NFL owners meeting or a Super Bowl by Robert Kraft and Jonathan Kraft, owners of the New England Patriots and New England Revolution. Having launched with 10 teams in 1996, the league jumped to 12 in 1999. But average attendance this season, 21,000, just behind Italy’s Serie A and France’s Ligue 1, above both the NBA and NHL, albeit with a shorter schedule.

“Avg. attendance was 14,000 in 1999 and now is in the 21,000 to 22,000 range, just behind Italy’s Serie A and France’s Ligue 1, above both the NBA and NHL, albeit with a shorter schedule.

“Team payroll soars from $9 million to $22 million — far below next season’s salary caps of $81.5 million for the NHL and $109 million for the NBA.

“Marathon” is needed.

More in involved in league operations.

“Never a question that MLS will reach the status of the NHL and NBA, albeit with a shorter season.

By the numbers

257,000
Average number of viewers through 21 telecasts of MLS games this season on ESPN.

24
Number of teams in the league, double what it was when Don Garber took over as the league’s commissioner in 1999.

21,000
Estimate of average attendance this season, above that of the NHL and NBA, albeit with a shorter season.
Hendrick making strides to improve on awful ’18

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

JERSEY CITY, N.J. — Tiger Woods is plenty rested going into the FedEx Cup playoffs this week. He faces the busiest part of the season, when the NASCAR Cup Series race Sunday at Watkins Glen International in Watkins Glen, N.Y.

Tiger Woods rests, but back still ails him

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

JERSEY CITY, N.J. — Tiger Woods is plenty rested going into the FedEx Cup playoffs this week. He faces the busiest part of the season, when the NASCAR Cup Series race Sunday at Watkins Glen International in Watkins Glen, N.Y.

Tiger Woods looks on before the first round of the Presidents Cup at Liberty National Golf Club on Sept. 28, 2017 in Jersey City, N.J.
Balancing act: Biles mixes rage, grief and healing

By Will Graves
Associated Press

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

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

“Full-out hits you like a train wreck,” Biles said Wednesday as she prepared for the U.S. championships.

One that leaves the greatest gymnast of her generation and the face of the U.S. Olympic movement ahead of the 2020 Games in a difficult spot.

She still loves competing, pushing herself and the boundaries of her sport, but it is also painful.

And yet the 22-year-old still finds herself working under the banner of USA Gymnastics and by extension the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee. Both organizations were called out by Nassar’s victims — and his crimes — in the fall and winter of 2017 and filed for bankruptcy last fall in an effort to halt the decertification process — can find a way forward, Biles shrugged.

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

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

For now, she doesn’t sound convinced.

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

NCAA’s agent certification draws concern, criticisms

By Aaron Beard
Associated Press

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

James made that connection, tweeting Tuesday night “#TheRichPaulRule” then followed 2 minutes later: “Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop! They B**H MAD and Scared. Nothing will stop this movement and culture over here. Sorry! Not sorry!”
Athens, Ga. — Purdue quarterback Elijah Sindelar sees a whole new world of opportunities opening up this fall. The annual competition he waged against David Blough is finally over, his problematic left knee finally seems healthy and his class load finally is a little lighter now that he has an engineering degree.

So the next goal for the strong-armed Sindelar is simple: Show everyone how well he can play when he focuses on football.

“My decision-making has definitely gotten a lot better, being able to check it down,” he said after a recent practice. “A lot of times where the first read might not be there and I still tried to kind of force it when I was younger; today I actually got through my fourth progression in one play, which was really nice to go ‘one, no; two, no; three, no; four, yes,’ and throw the ball. That’s what I’m most proud of right now.”

Coaches also appreciate Sindelar’s toughness, especially in a college football world where a lack of instant gratification has created a whirlwind of transfers.

Sindelar is different, an old-school guy who just keeps fighting, studying and improving.

And while Kentucky’s 2014 Mr. Football award winner won’t make every throw, he looks like a perfect fit for coach Jeff Brohm at the Cradle of Quarterbacks.

“He works hard, he’s a good leader,” Brohm said. “I do think he’s got a lot of talent. He has a big arm. He can throw the ball vertically. We’ve got to do a better job of teaching him where we can limit the turnovers and making sure he’s taking care of the football.”

Sindelar knows what must improve. He wants to cut down on the turnovers and complete 70 percent of his passes.

But the fact he’s still chugging along in West Lafayette might be more remarkable given the way he’s navigated a whirlwind of transfers. Fromm enrolled at Purdue in January 2015, expecting Danny Etling and Austin Appleby to battle for the starting job while he and Blough fought to be the backup.

Things changed when Etling transferred to LSU in the summer, essentially ceding the job to Appleby. Four weeks into the season, Blough relieved the struggling Appleby and wound up starting the next 20 games before Appleby left for Florida amid a coaching change.

Blough lost his lock on the starting job when Brohm reopened the competition in 2017 and Sindelar and Blough essentially played to a draw. Eventually, Brohm decided to use the close friends in a rotation that ended when Blough suffered a season-ending dislocated right ankle in early November.

Then, less than one half into Sindelar’s first game as the undisputed starter, he tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee. Sindelar rebounded by winning the next two games on his bad knee to make Purdue bowl eligible and seven weeks later was named the offensive MVP of the Foster Farms Bowl — Purdue’s first postseason victory in six years. That’s when Purdue announced the extent of the injury, which continued to cause problems, but he missed all of spring practice in 2017 following surgery. He felt soreness in the knee, which limited his mobility, in the team’s first practice that summer. And after starting the opener and playing in the second game last season, Sindelar never took another snap.

A hyperextended knee also limited him in practice this spring. But a 30-minute pre-practice routine has so far kept Sindelar’s knee healthy.

“You’ve got to be ready to play and perform well at a high level every day or you’re not going to play,” Sindelar said.

Sindelar has only nine career starts, including two for touchdowns, last season. He was quick to note there is more to his role in Georgia’s run-first offense. He said he has told his new teammates they must prove they can block and contribute on special teams.

As Fromm is developing chemistry with the new receivers, the Bulldogs also are adjusting to a new offense with new coordinator James Coley. Sindelar predicted Coley will add more emphasis to Fromm’s passing game.

“Coley is bringing a lot of juice to the offense,” Sindelar said. “He’s kind of balancing the offense a little bit more. You’re going to see a completely different offense this year. It’s really going to be fun. It’s going to be an exciting offense. Hopefully everyone will enjoy that.”
**Star:** Parsons had to adjust to attention on him.

**By the numbers**

83 Tackles by linebacker Micah Parsons as a freshman last season for Penn State, despite making just one start.

**SOURCE:** Associated Press

---

Oklahoma State running back Chuba Hubbard was a freshman last season for Oklahoma State running back Chuba Hubbard was a freshman last season. Now, he's a preseason All-Big 12 pick.

---

Chuba was kind of like me in having to sit behind somebody that was an NFL talent kind of guy. It was a crazy experience. We had to sit back and wait our turn.

**Tylan Wallace**

Oklahoma State wide receiver

---

**FROM BACK PAGE**

star here. You got to work now and that's what I was worried about because you know he really never had to work. He was playing with God's gift."

Pry said not starting Parsons was not an attempt to teach him humility. It was about getting Parsons to understand what is expected of those at the top of the depth chart. "It's an approach. It's the in-betweens. When we're not doing a rep (in practice), what's the behavior? It's not the rep. It's the other times. It's trying to get the most out of every opportunity to learn and to grow as a player and recognize that you need that time," Pry said. "You have to take advantage of that."

Parsons was offered a scholarship by Penn State when he was in the ninth grade. The Harrisburg native wanted to commit right then, but Penn State coaches told him he needed to rush. That was the start of a long and winding road to Happy Valley. When Parsons finally signed in December 2017, Penn State coach James Franklin said the book of his career "will probably be five chapters on my career and then 15 chapters on the ups and downs and twists and turns, and the journey of Micah Parsons."

Pry verbally committed to Penn State in February 2016. He decommitted in April 2017. There was a serious flirtation with Ohio State. Parsons named his dog Brutus (like OSU’s mascot Brutus Buckeye). The Ohio State courtships ended awkwardly after Parsons tweeted, while on a visit to Columbus, that the Buckeyes should make a quarterback change from senior starter J.T. Barrett to Dwayne Haskins.

Then Parsons visited both Oklahoma and Georgia in December 2017, just days before signing with Penn State. Parsons said he was not ready for the attention that came with being a high-profile football recruit in the social media age.

"The more success you have the quicker you got to grow up and the quicker you realize that the better you’re off," Micah Parsons said.

Terrence Parsons said Micah would lament about not being able to act like a kid. "I said, 'Yeah, you’re right,'" Terrence Parsons said. "You’ve got two ways to look at this: You could be a kid now and you might have to work a couple of jobs like me and your mom do or become an adult right now and then your dreams can become reality and you can be the biggest kid in the world."

Franklin said he never thought about curtailing off Micah Parsons.

"I mean obviously there’s frustrations and there’s ups and downs and all those types of things," Franklin said. "But we felt like between myself and coach Pry we had a really strong relationship with the kid, with the family, with the high school coach. That if we didn’t overreact that we’d have a chance to get him back."

Other players and recruits took notice of all the drama Parsons stirred, including fellow 2018 Penn State signee and linebacker Jesse Luketa.

"When coach Pry told me I was going to room with him I thought, ‘Damn, this is going to be interesting,'" Luketa said. "This is a guy who’s going to want everything, the attention on him." Luketa and Parsons are like brothers now. Luketa’s biggest complaints about Parsons are his roommate’s obsession with the video game Fortnite and his propensity for late-night orders of chicken wings.

"And he tries to guilt me and tell me to eat with him," Luketa said. "I can’t do that. I have to watch. His metabolism is different. I don’t get it."

Parsons is different. At 6-foot-3, and around 250 pounds, he has speed like a running back. Parsons will play weak-side linebacker, but he has skills to line up almost anywhere. Franklin even expects to use Parsons as a secondary returning on kickoffs.

"He’s got elite characteristics," Franklin said.

Parsons has been on Arrington’s radar for years. This spring Parsons and Luketa visited Arrington, who is now the head coach at Maranatha High School in Pasadena, Calif. Terrence Parsons said Micah’s relationship with Arrington is “heaven sent,” providing his son insight on what it’s like to live in the spotlight and thrive at a football program.

"I love Micah’s way," Arrington said. “He’s a very cerebral person. Very, very intuitive." Arrington won the Butkus Award in 1999 as the nation’s top linebacker and was selected No. 2 overall by Washington. He is Linebacker U royalty along with Hall of Famers Jack Ham, Dennis Oniolokz and Shane Conlan, and more recent stars Paul Posluszny and Dan Connor. Arrington said Parsons could top them all.

"Who does he resemble the most? It could be a lot of different people because of his capabilities, he can play middle backer or he could play outside backer. He could play D-end. I mean, hell, he could play safety if you want it," Arrington said. "Who do you compare him to? He’s the first Micah Parsons.”

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**Oklahoma State’s Hubbard primed for huge season**

By CLIFF BRUNT

Associated Press

STILLWATER, Okla. — Oklahoma State running back Chuba Hubbard didn’t get double-digit carries in a game last season until November. Now, he’s a preseason All-Big 12 pick.

Hubbard got an unexpected chance to shine when Justice Hill was injured late last season. In four games as the primary back, Hubbard averaged 106.3 yards a game and 5.4 yards per carry. “He took it on like a pro,” fellow running back LD Brown said.

“His maturity on it. He was very mature on it,”Oklahoma State wide receiver LD Brown said. "I think he’ll pick up right where he left off last season and continue to get better. He takes his offseason very seriously, and I’m very excited to see what he can do this season to rank second nationally with 1,491 yards and become a Biletnikoff Award finalist.

Hill ran for 3,359 yards at Oklahoma State and was a two-time All-Big 12 pick, so stepping into that role came with pressure. "Chuba was kind of like me in having to sit behind somebody that was an NFL talent kind of guy," Wallace said. "It was a crazy experience. We had to sit back and wait our turn. We kind of showed out when we went out there."

Brown, the No. 2 back, is a 191-pound speedster with a career average of 6.1 yards per carry. Gundy expects Hubbard and Brown to work well together. "LD has done really well," Gundy said. "He’s come a long way. He’s a really good example of years of maturity. If those guys stay healthy through camp, they’ll be a good package."

Oklahoma State receiver Dillon Stoner sees good things ahead for Hubbard.

"He just continued to get better and better every game," Stoner said. "I think he’ll pick up right where he left off last season and continue to get better. He takes his offseason very seriously, and I’m very excited to see what he can do this season to rank second nationally with 1,491 yards and become a Biletnikoff Award finalist."

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Penn State linebackers Ellis Brooks and Micah Parsons participate in a tug-of-war contest during the annual Penn State Lift for Life in Holuba Hall last month in State College, Pa.

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Associated Press
Sarkisian inherits loaded 'Bama offense

Assistant coach keeps hitting jackpot with QBs and playmakers

By John Zenor
Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Steve Sarkisian keeps hitting the jackpot when it comes to quarterbacks and other offensive playmakers. A former USC and Washington head coach, Sarkisian left the Crimson Tide after the national championship game in January 2017 to head to the NFL. He took over an offense led by reigning NFL MVP Matt Ryan and All-Pro receiver Julio Jones. Before that, he arrived at USC in 2005 with Matt Leinart returning after winning the Heisman.

“Honestly, it’s weird to say, but I do feel like I’ve got a lot to offer. I got to go back through some notes for Sark,” Saban said. “He’s very well-organized and does a good job with the players. He’s a good teacher. He’s got a really good personality. He’s easy to work with.”

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

Alabama quarterback Tua Tagovailoa works through drills as offensive coordinator Steve Sarkisian, crouching, watches during Alabama’s fall camp fan-day scrimmage Saturday in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

By Ken Poyntak
Associated Press

BOSTON — Boston College running back AJ Dillon was the talk of the Atlantic Coast Conference before last season. Named the preseason player of the year after winning the league’s rookie of the year in 2017, Dillon was ready to take off in his sophomore season with the Eagles.

An ankle injury taught him a lot more about himself than he could have imagined.”

“Honestly, it’s weird to say, but I do feel like the injury was a blessing in disguise,” Dillon said Tuesday. “I felt like it taught me a lot about myself, obviously I’m not invincible. You’ve got to protect your body.”

It even brought him back to reality, a bit.

“If I could say last year was a humbleing experience,” he said. “I came onto the scene freshman year. I ended up with the ACC rookie of the year, those kinds of accolades, things like that going into last season.”

Before last season, the hype was building around BC’s campus. The 6-foot, 250-pound Dillon was being touted as a potential Heisman Trophy candidate.

The talk was a lot for him to handle.

“Just being 100 percent truthful,” he said. “Those kinds of things, to be a sophomore at the time, those kinds of things you hear all the time in the NFL, those kinds of things — that you got to me or changed anything mentally — I felt like I kind of just consumed it a little bit too much and felt invincible.”

Then, after rushing for 652 yards, Dillon hurt his left ankle early in the second half of the fifth game of the season, missed the next two and finished with 1,108 yards.

He never felt the same. The power was there, at times. The speed was diminished.

“This camp I’ve been trying to go 100 percent every day,” he said. “I honestly couldn’t play my kind of football at all during the regular season after the injury.”

Boston College coach Steve Addazio knows how important Dillon is to the team’s success and figures to watch his workload.

If he’s healthy, Addazio’s team may finally get past seven wins, its total in six of his seven seasons at the school.

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

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

“My goal is always to be the best on the field no matter who I’m out there with,” he said.
Browns RB Johnson sent to Texans for 2020 draft choice

By Tom Withers
Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Duke John-
son, who wished, and the Browns
got more than he expected for him.
Cleveland traded the disgrun-
tle stack back to the Houston
texans on Thursday for an undis-
closed 2020 draft pick. A person
familiar with the deal told The
Associated Press that the Browns
are getting a fourth-round pick
that can become a third-rounder.

The person spoke on the con-
dition of anonymity because the
teams are not providing details of
the swap.

One of the NFL’s most versatile
backs over the past four seasons,
Johnson had grown unhappy with
his role and asked to be traded
earlier this year after the Browns
signed suspended free agent run-
ning back Kareem Hunt, who will
sit out the season’s first eight
games.

Browns general manager John
Dorsey had been quoted as saying
he wasn’t going to “give away” the
25-year-old Johnson, and he re-
asserted several offers before strik-
ing a deal with Houston.

Houston was looking for a proven
backup to play behind starter
Lamar Miller. The 6-foot-4, 240-
pound Johnson skipped the team’s
voluntary offseason program.

Johnson, who has been sideline-
ed for much of training camp
with a hamstring injury, is a shifty
runner, solid at blitz protection
and can play some wide receiver
if the Texans need him to.

Miffed by what he called the
Browns’ lack of loyalty toward
him, Johnson skipped the team’s
voluntary offseason program.

In June, he doubled down on his
trade request, saying loyalty “is
not a one-way street.”

During his public rift with the
Browns, Johnson changed agents
and hired Drew Rosenhaus, who
met with Dorsey at the start of
training camp.

With Johnson gone and Hunt
out until November due to an
NFL suspension for two violent
incidents, second-year back Nick
Chubb will get the majority of
carrying the load.

Everywhere, depth is a concern
for the Browns, who have been
impressed with Dontrell Hilliard,
who signed as an undrafted rook-
ie last season and showed prom-
ise while appearing in 11 games.

Johnson was drafted in the
third round in 2017 after starring
at Miami, where he is the school’s
career rushing leader. He ran for
1,286 yards, caught 35 passes
for 2,170 and scored 13
touchdowns for some
bad Browns
teams.

He was dependable, but Clevel-
dand’s coaching
staffs never
figured
ted how to
to best
use
the 5-foot-
9, 210-pound, who
ought for
every yard. Johnson was named
the team’s MVP in 2017, when the
Browns went 0-16, but his stats
dipped dramatically last season
— 40 carries vs. 82 the previous
year — when Chubb got the bulk
of work as a rookie.

Johnson’s trade removes a possible
distraction for Fred-
die Kitchens in his first year as
coach. Johnson was an
ongoing drama, and the back’s
hard stance didn’t sit well with
several teammates, including
quarterback Baker Mayfield,
who called him out publicly and
said he hoped Johnson could “do
his job.”

He’s now got a new one.

Steelers’ Watt seeks to build on breakout year

By Dan Scifo
Associated Press

LATROBE, Pa. — Personal stats
don’t mean much to Pittsburgh
Steelers outside linebacker T.J. Watt.

The 24-year-old was happy to earn
a trip to the Pro Bowl during a break-
out second season, but he also
wanted to make the play-offs with the
Steelers. This year, Watt looks to lead the
Steelers back to the postseason, while also
becoming one of the league’s top out-
side linebackers.

“I have very high goals for myself
and for this team,” Watt said. “I’m not
into individual accolades. I’m happy
with how I played, but not satisfied. I
definitely have a lot more that I want
to accomplish this year.”

Watt is off to a bit of a slow start,
as he opened training camp on the
physically unable to perform (PUP)
list with a hamstring injury. He was
removed from the PUP list on Sunday
and fully practiced for the first time
on Tuesday.

Watt missed most of training camp
last season with hamstring issues. But
it didn’t affect him in Week 1 after he
finished with 10 tackles and three
sacks in a tie at Cleveland.

“If (an injury) is going to happen,
(training camp) is the best time for it
to happen,” Watt said. “I’m trying to
be as cautious as possible, so this is
in the reaview mirror heading into
the season.”

Watt, the No. 30 overall pick in
the 2017 draft, has older brothers in
the NFL: Derek, a fullback with the
Los Angeles Chargers, and J.J. Watt,
a three-time NFL Defensive Player of
the Year with the Houston Texans.

But the youngest Watt is making
his own name with the Steelers.

The 6-foot-4, 252-pound Watt
racked up seven sacks as a rookie
in 2017, and he took a leap forward
this season. He’s tied for the most in the
NFL — and a franchise-record 56 in 2017.

Watt said he’s ready to step into a
leadership role in his third season.

“I feel like once you get on the field
it kind of all happens organically,”
Watt said. “I don’t think you have
to force anything. You don’t want
to act like something you’re not. If guys
look to me as a leader, I’ll take that role
on.”

Goff happy with Rams’ work
in joint practice with Raiders

By Michael Wagaman
Associated Press

NAPA, Calif. — Jared Goff
hoped the Los Angeles Rams
would be much crispier in their
first joint practice with the Oak-
land Raiders than they were last
week against the Chargers.

A broken play capped by Goff’s
scramble and touchdown throw
to tight end Gerald Everett in heavy
traffic was all the evidence the
Rams’ fourth-year quarterback
needed.

“This was definitely a good day,”
Goff said Wednesday following the
two-hour practice at the Raiders’
training camp facility. “We raised
our intensity. Kind of sharpened
some things up and just raised
that intensity level, that standard,
and I think it showed today.”

Goff made several strong
throws against the Raiders de-
fense, including a long touchdown
throw to Robert Woods that was called
back when Woods was flagged for
offensive interference after push-
ning off against Gareon Conley.

Rams coach Sean McVay argued
with a referee, claiming that
Conley was sitting on the
route and not in position to make
a play.

“I knew that route,” Conley
said.

You didn’t know that route,”
McVay shot back. “He would have
diced your (butt).”

That was about as chippy as
things got between the two teams
in their first of two joint prac-
tices. During one punting drill,
Oakland’s Nevin Lawson was
blocked to the ground then got up
and slapped the facemask of the
Rams’ Ramon Richards. The two
exchanged words but nothing else
happened.

That “falls solely on the head
coaches and their leadership and
how they teach,” Raiders quar-
terback Derek Carr said. “There
was maybe one time where some-
one got shoved a little too late.”

One player not in attendance
was Raiders wide receiver Anto-
nio Brown, who has not yet taken
part in a full practice because
of a foot ailment.

ESPN reported Wednesday
that Brown has been dealing with
a case of frostbite suffered while
getting cryotherapy treatment in
France last month.

Los Angeles Rams quarterback
Jared Goff, right, and Blake Bortles run through obstacles during training camp Wednesday with the Oakland Raiders in Napa, Calif.
Vikings have big plans for rookie TE

By DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — When the Minnesota Vikings take the field against New Orleans in their preseason opener, Irv Smith Jr. will be the latest but nowhere close to the last.Corey Smith's second cousin, the 6-foot-2, 242-pound Smith was selected in the second round of the draft out of Alabama, the same stadium where his father, Lynn Smith, coached for 12 years. The rookie tight end will not only celebrate another year of life but make his NFL debut in the same stadium where his father spent most of his professional career in front of a host of family and friends in the city he calls home.

"It's crazy how everything worked out," Smith said.

Selected in the second round of the draft out of Alabama, the 6-foot-2, 242-pound Smith was born after his dad, Irv Smith Sr., left the Saints after five seasons. Smith Sr. played his last two years in the league with San Francisco and Cleveland, respectively.

The future football player son wasn't the only Smith to make a name for himself in the NFL. More than 20 Smiths have suited up for a professional football team with household memorabilia and internet searches. That doesn't make him any less proud, of course. He's determined, too, to establish himself a little more proud, of course.

"I'm not really worried about the future. It's just when everything starts moving super-fast, he's trying to get used to that and I think it's starting to work for him. It's slowing down for him and I think it just keeps slowing down."

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

"I'm excited to see him get to play in some games and just kind of see how he reacts to all that."

Holmes might get that chance Thursday night in a game against the Giants.

"It'll be cool just to be on the sideline and interact with the guys," he said, "and watch with them rather than just watch on the TV. You know?"

Holmes was fascinated by the NFL as a kid, checking out highlights of games and reading about the league's biggest names. The standout winger and fullback for the Guillaumat-Southport National Rugby League was recognized wherever he went, with die-hard fans donning his team's jersey and wide-eyed young boys wanting to take a photo with him. And then, Holmes stunningly left it all behind.

He headed to the United States for a chance to play American football in the NFL, a decision that angered some of those same fans who once cheered him. But Holmes needed to tackle his dream — no matter what everyone else thought.

"I just felt I needed to do it for myself as a person and an athlete," the 24-year-old Holmes told The Associated Press. "I wasn't really thinking about what I was giving up, I guess. It was just that I wanted to chase more."

Holmes is in training camp with the New York Jets competing for a roster spot as a running back, wide receiver and return specialist. The rookie tight end will not only celebrate another year of life but make his NFL debut in the same stadium where his father coached for 12 years.

"He's living his dream right now."

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

Parsons primed to be Penn State’s next star linebacker

By RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

State College, Pa.

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

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

It has been 19 years since Penn State had a linebacker selected in the first round of the NFL Draft.

Parsons has all the attributes to end that drought.

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

Parsons is still waiting for that first home start, though. Despite being the first player to lead the team in tackles as a freshman, Parsons had a lot to learn. It was not enough to practice hard. He needed to focus when he was not participating. Parsons could make plays because of his freaky athleticism, but after playing defensive end in high school he was taking introductory courses at linebacker. Penn State defensive coordinator Brent Pry said Parsons was at the 100-level last year and is now working on 200.

Parsons disagrees.

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

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

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

SEE STAR ON PAGE 60

Who do you compare him to? He’s the first Micah Parsons.’

LaVar Arrington
Former Penn State LB

Did you know

LaVar Arrington, pictured, won the Butkus Award in 1999 as the nation’s top LB. ‘Linebacker U’ royalty along with College Football Hall of Famers Jack Ham, Dave Robinson, Dennis Onkoz, and Shane Conlan, Arrington was the last Penn State linebacker taken in the first round of the NFL Draft when he was picked No. 2 in 2000.

SOURCE: Associated Press; AP; TNS photos

Biles still struggling with grief, anger  » Gymnastics, Page 58