N. Korea fires more presumed missiles

By Kim Gamel
And Yoo Kyong Chang
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea fired two short-range missiles on Thursday, less than a week after the communist state launched a missile into the sea off its east coast, South Korea said.

The move threatened to raise tensions as the main U.S. envoy for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, was visiting Seoul in an effort to get stalled nuclear talks with the North back on track.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, speaking hours later in a television interview, said his government and its ally the United States believe that short-range missiles had been fired, based on their flight distance.

However, he said it was too early to determine whether they had violated U.N. Security Council resolutions, which prohibit the North from using ballistic technology.

"I want to tell North Korea once again that it’s not ideal to repeat actions that … risk throwing cold water on the atmosphere of dialogue and negotiations," Moon said in an interview with South Korean broadcaster KBS.

Thursday’s launch was especially bittersweet for Moon as it occurred on the eve of the second anniversary of his presidential inauguration.

SEE MISSILES ON PAGE 8

'I have no hope for the future'

Taliban attack on US-based aid group raises concern in Kabul

By Amir Shah
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A brazen Taliban attack on a U.S.-based aid group in the Afghan capital raised concerns Thursday among other relief organizations they could be targeted even as the insurgents hold peace talks with a U.S. envoy.

Authorities say Wednesday’s assault on the Kabul office of Counterpart International, a group that promotes gender equity, killed at least nine people.

The Taliban set off a huge explosion and battled security forces for more than six hours before they were repelled. Those killed included three Afghan employees of the organization and two of its security guards.

On its website, Counterpart International said it was “devastated to have lost” members of its family in the “senseless attack.”

Abdul Halim Halim, head of Afghan Relief, an aid agency that provides education and assistance to returning refugees, expressed his concerns for more than 200 of the group’s employees across the country.

"The attack has us all worried for the future," he said.

Afghan Relief has partnered on projects with Counterpart International, and Halim said they “urged everyone to be extra careful.”

Kabul residents living near Counterpart International’s offices described a deafening explosion that started Wednesday’s attack and complained about deteriorating security in their homeland, more than 17 years since the U.S.-led coalition ousted the Taliban.

SEE ATTACK ON PAGE 7
Marine leader is 4th fired in recent weeks

By Corey Dickstein
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON – The 1st Marine Division’s commander fired the officer in charge of Camp Pendleton’s 1st Reconnaissance Battalion on Tuesday, marking at least the fourth removal of a Marine commander in recent weeks.

Lt. Col. Francisco Zavala was removed from his command after Maj. Gen. Robert Castellvi “lost trust and confidence in the commanding officer’s ability to lead,” according to a statement issued Wednesday from the division, which is based in California.

A spokesman for 1st Marine Division declined to provide any additional details about Zavala’s removal but indicated he was under some kind of investigation.

Zavala, who is from Texas, was commissioned into the Marine Corps in 2000 as an infantry officer and has served in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to his official biography. His former commands include leading a platoon with the 1st Fleet Anti-terrorism Security Team Company, a company in 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines, and recently the Corps’ Special-Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force-Peru, according to the Marines.

He is a recipient of the Bronze Star Medal with “V” device for combat valor for actions in Afghanistan in 2010, which included “sprinting more than three kilometers in full combat equipment” and, for more than 24 hours, securing a location where a Marine three days prior had been killed.

Zavala was also attributed to a “loss of trust and confidence” as an investigation continues into a fatal weather, live-fire battle-training accident where two pilots killed in the crash, according to his award citation.

Castellvi appointed Maj. Jeffrey Erb as 1st Reconnaissance Battalion’s commander after removing Zavala, the Marine statement said.

Two other Marine commanders were removed from their duties in recent weeks following arrests on suspicion of drunken driving.

Col. Douglas Lemott Jr. was fired from his position as commander of the Marines’ Cyber-space Operations Group on May 3, just days after his arrest in Fauquier County, Va. On April 25, Col. John Atkinson was removed from his position as commander of Headquarters and Service Battalion at Marine Corps Base Quantico after his arrest earlier in April in Prince William County, Va.

Marine officials cited leaders’ “loss of trust and confidence” in both of those officers in announcing their relief from command.

Another recently fired Marine officer, Lt. Col. James Compton, was removed April 22 from his role commanding the All Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242 at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Japan. His dismissal was also attributed to a “loss of trust and confidence” as an investigation continues into a fatal collision in December between one of Compton’s squadron’s F/A-18D Hornet fighters and a KC-130J air tanker.

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Drills suspended after New Zealand soldier dies during training

By Seth Robson
Stars and Stripes

A member of the 1st New Zealand Special Air Service Regiment has died following an accident during counterterrorism training with the U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Regiment, according to New Zealand and U.S. officials.

The fallen soldier had been involved in an exercise conducted in Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city, and Waiouru, the New Zealand army’s main training area, that had been scheduled to run from May 8-23, the New Zealand Defence Service said in a statement.

The exercise has been suspended and an accident investigation is underway, the statement said.

“It is with regret that I must inform you of the passing of (Lance Cpl.) Nicholas Kahotea, a soldier, father, friend and proud New Zealander,” New Zealand Chief of Army Maj. Gen. John Boswell said in a tweet Thursday.

Authorities didn’t provide details of the accident, which happened late Wednesday at Auckland’s Air Force Station. One member of the Special Air Service was removed from command.

Kahotea joined the army on Nov. 1, 1999 and had served on operations in Afghanistan and the nation of New Zealand, according to a statement.

“We work side by side with our N.Z. partners around the world and we mourn the loss of their trooper and want to express our condolences to his family, friends and the nation of New Zealand,” he said.

The training was to include day and night flying and live fire at the Kaipara Air Weapons Range to practice counterterrorism integration techniques between the two countries, according to the Defence Force statement.

New Zealand has been on heightened alert since a gunman killed 51 people at two mosques in the southern city of Christchurch March 15.

However, authorities said the counterterrorism exercise had been planned since 2018 and was not a response to the attacks.

Kahotea joined the army on 25 Jan, 2006, as a Royal New Zealand engineer. He was posted to the Special Air Service as a specialist searcher in 2008 and was upgraded as an operator in December 2014, the Defence Force statement said.

He served in Afghanistan, and was awarded the New Zealand Operational Service Medal, New Zealand Defence Service Medal, New Zealand General Service Medal and NATO International Security Assistance Force (Afghanistan) Medal, the statement said.

Boswell, in the statement, said Kahotea was known for his dedication and reliability — always upholding the army’s core values.

“He was an outstanding soldier and a top bloke,” Boswell said. “I know that his family, friends and colleagues will be keenly feeling the loss and we offer our deepest condolences.”

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Every Friday in the European and Pacific editions of Stars and Stripes AND online daily at www.stripes.com/relo
Polynesian paradise

Gold Star families receive regal treatment at posh Hawaii retreat

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Paul Mitchell Estate on Oahu’s windward side is a posh Polynesian retreat with a swimming pool, jacuzzi, sauna, gazebos, flower gardens and a soft-sand beach just steps from a suite of villas that can sleep more than a dozen guests.

Only an enviable slice of society could afford to stay there at $5,000 to $8,000 per night, the price varying by season.

But few have paid a price as high as the 14 people who’ve spent the past week there: Gold Star families who have lost loved ones in uniform.

The group, representing six servicemembers who died in the line of duty, are the first to be hosted in Hawaii by the Marine Reconnaissance Foundation. The foundation board chose the inaugural group, but the Paul Mitchell Estate has committed to participate annually so more families will follow their footsteps in the sand.

“The truth is a lot of these families are from small, middle-America towns, some from farms, and have only dreamed of ever coming to Hawaii,” said José “Pep” Tablada III, a retired reconnaissance force Marine and vice president of the foundation.

A Hawaii native, he and his wife spearheaded the planning of this inaugural Gold Star event.

They began laying the groundwork for the event a year and a half ago.

Tablada said he had heard the staff at the Paul Mitchell estate — built in the 1980s by the late hair-styling mogul — was very supportive of the military. After meeting Tablada, one of the staffers, a former Marine himself, presented the idea of a Gold Star family week to the estate board, which agreed to donate a full week, Tablada said.

“When I was first invited, I thought it was a joke,” Tablada said. “I said, ‘This is a lovely place. I would never expect …,’ he said as he searched for words. “I have never asked for anything like this — it just blew me away.”

He craves contact with those who knew his father — or even knew of him.

“It’s always amazing meeting people who served with my dad, or knew of my dad at all, because they just say the highest, most respectful things about him,” he said. “It makes me feel like I know him, even though I never met him.”

Twelve years after the death of their son Luke in Afghanistan, Michael and Rita Milam still learn new things about him during Gold Star events and other gatherings.

“Last summer we heard a nickname we hadn’t heard before,” Rita Milam said of her son, who was a Navy corpsman assigned to Marine Corps Special Operations Command in 2007 when he died from a rocket-propelled grenade blast while firing a weapon atop a Humvee. “‘The Navy guys get to wear their hair longer than the Marines. He was very proud of his hair, and I guess they called him Boy Band.’

She laughed at the thought of such a nickname for her son, who had been single-mindedly gun-ho about joining the military since he was 8. He was a senior at Columbine High School in 1999 when two students went on a shooting rampage there that left 13 people dead.

At that point he had already enlisted early to join the Navy, but the carnage of the shooting steered him toward becoming a medic so that he would “always be able to know what to do in an emergency,” his mother said.

He is remembered and honored by others, and that is a comfort to the Milams.

“We try to keep him alive,” Rita Milam said. “His friends, people he worked with, military groups — they have really helped in keeping him alive. We laugh. We cry. But we do know he made a difference, and that’s helpful. Don’t ever want to lose that.

“There are five boys named Derek and three named Michael,” she added. “But he’s the only one who ever worked with me.”

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Navy ends search for lost Japanese stealth fighter, pilot

BY SETH ROBSON
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The U.S. Navy has ended its support of a Japanese search for a lost Japan Air Self-Defense Force F-35A stealth fighter and its pilot, officials said Thursday.

“A U.S. Navy salvage team aboard a contracted vessel completed its mission supporting search and recovery operations with the Japan Self-Defense Forces after locating debris from the downed JASDF F-35A off the coast of Japan, May 8,” the Navy said in a statement.

The jet went down with its pilot, Maj. Akinori Hosomi, who remains unaccounted for, in the Pacific Ocean approximately 85 miles east of Misawa Air Base, its home field in northeastern Japan, just before 7:30 p.m. April 9. A search team found parts of the fighter’s left and right rudders in the water about two hours later.

Searchers discovered more of the aircraft, including part of its canopy and flight data recorder, sometime after May 3, Defense Minister Takeshi Iwaya told reporters during a news conference Tuesday.

The Navy salvage team had deployed a remotely operated vehicle, CURV 21, to survey the area where debris was found, the service said in its statement. The 6,400-pound craft can reach a depth of 20,000 feet in salvage operations, according to a Navy website.

Prior to the salvage team mission, the guided-missile destroyer USS Stethem and multiple P-8A Poseidon aircraft joined a Self-Defense Forces search from Apr. 9-17, covering more than 5,000 square nautical miles, the Navy said.

“The U.S. Navy’s thoughts continue to be with the pilot’s family, friends and colleagues,” the Navy said.

The Kaimi, a wide-area seabed research vessel owned by the Japan Agency of Marine-Earth Science and Technology, concluded its search mission Wednesday, a JASDF spokesman said.

Japanese ships and aircraft will continue the search for the missing pilot and the plane’s fuselage, he said.

The search team includes a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force minesweeper, two private salvage boats and JASDF aircraft. No timeline has been set for the search, he said.

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Navy ends search for lost Japanese stealth fighter, pilot

Weeklong transit through South China Sea complete

Six ships from US, India, Japan and Philippines conduct drills despite China’s claims to waterway

BY CAITLIN DOORBOS
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. on Wednesday finished a weeklong sail through the South China Sea with vessels from the Indian and Philippine navies and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force in early May.

Six ships from US, India, Japan and Philippines conduct drills despite China’s claims to waterway

The quadrilateral exercise follows a U.S. request in December that its Pacific allies boost their military presence in the South China Sea. China continues to claim and militarize reefs and islands in the region, contrary to a 2016 decision by a United Nations tribunal.

China has created 5,200 new acres of land in the sea’s Spratly Islands since 2013, building artificial land masses for military outposts, according to the center.

Last year, China placed “anti-ship cruise missiles and long-range surface-to-air missiles on outposts in the Spratly Islands,” according to a report on China’s military power published in December, proposed bringing more pressure on the Chinese by having “other partners and allies joining in these activities” in the South China Sea.

“If not freedom-of-navigation operations … just joint patrols, presence operations,” he added, according to The Australian.

Freedom-of-navigation operations challenge territorial claims and are often conducted by sending ships within 12 nautical miles of a disputed land mass.

Days before the four-nation exercise began, the USS William P. Lawrence sailed the Taiwan Strait with a guided-missile destroyer USS Stethem April 28, irking China.

William P. Lawrence commanding officer Cmdr. Andrew Klug said working with Pacific allies strengthens international partnerships.

“Professional engagements with our allies, partners and friends in the region are opportunities to build upon our existing, strong relationships, as well as learn from each other,” Klug said in the Navy statement.

JMSDF Rear Adm. Hiroshi Egawa, commander of Escort Fleet, said the four-country exercise “built mutual understanding and trust” and “enhanced” peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, according to the Navy statement.

“The ability to do various exercises among four different navies smoothly demonstrated professionalism and high operational skills,” Egawa said in the statement.

Weeklong transit through South China Sea complete

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Suspicous package at US base in Japan found to be ‘safe’

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Security forces cordoned off the post at a housing area of U.S. Forces Japan for several hours Wednesday while they investigated a suspicious package.

Emergency procedures were initiated at about 5 p.m. by someone at the Yokota post office who observed suspicious markings on the package, 374th Airlift Wing spokeswoman Kaori Matsukasa said in an email Thursday.

“Explosive ordnance experts checked the package and declared it safe,” she said. “At approximately 9:30 p.m. the suspicious package emergency was terminated and post office operations have returned to full service today.”

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SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE
Ex-Air Force officer loses appeal in lurid-talk case

By Nancy Montgomery  Stars and Stripes
A former Air Force officer's online conversations about sexually abusing young children were not constitutionally protected, the military's highest court has ruled, as it affirmed his conviction for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.

The Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces on Tuesday rejected the legal argument that Lt. Col. Scott Meakin's graphic online discussions were protected by free speech and privacy guarantees. The five-judge panel unanimously upheld the former combat systems officer's conviction and sentence to nearly 20 months' confinement, pay and allowance forfeiture and dismissal from the service.

Meakin, formerly of the 563rd Rescue Group, 23rd Wing at Moody Air Force Base, Ga., was tried in a judge-alone court-martial in 2015. Using the pseudonym “John Jones,” he had engaged in a series of online conversations through email, chat rooms and instant messaging with some 17 anonymous individuals in which he described “in lurid detail the abuse, molestation, and rape of children,” court documents say. One of the unnamed users, posing as a sexually abusive father willing to exploit his young daughter, was a detective in the Internet Child Exploitation Unit of the Holton Regional Police Service in Ontario, Canada.

Meakin had argued that his chats, although “repugnant sexual fantasies involving children,” were anonymous, private, consensual communications protected by the First and Fourteenth amendments, as set out by the 1969 U.S. Supreme Court decision Stanley v. Georgia. That decision helped establish a “right to privacy” in possessing pornography in one’s home.

Meakin further claimed that this “speech” did not constitute conduct unbecoming under Article 133 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice because there was no evidence that his communications adversely affected the military or incited illegal activity.

The CAAF thoroughly rejected those arguments.

“(Meakin's) obscenity was not contained within his home for consideration within his own mind,” the court said. “Instead, he produced, preserved, and transmitted his written obscenities to seventeen separate individuals.”

The Stanley decision noted the United States' whole constitutional heritage rebels at the thoughts of giving government the power to control men's minds,” the judges said, but in Meakin's case, “there is a stark difference between thinking thoughts within the confines of the home and reaching outward to share obscenity and encourage strangers across the world to sexually abuse their children.”

Further, it said, conduct need not be criminal nor private to be unbecoming of an officer and a gentleman.

“The (essence) of the offense is that the officer's conduct disgraces him personally or brings dishonor to the military profession such as to affect his fitness to command the obedience of his subordinates so as to successfully complete the military mission,” the court said.

Holding officers to a higher standard of honesty, decency, decorum, fairness and mercy is not only enshrined in the UCMJ, the court said, but is a tradition hundreds of centuries old and includes the idea of chivalrous knights.

Separately from his court-martial, Meakin pleaded guilty in federal court to knowingly accessing child pornography.
President designates Brazil a ‘major non-NATO ally’

**By John Vandiver**
Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump said he will grant special military status to Brazil, making it a “major non-NATO ally” in a move to boost cooperation. In the background is Rio’s famed Sugarloaf Mountain.

President Donald Trump said that military intervention is "fanciful." He is less comfortable with the escalating rhetoric on Venezuela, which does not pose a direct military threat to the United States. Any U.S. military involvement there risks a proxy fight with Russia, which backs Maduro and has sold him arms.

The events of April 30 have effectively shelved serious discussion of a heavy U.S. military intervention in Venezuela, where escalating political and humanitarian crisis time is on their side and that Maduro will fall of his own weight. The White House has repeatedly asked for military planning short of invasion, however.

John Feeley, a former U.S. ambassador and Univoson political analyst, said there is another reason that military intervention is unlikely.

"It runs counter to Donald Trump's 2020 re-election narrative. At a time when you're pulling people back from Syria, back from Iraq, back from Afghanistan, how do you say we're going to commit 50-, 100-, 150,000 of our blood and treasure to a country where you can't tell the bad guys from the good guys?" Feeley said.
Local protests endanger US plans in Syria

By Bassem Mroue
Associated Press

BEIRUT — The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces took credit for defeating Islamic State in its last stronghold in eastern Syria, celebrating the victory in front of throngs of journalists at a ceremony in March following a bloody four-year war.

But the Kurdish-led force faced protests by local Arab tribesmen in Deir el-Zour province demanding better services, jobs and a bigger role in decision-making, the oil-rich and fertile region.

Though limited to about a dozen villages for now, the demonstrations are a growing challenge to the U.S. and its local partners at a time when President Donald Trump plans to reduce America’s military presence in Syria.

On Thursday, the Kurdish-led fighters opened fire at protesters in the village of Shheil, killing one person — the first fatality since the protests began last month, according to Syrian state TV and the DeirEzzor24 activist collective, which monitors developments in the region.

The protest came after an overnight raid in the village by the U.S.-led coalition and SDF fighters killed six people, according to DeirEzzor24 and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitoring group. The Observatory said two people, one of them an ISIS member, were killed in the incident.

An SDF official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said the protesters so far are a small percentage of Deir el-Zour residents. But the demonstrations benefit the Syrian government, its Iranian backers and Turkey, and undermine Assad’s influence.

Some of the protesters believe that Kurdish fighters sell oil to Assad’s loyalists amid severe fuel shortages in government-held parts of the country, aggravated by U.S. sanctions on Syria and its main backer, Iran.

Since SDF began capturing parts of Deir el-Zour in 2017, residents have expressed anger at what they say has been forced recruitment of Arab residents into the SDF, as well as the detention of many on suspicion of links to ISIS.

“People are fed up with the regime as an acceptable alternative, and they are looking for the U.S. to act,” he said.

Several meetings have been held over the past weeks between SDF officials and Arab dignitaries in the northeast of the province. But military commanders were not present.

The talks failed to make progress, leading to concerns the protests could escalate, according to Barabandi and another SDF official who took part in the talks, said.

Another SDF envoy also is pushing for new and expanded talks, stepping up coordination with the U.S. and Europe-based activist from Deir el-Zour.

The SDF says it is taking away most of the oil it pumps in Deir el-Zour — about 60,000 barrels a day — and leaving hardly anything behind.

Arab officials demanded, among other things, the release of SDF-held detainees, stopping the flow of oil from the province, giving Deir el-Zour fighters within the SDF a bigger role, ending “outrageous” recruitment by the SDF and improving electricity and fuel services.

Afghan security forces walk in front of damaged buildings Thursday, a day after an attack in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Attacks: Taliban reject calls for cease-fire

FROM FRONT PAGE

“I have no hope for the future,” said Khan Barat, a money changer in the neighborhood. “Every day Afghans are dying.”

Masullah Malekzai, the manager of a nearby transportation company, said one of his employees was killed and another nine were wounded in the attack.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said Thursday the insurgents had targeted Counterpart International because it promotes “Western culture,” including encouraging the mixing of the genders — taboo to the Taliban.

Mujahid claimed the organization was also training Afghan security forces, without elaborating.

The Taliban carry out daily attacks, even as they embarked on another round of talks with U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Qatar this week. On Wednesday, they attacked a police outpost in northern Balkh province, killing five policemen, according to provincial police spokesman Adil Adil.

The talks between Khalilzad and the Taliban focus on U.S. troop withdrawal and guarantees from the insurgents that Afghanistan would not again be used as a safe haven for terrorists.

The Taliban sheltered Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. The terror network’s leader and bin Laden’s successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is still believed to be in Taliban-controlled territory.

Khalilzad is pressing for a cease-fire but the Taliban refuse, saying their fighters are reluctant to lay down their arms while foreign forces are still in Afghanistan.

The U.S. envoy also is pushing for new and expanded Afghan-Taliban talks, which were to be held last month, also in Qatar, but were cancelled when the two sides disagreed on participants.
**DOJ: Border mission to last a ‘couple years’**

By Rose L. Thayer

Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department is working on a plan now with the Department of Homeland Security that could keep troops at the U.S.-Mexico border for the “next couple years,” a top Pentagon official told Senate lawmakers Wednesday.

Based on Homeland Security’s ability to manage the increasing number of migrants crossing the southern border, Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Senate Appropriations Committee’s defense subpanel that the two departments want to create “a comprehensive plan for the next couple years.”

“Although the commitment to the border hasn’t impacted preparedness for other missions at this point, what we want to do is get into a more predictable mode of the requirements the Department of Homeland Security has and do better at integrating across the government,” Dunford said during the Senate hearing.

Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., the Appropriations Committee’s chairman, opened the hearing by noting that spending for border security and other border and ports of entry missions represents the construction of about 63 miles of border barriers during the next six months at a rate of about half a mile daily.

“We now have on contract sufficient funds to build about 256 miles of barrier,” he said, adding the money comes from the Pentagon, Homeland Security and the Treasury Department.

Of the troops working along the border, Shanahan said the primary task is the monitor and detection mission, which is carried out by about 1,176 servicemembers. Other tasks include logistics support, food service and aviation assets.

Now, about a year since the first request from President Donald Trump for military support at the southern border, Shanahan said there’s been no impact to readiness.

“In some cases, its enhanced readiness because troops get to perform certain functions,” he said.

Hours later, officials from the Department of Homeland Security testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee’s subpanel on border security and immigration describing the Pentagon’s help as a short-term fix to a larger problem.

The more than 460,000 apprehensions in fiscal year 2019 at the southern border have already surpassed the full-year numbers from 2016, the last time the U.S. has seized a North Korean cargo ship that administration says it has seized South Korean officials in Seoul earlier Thursday in its first trip to the divided peninsula since the Hanoi summit in late February.

Senior U.S., Japanese and South Korean defense officials also held a series of summits with Trump last year when the North agreed to halt nuclear weapons testing.

“Maximizing patience” amid the tensions in fiscal year 2019 at the southern border have already surpassed the full-year numbers from 2016, the last time the U.S. has seized a North Korean cargo ship that administration says it has seized.

Shanahan told lawmakers that the department is working on a contract for U.S. Customs and Border Protection to acquire a series of border wall overviews overseen by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Shanahan said that efforts to get the bordermission on track have already spent $280 million on border equipment since the start of the fiscal year.

“Now, about a year since the first request from President Donald Trump for military support at the southern border, Shanahan said there’s been no impact to readiness.”

Missiles: N. Korea claims launch part of routine exercise

Korea claims launch part of routine exercise

FROM FRONT PAGE

The son of North Korean refugees, Moon campaigned on a promise to pursue engagement with the North but he has been limited by sanctions.

Moon told KBS that the missile tests seemed aimed at provoking the United States as part of the second U.S.-North Korean summit in Vietnam.

“North Korea appeared to be discontented it could not reach a deal in Hanoi,” he said.

Breaking the lull

The latest launches breached the 18-month lull, although they technically didn’t violate the North’s self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests to facilitate talks.

“North Korea fired two unidentified projectiles presumed to be short-range missiles” in an eastern direction from the southwestern area of Kusong, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

The missiles flew more than 260 miles and 167 miles, respectively, for 20 minutes starting at 4:29 p.m., the statement said, revising an earlier assessment that said it was a single, unidentified projectile fired from Sino-ri.

The South Korean military has strengthened surveillance and security measures in case of more launches, it said, adding that Seoul and Washington were working closely together to maintain “full readiness.”

Kusong is near Sino-ri, about 50 miles northwest of Pyongyang, which is home to a missile base and was the launch site for the North’s first successful test of the Hwasong-12 intermediate-range missile in 2017.

On Saturday, North Korea fired several rockets and what experts said was likely a short-range ballistic missile that could have the threat to target U.S. forces and other targets in the South.

That was the first missile launch since November 2017.

Growing frustration

The resumption of testing poses a challenge to President Donald Trump, who has frequently cited the moratorium as a reason to persuade the North to give up its nuclear weapons.

“After Saturday’s rocket firing, he tweeted that Kim “knows that I am with him & does not want to break his promise to me. Deal will happen!”

The adversaries have been unable to narrow the gap between them on the core issue of nuclear disarmament and other rewards for disarmament steps already taken.

Trump’s administration insists imposing economic sanctions will remain in place until final, fully verified denuclearization is achieved.

Experts who analyzed photos released by North Korea and a commercial satellite image said it was clearly a short-range ballistic missile with a solid fuel engine.

“The short-range ballistic missile, depending on its origin, may significantly enhance Pyongyang’s capacity to conduct strategic strikes against targets in South Korea,” non-proliferation expert Michael Ellemen wrote in an analysis for the 38 North website.

North Korea said earlier Thursday that those salvos were part of a “routine and self-defense military drill” and mocked the South for criticizing them.

An unnamed spokesperson for the ministry of foreign affairs said the North has demonstrated “maximum patience” amid the lack of progress and mocked the South and other countries for criticizing Saturday’s strike drill.

“The recent drill conducted by our army is nothing more than a part of the regular military training, and it has neither targeted anyone nor led to an aggravation” of the situation in the region, the official said, according to the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

Diplomatic deadlock

Biegun, the U.S. envoy, met with South Korean officials in Seoul earlier Thursday in his first trip to the divided peninsula since the Hanoi summit in late February.

Senior U.S., Japanese and South Korean defense officials also held a series of communications talks in Seoul on Thursday.

North Korea has expressed increasing frustration over the lack of progress, calling on Washington to agree to a reciprocal approach to talks and urging Seoul to move forward with inter-Korean economic initiatives despite U.S.-led sanctions.

The North conducted a series of nuclear and missile tests in 2016-17 that demonstrated strong progress toward its goal of developing a weapon that could target the U.S. mainland.

Trump and Kim also traded personal insults and threats of war during months of heightened tensions that only ebbed early last year when the two sides agreed to engage in diplomacy and held a series of summits with Trump and Moon.

US seizes N. Korean cargo ship

From wire reports

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration says it has seized a North Korean cargo ship that U.S. officials say was used to transport coal in violation of international sanctions.

The Justice Department announced the seizure Thursday of the Wise Honest. The ship was detained by Indonesia last month with two dozen crew members on board.

Officials said it was the first time the U.S. has seized a North Korean cargo vessel for violating international sanctions.

U.S. officials say payments for maintenance and equipment for the ship were made unwittingly in American dollars through U.S. banks.

The announcement was made at a time of tension between the two countries.

It came days after North Korea fired two suspected short-range missiles in its second weapons launch in five days.

The launch is a possible sign that nuclear disarmament talks with the U.S. could be in danger.
EU urges Iran to respect nuke agreement

By Lorne Cook
Associated Press

BRUSSELS — The European Union on Thursday urged Iran to respect the international agreement curbing the Islamic Republic’s nuclear ambitions, and added that the bloc aims to continue trading with the country despite U.S. sanctions.

The EU and major European powers — Britain, France and Germany — also said that they “note with great concern the statement made by Iran concerning its commitments” to the nuclear deal, stressing that they “reject any ultimatums” coming from Tehran.

The joint statement came as the bloc struggles to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, a day after a new deadline from Tehran on finding a solution to make up for last year’s unilateral U.S. withdrawal from the accord and re-imposed U.S. sanctions on Iran.

“We remain fully committed to the preservation and full implementation” of the deal, endorsed by the U.N. Security Council, said the EU statement.

The Trump administration pulled America out of the 2015 deal a year ago, saying it does nothing to stop Iran from developing military or destabilizing the Middle East. The Europeans insist that the pact is an important pillar of regional and global security and was never meant to address those other issues.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said in a televised address Wednesday that signatories to the deal now have 60 days to come up with a plan to shield his country — already laboring under economic hardship — from the sanctions imposed by President Donald Trump.

As the sanctions bite, domestic pressure is increasing on Rouhani to demonstrate that Iran can still benefit from an agreement based on providing it with economic opportunities in exchange for limiting nuclear development.

“Iran must remain in this agreement and we must do everything we can to ensure that it stays,” President Emmanuel Macron told reporters at an EU summit in Romania, where leaders were to discuss trade.

Amid the heated rhetoric from Tehran and Washington, Macron urged the agreement’s signatories not to “get caught up in any escalation” and “to jointly watch over our collective security.”

In their statement, the EU powers said they “regret the re-imposition of sanctions” by the U.S. and remain “determined to continue pursuing efforts to enable the continuation of legitimate trade with Iran.”

The Europeans have set up a complicated barter-type system to skirt direct financial transactions with Iran and so evade possible U.S. sanctions. The workaround, dubbed INSTEX, is not yet operational as Iran has not completed its part of the scheme.

The bloc said it plans to push ahead with the “operationalization of the special purpose vehicle INSTEX.”

The EU has also introduced a so-called “blocking statute” protecting European companies from the effects of U.S. sanctions, but many international corporations do more business in the United States than in Iran and have already severed ties there rather than risk running afoul of Washington.

In a message implicitly directed at the U.S. administration, the EU powers said “we call on countries not party to the (deal) to refrain from taking any actions that impede the remaining parties’ ability to fully perform their commitments.”

Despite the heated rhetoric, the Europeans insist that only the International Atomic Energy Agency can judge whether Iran remains in compliance with the nuclear agreement.

More than a dozen reports have shown that Tehran is respecting it so far. A new report is due at the end of May.

“So far we have seen Iran fully compliant with all its nuclear-related commitments,” EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said at the summit. The deal, she said, “is a matter of security for us and for the entire world.”

The crisis with Iran comes at a sensitive moment in the wider Middle East. On Sunday, the White House said it dispatched the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and B-52 bombers to the Persian Gulf over what it described as a new threat from Iran.

Israel, which has conducted pre-emptive bombings of nuclear facilities in Iraq and Syria, has vowed to never allow Iran to obtain an atomic weapon.

The USS Abraham Lincoln on Thursday passed through the Suez Canal on its way to the Persian Gulf, according to Mohab Mameesh, the canal’s authority chief. The state MENA news agency said the U.S. defense attaché in Cairo, Gen. Ralph Groover, traveled to the Suez Canal area to check on the status of the U.S. warship.

Putin: Russian military to be strengthened

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin told the annual military Victory Day parade in Red Square on Thursday that the country will continue to strengthen its armed forces.

The parade marked the 74th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany. It included about 13,000 servicemen and 130 pieces of military equipment, ranging from a T-34 tank — renowned for its effectiveness in World War II — to lumbering Yars ICBM launch units.

For the second time in three years, the parade did not conclude with an aerial display of helicopters and warplanes above the square. Russian news reports said the cancellation was due to heavy clouds.

Among the guests were recently resigned Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Steven Seagal, the American actor who obtained Russian citizenship in 2016 and later was named a special envoy for humanitarian ties with the United States.

Putin said in his speech that “we have done and will do everything necessary to ensure the high combat capability of our armed forces.”

He added: “At the same time, Russia is open for cooperation with all who are ready to resist terrorism, neo-Naziism and extremism.”

Dozens of other Russian cities also held parades for the country’s most significant secular holiday.

In neighboring Ukraine, which also observes the holiday, outgoing President Petro Poroshenko struck out at Russia.

“For five years, the descendants of the glorious victors over Nazism have defended with arms the freedom of the Ukrainian people and their civilization choice from Russian aggression,” Poroshenko said.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and backs separatist rebels who have been fighting Ukrainian forces in the country’s east for the past five years.
WASHINGTON — The House Judiciary Committee voted to hold Attorney General William Barr in contempt of Congress, escalating the Democrats’ extraordinary legal battle with the Trump administration over access to special counsel Robert Mueller’s Trump-Russia report.

The vote Wednesday capped a day of ever-deepening dispute between congressional Democrats and President Donald Trump, who for the first time invoked the principle of executive privilege, claiming the right to block lawmakers from the full report on Mueller’s probe of Russian interference to help Trump in the 2016 election.

Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler said the panel’s action by Trump’s Justice Department a clear new sign of the president’s “blind disregard” of Congress’ constitutional rights to conduct oversight.

“We did not rush doing this, but we have no choice,” Nadler said after the vote.

The White House’s blockade, he said, “is an attack on the presidency and the rights of the American people to know what the executive branch is doing.” He said, “This cannot be.

But Justice Department spokespeople, said Barr’s move was disappointing that members of Congress “have chosen to engage in such inappropriate political theater.”

Barr made “extraordinary efforts” to provide Congress and the public with information about Mueller’s work, she said.

White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said neither the White House nor Barr “will comply with Chairman Nadler’s unlawful and reckless demands.”

Late Wednesday the chairmen of the House Intelligence Committee issued his own subpoena to the Justice Department for the full Mueller report, as the confrontation intensifies.

Democrats’ counsel Adam Schiff of California, whose committee had previously requested the documents, said he has “no choice” but to compel the department’s compliance. He warned that if it continues to “ignore or reject our requests,” the panel could take legal action.

Though the White House initially resisted on invoking privilege, Trump told his staff and political advisers in recent weeks to refuse to cooperate with Democrats, believing the party’s goal was simply to damage him politically going into his reelection campaign. The coming legal battle could stretch to 2020, and up congressional probes until Election Day.

Executive privilege is the president’s power to keep information from the courts, Congress and the public to protect the confidentiality of the Office decision-making process.

The president’s decision was weeks in the making, the next inevitable escalation between the White House and Congress over a number of probes.

The White House has rebuffed all efforts to probe Trump’s business dealings or tax returns as well as the West Wing’s security clearance process.

The committee voted along party lines, 24-16, to recommend the full House hold Barr in contempt, but only after some five hours of heated and, at times, emotional testimony.

Democrats made their case that Congress was at a historic juncture as it confronts the Trump’s stonewalling of lawmakers’ ability to conduct oversight of the administration. Republicans portrayed the majority as angry and lashing out at Barr after the special counsel did not find that Trump colluded with Russia to swing the 2016 election.

However, the panel’s top Republican, Doug Collins of Georgia, said Democrats were manufacturing a crisis and rushing the process to “sully Bill Barr’s good name.”

Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, a Trump ally, said the Democrats were trying to “delegitimize” the president and biding time before they try to impeach.

“Get over it,” Gaetz said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has said the next step will be a contempt resolution would almost certainly move to a unusual, and potentially protracted, multi-pronged court battle with the Trump administration.

Nadler said Wednesday the Trump administration’s refusal to provide the special counsel’s full Russia report to Congress presents a “constitutional crisis.”

Trump promises more hurricane relief for Fla. Panhandle residents

NADLER

PANAMA CITY BEACH, Fla. — President Donald Trump promised a swift infusion of federal aid to the Florida Panhandle seven months after devastating Hurricane Michael as he rallied supporters Wednesday for his re-election.

Trump addressed a crowd of thousands at an outdoor amphitheater, looking to rally loyalists in the reliably Republican corner of the swing state as he kicks his 2020 efforts into high gear. Federal emergency funds to the area hit by the Category 5 hurricane and elsewhere have been caught up in a Washington standoff over Trump’s opposition to more hurricane aid for Puerto Rico.

“You’re getting your money one way or another,” Trump promised supporters in Panama City Beach, holding up a chart showing federal emergency aid to Florida, Texas and the island territory. “And we’re not going to let anybody hold it up.”

Trump took a victory lap after last week’s jobs report showing the nation’s unemployment at a generational low, crediting his cuts to taxes and regulations.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, who accompanied the president to Florida on Air Force One, said the 2020 election was a referendum on whether to allow Democrats to undo Trump policies like tax reform.

Trump earlier surveyed recovery efforts and lingering damage from last year’s storm, and he announced that the Department of Housing and Urban Development would be granting $448 million to the state for hurricane response.

“We’ve already given you billions and billions of dollars and there’s a lot more coming,” Trump said.

Trump was greeted by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis and local elected officials as he arrived at Tyndall Air Force Base, which was severely affected by the storm. Almost every building appeared damaged in some way, including a collapsed hangar.

The White House blamed “Democrat obstruction” for a stoppage in recovery work, with about 120 projects being deferred.

After touring the base, Trump took credit for rebufio...
DENVER — Voters narrowly made Denver the first U.S. city to decriminalize psilocybin, the psychoactive ingredient in “magic mushrooms.”

Decriminalization led by a slim 51%, according to preliminary figures on Tuesday’s election released by Denver’s Election Division. As many as 1,300 votes still remain to be counted, but that figure was not enough to swing the vote the other way, division spokesman Alton Dillard said.

Final election results will be released on May 16, he said.

“I think today’s outcome really demonstrates that the conversation is going to continue, and the world is ready for it,” said Cindy Sovine, chief political strategist for the campaign to decriminalize the drug. “Psychedelics are already here. Now we can start to have the conversation about using them mindfully,” she added.

Organizers turned to the same strategy that marijuana activists used to decriminalize pot possession in the city in 2005. That move was followed by statewide legalization in 2012. A number of other states have since broadly allowed marijuana sales and use by adults.

Organizers say their only goal in the mushroom measure is to keep people out of jail in Denver for using or possessing the drug to cope with depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress and other conditions.

“We’re not talking about legalization, we’re talking about not putting people in jail,” Sovine said.

The initiative effectively decriminalizes use or possession of psilocybin by people 21 and older, making it the lowest enforcement priority for police and prosecutors. It does not legalize psilocybin or permit its sale by cannabis businesses.

Kevin Matthews, director of the Decriminalize Denver campaign, said psilocybin has helped him deal with depression for years.

“This is not something you have to take every day,” the 33-year-old Denver native said. “It provides a lot of lasting benefits, weeks and months after one experience.”

Psilocybin has been federally outlawed since the 1960s, when it was widely known as a recreational drug. The ban stymied medical research, but small studies in recent years have found the substance had positive effects on anxiety and depression for cancer patients. Users have described seeing vivid colors and geometric patterns and experiencing powerful spiritual connections and emotions.

Magic mushrooms have been used in religious practices for decades because of their powerful effect on perceptions and spiritual experiences. Those same effects have appealed to recreational users dating to the 1960s counterculture movement.

A California effort to decriminalize psilocybin failed to qualify for the statewide ballot in 2018.

JASON FOCHTMAN, HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Rosa Amaya drops off ballots at the Denver Electoral Commission on Tuesday. Voters made Denver the first U.S. city to decriminalize the use of psilocybin, the psychoactive substance in “magic mushrooms.”

Organizers in Oregon are trying to gather enough support to put an initiative to a statewide vote next year.

**Insurance claims from Calif. fires top $12B**

**BY KATHLEEN RONAYNE**

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Insurance claims have topped $12 billion for the November wildfires in California, making them the most expensive in state history.

The figure released Wednesday by Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara covers the fire that largely destroyed the town of Paradise and two Southern California blazes. It’s up about $600 million from data released in January.

Most of the damages relate to the Paradise fire, which killed 85 people and destroyed nearly 19,000 buildings.

“While last year’s tragic wildfires turned thousands of people’s lives upside down, insurance is helping to rebuild and recover,” Lara said in a news release during Wildfire Preparedness Week.

California experienced some of its deadliest and most destructive wildfires in its history in 2017 and 2018. A series of sweeping fires in late 2017 had been the most expensive, with claims topping $11.8 billion.

The increasing destruction is making it harder and more costly for people to obtain homeowners insurance.

The insurance department has started collecting data on policy non-renewals to better assess patterns and locations where coverage is being dropped, Lara said earlier this year.

“The wildfire has long been part of California’s landscape and insurers understand that California faces major wildfire risk,” said Nicole Mahrt-Ganley of the American Property Casualty Insurance Association, which represents about 60 percent of the nation’s property casualty insurance market. “Insurers are still operating in this competitive and stable insurance market.”

She said in her emailed statement that California homeowners should take steps to mitigate fire damage such as updating their coverage and creating defensible space around their homes.

When insurers decline to renew policies, state law requires them to notify customers about other options. The state has a pooled insurance plan of last resort known as the “FAIR plan.”

California lawmakers are grappling this year with ways to address the cost and destruction of wildfires.

Pacific Gas & Electric Corp., the state’s largest utility, filed for bankruptcy in January, saying it could not afford potentially tens of billions of dollars in liability costs related to fires.

State law makes utilities financially liable for damages from wildfires caused by their equipment, even if they aren’t found to be negligent.

One legislative proposal would create a fund for catastrophic wildfires that utilities, insurers and underinsured people could tap to help pay for damages.

Legal and financial experts hired by Gov. Gavin Newsom suggested a fund as big as $40 billion to help cover costs.

However, if a wildfire losses continue to be as large in future years as they were in 2017 and 2018, a $40 billion fund would not be large enough, said Nathan Polak, a consultant with Filsinger Energy Partners.

**Storm damages Ark. apartments**

**Associated Press**

PINE BLUFF, Ark. — Several people were injured when a possible tornado tore the roof off an Arkansas apartment building, part of a powerful line of thunderstorms that was dumping more rain Thursday on already drenched areas throughout the nation’s midsection.

The severe weather moved eastward Thursday after forcing people from their homes in Kansas, soaking Houston once again, and straining levees along the surging Mississippi River on Wednesday.

The flooding has caused billions of dollars of damage to farmland, homes and businesses across the Midwest, with some rivers above flood stage for more than six weeks now.

In Arkansas, about 150 people were displaced Wednesday after the storm ripped the roof from an apartment complex in Pine Bluff, about 40 miles southeast of Little Rock.

Pine Bluff Police Chief Kelvin Sergeant said there was extensive damage to buildings, and four injuries at the apartment.

The National Weather Service planned to send a survey team to Pine Bluff to determine whether it was a tornado or straight-line winds that caused the damage.

In Kansas, flooding waterways forced evacuations and school closures Wednesday. Problems continued Thursday, with a 19-year-old rescued from the roof of her car near Emporia. And the Kansas Turnpike remained closed near the Oklahoma border.

The National Weather Service predicted the Missouri River would crest Thursday in St. Joseph, Mo., at a level that causes parkland and a residential area to flood.

More severe weather is possible through the weekend, and forecasters said flash flooding is likely in Texas and Louisiana on Thursday and Friday.
NATION

Uber, Lyft drivers expose low wages, lack of benefits

By Cathy Bussewitz
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The executives at Uber are working hard to design a future where the company earns billions of dollars by allowing riders to summon fully automated robotaxis.

Until then, they must rely on an army of human drivers — nearly 4 million across the globe — to keep the business humming. The challenge is to figure out how to make their drivers happy while also making money, and right now the company is losing on both fronts as it heads into its initial public offering on Friday — the largest technology IPO of the year.

Drivers complain about low wages and being classified as contract workers instead of employees, which cuts them off from the benefits that go with it.

Lyft, which beat Uber to the public market last month, is dealing with similar issues. On Wednesday, drivers for both companies participated in strikes across the country, pledging to turn off their apps for hours to call attention to their plight, although it’s unclear how many actually took part and the impact on customers appeared minimal.

“The drivers are the one who helped Uber to be $100 billion, nobody else, and the drivers are the ones who are suffering,” said Inder Parmar, 54, an Uber driver who lives in a suburb of New York City. “Uber and Lyft, they figured out how to exploit the drivers, and that’s what they’re doing right now.”

Uber is being challenged around the globe to treat its drivers as employees instead of contractors. Fighting those battles is expensive. What’s more, losing those battles and being forced to classify drivers as employees would exacerbate its financial difficulties.

“That would be the nightmare scenario,” said Dan Ives, managing director of equity research at Wedbush Securities. “That continues to probably be the biggest threat to the business models.”

By continuing to treat drivers as independent contractors, Uber and Lyft avoid paying for health insurance, overtime or benefits such as workers compensation, said Shannon Liss-Riordan, partner at Lichten & Liss-Riordan, who has represented drivers in the employment classification cases.

Uber rolled out a suite of benefits for drivers last week, which includes discounts on gasoline and car repairs and tuition reimbursement for Arizona State University Online for qualified drivers who log a certain number of trips.

But drivers expect pay to get worse as Uber and Lyft face pressure from investors to cut costs. Nonetheless, the companies shouldn’t forget the workers who helped build their empire, said Bhairavi Desai, executive director of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, which represents taxi and app-based drivers.

Oregon teachers walk out in red to press for better school funding

By Gillian Flaccus and Sarah Zimmerman
Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. — Tens of thousands of teachers across Oregon walked off the job Wednesday to demand more money for schools, holding signs and wearing red shirts that have become synonymous with a nationwide movement pushing lawmakers to better fund education.

Schools around the state, including Oregon’s largest district, Portland Public Schools, closed for at least part of the day. Most offered day care and free lunch programs.

An estimated 25,000 people massed in a downtown Portland park for a rally before marching through the city. The mix of teachers, parents and students wore red to support the “Red for Ed” campaign that’s taken hold nationwide and chastened that slogan.

It was one of many protests statewide that called on lawmakers to expand school funding in Oregon, which has some of the largest class sizes and lowest graduation rates in the United States.

Kathy Paxton-Williams, who attended public school in Oregon and has been teaching in Portland for more than 20 years, said she has seen dramatic changes.

“Every year, for the last 21 years, there’s been cuts and cuts and cuts,” she said.

Unlike other states, Oregon teachers are not seeking pay raises or other union demands. They say they’re walking out to highlight classroom conditions and how years of low funding has affected learning opportunities.

Some school administrators didn’t agree with the walkout. In Grants Pass, one of Oregon’s most conservative cities, students are volunteering to wash firetrucks or play music in nursing homes to show why the community should value education, Superintendent Kirk Kolb said.

Report: Air quality harmed as Texas oil, natural gas production booms

By David Warren
Associated Press

DALLAS — The production of oil and natural gas in West Texas is booming but it’s coming at a cost to residents who are regularly exposed to unhealthy levels of air pollution, according to a report issued by an environmental group.

The Environmental Integrity Project noted in a report released Thursday that the Permian Basin, which extends into New Mexico, is one of the most productive hydrocarbon regions in the world, thanks largely to the advent over the past decade of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing. In another two years the basin will account for about 40% of all U.S. production, the group said.

But a consequence of that production is dangerous levels of sulfur dioxide in the air around Odessa and other locations, according to the report, which adds that pollution levels in much of Ector County, where Odessa is located, exceed standards set by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

“Controlling air pollution in West Texas has not been a priority for the state, as evidenced by the scarcity of air pollution monitoring stations in the Permian Basin,” the report said. “And yet, the type of air pollution in the Permian Basin — dominated by excessive emissions of sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide — is known to have serious environmental and public health consequences.”

The report asserts that oil and gas facilities are releasing large amounts of unpermitted pollution during equipment breakdowns, maintenance and other so-called “emission events.” The unauthorized release of air pollution occurs mainly from flaring, which is a way to burn gas that’s released, according to the report, but Levin adds that flaring was meant to be a last resort that instead has “become a business model to get rid of gas that they don’t know what to do with.”
VA pressed on meeting new GI Bill deadline

BY NIKKI WENTLING  Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Department of Veterans Affairs officials tried to assuage doubts from House lawmakers Thursday about the agency’s ability to successfully implement changes to veterans’ education benefits later this year.

Following a missed deadline in the fall, the VA set a new expectation to have the changes in place by Dec. 1, in time for the VAForever GI Bill implementation, which the agency said would test its new IT system in June and again in October.

“We should have a good sense in early October whether it’s ready for prime time on Dec. 1,” Bogue said.

Following the Dec. 1 deadline, the VA should be able to provide retroactive funds to all veterans who received incorrect payments and haven’t already been reimbursed, she said.

The onus will be on the more than 14,000 VA-approved schools to submit students’ information in order for them to be paid retroactively. The VA isn’t aware yet of the total amount owed or the number of veterans who were affected.

The VA is providing regular briefings to Congress about the process, but Rep. Mike Levin, D-Calif., described the relationship between VA officials and lawmakers as “somewhat strained,” following delays by the department to share contracting information related to the project.

Levin, chairman of the subcommittee on economic opportunity, said he would schedule a hearing after the VA has tested its new IT system.

“While things haven’t gone smoothly with the Forever GI Bill implementation, it’s important to know we share the same goal,” he said. “We have to take control of this process to prevent the same mishaps from happening again.”

By TERRY TANG  Associated Press

Michael Kwan can’t help but think about what life was like on a daily basis for his great-great-grandfather, a 12-hour days in California’s Sierra Nevada mountain range on the Transcontinental Railroad that would reshape the American landscape.

“You’re not talking about 12 hours sitting at a desk or sitting on a bench. You’re talking about 12 hours of lifting and hammering and blowing things up,” said Kwan, a judge in Salt Lake City. “And I complain when my trainer says we’re going to add 10 pounds.”

Kwan and other Chinese Americans are pushing for these workers — some of whom lost their lives building the Western portion of the railroad — to get more than a token mention in history books. This week marks 150 years since the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, and several years’ worth of events are planned.

The group will be in Promontory Summit, Utah, on Friday for a photo reenactment of the hammering of the final golden spike of the Transcontinental Railroad on May 10, 1869. And Margaret Yee, whose ancestors helped build the railroad, will tap a ceremonial spike alongside Utah Gov. Gary Herbert and a descendant of Union Pacific’s chief engineer on the project at an event Thursday in Ogden, Utah.

“We haven’t really opened the envelope and insisted that these contributions be recognized until fairly recently,” Kwan said.

The descendants group is raising money for a statue of a Chinese railroad worker at Golden Spike National Historic Park. Like previous years, they are spending this week’s Golden Spike Conference, which includes theatrical productions and panels, including one with Tony-winning playwright David Henry Hwang.

Michael Solorio feels fortunate that his family was able to determine that his maternal great-great-grandfather, Lim Lip Hong, worked as a foreman on the Central Pacific Railroad while thousands of other workers remain nameless.

“I have found the image of what is “American.”

Descendants reflect on Chinese rail workers 150 years later

BY ALFRED H. MARTIN  STANFORD UNIVERSITY

In this photo made between 1862 and 1869, railroad workers, including some Chinese laborers, are seen near an opening of the Summit Tunnel of the Central Pacific Railroad in Northern California.

7,000 feet on the Sierra Nevada range, they were ordered to blast through solid granite using nitroglycerine. Some suffered brutal deaths in explosions. Avalanches also took lives.

“They bodies weren’t recovered till next spring. Sometimes they would be uncovered as the snow melted with their work tools still in their hands,” Chang said.

There is no definitive date on the death toll among Chinese workers. While some reports back then suggest about 150 died, Chang believes deaths numbered in the hundreds. In his book, “Ghosts of Gold Mountain,” he points to newspaper articles that mention the shipping of remains or “bone boxes” to China and Chinese groups in America keeping their own census records.

Clamoring for recognition for them has gotten louder in recent years. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Labor induced the Chinese railroad workers into their Hall of Honor. New York Rep. Grace Meng, a Democrat, introduced a resolution in March that would honor them and renewed a call for an honorary postage stamp.

Chang has gone further in ensuring Chinese laborers and their sacrifices are embedded in the historical narrative as director of the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project. The project has amassed a treasure trove of oral histories, letters, periodicals and other materials since 2012. Chang said he was surprised when hundreds of people attended a project showcase at Stanford.

“I think it indicates there’s a tremendous interest and curiosity and hunger for this,” Chang said.

Max Chang, a board member of the Golden Spike foundation that’s been helping plan anniversary events, has been giving volunteer presentations on Chinese workers at elementary and middle schools throughout Utah. The Salt Lake City native is not a descendant, but it always bothered him that Chinese laborers were “a really small footnote” in history classes.

“I had to do a lot of research to make sure I wasn’t just making stuff up,” he said. “I’m just a parent who wants to make sure my children and grandchildren will eventually know the story of the Chinese railroad workers.”

He is in talks with Utah education officials about making the lessons a permanent part of history classes.

Kwan, of the descendants group, said education can help dispel the tendency for people to see Asian Americans as not fitting the image of what is “American.”

“We’ve been here for more than 150 years and we have contributed every step of the way,” Kwan said. “That’s the dream: Have people stop asking us where we’re from.”

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By Julie Auzmer
The Washington Post

GLASGOW, Ky. — Todd Steenbergen leads worship services in church sometimes, but today he was preaching in a different venue: the public-school classroom where he teaches.

“A lot of people will look at the Beatitudes and glean some wisdom from them,” he told the roomful of students, pointing toward the famous blessings he had posted on the board, some of the best-known verses in the Bible. “I want you to think about what kind of wisdom we can get from these today.”

While Steenbergen was urging students to draw lessons from the Bible here in southern Kentucky, students in Paducah — halfway across the state — were reading from the Gospel as well, in a classroom where they drew pictures of the cross and of Adam and Eve walking with dinosaurs, hanging them on the walls.

Scenes of Bible classes in public school could become increasingly common across the United States if other states follow Kentucky’s lead in passing legislation that encourages high schools to teach the Bible.

Activists on the religious right, through the State-level Initiative for the Christian Education of Public School Students, drafted a law that encourages Bible classes in public schools and persuaded at least 10 state legislatures to introduce versions of it in 2018. Georgia and Arkansas recently passed bills that are awaiting their governors’ signatures.

Among the powerful fans of these public-school Bible classes: President Donald Trump.

“Numerous states introducing Bible Literacy classes, giving students the option of studying the Bible,” Trump tweeted in January. “Starting to make a turn back?”

Proponents of Bible instruction — such as Chuck Stetson, who publishes a textbook that he says is in use in more than 600 public schools across the nation — are thrilled. “We’re not too far away from a day attending church-taught classes. West Virginia is now embroiled in a legal battle over such a policy.

Even those opposed to Bible classes in public schools often agree that religious literacy can be valuable if it is incorporated into world-religions or history classes.

But that is not what is called for in the state bills supported by Project Blitz, an effort of the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, which describes its purpose as protecting “the free exercise of traditional Judeo-Christian religious values and beliefs in the public square.”

Leaders of Project Blitz did not respond to inquiries from The Washington Post.

According to Americans United’s analysis of the texts of state Bible-class bills, all but South Carolina’s — which includes permission to teach alternatives to evolution, along with “religions of the world” — focus on the Christian Bible.

Alabama, Georgia and West Virginia’s bills say schools can teach the Old or New Testament, or both. Florida’s bill, which does not just encourage teach the Bible in public schools academically, as part of a good education, you’re going to have to find a reason not to do it.”

Stetson, the president of the United States gives us a shout-out, that’s pretty crazy. … It’s got the momentum now.”

The remaining two are in Glasgow and Paducah. Both are in mostly rural counties. Mary Coomer said she just finished reading "Isaac’s Journey," and that she is often an outlier among her peers because she supports abortion rights and likes reading New York Times articles about current politics. “I don’t get that people who are good people, genuinely good, nice people, have good intentions, but because they don’t believe in God, they’re doomed to hell. I can’t accept that. I cannot accept that.”

She hopes to find faith, or to understand her lack of it, she said. But she is no longer sure that her Bible class can offer her an answer.

"I like studying the Bible anyway," she told classmates. "My parents are so religious. They push it a lot.”

The Bible per se, some things I’m just not sure of — not the facts of evolution — I don’t know," said King, who acknowledged that she is often an outlier among her peers because she supports abortion rights and likes reading New York Times articles about current politics. “I don’t get that people who are good people, genuinely good, nice people, have good intentions, but because they don’t believe in God, they’re doomed to hell. I can’t accept that. I cannot accept that.”

The court noted that teaching the Bible was prohibited because the law did not stop the teaching of evolution, noted that the science class was not a religious class, and that the materials used to teach the Bible in those schools suggested they were violating the Constitution and might lead to a violation of the law.

"That was the sort of teaching that concerned Isaac’s parents — what other character Steenbergen’s class as a potential lawsuit waiting to happen.

A different approach

At McCracken County High in Paducah, Ellen Powless takes a different approach in teaching her Bible class.

"We’re not too far away from a day attending church-taught classes. West Virginia is now embroiled in a legal battle over such a policy.

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She hopes to find faith, or to understand her lack of it, she said. But she is no longer sure that her Bible class can offer her an answer.

"I like studying the Bible anyway,” she said one morning this semester.

Silence. “That’s OK,” said Powless, who has taught English for 21 years in the school system, and who just retired. “Let’s go to the text — Genesis 25.”

"Asatic prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren,” she read. "And the Lord answered her prayer. Have we seen that there has been a real difference?" she asked.

In class, she calls biblical figures “characters” and always refers to “their god,” not to “God.”

Maggie Dowdy said she picked this course “because I thought it would be easy. After all, she already knew the Bible from church.

When the class started with the very first Bible story — the story of creation — she was glad she had chosen it. She added that it was her brother and father’s joint birthday, and that she thought of them.

"I don't get that people who are good people, genuinely good, nice people, have good intentions, but because they don’t believe in God, they’re doomed to hell. I can’t accept that. I cannot accept that.”

She hopes to find faith, or to understand her lack of it, she said. But she is no longer sure that her Bible class can offer her an answer.

"So I am here. I’ve been studying the Bible my whole life,” she said. "‘James 1:26’… ‘to do what is right and holy is a way of life, not just a Sunday morning thing. It’s a way of life. It’s a way of living. It’s a way of being. It's a way of being true to yourself. It’s a way of being true to God.’

"I don't get that people who are good people, genuinely good, nice people, have good intentions, but because they don’t believe in God, they’re doomed to hell. I can’t accept that. I cannot accept that.”

She hopes to find faith, or to understand her lack of it, she said. But she is no longer sure that her Bible class can offer her an answer.
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Stay connected and hey, welcome to the neighborhood.
BEIJING — Ratcheting up tension ahead of talks in Washington, China vowed Thursday to defend its own interests and retaliate if President Donald Trump go ahead with more tariff hikes in a dispute over trade and technology.

Beijing will impose “necessary countermeasures” if the increases take effect Friday as planned, the Commerce Ministry said. It gave no details but a ministry spokesman said Beijing has made “all necessary preparations,” suggesting it might be bracing for worsening conflict.

Trump threw global financial markets into turmoil with Sunday’s threat to raise import duties on $200 billion of Chinese goods from 10% to 25%. Trump complained Beijing was trying to backtrack on earlier agreements.

“If the U.S. tariff measures are carried out, China will have to take necessary countermeasures,” said a Commerce Ministry statement. The spokesman, Gao Feng, said later that Beijing has the “determination and ability to defend its own interests.”

The volley of threats reignited jitters about global economic growth, prompting another round of losses on world stock markets.

“China’s economy czar, Vice Premier Liu He, was scheduled to leave Thursday for Washington, according to Gao, the government spokesman.

Liu expressed hope the two sides will “meet each other halfway and care for each other’s concerns,” Gao said. However, he added, “at the same time, China has made all possible preparations.”

Chinese authorities already have extended retaliation beyond imports by targeting operations of American companies in China.

BBC fires DJ who tweeted chimp photo as ‘royal baby’

LONDON — A BBC disc jockey has been fired after using a picture of a chimpanzee in a tweet about the royal baby born to Meghan the Duchess of Sussex and her husband Prince Harry.

Baker tweeted Thursday that he has been fired after posting an image of a couple holding hands with a chimpanzee dressed in clothes and the caption: “Royal baby leaves hospital.”

The tweet was seen as a racist reference to baby Archie’s heritage. His grandmother Doria Ragland is African American.

Baker says the posting was an “enormous mistake.” It has since been deleted.

BBC Radio 5 Live controller Jonathan Wall said Baker “will no longer be presenting his weekly show for us.”

Wall says Baker “made a serious error of judgment on social media.”

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Vatican: Priests, nuns must tell church of clergy abuse

By Nicole Winfield
Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis issued a groundbreaking law Thursday requiring all Catholic priests and nuns around the world to report clergy sexual abuse and cover-up by their superiors to church authorities, in an important new effort to hold the Catholic hierarchy accountable for failing to protect their flocks.

The new church law provides whistle-blower protections for anyone making a report and requires all dioceses around the world to have a system in place to receive the claims confidentially. And it outlines procedures for conducting preliminary investigations when the accused is a bishop, cardinal or religious superior.

It’s the latest effort by Francis to respond to the global eruption of the sex abuse and cover-up scandal that has devastated the credibility of the Catholic hierarchy and his own papacy. And it provides a new legal framework for U.S. bishops to use as they prepare to adopt accountability measures next month to respond to the scandal there.

“We have said for years that priests must conform to certain strict rules, so why shouldn’t bishops and others in the hierarchy do the same?” said Cardinal Marc Ouellet, head of the Vatican office for bishops. “It’s not just a law, but a profound responsibility.”

The law makes the world’s 415,000 Catholic priests and 660,000 religious sisters mandated reporters. That means they are required to inform church authorities when they learn or have “well-founded motives to believe” that a cleric or sister has engaged in sexual abuse of a minor, sexual misconduct with an adult, possession of child pornography — or that a superior has covered up any of those crimes.

The law doesn’t require them to report to police. The Vatican has long argued that doing so could endanger the church in places where Catholics are a persecuted minority. But it does for the first time put into universal church law that they must obey civil reporting requirements where they live, and that their obligation to report to the church in no way interferes with that.

If it is implemented fully, the Vatican could well see an avalanche of abuse and cover-up reports. Since the law is procedural and not criminal, it can be applied retroactively.

Previously such reporting was left up to the conscience of individual priests and nuns. There are no punitive measures foreseen if they fail to report, and similarly there are no sanctions foreseen if dioceses, for example, fail to comply. But bishops and religious superiors could be accused of cover-up or negligence if they fail to implement the provisions, or retaliate against priests and nuns who make reports.

In another legal first for the Vatican, the pope mandated that victims reporting abuse must be welcomed, listened to and supported by the hierarchy, as well as offered spiritual, medical and psychological assistance. It doesn’t mandate financial reparations.

The law goes into effect June 1 for an initial three years. Dioceses must establish the reporting system and confirm it is in place to the local Vatican embassy by June 1, 2020.

Lead levels soar around Notre Dame Cathedral

PARIS — Notre Dame Cathedral’s melted roof has left astronomically high lead levels in the plaza outside and adjacent roads. Paris police say lead levels from the roof were found to be between 10 and 20 grams per kilogram of ground — between 32 and 65 times the recommended limit by French health authorities of 0.3 grams per kilogram. The areas closest to the cathedral are currently closed.

The statement Thursday said the main danger is lead dust that could coat surfaces of nearby homes and businesses. To avoid lead poisoning, authorities have recommended a good cleaning with a damp cloth, and that pregnant women and children wash hands frequently.

Hundreds of tons of lead were used in Notre Dame’s frame, as well as the church spire that burned and collapsed.

From The Associated Press
Caregiver of 12 kids accused of being drunk

MN COTTAGE GROVE — Authorities are seeking to shut down a licensed Cottage Grove home day care after allegations that a woman was drunk with 12 small children in her care.

Authorities allege that police who searched the home on Feb. 25 found three of the 12 children strapped in their car seats with blankets draped over them. Caregiver Megan Martin, 25, allegedly failed a blood-alcohol test.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune reported that Martin will appear in court June 3 on misdemeanor charges of child neglect and operating a home day care without a license.

She’s to appear in court Friday in connection with a lawsuit filed by the Washington County Attorney’s Office seeking to put her out of business.

Man, dog missing for 5 days found safe

AZ WILLIAMS — Authorities said a 29-year-old Minnesota man and his dog were found safe five days after getting lost in a sparsely populated area of Arizona.

Coconino County sheriff’s spokesman Jon Paxton said Timothy Coen was found near Williams by a resident who recognized him from a missing person report. Coen was reported missing Thursday.

Coen was driving with his dog Harlow when his vehicle broke down in an unfamiliar area.

Both Coen and his dog are reported in good health.

Man jailed; refused to remove obscene sticker

FL LAKE CITY — Authorities said a Florida man was jailed after refusing to remove an obscene sticker from his vehicle’s window.

A Columbia County Sheriff’s Office report said Dillon Shane Webb, 23, was arrested and charged with misdemeanor counts of violating Florida’s decency law and resisting an officer without violence.

It said a deputy stopped Webb in Lake City because of a sticker crudely describing a sexual appetite. The deputy initially cited Webb for obscenity with a notice to appear in court.

Officials said the deputy told Webb to alter the sticker to change the derogatory part, but Webb refused, citing his First Amendment free speech rights.

State calls for daylight saving time all the time

SC COLUMBIA — South Carolina may soon join the states that are calling for Congress to authorize daylight saving time all the time.

The House Judiciary Committee approved a bill saying the General Assembly planned to adopt year-round daylight saving time if the move is authorized by Congress in a federal law.

Winding up for disc golf

JUSTIN SKINNER, of Orlando, Fla., who has competed as an amateur in Professional Disc Golf Association events, practices shots at Prompton State Park in Prompton, Pa., on Tuesday.

Around two dozen other states are considering or have passed similar legislation.

The bill has passed the state Senate and now goes to the House.

Fines mulled for failure to clear snow off cars

ME AUGUSTA — Maine lawmakers are considering a bill that would require drivers to clear ice and snow off their cars before hitting the road.

The proposal would prohibit people from driving at 40 mph or faster on a public road with “solid precipitation” on the vehicle. The fine would be $250 for a first offense.

Supporters say it’s a public safety matter, as motorists need to be able to see through their windshields. They also say flying chunks of ice create a hazard.

Village OKs smoking ban at beaches, parks

ELK RAPIDS — A northern Michigan village decided to ban smoking at its parks, beaches and trails following complaints about discarded cigarette butts.

The Traverse City Record-Eagle reported the Elk Rapids Village Council voted to approve the ban.

The ban includes smoking of any tobacco product or other plant, such as marijuana, whether using cigarettes, cigars, pipes, bongs, vaporizers or electronic cigarettes.

Prohibited areas would include all village-owned buildings, plus parks, beaches, public access sites, fishing piers, trails and pathways.

Firefighters rescue 8 ducklings from drain

STORRS — UConn firefighters rescued eight ducklings from a catch basin on campus.

The school said bystanders walking near the school’s chemistry building called the fire department after noticing a mother duck and two ducklings crying at the storm drain Sunday evening.

The school said a firefighter attached to a safety rope used a ladder to enter the catch basin. He reached six of the eight ducklings and brought them out.

The other two had made their way down a drain pipe. Crews lured those two out using a cord attached to a small dish filled with Rice Krispies.

The amount a Sonoma, Calif., couple was ordered to pay for uprooting a 180-year-old oak tree and causing other damage to a protected property. The (Santa Rosa, Calif.) Press Democrat reported the case against Peter and Toni Thompson started in 2014, when a concerned neighbor reported heavy equipment and digging on a property protected under a conservation easement. Sonoma County sued the couple and a judge ruled against them last month.

Civil War exhibit opens in Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA — The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia is unveiling the nation’s first permanent exhibit exploring the constitutional debates of the Civil War. “Civil War and Reconstruction: The Battle for Freedom and Equality,” opened to the public on Thursday.

The museum says visitors will “learn how the equality promised in the Declaration of Independence was finally inscribed in the Constitution by the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments.”

The exhibit includes original copies of those amendments, Dred Scott’s signed petition for freedom, a pile bought by John Brown for an armed raid to free slaves and a fragment of the flag Abraham Lincoln raised at Independence Hall.

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BY Matt O’Brien
Associated Press

Amazon met with skepticism from some privacy advocates and members of Congress last year when it introduced its first kid-oriented voice assistant, along with brightly colored models of its Echo Dot speaker designed for children.

Now those advocates say the kids’ version of Amazon’s Alexa won’t forget what children tell it, even after parents try to delete the conversations. For that and other alleged privacy flaws they found while testing the service, they’re now asking the Federal Trade Commission on Thursday to investigate whether it violates children’s privacy laws.

“These are children talking in their own homes about anything and everything,” said Josh Golin, who directs the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood.

A coalition of groups led by Golin’s organization and Georgetown University’s Institute for Public Representation is filing a formal complaint with the FTC alleging that Amazon is violating the federal Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act, known as COPPA, by holding onto a child’s personal information longer than is reasonably necessary.

Amazon said in a statement that its Echo Dot Kids Edition is compliant with COPPA. In one example the advocates captured on video, a child asks the device to remember some personal information, including her walnut allergy.

An adult later tries to delete all that information, which includes the voice recordings and written transcriptions associated with it. But then, when the child asks what Alexa remembers, it still recalls that she’s allergic to walnuts.

“This suggests that Amazon has designed the Echo Dot Kids Edition so that it can never forget what the child has said to it,” the complaint says.

It also says that about 85% of the more than 2,000 games, quizzes and other Alexa “skills” aimed at kids did not have privacy policies posted. Such skills are generally produced by independent software developers or other third parties, not Amazon.

It’s unclear whether the FTC will take up the complaint since its investigations are rarely public. But the agency has been enforcing children’s privacy rules more seriously in the past year, said Allison Fitzpatrick, a lawyer who helps companies comply with COPPA requirements and was not involved in the complaint.

That was the case earlier this week when the agency issued a warning to a Ukrainian firm that its three dating apps appeared to violate COPPA because they were accessible to children, which led Google and Apple to pull them from the child store.

Earlier this year, the FTC imposed a $5.7 million fine on popular video-sharing app TikTok, the largest COPPA-related penalty since the law was enacted two decades ago.

For the FTC to take notice, however, Fitzpatrick said there usually needs to be evidence of “real, actual harm,” not just the theoretical harm she said advocates often outline.

But Fitzpatrick said that, on their face, the new allegations against Amazon appear troubling. She said the FTC provides an exemption that enables a business to collect a child’s voice recording without parental consent, but that’s only for a temporary and specific purpose such as to perform an online search or fulfill a verbal command.

EUROPE GAS PRICES

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* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the week of May 10-16

MARK LENNIHAN

An Amazon Echo Dot sits on a shelf at the Amazon Prime warehouse in New York. Privacy advocates question whether the kid-oriented voice assistant violates children’s privacy laws.

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

FRIDAY IN EUROPE

SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC
In a sea of franchises, original gems find spots on the schedule, too

Leonardo DiCaprio is shown in a scene from Quentin Tarantino’s “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood,” one of this summer’s original releases directed by auteurs.

Pass the popcorn. The summer movie season is here.


How about a reboot with a casting twist? Look no further than the “Dirty Rotten Scoundrels” update “The Hustle,” with Anne Hathaway and Rebel Wilson, or “Men In Black: International,” with Tessa Thompson and Chris Hemsworth.

Biopics? “Rocketman” is coming and “Brian Banks,” too.

A literary adaptation? There’s “The Sun Is Also a Star” and “Where’d You Go, Bernadette.”

Or a remake of an animated classic? Disney has you covered with two: “Aladdin” and “The Lion King.”

There’s also a world of original films that will add fresh stories, unique perspectives, depth and diversity to the mix. And they’re not all indies.

Some studios are making big gestures, with original horrors, comedies and major releases from auteurs: Quentin Tarantino has his 1969 Manson-era Los Angeles film, “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood,” which Sony will release; and Danny Boyle has “Yesterday,” coming from Universal.

“Yesterday,” while a fresh conceit, also has a big recognizable selling point: It’s about the music of the Beatles and what happens when everyone in the world forgets that they ever existed — except one struggling musician.

Boyle said with a laugh that the songs are “both the enabler and the destroyer. Because if you get them right, it gives you an advantage.”

He even made the bold choice to cast a relatively unknown actor in the lead role.

“Any studio is going to prefer one of the leading men if you can get it,” Boyle said. “But there’s a natural inhibitor here: They’ve got to be able to play Beatles songs.”

The one who stood out in a sea of “Yesterday” auditions was Himesh Patel, who Boyle said made them sound new.

“It’s not cheap making a Beatles movie. The Beatles songs cost money. But (the studio) saw the audition and they bought into him,” Boyle said. “He’s a lovely discovery. He has a modern sense of humor.”

“Yesterday” is not the only big original movie coming out this summer featuring a South Asian lead. There’s the Bruce Springsteen-soundtracked “Blinded by the Light,” from “Bend It Like Beckham” director Gurinder Chadha; the Uber-driver-who-gets-in-over-his-head comedy “Stuber,” with Kumail Nanjiani, and Mindy Kaling’s “Late Night,” in which she plays a diversity hire on a late night talk show writing staff.

There’s also diversity in the independent realm with two notable and highly personal visions manifested in Lulu Wang’s “The Farewell,” with Awkwafina, and “The Last Black Man in San Francisco,” both A24 releases.

Wang’s semi-autobiographical film, about a Chinese-American family who decides to keep their Chinese grandmother’s terminal illness from her, was a breakout at the Sundance Film Festival.

“The Last Black Man in San Francisco,” both A24 releases.

Wang’s semi-autobiographical film, about a Chinese-American family who decides to keep their Chinese grandmother’s terminal illness from her, was a break-out at the Sundance Film Festival.

“To have an entire film of Asian faces and then have it predominantly be not English language, but to still have it be American financed and distributed and marketed as a U.S. production is not the usual,” Wang said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23
Docs that have a shot of breaking out at box office

BY AMY KALBFMAN
Los Angeles Times

T
he top-grossing films at the summer box office always almost always feature superheroes, action heroes or animated characters. But last year, some of the best performers at the multiplex during the hotter months were documentaries.

Audiences flocked to see nonfiction films about Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Fred Rogers and identical triplets separated at birth. Led by Morgan Neville’s Mister Rogers bio “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” — which collected nearly $23 million — three summer documentaries surpassed the $10 million mark in 2018. To put that in perspective, only three nonfiction films had previously topped that financial benchmark in an entire year — like in 2012, when the docs that attracted interest were a concert flick about Katy Perry, a Disney-funded nature doc about chimpanzees and a right-wing political film about Barack Obama.

In other words, documentaries seem to be transcending their niche, egghead reputation. As Elissa Federoff put it at the recent film industry convention CinemaCon: “Now we joke in our office sometimes that $10 million is the new $5 million.” Federoff is head of theatrical distribution for Neon, which has found recent success with the docs “Three Identical Strangers” and “Apollo 11” and this summer will release a behind-the-scenes look at the world of black male strippers.

The latter is just one of the five films we think have the potential to do breakout business at the box office this summer.

‘The Biggest Little Farm’
(May 10; Neon/LD Entertainment)

Do you ever find yourself fantasizing about quitting your job, abandoning the city and decamping for the simple life? 30 years ago, John and Molly Chester set their sights on a 130-acre homestead in Moorpark, 50 miles north of Los Angeles, where they started Apricot Lane Farms in 2011. Before launching the business, the couple knew nothing about farming: John was a television director, Molly a private chef. “The Biggest Little Farm” not only serves as a kid-friendly environmental primer on how the circle of life functions but also offers a real-world example of the dedication it takes to turn a dream into reality.

‘This One’s for the Ladies’
(Seven; Neon)

So you loved the “Magic Mike” films but haven’t been able to make it to Vegas for the real thing? Check out Gene Graham’s documentary about the African American Stripper community in New Jersey. Yes, you’ll see a lot of thongs, whipped cream and bare behinds — this is NC-17, after all. But what starts out as a fun riff turns into a surprisingly emotional look at the men who are drawn to the world of adult entertainment and the women who devotely pay place bills in their G-strings.

‘Maiden’
(June 28; Sony Classics)

When Tracy Edwards decided to put together the first all-female crew to compete in an arduous, 33,000-mile sailing race around the world, no one thought she stood a shot. The sport was dominated by men, all of whom underestimated the sailing captain and her female team competing in the Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race. But as Alex Holmes’ “Maiden” shows, the 24-year-old was up against far more than just sexism in 1989: Her team struggled to find funding, was misunderstood by the media, and, oh, yeah, had to actually navigate the oft-cruel sea. After watching Diana Nyad swim from Cuba to Florida and the brave women of the USA Gymnastics team stand up against Larry Nassar, the tide should be high for this feminist sailing saga.

‘Ask Dr. Ruth’
(Released May 3; Magnolia/Hulu)

Sure, there have been plenty of documentaries about badass female senior citizens over the past couple of years — Ginsburg, Jane Fonda, Gloria Allred, Jane Goodall. Get ready to be inspired all over again by Dr. Ruth Westheimer, the legendary sex therapist who has been doling out frank relationship advice to the masses for decades. While you might know her from her parents in Germany and sent to a concentration camp at age 10, she was separated from her parents in Germany and sent to a Swiss orphanage as they were shipped off to concentration camps. Westheimer’s resilient, optimistic spirit is infectious and seems likely to catch on with moviegoers looking for a dose of positivity.

‘David Crosby: Remember My Name’
(July 19; Sony Classics)

Crosby has produced so much memorable music over the course of his career that it would be easy to create a jaw-dropping portrait of the rock ‘n’ roll star. But that’s not what this documentary is. Produced by Cameron Crowe — who interviewed the singer as a young journalist — and directed by A.J. Eaton, the film takes a hard look at Crosby’s addiction struggles, womanizing and unruly temper. Through the course of introspective sit-downs, the 77-year-old grapples with the harm he’s inflicted on his body through substance abuse and tries to understand why so many of the people he made music with — namely Neil Young, Graham Nash and Stephen Stills — no longer speak to him. Rarely do celebrity docs come this raw.

FROM PAGE 22

“The Last Black Man in San Francisco” is another exciting discovery from filmmaker Jimmie Fails, who wrote and stars in this story about gentrification and loving a home that’s no longer yours.

“I love that company,” Fails said of A24. “They give young, new voices a platform.”

Another outfit taking gambles on new stories is Annapurna, which backed Olivia Wilde’s directorial debut “Booksmart,” a sure-to-be breakout about two high school overachievers and devoted good girls who decide to go to a party one night.

Focus Features is releasing Jim Jarmusch’s star-studded zombie comedy, “The Dead Don’t Die,” with Bill Murray and Adam Driver, and Neon has “The Rose,” about an Irish mother of two youngsters, recently released from prison, who wants to be a country music star.

Some found luck with Netflix, like Amy Poehler with “Wine Country,” which is based on a real trip she took with Maya Rudolph, Tina Fey, Rachel Dratch and others. In the film, the group of friends gets together in Napa to celebrate a 50th birthday.

“She’s still down 10.9%.

When you look at the numbers, and there’s no question that ‘Avengers: Endgame’ was the biggest movie of all time with roughly $2.8 billion globally, you’re going to have a hard time finding anything that topped that,” said Paul Dergarabedian, senior analyst for Comscore. Of course the franchises usually earn the most. Last summer, the top five films were sequels and identical triplets separated at birth. Led by Morgan Neville’s Mister Rogers bio “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” — which collected nearly $23 million — three summer documentaries surpassed the $10 million mark in 2018. To put that in perspective, only three nonfiction films had previously topped that financial benchmark in an entire year — like in 2012, when the docs that attracted interest were a concert flick about Katy Perry, a Disney-funded nature doc about chimpanzees and a right-wing political film about Barack Obama.

In other words, documentaries seem to be transcending their niche, egghead reputation. As Elissa Federoff put it at the recent film industry convention CinemaCon: “Now we joke in our office sometimes that $10 million is the new $5 million.” Federoff is head of theatrical distribution for Neon, which has found recent success with the docs “Three Identical Strangers” and “Apollo 11” and this summer will release a behind-the-scenes look at the world of black male strippers.

The latter is just one of the five films we think have the potential to do breakout business at the box office this summer.
Horror Show

Season normally full of sunny escapism teeming with demons, serial killers and possessed dolls.

J.J. Abrams didn’t have to look far for buzzwords.

“I see a lot of soulless ghoulies on the streets at night walking along staring into their phone and they don’t even know they’re in the world anymore,” says the director. “Sometimes I just want to shove them out of the way like, ‘Wake up! Get off your screen!’”

Since Jarmusch’s “The Dead Don’t Die” (June 14), a zombie comedy starring Bill Murray, Adam Driver and Tilda Swinton, zombie movies are uncontrollable and a problem,” Jarmusch said in a recent interview. “They’re not monsters attacking society from outside it. They’re from inside the social structure that has somehow failed or is collapsing.”

Collapsing social structures haven’t been great for, well, the world. But they have been a boon to the horror film. And this summer movie season — usually a sunny time of air-conditioned escapism in theaters — is, fittingly, teeming with demons, serial killers and possessed dolls.

Jarmusch’s film is a more comic post-modern riff on the genre. Adam Driver’s character, Jarmusch notes, knows he’s in a movie. But more than ever, Hollywood’s summer is turning darker, more disturbed and scarier.

“Now, along with the theatrical experience changing, the summer is changing,” says Guillermo del Toro. “When you have a massive, massive overload of action, superhero movies, it’s great to counter that.”

Del Toro, the modern don of horror who stretched the genre in new, fantastical directions in “Pan’s Labyrinth” and “The Devil’s Backbone,” produced “Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark” (Aug. 9). The film, directed by Andre Ovredal, adapts Alvin Schwartz’s celebrated campfire tales, stitching together a single, slinky narrative.

“Horror always connects with the social anxiety. It’s always alive,” says del Toro. “And right now, there’s a great awareness of its social implications, and I find that exciting.”

The summer blockbuster, of course, was born with the sound of screams echoing through packed movie houses. Steven Spielberg’s “Jaws” (1975) ushered in the era of mass-release, heavily marketed summer thrills. But the season, built on the lucrative holiday turns sinister. “It’s a vacation movie,” says Banks. “For a long time there was this great trust in institutions and in people. If an alien comes from outside the world, let’s assume the best! Let’s hope they’re a gift from heaven!” says Banks. “Now, more and more there’s so much distrust of people and supposed heroes. So many of our quotation heroes, especially the men who have been perceived as heroes in the world, there’s a curtain being pulled back on so much bad behavior.”

Also on the way are “Conjuring 3,” from the director of “Annabelle Comes Home” (June 28), “Crawl” (July 12), “Venom” (June 28) and “47 Meters Down: Uncaged” (Aug. 16). Netflix, which has claimed the last years’ “Bird Box” drew tens of millions of viewers on the streaming platform, is also in the mix with “The Perfection” (May 24), starring “Get Out” and “Girls” star Allison Williams as a troubled musical prodigy.

But for many, the most anticipated — or, in a good way, dredged — release of the summer will be “Midsommar” (July 3), Ari Aster’s follow-up to his 2018 breakthrough, “Hereditary.” Wildly hailed as the scariest movie in years, “Hereditary” (released last June) summoned a steadily-mounting frenzy from the transmissible terrors of a multi-generational family. Its distributor, A24, even charted heart rates from moviegoers, revealing ever-larger graphical mountains of dread.

Aster cautions that “Midsommar” isn’t “Hereditary.” “It’s something different,” he says, that almost belongs to a separate genre. “Really, I see the film as a gift from heaven!” says Banks. “Now, more and more there’s so much distrust of people and supposed heroes. So many of our quotation heroes, especially that may be perceived as heroes in the world, there’s a curtain being pulled back on so much good behavior.”

In the slow-burning “Midsommar,” a sunny summer holiday turns sinister. “It’s a vacation movie,” laughs Aster, who believes moviegoers get a kind of catharsis from a good horror movie.

“Right now I think it’s a particularistic and defeatist. I feel that way too,” he says. “There’s some comfort in going to a theater and electing to watch a film as opposed to just sitting helplessly in your own life and watching everything fall apart. There’s maybe power in shushing out the $15 to have it happen.”
Some crucial advice from the man himself, Taron Egerton captures the essence of Elton John in “Rocketman”

By Lindsey Bahr
Associated Press

Sir Elton John gave actor Taron Egerton some unlikely advice for portraying him in “Rocketman”: Don’t do an impression. Sing the songs the way you want. It was a freeing, if unusual, bit of direction for a project about himself that John had been trying to make for seven years. But it gets to the heart of what “Rocketman,” out May 31, is trying to do: Evolve the essence of John’s life, as told by John, from his childhood to middle age and all the success, tumult and darkness behind all those fantastical costumes, and not give audiences a Wikipedia entry. You won’t even hear John’s voice at all — Egerton performs the songs himself. It’s an unconventional biopic for an unconventional rock star and John, 72, certainly wasn’t going to get in the way of that.

The project came together in a roundabout way, after a few years of false starts. At one point, Tom Hardy was signed on to star. But it wasn’t until producer Matthew Vaughn — who is friends with John and his husband David Furnish and had convinced John to do a cameo in his “Kingsman” sequel — proposed the idea of Egerton to play John, from his childhood to middle age and all the success, tumult and darkness behind all those fantastical costumes, and not give audiences a Wikipedia entry. You won’t even hear John’s voice at all — Egerton performs the songs himself. It’s an unconventional biopic for an unconventional rock star and John, 72, certainly wasn’t going to get in the way of that.

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FRANCHISE FACTS

"JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 3 - PARABELLUM"
Number of films in series: 3
Average box office: $688 million
Average Rotten Tomatoes score: 88 percent
A slick, hyper-violent action thriller starring Keanu Reeves as a hard-bitten assassin with nothing left to lose, 2014's "John Wick" proved a surprise sleeper, spawning a cult franchise with its own increasingly ornate mythology. Impassively, the follow-up took in more than double the first film's $43 million haul. But the third installment — with the now 54-year-old Reeves returning for more "gun fu"-style action — will truly test whether the series can continue along that trajectory.

"GODZILLA: KING OF THE MONSTERS"
Number of films in series: 3
Technically the 35th installment in the venerable rampaging-giant-franchise, "Godzilla: King of the Monsters" marks the third outing in Warner Bros.' more recently minted "Monsterverse." But viewers will likely provide the latest test of the remaining appetite for a series that already holds the Guinness World Record for the longest continuously running movie franchise.

"X-MEN: DARK PHOENIX"
Number of films in series: 12
Average box office: $215 million
Average Rotten Tomatoes score: 74 percent
Released two years before "Spider-Man" and five before "Batman Begins," the 2000 hit "X-Men" helped kick-start the modern superhero craze, introducing Xavier, Wolverine, Magneto and the rest of the Marvel mutants. As the franchise has sprawled through sequels, prequels and spinoffs like "Deadpool" and "Logan," the reception among critics and audiences has swung between enthusiastic and meh, and it remains to be seen where this continuation from the underwhelming "X-Men: Apocalypse" falls.

"MEN IN BLACK: INTERNATIONAL"
Number of films in series: 4
Average box office: $207 million
Average Rotten Tomatoes score: 66 percent
In this sequel to the immensely popular first film, Tiffany Haddish, Patton Oswalt and Dana Carvey try to replicate the unlikely chemistry of Smith and Jones.

"TOY STORY 4"
Number of films in series: 4
Average box office: $284 million
Average ROTTEN TOMATOES score: 99 percent
Injecting a simple premise — toys that come to life — with savvy humor and heartstring-tugging emotion, 1995's "Toy Story" made history as the first fully computer-animated feature-length film and set the template for all of Pixar's smash-hits. Two decades on and nine years after the best picture-nominated "Toy Story 3," Pixar pushes the franchise to a fourth installment — with Sheriff Woody, Buzz Lightyear and the gang on a fresh adventure involving a new toy named Forky. Could audiences start to tire of this plaything?

"ANNABELLE COMES HOME"
Number of films: 6
Average box office: $91 million
Average ROTTEN TOMATOES score: 58 percent
Centered on real-life paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren, 2013's supernatural horror film "The Conjuring" scared up $137 million in grosses and strong reviews, kicking off a string of sequels and spinoffs that have delivered wildly varying critical and box-office results. "Annabelle: Creation," released in 2017, was seen as one of the stronger entries in the franchise, though it remains to be seen where this continuation from the underwhelming "Annabelle: Creation" falls.

WEEKEND: SUMMER MOVIE SCHEDULE

**MAY**

8
"Wine Country" (in theaters; May 10 Netflix)
— Amy Poehler has assembled the cast of "The Avengers of comedy, Maya Rudolph, Tina Fey, Paul Rudd, Rachel Dratch and Ana Gasteyer." The Netflix film will end up as the latest entry in the rivalry between the two groups.

10
"The Hustle"
— Anna Hathaway and Rebel Wilson put a female spin on "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels." The star-studded comedy is directed by Ken Scott and written by and stars Will Ferrell and Rachel McAdams.

17
"John Wick: Chapter 3 - Parabellum"
— Everyone's favorite assassin is back and this time he faces off against a new threat: the Keanu Reeves character has a $14 million price on his head. The third outing in Warner Bros.' more recently minted "Monsterverse." This James Gunn-produced biopic, with Jamie Bell and Richard Madden. "Chuck Norris" (theaters and on Netflix)
— Ryan Reynolds lends his voice to the cuddly yellow Pokemon in this live-action mystery.

24
"Aladdin"
— This live-action reboot of the animated classic directed by Guy Ritchie will feature Will Smith in the role of the Genie. "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs"
— This Tim Burton-directed film about a young film student who gets wrapped up in a fraught relationship.

31
"Godzilla: King of the Monsters"

**ALSO PLAYING**

May 1
"Knock Down the House" (Netflix and select theaters)

May 3
"The Last Summer" (Netflix)
— "Non-Fiction"
— "Ask Dr. Ruby"
— "The Intruder"
— "El Chichano"

May 10
"Tukker"
— "Chili Says"
— "The Biggest Little Farm"
— "Porns"
— "All Is True"
— "My Son"

May 17
"All Creatures Here Below"
— "Fist of Fire"
— "A Violent Separation"
— "See You Yesterday" (Netflix)
— "A Dog's Journey"
— "The Sun is Also a Star"

May 22
"The Tomorrow Man"
— "Halston"
— "Echo in the Canyon"
— "Isabelle"
— "The Poison Rose"
— "The Perfection" (Netflix)
— "Rim of the World" (Netflix)

May 29
"Always Be My Maybe" (in theaters; May 31 on Netflix)
— "Charlie Says"
— "Pizza Boy"
— "The Intruder"
— "Ask Dr. Ruth"

May 31
"Killers Anonymous"
— "Maiden"

**JUNE**

7
"Dark Phoenix"
— Sophie Turner's Jean Grey gets the spotlight in this X-Men sequel set a decade after the events of "X-Men: Apocalypse."

14
"Men in Black: International"
— Tessa Thompson and Chris Hemsworth take up the mantle of this franchise with "Straight Outta Compton" director F. Gary Gray at the helm.

21
"Child's Play"
— Mark Hamill lends his vocal talents to the voice of the demonic doll Chucky in this reboot of the 1988 horror film, with Aubrey Plaza and Brian Tyree Henry.

28
"Annabelle Comes Home"
— In this third "Annabelle" film, Ed and Lorraine Warren's daughter (McKenna Grace) and her baby-sitters are the targets of the murderous doll.

**ALSO PLAYING**

June 7
"I Am Mother" (Netflix)
— "The Black Godfather" (Netflix and in theaters)
— "This Orc's for the Ladies"
— "Burn Your Maps"
— "Katie Says Goodbye"
— "Papi Chulo"
— "Pavarotti"

June 12
"Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story by Martin Scorsese" (theaters and on Netflix)
— "American Woman"
— "Being Frank"
— "Daughter of the Wolf"
— "Deep Murder"
— "Hambrecht"
— "Wild Rose"

June 19
"Beats" (Netflix)
— "The Edge of Democracy" (theaters and Netflix)
— "Anna"
— "Nightmare Cinema"
— "Tori Morrison: The Pieces I Am"

June 26
"Killers Anonymous"
— "Maiden"

Schedule from The Associated Press; franchise capsules from The Los Angeles Times
JULY

2  “Spider-Man: Far From Home” — There is life after “Avengers: Endgame” for Peter Parker (Tom Holland) on a school trip to Europe, where Jake Gyllenhaal’s Mysterio complicates things.

3  “Midsommar” — “Hereditary” director Ari Aster is back to scare audiences again with this film about a couple vacationing in a Swedish village with possible cult tendencies.

5  “Opphelia” — The women of “Hamlet” take center stage in this film with Daisy Ridley and Naomi Watts.

12 “21 Bridges” — Chadwick Boseman puts down his “Black Panther” suit to play a disgraced NY detective pursuing a cop killer in this gritty thriller with Taylor Kitsch and Stephan James.

24  “The Great Hack” — This documentary takes a close look at the Cambridge Analytica scandal.

26  “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood” — Quentin Tarantino takes audiences back to Charles Manson-era Hollywood in this film about an actor (Leonardo DiCaprio), his stuntman (Brad Pitt) and neighbor Sharon Tate (Margot Robbie).

31  “Dora and the Lost City of Gold” — A live-action adventure family based on the animated series with Eva Longoria, Eugenio Derbez and Isabel Moner as Dora.

ALSO PLAYING

July 5  “Marianne & Leonard: Words of Love”

July 5  “The Return of Martin Guerre”

July 12  “Armstrong”

July 12  “Lying & Stealing”

July 12  “Summer Night”

July 19  “The Art of Self Defense”

July 19  “Above the Shadows”

July 26  “Astronaut”

July 26  “Mike Wallace is Here”

July 26  “Skin”

AUGUST

2  “Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw” — The first “Fast & Furious” spinoff focuses on Dwayne Johnson and Jason Statham’s characters as they try to combat Idris Elba and help Shaw’s sister (Vanessa Kirby). Expect equal amounts quips and muscles.

5  “Luce” — The parents of an adopted teenager and model student start to question everything after reading a disturbing essay he wrote. With Naomi Watts and Octavias Spencer.

9  “The Kitchen” — When their husbands are arrested by the FBI, Melissa McCarthy, Tiffany Haddish and Elisabeth Moss have to run the Hell’s Kitchen organized crime scenes in the 1970s in this film loosely based on a comic.

16  “Good Boys” — From producer Seth Rogen, this raunchy comedy follows three sixth grade boys who ditch school one day.

19  “Where’d You Go, Bernadette?” — Filmmaker Richard Linklater adapts Marla Semple’s bestseller about a woman (Cate Blanchett) who perplexes her family when she suddenly disappears.

23  “Brittany Runs a Marathon” — Jillian Bell plays a woman who attempts to change her messy, party-girl life around by starting to run in this charming Sundance acquisition.

ALSO PLAYING

Aug. 2  “Love, Antosha”

Aug. 2  “A Score to Settle”

Aug. 9  “One Child Nation”

Aug. 14  “The Angry Birds Movie 2”

Aug. 30  “Angel of Mine”

FRANCHISE FACTS

“SPIDER-MAN: FAR FROM HOME”
Number of (Spider-Man) films: 9
Average box office: $290 million
Average Rotten Tomatoes score: 74 percent
Since 2002’s “Spider-Man,” Sony Pictures has kept its sole comic book franchise humming through an ever more complex web of reboots, sequels and spinoffs.

“FASD & FURIOUS PRESENTS: HOBBS & SHAW”
Number of films: 9
Average box office: $117 million
Average Rotten Tomatoes score: 57 percent
Since roaring out of the gate with “The Fast and the Furious” in 2001, this series has adhered to a simple (some would argue simple-minded) formula of muscle cars, musclebound stars and high-octane smashy-smashy to increasingly robust worldwide box office. But with “Hobbs & Shaw,” the franchise takes a somewhat risky left turn, spinning off Dwayne Johnson’s federal agent Luke Hobbs and Jason Statham’s mercenary Deckard Shaw in their own buddy action-comedy. Vin Diesel is nowhere in sight.

‘F3HIJKLM’
Universal Pictures

‘STARS AND STRIPES’

Universal Pictures

Sony Pictures Entertainment
‘Detective Pikachu’ much better than it should be

By KRISTEN PAGE-KIRBY
The Washington Post

It may be surprising, to put it mildly, to read a review of “Pokemon Detective Pikachu" that also mentions “Blade Runner.” (More on this later.)

But in a world where goldfish turn into dragons and baby dinosaurs walk the streets with tails aflame, stranger things have been known to happen.

For the uninitiated, Pokemon are mythi-
cal creatures of varying types that each have special abilities. (Ask your local 10-year-old to list a few of the many species and their powers.) Working with human trainers, they battle one another for supremacy by using their powers to attack opponents. The phenomenon started in the 1990s with video games, evolving into a cartoon series, a card game and eventually the ever-present cultural juggernaut it is today. “Pokemon Detective Pikachu,” the first live-action/animated entry into the canon, is only the latest fuel to keep the fire burning — and the money flowing.

“Detective Pikachu” takes the mostly cuddly creatures out of the ring and puts them on the streets of a place called Ryme City, where Pokemon and people live together in relative harmony. The story starts outside the city limits, with Tim Goodman (Justice Smith), a 22-year-old insurance adjuster who has given up his dream of becoming a champion Pokemon trainer.

After the death of his father in a mysterious accident, Tim heads to Ryme City to discover an amnesiac Pokemon lurking in his father’s office: It’s the yellow, rodent-like critter known as Pikachu. Though Pokemon can normally only articulate variations of their own names — e.g., pika pika, delivered here by the original voice of the cartoon Pikachu, Ikue Otani — this particular specimen (voiced by Ryan Reynolds) can talk. He convinces Tim to try to get to the bottom of his father’s death.

Here’s where “Blade Runner” comes in. Just as Ridley Scott created a film-noir vision of the future, the all neon lights and crowded streets — director Rob Letterman (“Monsters vs. Aliens”) has rendered a dizzyingly complex and visually dazzling Ryme City. “Detective Pikachu” embraces other noir tropes as well, down to the film’s snappy dialogue and trenchcoat-clad femme (not quite) fatale: a BuzzFeed-style journalist (Kathryn Newton) who compiles Pokemon listicles, yet aspires to bigger things.

It’s a clever kind of world-building. The film’s Pokemon — all of whom are CGI — look so real you want to reach out and cuddle them, especially Pikachu. That near-similitude makes “Detective Pikachu” feel like more than a kids’ movie, extending its appeal to nostalgic adults who may remember the Pokemon-card-filled binders of their own childhoods.

The screenplay, however, isn’t terribly well written. Running time: 104 minutes.

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

The elevator pitch for “Poms” had to have been: “It’s ‘Bring It On’ in an old folks home!” because that’s exactly what it is. The brilliant 2000 cheerleading comedy is the gift that keeps on giving (to the tune of, count ‘em, five sequels), so it makes sense to try and re-create that magic by mapping the formula onto a different genre. The friendship between Martha (Diane Keaton) and Vicki (Celia Weston — the only performer to nail the necessary wackiness yet with wit), Martha convinces Sheryl and a few other women to join her in a cheerleading club. Training montages, interpersonal feuds and viral videos ensue as they chase their dream of competing in a prestigious cheer competition.

The story and plotting are thin and merely serviceable at best, and it often feels like the film has barely been written. We know almost nothing about Martha or Sheryl, aside from their prickly personality and secret illness. So it’s hard to follow their emotional transitions, which turn on a dime and feel unearned. Much like a cheerleading routine, the story hits every expected beat, but it rings hollow.

Atkinson and Hayes do manage to achieve a few touching moments and even some surprising displays of independence. The friendship between Martha and Sheryl becomes the emotional touchstone of the film, and especially Weaver helps carry the heart of the relationship.

There’s even an undercurrent of rebellion in their dancing, bucking the prescribed behavior of what older women “should” do and what the prissy Vicki deems an acceptable pastime. The group refuses to be shamed, and even stands up to the controlling men in their lives.

One area where “Poms” surprises is in its forthright and funny treatment of death. “I’m just here to die,” Martha informs Vicki flippantly, who reminds her to aim higher than that. In a place where death is palatable and frequent, there’s a certain amount of gallows humor among the inhabitants of the community. While the fear of death remains, it’s not something that will ever stop these gals from doing what they want. Why worry about dying when you can spend your time dancing? Although “Poms” is an imperfect package, one can’t help but take the message to heart.

“Poms” is rated PG-13 for some language/sexual references. Running time: 91 minutes.
**LILA SOUTH VIETNAMESE SPECIALTIES**

**Location:** Richard-Wagner Str. 9a, 67655 Kaiserslautern, Germany  
**Hours:** Monday to Saturday, 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.; Sunday and holidays, noon to 10:30 p.m.; Wednesday, closed  
**Dress:** Casual  
**Prices:** Main courses start at 6.50 euros (about $7.50). Vietnamese specialty dishes average a little higher, starting from 8.50 euros (about $9.55).  
**Portions are big. Most appetizers and desserts cost less than 5 euros. Takeout available. Cash is the only accepted form of payment.**  
**Information:** phone: (49) (0) 631 31183430; Facebook: Lila Imbiss Sudvietnamesische Spezialitaten. Street parking available, also parking garage at K in Lautern mall.  

— Jennifer H. Sván

**Kranch: The latest condiment combo no one really needs**

Like Brangelina and Kimye, portmanteaus of famous pairings keep entering the lexicon, and Kraft Heinz wants to add some more. The company started with Mayochup, the combination of mayo and ketchup (why not ketchonnaise?) that the company released last fall. And it must have been a success, because they’ve just come out with three more Franken-condiments: Mayomust (mayo + mustard), Mayobacon (mayo + barbecue sauce) and the best-named one yet: Kranch (ketchup + ranch dressing). 

**Kranch. KRANCH. This is a word you cannot help but say out loud. Ranch dressing is having a revival, but it almost doesn’t matter what this tastes like. The most important thing — Heinz’s greatest hits of the America this summer — is the opportunity to say, “Hey, brah, can you pass me some KRANCH!” It is absurd. Are we really this lazy?**

There’s an argument to be made that combinations of condiments, while good on their own, can come together to create something even better — see: the European Union. Thousand Island dressing, for example, is made of mayonnaise, ketchup and relish, along with other spices. But these new sauces have a simpler, 50/50 recipe, you could make the case for a value add (of two of them). Mayomust functions as either a very creamy barbecue sauce or a mayonnaise dip with a smoky tang. It would be delicious with chicken tenders, fries and a chicken sandwich. Kranch is more ketchup at first taste, then more ranch — but you won’t care, because they’re both good on fries. It would also work on onion rings.

But Mayomust? It’s a food product that is also a complete sentence. It’s hard to think of the application for this, other than ham and/or turkey sandwiches. The only real benefit is that it saves you the time it takes to get two separate jars out of the fridge.

It seems as if the condiments are novelties that Kraft Heinz is counting on people to impulse-purchase. And if that’s the case, why stop here? There are many other combinations they could make. Mustard + relish = Mustish (great on hot dogs!). Ketchup + mustard = Kustard. Worcestershirenaise. Tartard Sauce. These are all good names. Not as good as Kranch, perhaps, but then again, Kranch could have had an even better name: Retchup!

— Maria Judkis

**The crisp greens of the Vietnamese mustard green soup — canh cải bì xanh — hide a cooked egg.**

**Vietnamese bun bo nam bo is traditionally beef noodle salad, but at Lila, the dish can be served with fried tofu.**

**After Hours: Germany**

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN  
Stars and Stripes

From its family-run kitchen to emphasis on traditional recipes, Lila appears to have the right ingredients to back Hoa Hiep Nguyen’s bold claim that his downtown bistro serves up the most authentic Vietnamese food in town.

The restaurant specializes in southern Vietnamese cuisine, and both Nguyen and his wife, Thi My Hanh, share cooking duties with Nguyen’s uncle. They’re from the region, where they grew up on family meals cooked with Vietnamese staples such as rice, noodles, fresh vegetables, marinated meats and herbs.

But though Nguyen is very convincing when he says, “What we eat at home, we cook here,” the food at Lila really does the talking.

I was surprised to learn that Lila has been open since October 2015, having only heard of it recently after a colleague mentioned it. I found it hiding in plain sight a few blocks from the K in Lautern mall.

The restaurant is small, with seating for about two dozen, but it’s clean and bright inside, the decor highlighting the Vietnamese culture and country.

After two hours chatting with the friendly Nguyen and hearing of his harrowing journey to Germany as a refugee after the Vietnam War, I left with a greater appreciation of the food he and his family prepared.

In Lautern, I had no prior expectations. With no knowledge of what Vietnamese food should taste like, I can’t say whether it’s authentic. I can say, however, that the food was good and fresh and certainly tasted like a home-cooked meal.

The menu at Lila includes a selection of southern Vietnamese dishes, as well as more traditional Asian dishes of grilled meat and fish served with different sauces, such as curry, sweet and sour, peanut and mango. Lila also has a separate sushi menu.

Husband-and-wife team Thi My Hanh, left, and Hoa Hiep Nguyen, left to right, cook Lila’s authentic south Vietnamese dishes.

Hình ảnh: Jennifer H. Sván

“That’s how we make it in Vietnam,” he said.

Svan.jennifer@stripes.com  
Twitter: @stripesktown

**Lila South Vietnamese Specialties opened in October 2015, specializing in home-cooked southern Vietnamese dishes. The bistro is down the street from the K in Lautern mall in Kaiserslautern, Germany.**

**Lila South Vietnamese Specialties is small but cheerful and clean, with freshly-cut flowers and Asian decor brightening the cozy dining room.**

**Photos by Jennifer H. Sván/Stars and Stripes**

**TOM MCCORKLE For The Washington Post**
There is a lot blooming in Heilbronn these days. The German city on the banks of the Neckar River is host to the country’s federal garden show. The Bundesgartenschau — or BUGA, as it is known for short — covers an area of nearly 100 acres on what was once industrial wasteland.

Around a million flower bulbs were planted here for the show, along with thousands of shrubs, trees and other plants. Not as pretty, but almost as interesting is what was pulled out of the ground in preparation: a ship’s bow with anchor, a railroad car and a truckload of unexploded ordnance, among other things.

As the name suggests, the BUGA is about gardens, but there is so much more — art, architecture, environment, rest and recreation.

The grounds encompass two lakes, and an arm of the river, the Alt-Neckar, has been incorporated in the show. The biennial exhibit, hosted by different cities, has often been used to upgrade a neighborhood or establish a new part of town, but this is the first BUGA to actually have residents.

One section of the grounds is called the Stadtausstellung, or city exhibit. Here are the beginnings of a new city quarter that will expand after the show ends in October. More than 800 people already live here in apartment buildings that include a kindergarten and bakery. In the future, up to 3,500 people will reside in the area.

The garden exhibits show how different kinds of gardens can be grown, be it with herbs, flowers or fruits and vegetables. One exhibit is on beekeeping and the importance of the little creatures for life on earth.

Plenty of art dots the grounds, from the soaring “Hoop-La,” by Alice Aycock, to the playful “Monumental Brooke with Beach Ball,” by Carole A. Feuerman, and “WE,” by Jaume Plensa. Works by local artists are also on display in temporary, rotating exhibits housed in containers.

Even if gardening or art is not your thing, you can still stroll through the grounds, or relax on the seating sprinkled throughout. One area simulates a dune rose garden like those on the German North Sea island of Sylt, with beach bar included. There are playgrounds for the kids, including a rock-climbing wall and two small beaches. A boat plies the Alt-Neckar, ferrying visitors to three different stops on the grounds, giving people a view from the river.

Children visit “Monumental Brooke with Beach Ball” at the Bundesgartenschau.

ON THE QT

Germany’s Bundesgartenschau: Come for the flowers, stay for the art, architecture, leisure

DIRECTIONS
Heilbronn is off Autobahn A6 on the Neckar River, about 40 miles north of Stuttgart, about 90 miles east of Kaiserslautern and about 100 miles south-east of Wiesbaden.

Follow the BUGA logo to parking. The Heilbronn main train station is across from the grounds, about a six-minute walk to the gate.

TIMES
Daily, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. through Oct. 6.

COSTS
Admission is free for people under 15; 8 euros for people 16 to 25; 23 euros if you are 26 to 66; and 21 euros for seniors 67 and above. Parking is 5 euros.

FOOD
There are restaurants scattered throughout the grounds.

INFORMATION
Online: buga2019.de. Under Hauptmenu, scroll down to Service and then BUGA — Life in Bloom for information in English. Dogs are not allowed on the BUGA grounds.

— Michael Abrams
Night of the Museums in Frankfurt

An exceptional night of art, music, performance and culinary specialties awaits visitors to Germany’s financial capital on Saturday night.

Frankfurt’s annual Night of the Museums will see more than 40 museums and cultural institutions throughout the city and nearby Offenbach stay open from 7 p.m. until as late as 2 a.m. with special programs planned. On board for the first time ever is Frankfurt’s beautifully restored Old Town area, home to several historical museums.

Visitors have a wonderfully diverse list of events to choose from. Watch medieval and baroque dance moves performed by a troupe in the Kaisersaal gallery of Kaisers and Kings of the Holy Roman Empire. Experience Peruvian night at the city’s zoo. Take a guided tour of the monumental sculptures of Bruno Gironcoli, watch a contemporary dance show or kick back to the sounds of a jazz and funk band in the Schirn Kunsthalle.

Tickets go for 14 euros per adult and 9 euros for ages 18 and under; these are available online or that night. The ticket includes use of shuttle buses, a historic tram and a shuttle boat. The event’s central information point is located on the Roemerberg. Online: nacht-der-museen.de

Flower time in Girona, Spain

The towering stone walls and ancient buildings of Girona, Spain, make this a city worth exploring year round, but never more so than during its annual flower spectacle, Temps de Flors. From May 11-19, the city will be awash in the rainbow colors of blossoming beauty. Displays are set up throughout the Barri Vell in a way that integrates the neighborhood’s architectural highlights with the greenery itself. Local businesses, hotels and restaurants compete to have their arrangements named the best in town. Some displays will grace interiors as well.

Performances planned for the occasion will include a cappella choirs and folk and dance groups, and an ensemble presenting Tahitian dance. Several local restaurants serve special menus incorporating edible parts of flowers into their cuisine. Exhibitions are accessible from 10 a.m.-10 p.m. daily. Entry is free. Online: gironatempsdeflors.cat
Cave in to culture

Okinawa World visitors get an entertaining, educational overview of island’s history

By Matthew M. Burke

Stars and Stripes

Even travelers who seek out the most authentic cultural experiences and are repelled by the commercialism of cultivated tourist traps might enjoy Okinawa World.

This expansive park — about 30 minutes southeast from Naha in Nanjo City — boasts a host of extraordinary and fun attractions that incorporate Okinawa’s beauty and mysticism.

Okinawa World captures everything that is exceptional about Japan’s southern island prefecture — including traditional eisa dancing, architecture, tropical fruits and majestic caves.

The first major selling point of Okinawa World is Gyokusendo Cave. The limestone cave system is one of the largest in Japan and features breathtaking examples of stalactites, stalagmites and flostones, including exhibits with names like the “ceiling of spears,” “bell of the rising dragon” and “Asia’s grand hall,” all set among colorfully lit pools.

Gyokusendo is beautifully maintained and easily traversable, with walkways, stairs and hand rails. The walkways can get slick, but if one is careful, it can be a most refreshing escape from Okinawa’s smothering summer heat and humidity.

Because of the stairs, it is the only Okinawa World attraction that is not wheelchair accessible.

Head over to Eisa Plaza to see an eisa dance presentation, which is traditionally performed on Okinawa during the Obon holiday to honor the spirits of ancestors.

The performance, offered four times a day, includes Okinawan folklore, intriguing costumes and dragon dancing.

Kingdom Village encapsulates hundreds of years of ancient culture into an area roughly the size of a couple of football fields. The buildings of the Traditional Crafts Village resemble an ancient Shuri Castle town and house pottery studios, teahouses and cultural museums.

There, children can paint their own shisa (the part lion, part dog from Okinawan mythology) or have their picture taken while wearing traditional Okinawan clothing.

Crafts like cloth dyed in indigo and handmade paper or weaving are also available for purchase, and visitors can stop by the Ryukyu Glass Studio to see how Okinawa’s brilliant, colorful glass is made.

The Culture Center offers a view into Okinawa’s “history, culture and daily life,” according to its website. The museum offers a glimpse into the past through a collection of photographs and shisa from Okinawan antiquity.

The park also boasts an Okinawan tropical orchard with 450 trees and plants that bear 100 types of fruit such as mango, pineapple and papaya, according to the Okinawa World’s website.

Pose for a picture in front of one of Okinawa’s ancient traditional thatched roof structures, among sweet-smelling flowers or sit down for a cold coconut at the parlor next door.

Nanto Brewery brews its Okinawa Sango Beer on site using water pumped up 325 feet from the Gyokusendo Cave. The water is rich in calcium and minerals and is considered one of the 100 most acclaimed water sources in all of Japan.

One can also watch brewers make habu sake, which is not for the faint of heart; bottles have the snake at the Habu Museum — along with herbs, according to the website. The snake is said to inspire virility and mute exhaustion and stress.

You can learn more about the snake at the Habu Museum Park, which features a snake and reptile exhibit and a snake and mongoose show.

Okinawa World has a large shopping center in the middle of the park that sells local snacks, desserts, drinks and souvenirs. It can feel a bit shameless when you are purposefully funneled through it to access various park attractions. However, Okinawa’s charm and beauty never fail to inspire, making even the most discerning visitor want to take a piece of it home with them.

Okinawa World ensures that they can.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS
Address: 1336, Tamagusuku Maekawa, Nanjo-city, Okinawa Prefecture, 901-0616

TIMES
Open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; last admission at 5 p.m.

COSTS
A general admission pass for access to all Okinawa World attractions is 1,650 yen (about $14.80) for adults and 830 yen for children. Cheaper tickets to specific attractions like Kingdom Village and Habu Museum are also available.

FOOD
The park features a restaurant that serves a buffet of local Okinawan dishes. Nanto Brewery also provides beer and other alcoholic beverages, along with other shops selling local snacks and a parlor for sampling coconuts and tropical fruits.

INFORMATION
Phone: 098-949-7421; Website: gyokusendo.co.jp/okinawaworld

— Matthew M. Burke

Stars and Stripes reporter Aya Ichishashi contributed to this report.
Trek to Base Camp allows regular hikers a chance at part of iconic climb

BY MOLLY SPRAYREGEN
Associated Press

When we landed, I was shocked to find the flight from Kathmandu only a 30-minute plane ride from Lukla. It is accessible only by air. The road to Lukla is 6,000-8,000 feet long; Lukla’s is only 1,700 feet long. It’s sloped upward to help slow the plane before it hits the solid rock wall waiting at the end of it. At the other end is a 2,000-foot drop. After landing safely, we were mesmerized watching the planes taking off for Kathmandu literally fly off the edge of a cliff.

Altitude sickness also is a concern, although if you work with an experienced guiding company, as we did, they will ensure that you climb slowly to acclimatize. We had two layover days and hiked a far shorter distance each day than our bodies were capable of going. This itinerary helped us grow accustomed to the air as it grew thinner.

Hiking slowly didn’t feel like a burden, as it allowed extra time to take in those jaw-dropping views. The higher I climbed, the more I felt like I could reach out and touch the shimmering, snow-capped peaks. The further we progressed, the more the mountains seemed to bend toward us, like we were inside a snow globe. At several points, we caught sight of Everest’s majestic peak peering out from behind its neighbors. Most of Everest lies in Tibet, but the peak is in Nepal. As such, the trek to Base Camp does not actually take place on Mount Everest, but inside Sagarmatha National Park — Sagarmatha being the Nepalese name for Everest.

Each day, as we made it a little higher, the air became a little thinner and our breath a little shorter. By day eight, the time between each step I took had grown significantly. I was breathing hard. My feet were dragging and my head pounding. I was grateful to have a guide, the glacial terrain changes so rapidly that the expedition leaders have to move their tents several times a day.

We took pictures beside the sign declaring that we were there and feasted on dark chocolate almond bark to celebrate. As we waded through the clouds, we lay back and watched the mountains disappear above our heads. The cheers and yelps of more trekkers arriving filled the air as it began to snow.

It may not have been the top, but it was nonetheless a spot where most people on the planet will never set foot. I feel so lucky to have stood in that very special place, and as I lay on the edge of a cliff, I feel so strong knowing it was my own two feet that got me there.
Keeping it light

Millennials interested in inheriting ‘Mad Men’-era antiques, not their parents’ big, heavy furniture

BY ERIN ARVEDLUND
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Millennials are interested in inheriting antiques, but not the big, heavy furniture of their parents, according to art appraiser and former FBI investigator Mischa Greenberg.

Greenberg said that while there is demand for hand-me-down furniture, there are not enough pieces to go around.

“Millennials aren’t finding a home,” he said. “They’re building small. Even the free furniture from mom and dad isn’t finding a home,” said Wittman.

High-end colonial furniture from the 1700s, collected by the Winterthur Museum and other institutions, still fetches exceptionally high prices. But those pieces are not what drives the antiques secondhand buyer — the buyer who instead wants everyday usable furniture.

Philadelphia’s premier auctions show large and small Mid-Century modern pieces selling for discounts. At an auction this year, a six-piece mahogany Chippendale-style room set with ball-and-claw feet sold for just $750.

Wittman himself just bought six high-end chairs made in North Carolina, which retail for $2,500. “I got them for $200” at Briggs Auction, headquartered in Garnet Valley, Pa., he said.

However, an Arne Jacobsen red chair and ottoman, with straight mid-century modern design, fetched more than $3,500 at a recent Briggs auction. It’s a trend that Philadelphia auctioneers, such as Freeman’s, have tried to capitalize on by featuring affordable, mid-century modern pieces that appeal to millennials.

Photograph your stuff


One of Scouten’s clients was a 20-something French. “My grandmother had an enormous hutch for china and flatware. It followed her throughout her life. But my mom couldn’t sell it, and it didn’t fit in an apartment,” she said. “When my mom died, I sold everything, and I went out to my car and wept. It’s complicated.”

She advises families to sell expensive pieces of art and divide proceeds among heirs.

“Keep it shareable. The cash is there to use. There are ways to preserve what was meaningful about the object without the object itself. That’s where there is opportunity. Don’t put it in storage. Take the object without the object itself. That’s where you can pass on,” he said. Wittman.

He said that “you can’t carry to part with something, take a photograph of it for sentimental value, said Clementence Scouten, founder of Attics Anonymous. “She helps families create personal histories of their relatives and heirlooms.

“When your parents are gone, you’re attached to a piece of furniture or china or stemware. But you can take a picture and make a book out of it,” Scouten said.

“Keep it light,” she said. “When my mom died, we sold everything, and I went out to my car and wept. It’s complicated.”

She advises families to sell expensive pieces of art and divide proceeds among heirs.

“When you sell it and share the cash. There are ways to preserve what was meaningful about the object without the object itself. That’s where there is opportunity. Don’t put it in storage. Take pictures of it and make a book, explaining where and from whom it came,” said Scouten.

She charges clients a $75 hourly rate to organize, and a flat rate to write books about their families and possessions.

“One client wanted a book about her mom’s hats,” she said. “That kind of emotional association you can pass on.”

GADGET WATCH

Multifunctional lamp reduces desk clutter

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

The LumiCharge II is coming to a desk near you.

After a successful crowdfunding campaign earlier this year, the multifunctional LED desk lamp charging station has launched and is available for purchase with a June delivery.

Even if you’re one of the few who has a clutter-free desk, you’ll still find a use for LumiCharge, the multifunctional LED desk lamp charging station.

If you’ve ever had one of those knives, you’ll understand the versatility of the lamp, which is far from just a lamp.

It’s great when used as a lamp, though, with 10 levels of brightness and 3 LED light colors — all from energy-efficient low-heat LED bulbs. A motion sensor night light will detect movement in the dark and give you a soft light to find your way around.

The base of the lamp is a Qi wireless, fast-charging pad so assuming you have a Qi-charging phone, just place it on the base and it charges. And, if you have or any other Qi-enabled phone will work.

A built-in universal charging dock spins around to expose lightning, USB-C and Micro USB charging ports to dock and charge non Qi-enabled devices.

Only one of those connections can be used at a time since the dial exposes the one you’re using while the other will be turned away. But there is an extra USB port to connect and charge an additional device.

Both the wireless and dock charging features are built to be user-friendly. A smart LED dimmable display on the arm of the lamp turns on as an information center with the date, day of the week, temperature and time. A built-in alarm clock can also be set for alerts and appointments.

After the crowdfunding campaign is over, the LumiCharge II will be $159 and available in black, silver and white.

Online: thelumicharge.com/products/lumicharge-ii-prelaunch

The base of the LumiCharge II LED desk lamp is a Qi wireless fast-charging pad.

The tough DemerBox is sure to be the life of the party. It’s a great-sounding Bluetooth sound system built into a Pelican case and 100 percent waterproof.

Inside the box is a pair of 3-inch, 8ohm, aluminum cones with rubber surround drivers.

Other features include a 50-hour battery life, which is rechargeable with the included AC adapter. With the internal USB charger, you can keep other devices charged up as well.

The Pelican outlook case is as durable as a case can be. Pelican is known for making the most durable cases with military grade standards, resulting in cases that are pretty much indestructible.

DemerBox incorporates a port plug, which makes the waterproof seal.

Measuring just 10.62-by-9.88-by-6.87 inches with a 5.44-pound weight, it’s easy to take along. While other speakers are waterproof, having the speakers built into the durable Pelican case makes it a perfect combination.

There is also a small amount of storage room for phones, wallets and keys to keep them safe and dry while you’re on the water. Bluetooth will have a 100-foot range from your media source, so keep in mind that while the DemerBox is waterproof, in most cases what you’re using to send the music is not.

Online: demerbox.com; $349, available in royal blue, matte black, orange and yellow.
I think that the Earth Defense Force series is one of those games you either get, or you don’t. You either understand what’s great about an arcade-style third-person shooter that lets you blow up giant insects in a chaotic fervor, or we probably just don’t get each other and never will. I don’t think I’m alone in the sentiment, either. While the EDF series may never have the reach of some other titles, what it does have is a dedicated fan base. That following has only grown over the years as the game has improved. Now we find ourselves on the precipice of an entirely new era for the series as Iron Rain launches on the PS4.

Iron Rain isn’t so much a new chapter for EDF as it is an entirely new story made with a Western gaming audience in mind. In many ways, Iron Rain succeeds at delivering key new features and details that fans will be excited to experience, but at the same time, multiple aspects stay the same, for better or for worse.

Players take on the role of the Closer, a legendary soldier who survived a key battle against an alien invading force seven years earlier. Since that time, the Closer has been in cryogenic suspension awaiting a moment when once again his special skills and one-of-a-kind physical augmentation gear (PA-Gear) would be needed to protect the homeworld. Now the Closer must battle the mysterious alien invaders and soldiers be more than nameless fodder, which is a nice touch, but the dialogue and characters are as cheesy as ever. The writing is still very much on that late-night sci-fi B-movie level, and very laughable.

Iron Rain does deliver one of the most enjoyable and extremely challenging experiences that I’ve ever had with the EDF series. It doesn’t reinvent the wheel as far as gameplay or mechanics go, but it does make some great tweaks that make it one of the most notable entries in the franchise’s history. This is still a game that’s primarily about blowing up bugs, aliens and kaiju monsters, but there are many more customization options.

The pivot from a class-based weapon system to one that lets you purchase weapons you want is a good move that allows for some creative combinations, such as a Jet Lifter with a laser sword and a minigun. Replacing the support class with the new Prowl Rider (more on that in a minute) and allowing each class to carry a limited supply of support items like health packs, revives, turrets and vehicles is another welcome new feature. Being able to customize my avatar and unlock new outfits as I progressed through Iron Rain was something I’ve been personally wanting to see in the series for a long time.

EDF fans will be familiar with Iron Rain’s character classes: The standard run-and-gun Trooper, the high-flying Jet Lifter and the dual-weapon-wielding tank known as the Heavy Striker. One thing that Iron Rain does very well is build players up to unlock the more nuanced classes as they progress through the campaign. Usually, players have to start from level one when switching classes, but now everything is tied to your character instead of the class itself.

Iron Rain introduces the Prowl Rider, the game’s tactical soldier class. As a Rider, players have the ability to summon a giant bug that does their bidding. Players will have to think carefully about what loadouts to bring into the fray and how to approach a situation. Learning when in a mission to go all-out with an overdrive ability is another key factor in level strategy.

Players are also now graded at the end of each level based on factors like completion time, how much damage was taken, and whether or not their PA gear overheated. In order to keep players from spamming support gear, each item used or vehicle called in is charged at the end of a round. I can see why the system was put in place, but the prices for some things seem a bit steep. It’s odd that players who revived a downed teammate stand to lose money, especially since they’re not the ones who made a few mistakes and died.

Iron Rain will offer single players a grueling challenge, even on normal mode, but these games were never really meant to be played solo. Because of the extra challenge, Iron Rain has upped the co-op player count from four to six. Any time I can get more friends in on the fun in any game, it’s a welcome addition. In the case of “Iron Rain,” you really get the full experience of playing with a squad.

As far as I know, this is also the first EDF to feature PvP in the form of Mercenary mode. Right now there’s only one game for it called Scavenger. It pits two teams with up to four players each against each other in an arena full of creatures. Players must collect the gems that the creatures drop and then deposit them at certain locations on the map to earn points. The team with the most points wins that round, and the first team to win three rounds takes the match. As the rounds progress, the enemies get tougher and the time decreases, making it more difficult to score. Playing PvP earns mercenary points, which can be used to unlock new online titles that come with bonus currency to use in the campaign. While adding a PvP mode was a nice touch, it’s rather mediocre in its execution.

Iron Rain stands out as one of the most enthralling, challenging and gorgeous entries in the series. It does have some glaring flaws: the imbalances in the new currency system, balancing issues like the Jet Lifter running out of boost too quickly; and how long it takes the meter to recharge after overheating. I also experienced several crashes while playing.

Despite these issues, I just can’t quit Iron Rain. It’s too addictively fun to give up on, and any EDF fan that’s been around long enough is most likely used to these games having a few blemishes.

**Platform:** PlayStation 4
**Online:** d3p.co.jp/edf/en

Third-person shooter Earth Defense Force: Iron Rain introduces a new cast of characters and customization options but retains the series’ charming B-movie dialogue.
ALL THINGS

BY SONIA RAO
The Washington Post

It's difficult to pinpoint exactly when BTS became a global phenomenon. The boy band is Korean pop royalty at this point, known to and beloved by fans of the genre for several years. But for those who haven't always been in the K-pop loop, the past few months might feel like an awakening of sorts.

In mid-April, BTS became the first South Korean musical guest to perform on “Saturday Night Live,” with its single “Boy With Luv” from its latest EP, “Map of the Soul: Persona.” The release topped the Billboard 200 chart in its opening week, marking the group's third No. 1 after August's “Love Yourself: Tear.” “Love Yourself: Answer” and “Love Yourself: Speak Yourself” — Forbes reported in March that it’s almost an understatement that appeals to a wide range of people, including many who may not even speak the language. Sweeping as that sounds, it’s almost an understatement — Forbes reported in March that BTS sold out its shows in North America and Europe for the “Love Yourself: Speak Yourself” stadium tour.

Who makes up BTS?

BTS is made up of seven polished 20-somethings: rappers RM, J-Hope and Suga, as well as vocalists Jimin, Jin, Jungkook and V. They released their debut album “2 Cool 4 Skool” in 2013, but their journey began earlier: In 2010, BTS leader RM met with Bang Si-hyuk, the founder and CEO of the Seoul-based Big Hit Entertainment, who saw potential in his rapping. (The others came onboard afterward.)

As with American boy bands, K-pop groups often have close creative ties to their production companies — generally, JYP Entertainment, SM Entertainment or YG Entertainment. But Big Hit Entertainment, begin a much smaller company, has given BTS quite a bit of freedom. From “2 Cool 4 Skool” onward, BTS has explored new territory with lyrics that speak to the affections of younger generations. The album’s lead single, “No More Dream,” for instance, explored how societal expectations affect Korean youths. “We started to tell the stories that other people wanted to hear and were ready to hear, stories that other people could not or would not tell,” Suga told Time magazine last year. “We said what other people were feeling — like pain, anxiety and worries.”

What does BTS stand for?

It stands for the Korean expression Bangtan Sonyeondan, which literally translates to “Bulletproof Boy Scouts” (another nod to the group’s social awareness and efforts to combat oppressive expectations facing today’s youths). BTS is also referred to as the Bangtan Boys.

In 2017, BTS added a new English meaning to their name: Beyond the Scene. Representative M.C. for Youth, and V, are giving voice to the peaks and valleys of other things: R&B, EDM, rap and even rock. (Genre lines continue to blur.) This variety matches that of other things: R&B, EDM, rap and even rock. (Genre lines continue to blur.) This variety matches that of other things: R&B, EDM, rap and even rock. (Genre lines continue to blur.) This variety matches that of other things: R&B, EDM, rap and even rock. (Genre lines continue to blur.) This variety matches that of other things: R&B, EDM, rap and even rock. (Genre lines continue to blur.) This variety matches that of other things: R&B, EDM, rap and even rock. (Genre lines continue to blur.) This variety matches that of other things: R&B, EDM, rap and even rock. (Genre lines continue to blur.) This variety matches that of other things: R&B, EDM, rap and even rock. (Genre lines continue to blur.) This variety matches that of other things: R&B, EDM, rap and even rock. (Genre lines continue to blur.) This variety matches that of other things: R&B, EDM, rap and even rock. (Genre lines continue to blur.) This variety matches that of...
East Coast prep out, LA dad vibes in

Frenetic indie-rockers Vampire Weekend go laid-back California on ‘Father of the Bride’

By Mikael Wood
Los Angeles Times

I t wasn’t always relaxing, the six-year break between Vampire Weekend’s last album and its new one, but not because Ezra Koenig didn’t have time to chill. Sure, the frontman kept busy with projects outside the band known for its globe-hopping style and arch, prep-school attitude. There was the animated series he made for Netflix and a radio show on Apple’s Beats 1; there was the tune he wrote for the movie “Peter Rabbit” and his performance with Karen O at the Academy Awards.

But come on, Koenig scoffed, it’s not like these bursts of activity filled the half-decade since “Modern Vampires of the City” debuted at No. 1 in 2013 and won a Grammy for best alternative music album.

What threatened Koenig’s calm as he slowly pieced together his follow-up was occasionally hearing something by another artist and realizing he’d been scooped on a cool idea. Or worrying about the relevance of guitar music — the kind he can broadly be said to make — in a pop scene increasingly defined by hip-hop.

“For sure there were moments when I wondered, ‘Are we taking too long?’” he recalled.

Yet to listen to “Father of the Bride” is to get the sense that he couldn’t have finished it a day sooner. More than anything else, time feels like the crucial ingredient on the group’s fourth record.

In songs that blend organic and artificial, fashionable and un-, Koenig, 35, ponders the stuff of growing older — marriage, parenthood, creating a home — with a knowing warmth that registers as a distinct shift from the clever if chilly character studies of the band’s earlier work.

Where he once was drawn to concepts and archetypes, Koenig now finds inspiration in “emotions and communication and people coming together and going apart,” as he put it — the preoccupations of a new dad in a committed relationship.

And after years of reflexively dismissing the sound of classic rock, he’s come to view a tasy riff as “something that brings me joy.”

“We did our thing with the first three records, but it was clear to me that this album needed a different vibe,” said Koenig, whose romantic partner, the actor Rashida Jones, gave birth to the couple’s son, Isain, last summer. The singer spoke from his manager’s office, not far from his home in Los Angeles.

Koenig stopped short of declaring that he’d left New York for L.A. “It’s more nebulous than that,” he said, pointing out that most of his belongings stayed behind. But as his personal life coalesced on the West Coast, Koenig began building a new crew of key collaborators, many of them born and raised in Southern California, producer Ariel Rechtshaid, known for his work with Haim and Adele; Steve Lacy of the Odd Future-Connected Internet; hip-hop hitmaker DJ Dahi; and Haim’s Danielle Haim, the last of whom Koenig reckoned sings lead or backing vocals on half of “Father of the Bride,” including three male-female duets.

Even Rostam Batmanglij, who amiably split from Vampire Weekend in 2016 but contributed to the new album, lives here now. (The band’s remaining original members are bassist Chris Baio and drummer Chris Tomson.)

When we met, Koenig had just returned from a promotional trip to London, where he said loads of journalists told him they could hear an L.A. influence in his new music.

“But the last few years have actually been characterized by some of the most intense longing I’ve ever had for the East Coast,” he said.

“I’m like, ‘You don’t understand — I’m sitting here beneath this burning white sun fantasizing about a week I spent in Vermont when I was 12.’”

How did California affect the sound of “Father of the Bride”? Koenig said he’s learned to appreciate musicianship in a way he hadn’t before; in addition to his friends, the album features appearances by veteran L.A. session pros, guitarist Greg Leisz and bassist Jimmy Johnson — a first for Vampire Weekend.

“‘Father of the Bride’ isn’t total dad-rock; it’s got weird beats and processed synth sounds and samples of tracks by Hans Zimmer and the Japanese electronic musician Haruomi Hosono. But pay close attention to ‘Stranger’ — especially the little instrumental section after the second verse — and you’ll catch an undeniable whiff of the Jerry Garcia Band.”

The band’s world-beat influences are gone. Koenig has replaced them with his twist on sunny classic rock and several duets with Danielle Haim.

“Are we taking too long?” he wondered, “It’s jarring to hear Koenig’s voice in such soothing, laid-back surroundings. The first single “Harmony Hall” sounds like he was dropped into the “Let It Bleed”-era Rolling Stones. In “Stranger,” he may have joined The Band circa “Northern Lights-Southern Cross.” At least “This Life” has a Paul Simon feel to it, though more like his time with Art Garfunkel rather than his time with Ladysmith Black Mambazo that inspired so much of Vampire Weekend’s earlier work.

However, Koenig makes it all fit together. And his duets with Haim give “Father of the Bride” a strong backbone, shining up pieces of the album.

“Father of the Bride” establishes a new timeline for Vampire Weekend rather than picking up where it left off.

— Glenn Gamboa/Newsday
An unforgettable portrait of 9/11

‘Fall and Rise’ a collection of vivid, intimate stories from those who survived and those who didn’t

BY KAREN ABBOTT  Special to The Washington Post

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or those of a certain age, it is strange to think of Sept. 11, 2001, as distant history. Yet an entire generation has no living memory of that day’s events, which reverberate as strongly as ever in our messy, complicated present. Early in “Fall and Rise,” Mitchell Zuckoff’s remarkable and groundbreaking book about 9/11, he invokes the most obvious historical parallel: the attack on Pearl Harbor 60 years earlier, which also claimed thousands of lives and hurtled America into war. “Hindsight furnishes us with perspective on the crisis,” Zuckoff writes, quoting historian Ian W. Toll, “but it also undercuts our ability to hurtled America into war. “Hindsight furnishes us with perspective on the crisis,” Zuckoff writes, quoting historian Ian W. Toll, “but it also undercuts our ability to

Zuckoff, a former reporter for the Boston Globe, states that his intention is not to address the “why” of the attacks, by probing into the mindset of jihadists, but to offer a more intimate perspective of the tragedy for those who lived through it and to create “something like memories” for everyone else.

Part of Zuckoff’s challenge is to distinguish his book from a crowded and ever-growing field. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 are not only the deadliest in U.S. history but also the most dissected and documented. You can read about the tragedy in every imaginable genre: graphic novels, airport blockbusters and literary novels (and even entire books reviewing 9/11 fiction), comics, memoirs, documentaries, collections of poetry and short stories, conspiracy theorist narratives, and factual examinations of intelligence failures and the history of al-Qaida. The most similar to Zuckoff’s in tone and scope is Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn’s “102 Minutes,” which focuses on the experiences of those inside the twin towers, from the moment of first impact until their collapse. Zuckoff includes and expands upon this landscape, delving into events at three airports, on the four hijacked flights, inside the Pentagon, at the Northeast Air Defense Sector in Rome, N.Y., and at the crash site of United Airlines Flight 93 in rural Pennsylvania. He also smartly begins his narrative on the evening of Sept. 10, capturing the cozy banality of everyday life that precedes the impending horror, the final ticking hours before the world irrevocably changed.

“Fall and Rise” is an ambitious undertaking, setting out to be an exhaustive, prismatic chronicle of 9/11. Impressively, Zuckoff pulls it off. He deftly employs novelistic tools to create and maintain suspense (a difficult feat when the story’s outcome is universally known): foreshadowing, cliffhangers, and an evocative homing in on details both heartbreaking and macabre. A 2-year-old girl, excited for her first trip to Disneyland on United Airlines Flight 175, tucks her stuffed rabbit under the covers so be safe until her return. Ziad Jarrah, the hijacker of United Airlines Flight 93, drafts a goodbye note to his fiancee (“I will wait for you until you come to me. There comes a time for everyone to make a move”). Shortly before that Tuesday morning, a 38-year-old passenger on Flight 175 gives his wife specific, heart-rending instructions should he die: “I invite all my friends and you drink Captain Morgan and you live.” A service manager for American Airlines scans the business section of Flight 11 and experiences “a queasy gut feeling” as he locks eyes with Mohamed Atta in Seat 8D. Then come the numerous calls from Alfonso, progressing from frantic to resigned: “Don’t worry, Dad,” consoles a passenger on Flight 175. “If it happens, it’ll be very fast.”

Following the four crashes, the narrative both broadens (witness President George W. Bush at Booker Elementary School and Vice President Dick Cheney being whisked off to an underground bunker) and becomes more personal. While the general aftermath of 9/11 is standard knowledge, the characters’ individual fates are not, and the reader follows each of their plights with heart-stopping anticipation. How would aspiring actor Chris Young, on a temp job in the North Tower, escape from an elevator? Who would help Elaine Duch, struck by a fireball on the 88th floor of the North Tower and so badly burned that the zipper of her jacket fused into her scorched skin? What would happen to the firefighters of Ladder Company 6 and their injured charge, Josephine Harris, as the North Tower collapsed around them? Would Rear Adm. Dave Thomas find his best friend and colleague amid the smoldering wreckage of the Pentagon? What would Terry Shaffer, the chief of the Shanksville Volunteer Fire Department, encounter on the field where the 44 passengers of Flight 93 lost their lives? The reader can barely fathom what Shaffer had to endure: a scattered heap of seared limbs, teeth and bones; a heap of seared limbs, teeth and bones; a Superman tattoo on a slice of shoulder. It would be years, Zuckoff writes, before the fire chief could bring himself to describe his most disturbing find: the detached swatch of torso and a foot with three toes; a Superman tattoo on a slice of shoulder. It would be years, Zuckoff writes, before the fire chief could bring himself to describe his most disturbing find: the detached swatch of torso and a foot with three toes; a Superman tattoo on a slice of shoulder. It would be years, Zuckoff writes, before the fire chief could bring himself to describe his most disturbing find: the detached swatch of torso and a foot with three toes; a Superman tattoo on a slice of shoulder.

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Hatching a surprise

Lisa Hanawalt of ‘BoJack Horseman’ behind surreal animated Netflix series ‘Tuca & Bertie’

By Chris Barton
Los Angeles Times

A few episodes into Lisa Hanawalt’s new, terrifically funny animated series “Tuca & Bertie,” there’s a moment when a puffin in a suit calls a crowded auditorium to attention. In the process, she tidily summarizes the show’s twist (yet unmistakably human) perspective. “Ladies and gentle-birds,” the emcee begins, “there’s plants, humans and sometimes inanimate objects that talk — what a weird world!”

Even for Netflix viewers who might be coming to “Tuca & Bertie” from Hanawalt’s other television job — character designer and producer of the biting yet melancholy Hollywood satire “BoJack Horseman” — the statement can’t be denied.

Featuring stand-up stars Ali Wong and Tiffany Haddish as a pair of bird best friends on the cusp of their 30s, their home of Birdtown is a freelwheeling dreamscape where the subway is a make and freeways loop like roller coasters around cat-infested yarn hillsides and lakes of grape jelly. A few scenes incorporate snippets of live action and claymation and, at one point, Bertie drives her car off the road and her profanity, spilling from the window in puffy balloons of text, builds a bridge to safety.

At times capturing a hallucinogenic meeting between “Broad City” and “Tuca & Bertie” stands in a strange territory all its own. “Having worked on ‘BoJack’ for nine years, I was really excited on the sixth season it felt fun to me to have an opportunity to break the rules a bit and create a different universe where things are a little more loony-goosy and surreal,” says Hanawalt.

And closer to my personal work, where plants can walk around and wear clothing, and there are boobs on buildings. That really is more like my comics and my own little world.”

But for the visual goofiness, playful puns and anything-goes sense of comic adventure, “Tuca & Bertie” remains grounded in very human realities. Though rendered in candy-colored hues and framed by a sunny, dance-funk soundtrack, the series fearlessly displays a deft comic touch, and the indie hit “Burning”) Yeun (of “Walking Dead”) and the slapstick comedy of Lucille Ball.

Fans of the Agatha Raisin tales have been reading about her adventures written by Marion Chesney (released under the pseudonym M. C. Beaton) since 1992. The transformation of the beloved character into an eight-part British TV series and three new movies on the Acorn TV streaming service required an actress who could handle the sleuthing skills of a Jessica Fletcher (of “Murder, She Wrote”) and the slapstick comedy of Lucille Ball.

Ashley Jensen, best known to American TV watchers for her work on “Ugly Betty,” proved able to handle both demands. She brings both curiosity and comedic energy to the role that makes the unlikely sleuth so much fun to watch.

The sequel series includes the three films. Offerings included in the DVD are “The Wizard of Everosh,” “The Fairies of Fry-fam” and “The Curious Curate.” In “Everosh,” Agatha suspects that her hair salon’s arrogant stylist is blackmailing clients with their darkest secrets.

NEW ON DVD

“Agatha Raisin: Series 2”: Fans of the Agatha Raisin tales have been reading about her adventures written by Marion Chesney (released under the pseudonym M. C. Beaton) since 1992. The transformation of the beloved character into an eight-part British TV series and three new movies on the Acorn TV streaming service required an actress who could handle the sleuthing skills of a Jessica Fletcher (of “Murder, She Wrote”) and the slapstick comedy of Lucille Ball.

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**I’ll drink to that!**

Have that glass of wine, with a twist of benefits to your health

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**BY CINDY KRIECHER GOODMAN**

Sun Sentinel

On a Friday afternoon, Yvette Vezina settles into her hairstylist’s chair at Tipsy Salonbar in Plantation, Fla., to get coloring, and to indulge in a cold glass of pinot grigio.

“Drinking wine is relaxing,” Vezina said. “I really enjoy it.”

In South Florida, wine is flowing at hair salons, furniture stores, book club meetings, art galleries and more. Wine has become so popular that specialty grocery stores like Lucky’s Market serves customers wine while they shop. And at Tipsy Salonbar in Plantation, manager Duke Hoang offers an extensive menu of wine choices to customers as they have their fingernails polished and hair cut.

“Our customers love to drink their wine and get comfortable,” said Hoang, whose salon goes through about 20 bottles a week.

Wine is a popular alcohol choice with American consumers, particularly women who make up about 60 percent of wine sales, according to the Wine Market Council. In 2018, wine consumption rose again year over year — as it has since 1993 — with drinkers imbibing more than 750 million gallons of wine, according to the State of the Wine Industry Report 2019.

But industry experts are cautioning that wine sales could taper off going forward, unless millennials — the next generation of wine drinkers — buy into the positive health messaging.

So how healthy is wine?

“It’s an antioxidant,” said Dr. John Rivas, a board-certified liver specialist in Hollywood. “We have a big-time epidemic of fatty liver disease in this country with supersized foods and a lot of calories from fat. Wine actually helps protect the liver from inflammation caused by fat.”

Rivas said the health benefits depend on moderation in drinking — no more than two glasses of wine a day. “You want to drink enough that you are getting the antioxidant properties, but not enough that it ends up causing damage.”

Beyond benefiting the liver, moderate wine drinking is linked to a longer life span. In a study published in 2018 of 1,600 people age 90 and older, Dr. Claudia Kawas, professor and researcher at the University of California, Irvine, found that drinking wine regularly was associated with 18 percent reduced risk of premature death. “It did not necessarily have to be daily,” Kawas said. “It just had to be sometimes.”

And while wine could affect longevity, it might also help with mental health as people age. A 2011 Loyola University Medical Center study of the older population, looking at data from 19 countries, found a lower risk of dementia among regular, moderate red wine drinkers in 14 countries.

Vezina, who says South Florida’s warm climate makes a cold, white wine enticing, wonders if she should be drinking red — or if the stress relief of relaxing at the salon with a pinot grigio is benefit enough.

“There are absolutely benefits in terms of stress relief,” said Dr. Kashmira Bhadha, medical director for women’s cardiac health at Memorial Hospital West in Pembroke Pines. “That is one factor as far as cardiovascular benefits go, but only if you’re drinking in extreme moderation.”

Scientists have found that red and white wines both contain resveratrol, a compound found in the skin of grapes, that has been tied to improved heart and blood health. Red wine, however, has more resveratrol.

Bhadha said the resveratrol in red wine is the reason it is included in a heart-healthy diet. Red wine raises the good cholesterol and helps with hypertension, she said. “Once you exceed the advised amount, though, it will have an adverse effect.” For women, that amount is four to six ounces a day, and for men, it is eight to 10 ounces a day, she said.

Wine also has the benefit of helping prevent dental cavities by getting rid of bacteria on the teeth, according to Bruce Lein, a South Florida dentist. “It’s best to drink a lot of water, though, to keep the wine from staining your teeth or deteriorating the enamel.”

Some studies take a different approach to wine’s effect on health. A U.K. study released recently found that drinking one bottle of wine each week could have the same carcinogenic impact as smoking five cigarettes for men and 10 cigarettes for women. Also, The National Cancer Institute has said that the more alcohol a person drinks regularly over time, the higher his or her risk of developing certain alcohol-associated cancers such as colon and breast cancer.

Bhadha said if you drink wine to reap the health benefits, the key is also to try incorporating heart-healthy foods like those in the Mediterranean diet. And most important, she says, “Drink in extreme moderation.”
I've been a dad now for more than six months, and there's no going back to the man I was before welcoming a daughter into the world. That's a given. But aside from the many life-altering details that come with being a parent, there's one way being a dad has changed me that I never expected: I can't watch horror movies like I used to.

For more than three decades, I've been a horror fan. I first discovered my passion for the genre in the sixties, as well as the power that words and visuals can have over an audience, through horror movies. As a child, I was introduced to the horror genre at the age of 6 with William Friedkin's terrifying classic “The Exorcist.” Just three years later, Stanley Kubrick's “The Shining” changed my view of the world, and I now see the visual of a defenseless baby in her crib, affected by the moment — only to have my anxieties take over and show me all the ways she could be harmed in mere seconds. What if my daughter died? And if I had the chance to bury her in a magical cemetery, knowing full well she'd return alive but murderous, well — would I do just what Louis did anyway? I can't say no.

But the rage? That came from seeing scary stories. They say parenting changes you, and I believe you can have over an audience, through horror movies. For better and worse, horror movies are a big part of what makes me — well, me. But now I'm looking inward, taking a mental inventory of who I was before my daughter was born and comparing that person to the man I am now.

Horror is human. The demand for scary stories with a deeper message and emotional core have brought us horror movies like Jordan Peele’s “Us,” Ari Aster’s “Hereditary” and even Mike Flanagan’s hit Netflix series “The Haunting of Hill House,” all of which delivering the scary goods while also reaffirming who we are as a society, as families, as humans — and the undeniable progress we still need to achieve.

Upon watching the big-screen adaptation of Stephen King’s “Pet Sematary,” I was floored. The story of Louis Cheadle as a precocious downward spiral of grief, was something new to me — but it revealed itself as a fresh concept for my dad brain to unpack.

More than once, I have found myself watching my daughter asleep in her crib, affected by the moment — only to have my anxieties take over and show me all the ways she could be harmed in mere seconds.

But maybe that's Ok.
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

WORDS OF INTRODUCTION
BY BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Brendan Emmett Quigley is a professional puzzle maker in Brookline, Mass. He says he’ll make puzzles for pretty much any market that will cut him a check — “not to mention a few others that still owe me money.” Brendan said he first conceived of The Times in 1996, when he was a senior at the University of New Hampshire. This is his 1442nd puzzle for the paper — W.E.

ACROSS
1. Thieves often go by them
8. Do well
14. Rhyme scheme of “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”
18. A little
19. Didn’t strictly follow one’s diet, say
20. The Princess of Power in cartoons
21. KIND words
23. Steadfast
24. Politician-winning playwright Zev
25. Banking 500%, among all states, say
26. Simon & Garfunkel song about emotional detachment
28. Home to the Triple-A Aces
29. Sports.org, based in Indianapolis
30. Pestide ingredients
33. Wife of Jared Kushner
34. Craft measured in cubas
35. EAS words?
36. Retreat
39. Need for a restricted area
40. Needs for some touring bands

Down
2. Bathing suit
4. Emperor, in a sentence
5. “I ___ (what the Latin ‘veto’ means)
7. 1920s, in slang
8. 19th-century detective
10. Signed, with a pen
11. 1980s farce
13. “You’re a ___”
15. 40th-century British
16. 1960s, in a sentence
17. 1990s, in a sentence
18. 2000s
19. 2010s
22. 2020s
23. 2030s
24. 2040s
25. 2050s
26. 2060s
27. 2070s
28. 2080s
29. 2090s
30. 2100s
31. 2110s
32. 2120s
33. 2130s
34. 2140s
35. 2150s
36. 2160s
37. 2170s
38. 2180s
39. 2190s
40. 2200s

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

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Cheers to her movie career

Diane Keaton's latest film "Poms" stars her as Martha, a woman who moves to a retirement community as a means of facing her own mortality. As a last-ditch effort to reclaim the life she once had, Martha starts a cheerleading club with her fellow female residents, refusing to surrender to her own mortality.

They're humidified, and they're afraid, and they can't adjust, you know; that's the story to me," Keaton told the Daily News. "A lot of people go through that, men and women; they just give up. You don't want to give up, you want to live your life to the fullest until the end."

Keaton admits, "I would never have done any of those things. I would never be cheerleading," nor, she says, would she have joined that club, "much less be part-creator of it."

The movie centers on a divorced playwright (Keaton) who becomes unglued when she unexpectedly falls for her daughter's (Amanda Peet) decades-older playwright beau (Jack Nicholson). The film, is for all intents and purposes, a formulaic boy-meets-girl-tale girl. The twist though, is in the casting: the two key players, unlike in most romantic films, are over 50, and in Nicholson's case, over 60.

"I remember Nancy Meyers invited me to have lunch with her," Keaton recalled to The News. "And I had not been working, OK? ... And so, she says, 'I'm gonna make a movie, and I want you to be in it, with Jack Nicholson.' And I told her, 'Nancy, there's no way anybody's gonna make a movie with me, starring in it with Jack Nicholson.'"

"That was just something that really changed my life in a big way, at a certain time in my life when nothing was happening. And because of that movie, I've had a longer longevity, more time to be in more movies, because of that movie. (That) movie means a tremendous amount to me because of those things. I would never be cheerleading," she said. "... I have a lot that I'm interested in doing outside of film."

Keaton credits 2003’s “Something’s Gotta Give” by writer-director Nancy Meyers with reinvigorating her career. The movie centers on a divorced playwright (Keaton) who becomes unglued when she unexpectedly falls for her daughter’s (Amanda Peet) decades-older playwright beau (Jack Nicholson). The film, is for all intents and purposes, a formulaic boy-meets-girl-tale. The twist though, is in the casting: the two key players, unlike in most romantic films, are over 50, and in Nicholson’s case, over 60.

"I like to do a lot of things in my life. As long as I'm able to do that ... Keaton trounced off. ‘Of course if something came my way, of course I'm gonna do it’.

After Keaton’s career received a boost from "Something's Gotta Give," the star continued to work steadily, appearing in films like "Marley & Me," "The Godfather: Part III," and "The Departed." Her performance in "Marley & Me" earned her a nomination for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress.

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The film was a box-office hit, and earned Keaton another Oscar nod. More importantly, it reinstalled her as comedic dynamite.

Even so, Keaton feels they couldn't be more different.

In addition to portraying "a different kind of friendship," Keaton says, "It's the way (the women) treat themselves in this one. ... I think it has to do with (Martha's) own personal relationship with death."

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"I like to do a lot of things in my life. As long as I’m able to do that ... Keaton trounced off. ‘Of course if something came my way, of course I’m gonna do it.”
The stagnation in the living standards of ordinary American workers ultimately threatens the legitimacy of our private-market system and the stability of our politics.

**By Harry J. Holzer**

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What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Heroes of shootings died in preventable circumstances

The Washington Post

When a gunman opened fire at a synagogue in California, 60-year-old Lori Gilbert Kaye jumped between the shooter and the children, but the rabbi credits her with saving his life.

When another man started shooting inside a classroom at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 21-year-old Riley Howell charged him. Shot three times, he died. Authorities said he stopped what would have been a far worse massacre.

And when gunfire broke out Tuesday at a science, technology, engineering and mathematics school in Colorado, 18-year-old Kendrick Castillo lunged at the shooter. He was fatally shot. Witnesses said his actions gave other students a chance to safety get away.

We mourn the loss of these people. They were heroes. Faced with the unimaginable, they were unshrinkable. But the fact that they were gunned down in the course of everyday life — saying a prayer, giving a college presentation, sitting in English class — feel compelled to throw their lives into the line of fire to shame our so-called political leaders, who don’t even have the guts to pass sensible gun reform.

Rather than offer solace, the response aimed at preventing shootings (such as New Zealand’s swift move to ban assault weapons) is a prelude to a ground offensive. The attacks were far too convoluted to fit into the usual narratives of Syria and Russia. The US has repeatedly called for the Syrian and Russian regimes to abide by their commitments to avoid large-scale military offensives, return to a de-escalation of violence in Idlib area, and allow for unhindered humanitarian access to address the humanitarian disaster created by the ongoing violence.

The Washington Post

Last fall, as Russia and Syria planned a major offensive to drive a small number of rebels from Idlib province that was expected to endanger refugees from other war-torn areas of Syria, President Donald Trump spoke up forcefully, saying the two “must not recklessly attack” the civilian areas. He must do so again.

The massive attack on Idlib did not materialize due to an agreement between Turkey, which assumed a protective role for the endangered civilians, and Russia to create a demilitarized zone for the roughly 3.5 million civilians, including over a million refugees, living in the province.

Following the agreement Trump claimed credit for stopping the planned assault, apparently because of pressure the US quietly put on Russia. Now the threat is back.

It brings the potential for more human misery and new floods of refugees fleeing Syria for Turkey and Europe.

In the recent attacks, Syria is once again using barrel bombs dropped by helicopters and designed to wound and kill civilians. The United Nations Security Council in 2014 specifically condemned the use of these crude and devastating weapons, and Russia’s ambassador to the U.N. said in 2015 that Syria would no longer use them, a promise that Syria and Russia have ignored. Their use in the Syrian civil war is considered a war crime.

Last Friday, reports The Wall Street Journal, Syrian helicopters, helicopters and fired more than 100 barrel bombs on villages and hospitals in what was ominously described as a prelude to a ground offensive.

The Independent Syrian Network for Human Rights, which has carefully documented the use of these weapons during the civil war, reported that Russian and Syrian bombardments have killed 441 civilians including 130 children since September’s cease-fire. The recent bombings, which continued this week, have killed an estimated additional 100 civilians and damaged 10 hospitals. Unfortunately, this might be just the beginning of a broader, unconscionable carnage.

The attacks appear to signal the end of Russian-Turkish cooperation to preserve a ceasefire in the province. As recently as April 8, Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russia’s President Vladimir Putin agreed on a plan for joint patrols to prevent attacks by rebel forces in Idlib.

Another significant step taken with Russia is cooperation against terrorist acts in Syria,” said Erdogan at the time. It turned out to be another broken promise.

In a statement issued last week, State Department spokesman Morgan Ortagus said, “We call on all parties, including Russia and the Syrian regime, to abide by their commitments to avoid large-scale military offensives, return to a de-escalation of violence in the area, and allow for unhindered humanitarian access to address the humanitarian disaster created by the ongoing violence.” The European Union has also protected.

These are fine words, but unless backed by a credible threat of consequences, they are unlikely to have any impact.

Meanwhile, other reports say Iran has made preparations to attack U.S. forces in Eastern Syria.

Trump is being tested. To prevent a massive loss of civilian life, the president needs to make it clear to Russia, Syria and Iran that they must back off.

Warren’s behind in the polls, hence her call to impeach

Boston Herald

Make no mistake, Sen. Elizabeth Warren’s call for the impeachment of President Donald Trump is nothing but a product of poor polling. Since her presidential announcement in early February, she has seen many in the field pass her by and with Joe Biden holding steady at the top spot, she will take any and all measures to catch a tailwind.

And so it is that Warren, D-Mass., took to the Senate floor Tuesday and declared, “The information that has been given to us by the Trump campaign report clearly constitutes adequate information to begin an impeachment proceeding in the House of Representatives. No matter how many times Mitch McConnell or the rest of the Republicans want to wish that away, it’s there in black and white in the report.”

Of course, nothing is there in black and white than the other fact that, “The investigation did not establish a range of members of the Trump campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government in its election interference activities.”

But that is not enough for Warren, who managed to keep a straight face on the Senate floor. “This is not a fight I wanted to take on but this is the fight in front of us now,” she said. “This is not about politics, this is about the Constitution of the United States of America. We took an oath not to try to protect Donald Trump. We took an oath to protect and serve the Constitution of the United States of America.”

On March 25, when Biden hadn’t entered the race but was still touting her by 24 points in the Real Clear Politics average, she told Stephen Colbert that voters she’d talked to didn’t care about the Mueller report, “Because what people are talking about, what they’re asking about, are the things that touch their lives every day.”

Now, many weeks later, as the Biden campaign surges ahead, Warren finds herself behind him by more than 30 points in the Real Clear average.

That is bad news. And that is why Warren is throwing around soak-the-rich tax proposals, slavery reparations, college debt forgiveness and now impeaching.

It never ends. Unless the polling trends continue, in which case Warren will be relegated to the also-ran pile of 2020 presidential candidates.

Trump is resisting the lawful request of the House Ways and Means Committee for the release of the last six years of his tax returns.

In seeking the president’s returns, the House is clearly acting in the public interest. Firing the first shot, Speaker Pelosi deserves to know more about Trump’s finances: from whom he has borrowed, with whom he has done business, whom he has been beholden. This is relevant information about any president, but it is particularly important about one who has long chosen to evade taxes.

As Pelosi has said, “I believe he has done business, to whom he may have lent money, from whom he has borrowed, with whom he has been beholden.”

The disclosure of Trump’s tax returns could expose financial dealings and trusts and partnerships that would provide a range of assertions that Trump has made about his own life — stories that he used to build support for his candidacy and continues to use to build support for his policies.

Reporting on Trump’s financial past by The New York Times has already undermined the president’s conflicted image as a hugely successful businessman. But now, as The Washington Post has reported, The New York Times repeatedly raised with Trump that they could dig into Trump’s personal tax returns.

In requesting Trump’s tax returns, the House has said it seeks to evaluate whether he is being properly audited by the IRS, which audits all presidential returns as a matter of policy. It has asked for the last six years of the president’s personal tax returns rather than the typical output of an IRS audit — and tax information for eight of Trump’s businesses.
Eugene Sheffer Crossword

58 Bikini top
57 Old anesthetic
50—51
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1—2

ACROSS
1 Sailing vessel
2 Clear the deck?
3 Kitten’s cry
4 Low digit
5 “Xanadu” band
6 Baby hooter
7 Florida city
8 Handsome guy
9 Convex
10 Tool set
11 March hooroo, for short
12 A Marx brother
13 Brooch
14 Cuba rum
15 Zing
16 Florida city
17 Convened
18 Cuban
19 Burden
20 Soft leather
21 Brooch
22 Check the fit of
23Tool set
24 The Chosen
25 Burden
26 Russian
27 Cubans
28 Spock portrayer
29 Soft leather
30 Overly
31 “At once”
32 Spock portrayer
33 Preambles
34 Approves
35 Attention-getting call
36 Soft leather
37 Senior member
38 Houston player
39 Houston player
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Answer to Previous Puzzle

CRYPTOQUIP

RY SIUGLI QO, N’U YJXXIYGT
HI QGR T HSNY MIIO ME
LQNHGQ TRSZ NA IAG TRE
HNUG HI SNH HS G QIRZT!

Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: PART OF AN ALARM CLOCK PRODUCING THE SOUNDS OF FOLKS SHOOTING THE BREEZE: THE SCHMOOZE BUTTON.

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals R
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Tennis

**Stanford**

### Women's doubles

1. Aliaksandra Sasnovich, Belarus, and MariaKirilenko, Russia, 6-3, 6-2.
2. Gabriela Dabrowski, Canada, and Xu Yifan (6), China, def. Shuko Aoyama, Japan, 6-2, 6-4.
4. Sofia Kenin and Amanda Anisimova, United States, def. Monica Puig and Caroline Garcia, France, 6-2, 6-3.
5. Barbora Krejcikova and Katerina Siniakova, Czech Republic, def. Sevastova and Sara Sorribes Tormo, Spain, 6-2, 6-4.

### Men's singles

1. Matteo Berrettini, Italy, def. walkover.
2. Cameron Norrie, United Kingdom, def. Miomir Kecmanovic, Serbia, 6-2, 6-4.
3. Hubert Hurkacz, Poland, def. Lucas Pouille, France, 6-2, 6-3.
4. Fernando Verdasco, Spain, def. Karen Khachanov (11), Russia, 6-7 (4), 6-1, 7-5.
5. Laslo Djere, Serbia, def. Juan Martin Del Potro, Argentina, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (1).

### Women's singles

1. Sloane Stephens (8), United States, def. Belinda Bencic, Switzerland, 6-0, 6-3.
2. Barry Moore, United Kingdom, def. Berrettini, Italy, 6-2, 6-4.
3. David Ferrer, Spain, def. walkover.
4. Adrian Mannarino, France, 6-2, 7-5.
5. Laslo Djere, Serbia, def. Juan Martin Del Potro, Argentina, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (1).

### Men's doubles

1. Hyeon Chung and Horacio Zeballos, Argentina, 6-4, 7-6 (2).
2. Pavic (6), Croatia, def. Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni, Argentina, 7-5, 6-2.
4. Pierre-Hugues Herbert and Nicolas Mahut, France, def. Austin Krajicek and RajeevRam, United States, 7-5, 7-5.
5. Laslo Djere and Matteo Berrettini, Italy, def. Paulo Lorenzi and Andrea Vavassori, Italy, 6-1, 6-1.

### Women's doubles

Two men convicted in college corruption trial

Aspiring agent, youth coach guilty of bribery conspiracy

By Larry Neumeister
Associated Press

NEW YORK — An aspiring sports business manager and an amateur basketball coach were convicted on bribery conspiracy Wednesday after a two-week trial that showed they tried to use their influence as investors in his fledgling management company, had tried to get him to pay bribes, but he refused.

In closing arguments, a prosecutor said Dawkins lied to jurors.

"I didn’t have any guilt on my part that I’m asking for things that aren’t needed," said Andy Hunt, head of World Sailing.

"We are very keen to discuss how we can finalize this," he said.

Overall Olympic spending in Tokyo has soared to three times more than the $7.3 billion it was estimated when it won the bid in 2013. Costs just keep rising.

Here’s an example. Earlier this year, Tokyo officials announced the bill for the opening and closing ceremonies had risen by 40 percent. At the time, Tokyo chief executive Toshiro Muto said there was a “reserve fund” to cover such increases.

Hunt, the sailing official, said federations don’t want frills.

“I don’t think we over-ask,” Hunt said. "If there was not enough medical provision and focus on safety — if something went wrong — you can be absolutely certain where the responsibility would sit."
DODEA Europe weekend peek
Panthers host Warriors in battle of unbeaten

By Gregory Broome
Stars and Stripes

The final weekend of the DODEA Europe soccer regular season is one of relatively low pressure and low mileage, comprised mostly of non-division regional games.

But there’s one very notable exception: a marquee girls matchup compelling enough to carry the otherwise calm weekend on its own.

The defending Division I champion Stuttgart Panthers play host to the Wiesbaden Warriors on Saturday in a battle of the division’s unbeaten teams, so we want to be playing great soccer as we enter the tournament, said coach Nicole Angel. “They want to finish strong. Another win will give them confidence going into a very tough postseason.”

The Panthers, with just three games on their Division I regular-season schedule, including this weekend’s Wiesbaden match, are eager for another taste of high-level Division I competition before they’re immersed in it at the tournament. “We want to be playing as we enter the tournament, so we want to be playing great soccer at this point in the season,” Stuttgart coach Billy Ratcliff said.

Wiesbaden, led by goal-scoring phenom Erin Goodman and senior star Audrey Merhar, boasts an explosive offense that scored 34 goals over its first three games — all against Division I competition. And the Warriors are locked in defensively as well, holding Ramstein, Naples, Vicenza and Black Forest Academy scoreless over their last four matches.

Stuttgart, fielding a typically deep and dangerous roster including prolific goal scorers Liv Sullens and Victoria Antoine, has made the most of its limited divisional opportunities. The Panthers routed Ramstein 4-0 on May 4.

What remains, then, is to face off with each other Saturday. “In order to be the best, we have to beat the best,” Stuttgart’s program, Angel said. “They have a great team and always come ready to play.”

DODEA Pacific weekend peek
Last tuneup for Far East
Plenty at stake in Korea and Kanto Plain district finals

By Dave Ornauer
Stars and Stripes

Qualifying for individuals competing in the Far East meet has come and gone. But there are still things athletes can achieve at Saturday’s Korea and Kanto Plain district track and field finals. Coaches say: “There are still things to compete for,” said coach Luke Voth of four-time Far East Division I team champion Nile C. Kinnick. “Sometimes, you use it for (Far East) dress rehearsal, sometimes kids have one last chance (at a personal record) in an event they won’t run at Far East.”

The Kanto Plain finals are scheduled for 9 a.m. Saturday at Yokota, site of all but one of the meets in Japan this season. Korea’s district finals are also on tap at 9 a.m. Saturday at Camp Humphreys, which has the only eight-lane track in Korea.

Weather forecasts for both locations is fine, with temperatures expected to reach 80 with sunny to partly cloudy skies. At issue could be the air quality at Humphreys; the district finals were canceled in 2016 and 2017 due to poor air quality.

Saturday’s meets are the last scheduled in each district before the Far East meet May 22-23 at Yokota. It’s one last chance, Voth and Humphreys coach Ron Merrivether said, for teams to fine-tune things and decide events in which they can put qualifiers to maximize team points.

“We’re trying to tighten up our relays, getting the handoffs right, working on getting that bonding that teams need,” said Merrivether, coach of last year’s Far East Division II champion Humphreys, which is competing in D-I this season. “Just trying to become one, make sure we hit some targets as far as personal goals and put them in better position to compete at Far East, put them in the environment they can expect to compete in.”

The qualifying deadline was Monday, and Far East meet organizers are finalizing the list of qualifiers and the events in which they’ll compete. But it’s not too late, Voth and Merrivether said, for athletes to improve their seeding in a particular event.

“The seed at Far East is pretty important for teams trying to compete for a banner,” Voth said. “You can use this (district meet) to improve your seed, get into the top 16 in field events, top 24 in the races.”

Most coaches are fairly confident of where their top athletes will finish.

Kinnick’s Chris Watson and Debraianne Ellis should do well in sprints, Watson in the long jump and Annabel Stafford and Carlos Mobley in distance.

Humphreys’ Tevion Williams holds the Pacific’s fastest 100-meter time, while Junior Gregor is chasing middle-distance bests and Quintin Metcalf has his last shot at a Pacific high-jump record. It’s the first-time qualifiers, Merrivether said, who can best use the district finals to mirror what a state final might be like.

“A lot of the rookies, it’s their first time having that experience,” Merrivether said. “We’re pretty dominant in Korea. The best we can do is give them an environment similar to what they’ll face at Far East.”

With Far East fast approaching in all sports, many teams in Japan, Okinawa and Korea are seeing final action this weekend. Korea soccer ended the last weekend of April. Korea’s baseball and softball teams play Saturday at Humphreys.

Kadena’s boys and girls soccer teams are at Kubasaki in their final regular-season head-to-head matchups; the boys winner will capture the Okinawa district title.

And Matthew C. Perry hosts its final, big regular-season weekend in baseball, softball and soccer Friday and Saturday, with three visiting high schools, including E.J. King.

Kinnick’s Chris Watson is chasing top honors in the long jump during Saturday’s Kanto Plain track and field finals at Yokota. Stars and Stripes/KRYSTAL DUENAS/Special to Stripes
Patience proves difficult for golfers seeking first Tour victory

Former NCAA champion Max Homa got his first PGA victory on Sunday at the Wells Fargo Championship in Charlotte, N.C. The win came as a relief after four years on the PGA Tour.

**The waiting game**

Patience proves difficult for golfers seeking first Tour victory

**By Doug Ferguson**
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — He was away from golf for two years, and his world ranking plummeted lower than it had been at any point in his career.

For Sangmoon Bae, the recent past has not gone as well as he would have liked.

Bae started well enough at the Wells Fargo Championship until his five birdies were wasted by five bogeys, and he ended up missing the cut for the ninth time in 13 starts on the PGA Tour this year. He knows the game that took him to 13 wins worldwide, including two on the PGA Tour and a spot in the Presidents Cup, is still in there.

“I think my game is a lot better than before. My swing is better,” Bae said. “I’ve kind of lost my feel how to play golf. Not how to swing — I forgot how to play golf.”

Bae was in the final match at home in South Korea in 2015 at the Presidents Cup, and he missed a putt on the 18th hole that was the International team’s last chance to win the trophy. That was his final competition before he faced two-year mandatory military service.

He was the second-best player from South Korea in the world ranking (No. 88) going into the Presidents Cup. When he returned, he was No. 1,869 in the world.

Bae, who lost an appeal to extend his work permit to play golf, was in the Army with kids some 10 years younger than him.

“I wasn’t able to play there because I was a rifleman,” he said. “I had a four- or six-day training every month, but Korea is really cold in the winter. Five days is not enough to play and I was happy in that time to hang out with my family. I didn’t have to think about the military.”

He had never shot a rifle before he joined the Army.

“I learned. I was good at it,” he said with a laugh. “We didn’t shoot every day, it was more training. We had a lot of running, working out and military theory, so we studied. We woke up at 6 a.m. every day, the same schedule.”

The food?

“No as good as it is here,” he said with another laugh from the Quail Hollow Club locker room.

The world ranking wasn’t a concern, he said. It was just his job.

Bae said he had 27 events to try to earn back his card. He played 17 tournaments this year and still looking for a win.

Byron Nelson this week, hoping to get a win, but it’s like, ‘Hey, we need to do this. It pushes everyone as Spieth’s buddy. His first year on tour, he lost out on rookie of the year to Daniel Berger.

“We’re all excited and happy for each other,” Thomas said. “But it definitely puts a little bit of fire in us.”

Early in his rookie year, Thomas played a practice round at the Val- spieth was the youngest. He had just crossed the $9 million mark in career earnings. That was his final. So is Patrick Rodgers, another of Spieth’s buddy. His first year on tour, he lost out on rookie of the year to Daniel Berger.

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Called into question

Technology increases debate, leaves no ruling safe

BY EDDIE PELLS
Associated Press

The replays stream on to our sets in high definition on a practically endless loop, with no detail too small, or too big, to ignore: fingernails nicking basketballs, horses veering out of line, base- ball gloves grazing runners as they slide into second.

About the only irrefutable evidence to come from any of it is that nobody agrees on what they saw.

Instead of offering clarity, technology has transformed the sports we watch into fodder for a nonstop debate, while the growingly divisive American culture these sports are part of has hand- cuffed the country’s ability to find common ground in the aftermath of the calls.

What used to be one of society’s great distractions has become simply another cog in the spin cycle. What used to be the domain of talk radio has now found a home on the president’s Twitter account.

Social media, endless cable talk programs and the lack of any “neutral” arbiter for any of it has turned some of our debates about sports officiating as toxic as those about politics.

“In this world of the internet and the 24-hour news cycle, it’s the ways we take opinion and ex- acerbate that opinion and elevate anyone who shares those opin- ions into a sort of sanctimony if we disagree with that opinion,” said Dan Lebowitz, the executive director for Northeastern’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society. “We’ve gotten ourselves into a little bit of a conundrum. What do we accept as truth? Truth about the call, or truth about the White House or truth about anything else?”

These days, every call is vul- nerable to spin. Every whistle is subject to its own facts — along with a set of alternative facts and potential conspiracy theories.

Given the information overload brought on by replay — a piece of technology developed to elimi- nate officiating errors — it follows that somebody must be right, and wrong, about every close call. Pick a side, either side. There is less room — if any — for shades of gray.

Sound familiar?

“When political leaders are say- ing that the system is rigged and question the fundamental fair- ness of the institutions that are at the core of our society,” said NBA commissioner Adam Silver, “then I don’t think anybody should be surprised that people come into the arena and look at yet another long-term institution, the NBA, and say this must not be on the level, either.”

A number of close games during this spring’s NBA playoffs have hinged on one or two potentially game-changing calls that have been subject to replay, with no definitive conclusion.

The issue came into sharp focus when the Houston Rockets, after a close loss to Golden State filled with tough calls in Game 1 of the Western Conference semfinals, said they had conducted a report about last year’s Game 7 loss to the Warriors in the conference fi- nals. The report concluded there were 81 calls and non-calls that cost them the game and, thus, the series.

The study underscored a long- standing reality of replay in all sports: Only some, not all, plays are reviewable. Many of those come at the end of games.

Does the “right” team end up winning these games? That’s subject to many different interpretations.

“I don’t think anyone wakes up and says, ‘We’re going to rig the system,’” said Bob Malekoff, who studies sports’ role in society at the University of North Carolina. “But people are human, and decisions and calls get made that not everyone gets. And it’s totally natural to see what goes on in Washington or other parts of the world and look at something that happens in sports, and say, ‘Well, that’s just the way the world works.’”

The NBA isn’t the only league that gets caught up in this kind of thinking.

Last weekend, the winner of the machines?”

Replay clearly showed the horse that finished first in the Ken- tucky Derby, Maximum Security, veering into the path of others. A 22-minute “inquiry” into the matter resulted in Maximum Security’s disqualification. Horse racing is the sport that practically invented the use of instant replay to adjudicate results on the track.

The one explanation that seems- ingly no one wants to hear any- more: The ref made a mistake.
Postseason showcases 

Bettman’s vision: parity

By Stephen Whyno
Associated Press

NEW YORK — There’s a word on players’ and coaches lips this playoffs, and it has nothing to do with getting pucks in deep.

“Parity in the league, it’s insanely tight,” Colorado coach Jared Bednar said.

This has been the postseason of parity with all four division champions gone, including the top seeds in each conference.

This is the world Commissioner Gary Bettman envisioned when the NHL instituted a salary cap in 2005 after a yearlong lockout.

Bettman prefers to call it “competitive balance,” and it’s the thing he trumpets the most about the state of the league where almost anyone can contend for the Stanley Cup in a given season.

If there’s ever a time to showcase competitive balance, that’s now, with top-shelf hockey almost every night, even if many big markets are gone.

“Everything starts with the game, what takes place on the ice,” Bettman told The Associat- ed Press on Tuesday. “You can’t market and promote around a product that is inferior, but with parity, with good, authentic, entertaining, then you can market it and promote it and reach out to new people.

Frankly it comes down to story lines, to player performance and that is as important, if not more so, than what cities are being represented.”

There’s not a lot of national buzz if a team from Raleigh, N.C., makes it to the third round of the playoffs. But when the Cinderella Hurricanes face the Boston Bruins, it should be a continuation of one of the wackiest, wildest postseasons in recent history.

Carolina in the conference final would’ve been difficult to imagine in the late 1990s, when big-market teams spent like crazy and could tilt the ice against those from smaller markets. It’s referred to now as the “Dead Puck Era” because scoring was repressed, and Bettman remembers the conversations he’d have with coaches in the late 1990s, when big-market teams spent like crazy and could tilt the ice against those from smaller markets.

“It’s just a testament to how close our clubs are competitive-ly,” Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said. “I don’t think that’s a problem with the system. I think that’s a unique aspect to the sys- tem. I think it’s worked well. I don’t think you’ll see it every year. But you won’t be surprised when it happens again.”

Bettman said nothing in sports is better than the first round of the NHL’s playoffs, and NBC Sports reported the highest first-round ratings in the network’s history.

If more big markets go out, that picture could change and interest could wane, but Bettman believes it all even out over time.

“Will ratings vary from year to year? Yes. And that is one of the results of this type of system. Some would say one of the conse- quences,” Bettman said.

“Obviously, if you take two big- market teams and they’re in the Stanley Cup Final, your ratings are likelier to be higher than if you have two small markets. And over time that can change, and the NFL’s a good example of that. The Super Bowl it doesn’t matter who’s playing.”

Carolina defenseman Jacob Slavin brings the puck up the ice during the Hurricanes’ second-round series against the New York Islanders.

By Joe Harris
Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Jordan Binnington still doesn’t look nervous.

Sure, the standout rookie goalie for the St. Louis Blues admitted he got a little tired late in the double-overtime win over Dallas in Game 7. But he said he is ready to keep his strong play going as St. Louis advanced to the Western Conference finals for the first time since 2016.

“I was pretty happy to see that puck go in, and in front of a home crowd, the at- mosphere was crazy,” Binnington said. “It was a fun experience.”

The Blues will play the San Jose Sharks, 3-2 winners over the Colorado Avalanche in Game 7 on Wednesday night. The Blues are making their fourth con- ference finals appearance since 1970. They can thank Binnington for doing his part.

The 25-year-old Canadian was cool and composed — and maybe a bit weary — fol- lowing Pat Maroon’s winner at 3:50 of the second overtime Tuesday night. There was no overly demonstrative celebration. He calmly skated to his teammates as if the Blues had wrapped up a ho-hum, regular- season game in October.

It’s been this way since Binnington was called up from the AHL on Jan. 5.

In the first round, Winnipeg fans tried to throw Binnington off his game by chant- ing, “You look nervous.” After helping lead the Blues to a momentum-shifting win in Game 5 at Winnipeg, reporters asked him about the chant, to which he simply replied, “Did I look nervous?”

Binnington, a Calder Trophy finalist, continued his stellar play against the Stars and Ben Bishop, a Vezina Trophy finalist.

“Big-time, big-time saves, at key mo- ments,” Blues coach Craig Berube said about Binnington. “That’s a credit to him. When you’re sitting there and watching it all, we’re getting a lot of action at the other end, things happen and they come down and get an opportunity, he was there to not make a big save for us.”

Binnington’s arrival helped turn the Blues around.

St. Louis was last in the league in points in January. Behind Binnington, the team went on a franchise-record, 11-game win- ning streak from January into February.

Binnington wound up 24-5-1 in the reg- ular season and is 8-5 in the postseason, where his save percentage is a pedestrian .915 but his goals-against average is just 2.39 behind a stingy defense.

Binnington has been a steady rookie for Blues

By Stephen Whyno
Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Jordan Binnington still doesn’t look nervous.

Sure, the standout rookie goalie for the St. Louis Blues admitted he got a little tired late in the double-overtime win over Dallas in Game 7. But he said he is ready to keep his strong play going as St. Louis advanced to the Western Conference finals for the first time since 2016.

“I was pretty happy to see that puck go in, and in front of a home crowd, the at- mosphere was crazy,” Binnington said. “It was a fun experience.”

The Blues will play the San Jose Sharks, 3-2 winners over the Colorado Avalanche in Game 7 on Wednesday night. The Blues are making their fourth con- ference finals appearance since 1970. They can thank Binnington for doing his part.

The 25-year-old Canadian was cool and composed — and maybe a bit weary — fol- lowing Pat Maroon’s winner at 3:50 of the second overtime Tuesday night. There was no overly demonstrative celebration. He calmly skated to his teammates as if the Blues had wrapped up a ho-hum, regular- season game in October.

It’s been this way since Binnington was called up from the AHL on Jan. 5.

In the first round, Winnipeg fans tried to throw Binnington off his game by chant- ing, “You look nervous.” After helping lead the Blues to a momentum-shifting win in Game 5 at Winnipeg, reporters asked him about the chant, to which he simply replied, “Did I look nervous?”

Binnington, a Calder Trophy finalist, continued his stellar play against the Stars and Ben Bishop, a Vezina Trophy finalist.

“Big-time, big-time saves, at key mo- ments,” Blues coach Craig Berube said about Binnington. “That’s a credit to him. When you’re sitting there and watching it all, we’re getting a lot of action at the other end, things happen and they come down and get an opportunity, he was there to not make a big save for us.”

Binnington’s arrival helped turn the Blues around.

St. Louis was last in the league in points in January. Behind Binnington, the team went on a franchise-record, 11-game win- ning streak from January into February.

Binnington wound up 24-5-1 in the reg- ular season and is 8-5 in the postseason, where his save percentage is a pedestrian .915 but his goals-against average is just 2.39 behind a stingy defense.
SAN JOSE, Calif. — Ever since Joe Pavelski went down with a gruesome head injury in the first round of the playoffs, the mantra for the San Jose Sharks has been to stay alive in the postseason long enough for their captain to come back to the ice.

What a return Pavelski made to send the Sharks into the Western Conference finals.

Pavelski scored one goal and assisted on another in the first period Wednesday night to lead San Jose to a 3-2 victory over the Colorado Avalanche in a date in the conference finals against St. Louis.

Joonas Donskoi ended a 39-game drought, Martin Jones made 14 of his 27 saves in the third period and the Sharks capitalized on a favorable replay review that negated a potential game-tying goal by Colorado in the second period.

Mikko Rantanen and Tyson Jost scored for the Avalache, who were trying to make their first conference final since 2002. Philipp Grubauer made 24 saves.

“You know, you’re almost speechless,” coach Peter DeBoer said. “Many people in the building, a lot of them saw (Pavelski’s) injury. I don’t think you saw the recovery and what he went through and how questionable it was whether he would even be able to be out there tonight. It really was a coin toss, and he obviously made the ultimate decision. What an impact. What do you say? He’s a special player, a special guy.”

Pavelski went down in Game 7 of the first round against Vegas when his helmet slammed to the ice, causing a concussion and a cut to his head that needed eight staples to close.

The injury was severe enough that Pavelski’s teammates doubted he’d be able to make it back this round. But he did everything he could to get back on the ice, then traveled with the team to Denver for Game 6 and knew he’d be back as soon as Gabriel Landeskog’s overtime winner forced the seventh game.

“To be honest after they scored in Game 6, it was kind of like a switch went on,” he said. “We’ve been working and feeling good. That’s when I figured it was on. Came back and got some things checked. Wake up this morning, feel good, skated a little bit, do a couple of morning skate drills we usually do and get ready.”

**Stars in good place despite emotionally draining finish**

DALLAS — Goaltender Ben Bishop talked somberly about the end of the season. Defenseman John Klingberg described his emotions as pretty empty.

After a double-overtime loss in Game 7 of the Western Conference semifinals, it was hard for the Dallas Stars to reflect on just how far they had come in coach Jim Montgomery’s first season and the positive effect it should have moving on to next season.

“Yeah, I’m sure it can,” top-line center Tyler Seguin said, though the sting was still fresh after a 2-1 loss in St. Louis.

Bishop had a career-high 52 saves Tuesday night before a puck that ricocheted off the post and back of his mask fell into the crease and was knocked into the net.

The win was right after captain Jamie Benn’s wraparound attempt that came oh-so-close to being a series-clinching goal for the Stars.

I know a lot of people wrote us off when it was the All-Star break, and we grew, and we overcame a lot of adversity. So there’s a lot to like,” Montgomery said. “I think that next year we’re going to be able to start in a real good place because there’s going to be a lot of familiarity starting next year.”

The Stars will still have Bishop, a finalist for the Vezina Trophy that goes to the NHL’s top goalie, along with Seguin, Benn and Klingberg. There are several young standouts as well, including 19-year-old defenseman Miro Heiskanen and fast-skating 22-year-old forward Roope Hintz.

Heiskanen and Hintz will no longer be NHL rookies next season, and neither will be their coach. Montgomery led the University of Denver to an NCAA championship in 2017 and also was part of a title as a college player.

Montgomery was the third coach in three seasons for the Stars, following grizzled veterans Ken Hitchcock and Lindy Ruff with their differing philosophies.

There were plenty of adjustments and acquaintances to be made with another new coach, and things didn’t always go smoothly at first.

Right after Christmas, long-time team executive Jim Lites profoundly ripped high-priced forwards Seguin and Benn for their play. Then in January, Montgomery called out his team over a “culture of mediocrity.”

All those feelings have certainly changed after a season that unexpectedly stretched into May, when their 59th game was the longest of the season at 3 hours, 49 minutes. They went to the playoffs for the first time since 2016, when they also lost to the Blues in Game 7 of a second-round series.

“I appreciate how much we grew together as a group, and the effort and sacrifice that they put together,” Montgomery said.

“We’re only going to be better because of this playoff run. That’s for sure, we are. The valuable experience that some of our young players got in their first year, and some of the guys that hadn’t been to the playoffs ... It’s a good building block for next year.”

**By Stephen Hawkins**

**Associated Press**
Source: Lakers not hiring Lue as coach

BY TANIA GANGULI AND BRODERICK TURNER

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Lakers are moving on from Tyronn Lue and will continue their search for a coach, according to a person familiar with the Lakers’ thinking.

Former Indiana Pacers and Orlando Magic coach Frank Vogel, former Atlanta Hawks and New York Knicks coach Mike Woodson and former Memphis Grizzlies and Brooklyn Nets coach Lionel Hollins will be added to the Lakers’ pool of candidates. They will also continue to consider Juwan Howard and Jason Kidd, both of whom were interviewed in April.

Lue and the Lakers began negotiating Friday, about a week and a half after Lue’s second interview with the franchise. Talks stalled Wednesday over several issues and the Lakers determined that despite his coaching record and strong relationship with LeBron James, Lue was not a long-term fit for the organization long term, the person familiar with the Lakers’ thinking said.

A person close to Lue said his agent told the Lakers on Tuesday that they planned to move on from pursuing the job. Still, negotiations continued into Wednesday and the person said there was reason to believe the Lakers ultimately would offer Lue a deal more to his liking. A Lakers source unequivocally denied that Lue’s representatives ever pulled out of the process.

As the negotiations unfolded, there were numerous issues on which the Lakers and Lue did not agree, people who were not authorized to speak publicly said. One of those issues was the makeup of the coaching staff. The Lakers suggested several names that weren’t to Lue’s liking. Although rumors persisted early in the process that candidates would be asked to agree to speak to the Lakers, that was the biggest sticking point.

Durant left Game 5 of Golden State’s Western Conference semifinal series against Houston on Wednesday night with a right calf strain — or with their fingerprints smudging the golden surface of the Larry O’Brien Trophy.

They will all hear some version of the question that Irving got.

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Warriors bounce back, take Game 5

By Jamie McCaulley

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Golden State Warriors have won plenty of games on the postseason stage without their biggest stars.

This time, Kevin Durant went down, and Klay Thompson and company found a way when the Warriors desperately needed it.

Thompson scored 27 points, including a key layup with 4.1 seconds left, and Golden State overcame Durant’s calf injury to beat the Houston Rockets 104-99 on Wednesday night for a 3-2 lead in the Western Conference semifinals.

“Honestly it was a little deflecting for a second,” Stephen Curry said, “and then we rallied.”

Durant was scheduled for an MRI exam Thursday after he strained his right calf in the third quarter. His status for Friday’s Game 6 had yet to be determined, but didn’t seem promising.

“We’ll have to claw our way to one more win,” Curry said.

Durant limped to the locker room after landing awkwardly following a baseline jumper. The two-time reigning NBA Finals MVP finished with 22 points, five rebounds and four assists.

“They’ve been here so many times, have been through these battles for the last five years,” Golden State coach Steve Kerr said.

“They’ve got a lot of guts. They just pulled together and got it done. There’s no speech necessary. They knew what they had to do.”

James Harden scored 31 points for the Rockets, who will try to stave off elimination back home in Houston.

“It is a do-or-die but I feel good about it,” coach Mike D’Antoni said. “And then we rallied.”

But the Rockets wasted an opportunity in Game 5. After Durant departed, a couple more Golden State stars helped the Warriors close it out.

Draymond Green received his fourth technical of the postseason with 3:39 left, and then knocked down a three-pointer on the other end. Thompson followed Green’s three with one of his own to make it 97-89 with 2:33 remaining.

“Two very key sequences in that game, two key shots for us,” Green said.

Curry struggled with his shot again and finished with 25 points on 9-for-23 shooting. He went 3-for-11 from long range.

Curry hit a three with 5:09 to play that made it 89-85. He didn’t score again before he scored his first points of the night until a three 4:22 before halftime.

Golden State nearly gave it away with an awful third quarter, when the Warriors managed just 15 points and committed six turnovers. The game was tied at 72 going into the final 12 minutes.

Golden State Stars guard Klay Thompson hits a layup past Houston Rockets guard James Harden, right. Thompson led the Warriors with 27 points in a 104-99 win Wednesday.

Antetokounmpo propels Bucks past Celtics to Eastern finals

By Joe Totoraitis

Milwaukee — Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Milwaukee Bucks found another gear after their first loss of the playoffs.

Kyrie Irving and the Boston Celtics just couldn’t keep up.

Antetokounmpo had 20 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, and the Bucks routed the Celtics 116-91 on Wednesday night to advance to the Eastern Conference finals.

After sweeping Detroit in the first round, top-seeded Milwaukee struggled in Game 1 against Boston and lost 112-90 in one of its worst offensive performances of the season. But Antetokounmpo led the way as the Bucks responded with four straight wins by a combined 65 points.

“I think our mindset changed,” Antetokounmpo said. “In the first game, we weren’t focused enough. We weren’t ourselves. The next four games, we came out with a different approach, a different mindset.”

The Bucks used a balanced attack to close out the Celtics in Game 5, placing seven players in double figures. Eric Bledsoe had 19 points and eight rebounds, and Eric Bledsoe finished with 18 points. Next up for the Bucks is the winner of the Philadelphia-Toronto series. The Raptors are up 3-2 heading into Game 6 on Thursday night.

It’s the first Eastern Conference finals for Milwaukee since 2001.

“We realize we’ve never been there before. We’re really hungry to achieve our goals. That’s all we care about. As long as we play hard, we really don’t care about what anybody has to say,” Giannis said.

Prior to the clinching win, several Bucks took turns speaking to the team.

“Giannis’ speech was, ‘A lot of us probably came from nothing and we have the opportunity to write our own story right now.’ That’s what everybody did,” George Hill said.

Hill finished with 16 points, and Nikola Mirotic had 10 points and 11 rebounds.

Warriors bace bounce back, take Game 5

Thompson steps up, Durant goes down with a calf injury

By Jamie McCaulley

On an exciting Thursday night, the Golden State Warriors bounced back in Game 5 against the Houston Rockets. With a dominant 104-99 win, the Warriors took a 3-2 lead in the Western Conference semifinals against the Rockets.

Klay Thompson led the charge with 27 points, including a clutch layup with 4.1 seconds remaining to secure the victory. Stephen Curry added 25 points, while Kevin Durant added 19 points and eight rebounds before limping off the court due to a calf injury.

The Warriors played a tough and disciplined game, not allowing the Rockets to get close. This was the first time in the series that Thompson had scored as many points as Curry, showcasing their strength as a team.

During a post-game interview, Thompson praised his teammates for stepping up in Durant’s absence. "They’ve been here so many times, have been through these battles for the last five years," he said. "They knew what they had to do.”

Meanwhile, the Houston Rockets had a tough time keeping up with the Warriors’ relentless defense. Despite their best efforts, the Rockets couldn’t overcome the game-changing injury to Durant, who was ruled out for the remainder of the series.

The Warriors will now take a 3-2 lead into Game 6 with a chance to eliminate the Rockets and advance to the Western Conference finals. They’ll be looking to carry this momentum into the next game on Saturday night, with another chance to close out the series and move on to the next round of the playoffs.

The Golden State Warriors and Houston Rockets will meet in the Western Conference finals for the second consecutive year, and the outcome could have major implications for the NBA Finals. Will the Warriors come out on top and secure their place in the Finals? Only time will tell as the series continues to unfold over the next few days.
All eyes on Kyrie

Has Irving played his last game with the Celtics?

By Tim Reynolds
Associated Press

It begins.
When the buzzer sounded in Milwaukee on Wednesday night, the question immediately became this: Has Kyrie Irving played his last game for the Boston Celtics?

It's very possible.
Welcome to free agency, Kyrie.
He's now in the place that other big names like Kevin Durant, Kawhi Leonard, Jimmy Butler and Klay Thompson will be when their respective seasons end, whether that happens with a playoff defeat, or with an injury —

See last on page 62

Inside: Warriors top Rockets in Game 5 despite injury to Durant, Page 63

Two men convicted in NCAA corruption case » Page 56