US launches new airstrike against Syria site tied to Iran

By Matthew Adams
Stars and Stripes
WASHINGTON — The U.S. launched an airstrike on a facility in eastern Syria linked to Iran-backed militants in response to an increasing number of recent attacks against U.S. forces in the Middle East, the Pentagon said Wednesday.

“The United States is fully prepared to take further necessary measures to protect our people and our facilities. We urge against any escalation,” Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement about the U.S. attack.

The strike was carried out by two F-15 fighter jets against a weapons storage facility in Mayssulun, according to a senior U.S. military official who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity. The official watched the engagement and believed there were some secondary explosions indicating the facility was housing weapons used against U.S. forces in the region.

“We’d been watching it for a bit to ensure that when we struck the target, we would strike it at a time that we would be able to eliminate the use of the facility to [Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps] and do so with the minimal number of casualties,” the military official said. “We are very certain this did not involve civilian loss and that the personnel, if they were there, were prepared for combat.

Different approach to defense

US military placing new emphasis on ground troops for Pacific

By David Rising
Associated Press
BANGKOK — As Chinese missile testing in the waters around Taiwan grew increasingly aggressive in 1996, the U.S. sailed two aircraft carrier groups to the island that Beijing claims as its own, and China was forced to back down.

It employed a similar response to Hamas’ surprise attack on Israel a month ago, dispatching two carrier groups to the Eastern Mediterranean in a rapid and massive show of force meant to deter other countries or Iran-backed proxy groups such as Hezbollah from joining the fight.

But what is still viable in the Mideast is increasingly less practical with China, which in 1996 had no carriers of its own and little means to threaten the American ships, but now has the world’s largest navy, including three aircraft carriers, and a coastline bristling with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles.

Instead, ongoing exercises in Hawaii, which conclude Friday, highlight part of a new American approach to Pacific defense and deterrence, with a focus on small groups of mobile land forces operating from islands like those off China’s coast.

In the exercises, the largest-scale training held in Hawaii so far, more than 5,000 troops from the 25th Infantry Division, along with units from New Zealand, Indonesia, Thailand and Britain and supported by the U.S. Air Force, have been practicing fighting in an island jungle environment against an advanced enemy force, with exercises including paratrooper drops, a long-range air assault, and resupply by air and sea.

“All of those are examples of the importance of being able to project force here in the Pacific, which first requires seizing and holding ground and building up a base of operations where you can consolidate gains, secure and hold key infrastructure such as an airfield, and resupply by air and sea.”

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SEE SYRIA ON PAGE 3

MILITARY
Houthi rebels shoot down US drone near Yemen

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EUROPE GAS PRICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Super E10</th>
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Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective Nov. 10. The change in prices is from Nov. 3.

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

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Pacific price for the week of Nov. 10-16

EXCHANGE RATES

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

INTEREST RATES

| Prime rate | 8.50 |
| Interest Rates Discount rate | 6.00 |
| Federal funds market rate | 5.33 |
| 3-month bill | 5.43 |
| 30-year bond | 4.01 |

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

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

FRIDAY IN EUROPE

SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC

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

Today in Stripes

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**Friday, November 10, 2023**

**MILITARY**

‘Thanks, but no thanks’

Poll: Phrase makes some active-duty, vets feel awkward

By J.P. LAWRENCE

Younger American veterans and military personnel who receive a spoken thanks for their service are more apt to think “thanks but no thanks,” according to a new poll.

The finding came from a survey of 1,639 veterans and service members released Wednesday by financial services company USAA as part of a Veterans Day initiative.

About two-thirds of a mix of mostly veterans and some currently serving troops between the ages of 18 and 44 agreed.

Most veterans over 45 said the phrase does not bother them. And 76% of veterans over 65 said the phrase does not make them feel uncomfortable or awkward.

The survey found a generation-wide divide on the phrase, which gained prominence after the start of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan more than 20 years ago.

Most veterans over 45 said the phrase does not bother them. And 76% of veterans over 65 said the phrase does not make them feel awkward, with most responding that thanking them for their service is the most appropriate way to honor them.

In contrast, 69% of veterans and currently serving troops ages 18-29 said the phrase makes them uncomfortable, and 66% of respondents ages 30-44 agreed.

The divide on “thank you for your service” comes from the difference in how various generations were viewed on returning home from war, said Kayla Williams, a former Army linguist who serves on Mission 18 Honor Flight Syracuse.

Williams, a former Army linguist who now works at the Army Reserve, said their primary objective is to deter other groups and countries from escalating the war between Israel and the militant group Hamas, which is backed by Iran. The American service members in Iraq and Syria are part of the U.S. forces in the region deployed to support the ongoing campaign against the Islamic State group.

However, the Pentagon also has mobilized other U.S. military forces to the region after Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 17, including fighter jets and two Navy aircraft carrier strike groups. The Pentagon said Sunday that an Ohio-class, nuclear-powered submarine had also arrived in the region. Defense officials said last week that the U.S. is flying drones over Iranian-controlled territory southwest of Yemen — searching for the roughly 200 hostages taken by the militant group.

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A girl holds a sign welcoming veterans of World War II, Vietnam and Korean wars outside the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Virginia. Many young veterans are uncomfortable with the phrase thank you for your service, according to a recent USAA survey. Most veterans over age 45 said it didn’t bother them.

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**Houthi rebels shoot down US drone off coast of Yemen**

**BY DOUG G WARE**

WASHINGTON — A rebel group in Yemen shot down a U.S. drone on Wednesday, roughly three weeks after a U.S. warship intercepted missiles fired toward Israel by the same rebels, Pentagon officials said.

The U.S. drone was an MQ-9 Reaper taken down by the Houthis, an Iranian-backed militant group that has been fighting a civil war against the Yemeni government since the 1990s, according to a senior U.S. military official.

Attacks against U.S. forces in the Middle East have risen significantly since Hamas militants in Gaza attacked Israel a month ago.

Israel has retaliated with air strikes and an invasion of Gaza. The Pentagon said earlier this week that there have been at least 40 separate attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria in the past three weeks. None have caused any serious injuries or heavy damage to the bases, officials said.

The drone attack came on the same day that President Joe Biden ordered a U.S. airstrike by two F-15 fighter jets on a weapons storage facility in eastern Syria used by Iran’s military and rebel groups. The U.S. carried out a similar strike in the same region of Syria on Oct. 26.

It wasn’t immediately clear Wednesday what the drone was doing or whether it was armed. MQ-9 Reapers can carry a variety of armaments, including missiles and laser-guided bombs.

The military official said the Reaper was shot down in the waters off the Yemeni coast but didn’t say whether it was destroyed.

The attack came three weeks after the USS Carney shot down several Houthi rockets that were fired toward Israel on Oct. 19. The Pentagon said those missiles had a range of about 1,200 miles and could have reached Israel.

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However, the Pentagon also has mobilized other U.S. military forces to the region after Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, including fighter jets and two Navy aircraft carrier strike groups. The Pentagon said Sunday that an Ohio-class, nuclear-powered submarine had also arrived in the region. Defense officials said last week that the U.S. is flying drones over Iranian-controlled territory southwest of Yemen — searching for the roughly 200 hostages taken by the militant group.
USMC leader: Heart attack recovery ‘going well’

By Doug G. Ware
Stars and Stripes
WASHINGTON — Gen. Eric Smith, the new Marine Corps commandant, on Wednesday said his recovery is going well in his first public remarks about his health since suffering a heart attack more than a month ago. "I appreciate the outpouring of support for my family and me. My recovery is going well, and I look forward to getting back in the fight as soon as I can," Smith said in a statement.

Smith, who was confirmed by the Senate as the Marine Corps commandant in September, has been in the hospital since suffering the heart attack on Oct. 29 near his home at the Marine Barracks in Washington. At the time, he had been performing the duties of two jobs because the general nominated to become the assistant commandant was blocked from promotion along with hundreds of other military personnel by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala.

Since September, Senate Democrats have sidestepped Tuberville's hold by individually confirming several of the most senior military nominees, including Smith, Air Force Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Randy George as Army chief of staff, Adm. Lisa Franchetti as chief of naval operations, Gen. David Allvin as Air Force chief of staff and Lt. Gen. Christopher Mahoney as assistant Marine Corps commandant. Tuberville's blockade on military promotions is a protest against a Pentagon policy that reimburses troops who travel out of state to receive reproductive care, including abortions. Some Republican-controlled states have outlawed or imposed severe restrictions on the practice since the Supreme Court struck down Roe v. Wade in mid-2022.

The Marine Corps said it will be some time before Smith can resume his duties as commandant, even after he is discharged from the hospital. In the meantime, Mahoney will continue to perform his duties.

“Based on his baseline physical health and his rapid improvement over the last week, his medical team has recommended that he transition to inpatient rehabilitation to expedite his recovery,” the Marine Corps said Wednesday. “They are confident that with focused attention and daily interaction, he will be back to full-duty status sooner than if utilizing outpatient rehabilitation.”

Sigonella Seabees restore memorials to crash victims

By Alison Bath
Stars and Stripes
Navy Seabees' efforts to restore and re dedicate roadside memorials in Sicily that honor sailors killed near Naval Air Station Sigonella also may help keep other service members safe.

The three memorials to five sailors killed decades ago are a potent safety reminder, Petty Officer 1st Class Monica Cervantes said.

"It brings back the realism of driving … especially under the influence, out here at night and the dangers of it," said Cervantes, a Seabee attached to Sigonella's public works department.

On Nov. 3, new crosses were installed and the memorials were cleaned. Plaques with the sailors' names will be added later, she said.

One refurbished memorial is dedicated to three Seabees who died March 27, 1989, when a tire on their truck blew out. The others remember a Seabee killed in a motorcycle crash on his way to work in the late 1990s and a sailor who died Nov. 11, 1998.

Cervantes said she and fellow 1st Class Association Seabees were inspired to fix the remembrance sites after learning that they had been forgotten.

Maintaining the memorials had been a Seabee tradition until about 10 years ago, she said, adding that she didn't know why it stopped.

It took about four months to locate the memorials, seek needed permissions, build crosses and gather other materials, Cervantes said. She said the association spent about $340 euros on the project.

The Seabees hope to revive the tradition of maintaining the memorials as part of annual Veterans Day and Memorial Day observances. They also plan to eventually memorialize other sailors killed in traffic crashes near the base, Cervantes said.

Veterans who served at Sigonella submitted names of sailors they knew who had died on area roads.

That response created a feeling of responsibility among association members to let those veterans know that "we have your back" and will make sure the sailors they served with are remembered, Cervantes said.

Servicewide, 43 sailors died in crashes involving cars, motorcycles or other private vehicles during fiscal year 2023, which ended Sept. 30, according to data from the Naval Safety Command. That's an increase of 43% from 2022, when 30 sailors were killed. It's also higher than the 36 who died in 2021, the data show.

Sigonella lost at least four sailors to traffic accidents in 2021, including a single-vehicle crash in September that killed Petty Officer 3rd Class Racquel Amanda Johnson and Seaman Darica Shunte Lashae Slaughter.

Those deaths prompted base officials to heighten scrutiny of dangerous driving and rules violations, Stars and Stripes reported at the time.

US, S. Korea plan to counter North’s military pipeline to Russia

By David Choi
Stars and Stripes
The United States and South Korea “share profound concerns” over North Korea’s military ties with Russia and will counter that collaboration with action of their own, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during a press conference in Seoul on Thursday.

Speaking alongside South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin, Blinken told reporters that the two allies are concerned about the suspected export of military equipment from North Korea to Russia to use in the war in Ukraine.

U.S. and South Korean intelligence agencies in September assessed that North Korea had likely shipped more than 2,000 containers of roughly a million artillery shells in exchange for satellite support and other technological aid, according to Seoul’s Ministry of National Defense.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had traveled to Russia that month, his first trip outside North Korea’s borders in over four years, and met with President Vladimir Putin to reinforce their ties, the state-run Korean Central News Agency reported at the time.

“We share profound concerns about [North Korea’s] growing and dangerous military cooperation with Russia,” Blinken said.

Washington and Seoul are exploring “further actions that our countries can take with partners to intensify pressure on Moscow not to transfer military technology to North Korea,” Blinken added.

“This is something that we’re very focused on,” he said. "We’re working to identify, to expose, and, as necessary, to counter these efforts."

Blinken arrived in South Korea on Wednesday evening after a two-day meeting in Tokyo of foreign ministers from the G7, the seven leading industrial nations.

His visit came five days before Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is scheduled to meet with South Korean Defense Minister Shin Won-sik in Seoul on Monday.

Blinken also met with South Korean national security adviser Cho Tae-yong on Thursday for discussions “aimed at promoting a safe, secure and sustainable use of outer space and enhancing the resilience of space systems,” the State Department said in a news release.
MILITARY

DODEA students overseas begin e-testing for future military jobs

By Seth Robson
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — For the first time, high-schoolers at U.S. military bases in Japan have taken a new, electronic version of the test that gauges aptitude for military and civilian careers.

Students at Yokota High School, whose parents work at the airlift hub that’s also the headquarters of U.S. Forces Japan, sat for the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, or ASVAB, test on Thursday.

It was the first time the electronic version of the test, being rolled out at on-base schools worldwide, was given in Japan, said school information specialist Colleen McDougall as students tested in a nearby classroom that morning.

“This is the largest ASVAB that has ever been given in the Pacific,” she said.

More than four in five of the school’s 10th through 12th graders — 154 students — were taking the test, McDougall said.

“The test has been offered at the school for decades, but this is the first time it has been done electronically which gives instant results,” she said.

“It’s a powerful college and career planning tool,” she said.

The test matches students with careers and suggests courses they should take in high school and college. It also lists universities offering recommended courses and quotes tuition costs and what jobs pay in each state.

The test gives students a valid ASVAB score that they can use to enter military career fields for two years, McDougall said.

Between 8% and 10% of Yokota students enter the military, she said.

“That’s normal with your family already knowing about the military,” she said.

The electronic testing comes amid a recruiting crisis with officials citing factors such as a strong civilian job market and obesity among young people that make them unfit to serve.

One of those who took the test at Yokota on Thursday — student board president Melia Okamoto — said she wants to serve in the military as a physical therapist.

“I’m acquainted to the lifestyle and military benefits that go with it and it sets you up to have a career in the private sector,” she said.

Another test-taker, Makayla Lawry, a junior who home-schools at Yokota, said she wants to be a dentist.

Lawry said she has no plans to join the military, although she recognizes the benefits of service such as travel, a stable career and health care.

Lacroyx Harris, a sophomore who played Rumpelstiltskin in the school play, said he’s contemplating a career as a financial adviser, stockbroker or actor.

The test backed up his career interests but also suggested microbiology, he said.

Air Force Maj. Mark Sideno, a JROTC instructor at Yokota, said his twin sons, Nathaniel and Kyle, scored well on the test in science, technology, engineering and math.

“Based on their scores it gave them a road map to classes to prepare for high school, university and career,” he said.

One surprising career suggestion that the test recommended for his sons was nano engineering — designing ultra-small machines — Sideno said.

Students can take the electronic ASVAB anywhere the U.S., even if they attend schools that don’t allow recruiters or JROTC on campus, he said.
Russian missile hits ship with Liberia flag in Odesa

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A Russian missile strike on the Ukrainian port of Odesa hit a Liberian-flagged freighter, killing a port worker and injuring three civilians of the Philippines, who are crew members on the ship, Ukraine’s armed forces said Thursday.

The report did not give the name of the ship or the country of its owners, but Infrastructure Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said the ship was to carry iron ore to China. 200,000 metric tons of iron ore were not immediately reported.

Another port worker was injured in the attack along with the one killed.

Russia reportedly using Ukrainian POWs to fight in their homeland on Moscow’s side

Associated Press

Russia is sending Ukrainian prisoners of war to the front lines of their homeland to fight on Moscow’s side in the war, the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti reported.

The news agency said Tuesday the soldiers swore allegiance to Russia when they joined the battalion, which entered service last month.

“Russian authorities might claim they are recruiting them on a voluntary basis but it’s hard to imagine a scenario where a prisoner of war’s decision could be taken truly voluntarily, given the situation of coercive custody,” said Yulia Gorbunova, senior researcher on Ukraine at Human Rights Watch.

Nick Reynolds, research fellow for Land Warfare at the Royal United Services Institute in London, added that “the entire scenario is laced with the potential for coercion.”

A prisoner of war, he said, does not have “a huge amount of agency” and is in a “very difficult situation.”

Earlier this year, Russian media reported about 70 Ukrainian POWs joined the battalion. RIA Novosti reported the Ukrainians will operate as part of another unit in eastern Ukraine.

Experts: Stopping Ukraine aid would do global damage

By Doug G. Ware

WASHINGTON — Congress must approve President Joe Biden’s request for tens of billions of dollars to pay for another year of military aid for Ukraine because failing to do so would mean big trouble for Europe and the United States, a panel of experts told a Senate committee Wednesday.

“This is the wrong time to walk away because Ukraine is winning. It has already taken back half the territory [Russia] has seized since February 2022,” James O’Brien, assistant secretary of European and Eurasian affairs at the State Department, said during the hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. “You don’t walk away when you’re part way through the job.”

“The good fortune in our support, Russia will win and they won’t stop at Ukraine,” said Erin Mckee, assistant administrator for Europe and Eurasia at the U.S. Agency for International Development, the independent government agency that overseas civilian foreign aid and development assistance.

The hearing Wednesday came amid debate in Congress over Biden’s $106 billion supplemental funding request, which includes money in 2024 to aid Ukraine and Israel, which is at war with the militant group Hamas. The funding request also would pay for enhanced security at the U.S.-Mexico border and spend billions of dollars to make key investments across the U.S. defense industry. Ongoing aid for Ukraine still has bipartisan support in Congress, though some to sat say... are questioning or opposing it. Pentagon officials have said they are running out of money for equipment and weapons for the Eastern European country.

“If America falters in our support, Russia will win and they won’t stop at Ukraine,” said Geoffrey Pyatt, assistant secretary of energy resources at the State Department, adding Russia is constantly attacking civilian energy infrastructure to break the will of the Ukrainian people. “Congress’ continued support of our efforts is vital to U.S. interests. Putin is targeting Ukraine’s energy infrastructure because he sees it as central to his war’s aims. The energy sector funding that is included in the [Biden] supplemental (request) is essential to Ukraine’s success on the battlefield.”

“Putin must not succeed. We must continue to support the people of Ukraine in their fight to thrive as a free, secure, independent country,” Mckee said. “None of what we have achieved together would have been possible without the generosity of Congress and the American people.”

The three officials told senators that Putin is counting on Americans becoming fatigued with the war in Ukraine and waiting for U.S. support to disappear. They said failure in Ukraine would ripple into the Middle East, where the United States is also providing aid to Israel after it was attacked by Hamas on October 7.

“Putin sees Hamas as a way to distract us and to weaken the coalition that we have built against him,” O’Brien said. “His unwillingness to condemn what Hamas did on October 7 and his unwillingness to use any leverage he might have to get them [out of Gaza] is a sign that he prefers to see us distracted by this fight. Putin has hosted Hamas recently in Moscow, the president of [North Korea] and he’s visited China. That’s who wins if we walk away.”

The officials said aid for Ukraine is an investment that pays dividends in many ways. For instance, they said it strengthens the U.S. military throughout the world, expands defense research and innovation, grows the U.S. economy with good-paying jobs and discourages other authoritarian countries such as China and North Korea from similar aggression.

For years, China has expressed a desire to “unify” with Taiwan, which it considers a breakaway territory. Some U.S. military officials have said a Chinese invasion of Taiwan could happen as soon as the late 2020s.

“So, we have to shore that up if we are going to have the heft to compete with China over time,” O’Brien said. “All of that is included in this supplemental, and that’s going to make us better able to defend Taiwan, to work in the South China Sea.”

There were some tense moments during the hearing when Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., who has repeatedly opposed sending aid to Ukraine, berated the officials by arguing the supplemental funding request would only benefit the weapons industry.

“The money is coming from somewhere where it would be in a productive use to where it’s into the use of basically fomenting a war and continuing a war,” Paul said.

“No, that’s not the choice in front of us, senator. And I’m sorry you feel that’s the way you want to frame it,” O’Brien responded. “The choice in front of us is, do we invest in the capacities that allow this war to be won — capacities in energy, in defense, in [information technology].”

U.S. M1A1 Abrams tanks arrive at Grafenwoehr, Germany, on May 12, 2023.
Military

Pacific: Troops utilizing ‘geography in its favor’ to overcome difficulties

FROM PAGE 1

then introduce additional combat power,” said Maj. Gen. Marcus Evans, commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division, in an interview in Wheeler Army Airfield on Oahu.

While the exercises are not officially directed against a specific threat, the U.S. Department of Defense in its report last month to Congress reiterated that it considers China its “pacing challenge” as “the only competitor to the United States with the intent and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order.”

Even though China’s navy is now larger than the U.S. in terms of numbers of ships, the U.S. Navy is still more capable and has 11 carriers to China’s three, among other advantages. But while China’s main focus is on its nearby waters, the U.S. Navy operates globally and in the event of a Taiwan conflict, it would take time for many of its assets to get to the region.

As part of its “Operation Pathways” revamped of Pacific defense set in motion nearly a decade ago, the U.S. has been increasing its number of exercises with partners in the Indo-Pacific. It has also been re-thinking the way its soldiers and Marines operate in the first island chain off of China, which includes southwestern Japanese islands, Taiwan and the northern Philippines.

In and the second island chain, which includes the Mariana Islands and the heavily fortified American territory of Guam.

Those islands give them platforms from which anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles can be launched by mobile units that can quickly relocate to avoid counter battery fire, said Brian Grim, a defense analyst with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

“The U.S. already has a position in overlapping islands that permit by being forward deployed and having allies there, so it wants to utilize that geography in its favor,” Graham said.

“And that helps the U.S. to overcome its numerical disadvantages as China’s navy is continuing to expand. The U.S. has to do what it can to try and close the gap, and land forces are part of the equation.”

Beyond just being able to take and hold positions, the military has to overcome what Evans called a “tyranny of distance” in the Pacific where troops may find themselves on remote islands many hundreds of miles away from new supplies of water, fuel and ammunition.

Among several new technologies being tested in the ongoing exercises in Hawaii are three variants of an “atmospheric water generator” to produce potable water in field conditions.

Operating from the first and second island chains would require the consent of the countries they belong to, and the U.S. has also been working hard to shore up and expand alliances in the region.

It runs large-scale training exercises with the Philippines, where earlier this year it signed an agreement for 25% for suits filed in federal court.

The exercises provide experience in technical and procedural interoperability and also build human bonds that can be critical in times of crisis.

“We are just finishing up a defense here on the island of Oahu and watching soldiers from Indonesia, Thailand and New Zealand alongside soldiers from the United States Army dig fighting positions together, experience a crucible of privilege — that challenges, but most importantly forges relationships,” Evans said.

On the political level, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin is on his ninth trip to the Indo-Pacific this week with stops in India, South Korea and Indonesia, in which he is to “underscore the depth of the long-standing U.S. commitment to strengthening the Indo-Pacific’s dynamic security architecture.”

Austin’s travels overlap with Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s own visits to Tokyo, Seoul and New Delhi.

Planning and training by the U.S. and its allies have not been going on in a vacuum, and China has been working hard to extend the operational capability of its navy. It has also developed so-called “carrier killer” missiles able to hit targets at long distances, and a ballistic missile capable of striking Guam.

It launched its first domestically designed and manufactured aircraft carrier in 2022, and that same year signed a security pact with the Solomon Islands in the Pacific, which many say could be used as a port to re-supply Chinese navy ships.

That could give the Chinese navy a better ability to operate well beyond the second island chain and disrupt American supply lines or reinforcements coming from Hawaii — making it even more important for forward units to buy time in the event of a conflict.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has not ruled out the use of force to take Taiwan, and while the American policy on whether it would come to Taiwan’s aid is that of “strategic ambiguity,” or not saying how far it is willing to go, President Joe Biden has said that Washington would intervene militarily.

With tensions rising over Taiwan, the U.S. use of the island chains could both deter China from considering an invasion, and also exact a heavy price if they tried, Graham said.

“Having long-range anti-ship missiles and long-range air defense missiles operated by small groups that are designed to be resilient, and logistically able to operate without resupply under distress, they could do a lot to deter the Chinese from ever thinking about operating in that scenario,” he said. “But if push comes to shove, they could impose a cost in terms of attrition of those forces as they move closer to Taiwan.”

Air!craft carrier groups would still likely play a large role in a conflict but would more likely be surged in and then quickly moved out, putting them at greater risk than in the past, he added.

“But then,” he said, “aircraft carriers are designed to be risked.”

Senator touts cap on attorney fees in Lejeune toxin case

By Corey Dickstein

Former troops and their family members who became sick from exposure to toxic water decades ago at Camp Lejeune, N.C., cannot be charged by their attorneys more than 25% of the money paid to them as compensation by the government, federal officials have ruled.

The Justice Department made the decision Monday in an Oct. 27 court filing, adopting a request from Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, who said he had worked for more than a year to get the Marine Corps base in Lejeune to cap attorney fees in these cases involving the Marine Corps base.

Sullivan, who spoke Wednesday on Capitol Hill, accused some attorneys involved in these cases of signing their clients to contracts that would award the lawyers more than 65% of the money that victims eventually receive.

“We do not want sick Marines and their families to be scammed,” said Sullivan, who is an attorney, a colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve and a member of the American Legion in Alaska.

The Justice Department decision, shared by Sullivan’s office on Wednesday, caps attorney fees at 25% for suits filed in federal court.

Sullivan said Wednesday that Attorney General Merrick Garland had assured him that the federal government would levy criminal or civil penalties under the Federal Tort Claims Act on lawyers who charge their clients fees beyond those caps.

The American Legion has lobbied lawmakers to cap law firm fees since the Camp Lejeune Justice Act was passed in 2022, which allowed for those sickened by toxic water at the Marine base between 1953 and 1987 to sue for damages.

American Legion National Commander Daniel Seehafer, who spoke Wednesday alongside Sullivan, said he was angered by walk-to-wall radio and television advertisements from law firms seeking Camp Lejeune clients.

Seehafer said law firms have “spent billions (of dollars) … on predatory marketing campaigns targeting sick Marines and their families.”

He called on Congress to encode those fee caps in law, which Sullivan and other Republican lawmakers have unsuccessfully attempted previously.

More than 100,000 Marine veterans and their family members who served at Camp Lejeune between the 1950s and 1980s have filed claims, Navy officials said. So far, no one has been paid a settlement nor gone to trial in the case.

Victims have until Aug. 10, 2024, to submit a claim.

Navy officials said the processes to vet claims have been slow moving, but they have promised staffing has been increased and they are making progress on the backlog.

In September, the Navy and Justice Department announced the government would offer some victims a preset settlement option, which would pay between $100,000 to $550,000 to those who have developed certain diseases and spent at least 30 days at Camp Lejeune between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 21, 1987.

Known as the elective option, those settlements are meant to provide some claimants a “quick and early resolution” to their cases, the Justice Department said in September.

Government officials said they had not estimated how many victims would take the elective option.
Air Force completes Reaper drones transfer

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND MARI HIGA
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Okinawa — The U.S. Air Force has completed a transfer of MQ-9 Reaper drones to Okinawa from a Japanese air force base farther north, a Japanese defense official said this week.

Six Reapers from the 319th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron arrived at Kadena Air Base between Oct. 13 and Oct. 22, according to the Kyushu Defense Bureau’s website. The drones came from Kanoya Air Base, a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force installation on Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan’s four main islands.

The Reapers are already flying intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions over Japan’s southern island chain in close coordination with Japan’s Ministry of Defense, 1st Lt. Robert Dabbs, a spokesman from Kadena’s 19th Wing, said by email Thursday.

“The MQ-9s at Kadena are conducting ... missions to enhance our senior leaders’ ability to make informed decisions that help maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific,” he said. “All operations will occur in accordance with our agreements with Japan and international law.”

Two Reapers will remain at Kanoya until Tuesday, when they will be withdrawn, an Okinawa Defense Bureau spokesman said by phone Thursday. He would not comment on where the drones are headed next.

The bureaus represent Japan’s Defense Ministry on their respective islands. Some government officials in Japan may speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

The Reaper, made by General Atomics of San Diego, is a medium-altitude, long-endurance, remotely operated aircraft used primarily for surveillance, according to the Air Force. They are capable of carrying a combination of Hellfire missiles and Paveway laser-guided bombs.

Their mission in southern Japan consists primarily of monitoring potential flashpoints across the Indo-Pacific and providing time-sensitive intelligence to U.S. commanders, allies and partners, including an intelligence analysis cell made up of U.S. and Japanese military officials, 18th Wing spokesman Lt. Col. Raymond Geoffroy said last month.

Their plan to move the Reapers to Kadena was announced Oct. 6. About 150 airmen from the reconnaissance squadron and eight Reapers had been based at Kanoya for about a year.

The unmanned aircraft are originally from Creech Air Force Base, Nev.

The Reapers will be operating out of the southern air hub for the foreseeable future, Geoffroy said.

From Kadena, the Reapers can reach the disputed Senkaku Island chain in half the time the trip took from Kanoya, the bureau website said. The Senkaku, a string of five uninhabited islands and three rocks 105 miles east of Taiwan, are administered by Japan but claimed by both Taiwan and China.

Japan wanted the drones based in the southern isles because of a heightened need for information gathering due to the increased activities of potential adversaries, Japanese Defense Minister Seiji Kihara said Oct. 10.

China in recent years has stepped up challenges to its neighbors’ maritime claims in the East and South China Seas. Its coast guard frequently enters seas claimed by Japan around the Senkakus.

After learning about the deployment last month, Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki called the plan unacceptable and asked the Okinawa Defense Bureau to reconsider, he wrote in a letter published to a prefectural X account, formerly known as Twitter.

He acknowledged an increasingly severe security environment but called the drones burdensome on Okinawa.

Historical salvage platform collapsing into Pearl Harbor

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — It took Japanese torpedo bombers less than an hour to sink the battleship USS Arizona during the Dec. 7, 1941, surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

Salvaging the unrepairable hulk that rested half submerged on the harbor floor took almost two years. A pair of platforms were welded to the sides of the Arizona to which ferries, barges and ships transported workers stripped parts critical to the war effort.

Now, after eight decades of exposure to salt water and ever-tides, one of those submerged platforms has collapsed after breaking loose from the ship, which is now part of the USS Arizona National Memorial. On Oct. 27, staff with the Pearl Harbor National Memorial discovered the smaller of the two platforms had shifted, with its concrete surface now inclined diagonally in the water.

A preliminary assessment found that the platform appeared to be stable, but a much more in-depth evaluation will be needed to determine what can or should be done to preserve it, David Kilton, a spokesman for the Pearl Harbor National Memorial, told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

Preserving both platforms is essential to historical preservation, he said.

“Our mission at the National Park Service is not just Dec. 7, 1941,” he said. “It’s the lead up to the attacks, the actual attack and the aftermath, continuing all the way to peace and reconciliation—a story still playing out today.”

“Those platforms tell the part of the story of the salvage,” he said.

The top of the now-listing platform is a roughly 2-by-6-foot concrete slab, about a foot thick, Kilton said. It is lined with bollards that had been used to secure vessels.

The slab is attached to a submerged steel frame that had been welded to the ship.

The Arizona was one of only three ships so badly damaged in the attack that they were unrepairable, Kilton said.

The wreck of the USS Utah remains in the harbor, and a memorial was erected near the site in 1972. At the time it was sunk, the Utah was no longer an active battleship and was used primarily for anti-aircraft training.

The battleship USS Oklahoma underwent salvage work until 1946, when a private company purchased the Oklahoma’s hull and attempted to pull it by tug to California. The battleship sank about 500 miles east of Hawaii.

The sunken wreck of the Arizona is the centerpiece of the Pearl Harbor National Memorial. Roughly 1.7 million visitors each year take the short ferry trip to the memorial’s viewing platform that was erected above the sunken hull. The area includes a shrine room listing the names of the 1,177 crew members who died because of the attack.

The memorial’s dive team is working with the Navy and a dive resource team from the National Park Service’s Denver Service Center to conduct a more thorough assessment of the platform’s condition, Kilton said.
GOP debate focuses on Israel, China, Ukraine

Associated Press

MIAMI — In their first debate since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, the Republican presidential candidates all declared hawkish support for Israel but squabbled over Chinese investment and Ukraine as they faced growing pressure to try to catch Donald Trump, who was again absent.

Sparring over several issues were Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley, who has appeared competitive with DeSantis’ distant second-place position in some national polls. Much of the debate focused on policy — especially foreign policy issues — rather than Trump and his record.

Haley, the former South Carolina governor and United Nations ambassador, declared she would end trade relations with China “until they stop murdering Americans from fentanyl — something Ron has yet to say that he’s going to do.” In return, the Florida governor said Haley “welcomed” Chinese investment to her state, referencing a land deal with a Chinese manufacturer while she led South Carolina.

All five candidates face growing urgency, with the leadoff Iowa caucuses just a little more than two months away, to cut into Trump’s huge margins in the 2024 primary and establish themselves as a clear alternative. But it’s not clear many Republican primary voters want a Trump alternative. And given his dominance in early state and national polls, Trump again skipped the debate to deprive his rivals of attention.

Trump was the subject of the debate’s first question, when moderators asked each candidate to explain why they were the right person on their debate stage.

DeSantis said, “He owes it to you to be on this stage and explain why he should get another chance.” He suggested Trump had lost a step since winning the White House in 2016, saying he failed to follow through on his “America First” policies.

Haley, who is pulling some voter and donor curiosity from DeSantis, said Trump “used to be right” on supporting Ukraine but “now he’s getting weak in the knees.”

But the conversation moved on to policy issues with relatively few head-to-head confrontations. The moderators often declined to call on candidates who were mentioned by others onstage, as is normally the custom.

The DeSantis and Haley campaigns for months have attacked each other on China, long a topic of scorn in GOP primaries. Their allied super PACs have run ads in early primary states alleging the other side is soft on Beijing.

Abortion was also a topic of the debate after Democrats and abortion rights supporters won several statewide races in Tuesday’s elections.

DeSantis, who signed a six-week abortion ban in Florida, said anti-abortion activists were “flat-footed” in mobilizing and noted that people who voted for the measures included Republicans who have previously supported GOP candidates.

Haley, long credited by anti-abortion activists as being pro-choice, said she doesn’t “judge anyone for every woman and every man” and she doesn’t “judge anyone for being pro-choice.”

She said Republicans need to acknowledge they don’t have the votes in Congress to pass a national abortion ban but should instead work to find some consensus to “ban late-term abortions,” make contraception available and ensure states don’t pass laws that punish women for getting abortions.

Also appearing onstage Wednesday were South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and bio-tech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy.

Republican presidential candidates from left, Chris Christie, Nikki Haley, Ron DeSantis, Vivek Ramaswamy and Tim Scott, stand on stage before a GOP presidential primary debate Wednesday in Miami. (Wilfredo Lee/AP)

Scott frequently referenced the Bible and appealed to the Christian faith of many Republican primary voters, echoing his campaign themes and his singular focus on Israel, where white evangelical support seemed to be crucial.

Christie defended U.S. support for Ukraine in its defense against Russia’s invasion, saying that for the United States “this is not a choice. This is the price we pay for being the leaders of the free world.”

Ramaswamy tried several times to push his way into the center of the debate. Having long styled himself as someone willing to challenge his rivals, Ramaswamy repeatedly went after other candidates, notably Haley, who tussled with him in the first two debates.

Haley seemed to ignore his first barbs, but snapped during a discussion about the social media app TikTok, which many Republicans want banned in the U.S. due to its parent company’s ties to China.

Ramaswamy accused Haley’s daughter of having had her own TikTok account until recently. Responded Haley, “Leave my daughter out of your voice!” She then told him, “You’re just scum.”

All the candidates said they were staunchly behind Israel as it reinforces an offensive in Gaza following Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack that killed more than 1,400 people, making the candidates did not discuss humanitarian aid for civilians in Gaza as the number of Palestinians killed in the war passed 10,500, including more than 600 children, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza.

Several also said they would pressure college campuses to crack down on antisemitism.

Congress expands to-do list days before potential shutdown

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Several days before a potential government shutdown, Congress is no closer to resolving the standoff and is even complicating the issue with Republican demands on border policy changes as a condition for further support for Ukraine in its fight against Russia.

New House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said Tuesday that Republicans do not want to close things down, but he is well aware that his predecessor, Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., was ousted as speaker after compromising with Democrats in September to keep federal offices open.

“I do certainly want to avoid a government shutdown,” Johnson said at a news conference alongside family members with loved ones kidnapped in the Israel-Hamas war.

“It’s a dangerous time around the world right now,” he said. “We recognize that, and we’re doing our job.”

Johnson is facing one of his most difficult tests yet, just two weeks into his job. Rather than lead the House Republicans into a strategy, Johnson appears to be crowd-sourcing a way out of the government funding dilemma with his GOP colleagues.

At a closed-door meeting, House Republicans discussed stopgap measures, including a new idea gaining traction: a “laddered” approach that would fund parts of the government until early December and the rest until mid-January, according to Republicans granted anonymity to discuss the private gathering.

The Senate, which is controlled by Democrats, has been working to devise a more comprehensive spending plan that would fund the government at current levels while also considering President Joe Biden’s nearly $1.06 trillion request for supplemental money for Ukraine, Israel, the Asia-Pacific region and border security.

“None of this will be easy to do, none of this,” said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. “The outcome of the next two weeks will hang on the same thing I’ve emphasized all year — bipartisanship cooperation.”

Congress is in this budget-shutdown loop because the House and Senate have failed, as they often do, to pass the dozen individual bills needed to fund the various agencies in the federal government. When the new budget year began Oct. 1, lawmakers agreed to approve funding at the current levels until Nov. 17, to allow time to finish up the work.

To complicate matters this time, Republicans are refusing Biden’s request to support Ukraine in battling Russia unless the president agrees to their demands to bolster security along the U.S.-border wall.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said he spoke Monday with Biden and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and did “make it clear to both of them: We have to have a credible solution” to the border.

McConnell said he is aligned with Biden’s “comprehensive approach” to funding Ukraine, Israel and other regions, but Republicans are “very serious” about including the border changes. Given that Senate is thinly divided between Democrats and Republicans, “the border needs to be a part of it, if it’s going to clear the Senate,” he said.

Biden is seeking nearly $4 billion in border money for holding facilities, asylum officers and other needs, including efforts to stop the flow of deadly fentanyl. Republicans have said that does not go far enough and they are demanding policy changes that would make it more difficult for immigrants to claim asylum at the border. They also want aid to revive building the border wall.

The White House has been discussing some border policy changes, but dismissed the Senate Republican position as being “incompatible” with economic policy provisions that would be important to Democrats, such as a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

“You can’t treat children as adults,” said a White House official. “What we saw from Senate Republicans is not a serious piece of legislation,” press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said.

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NATION
Actors, studios reach accord ending strikes

By Andrew Dalton and Krysta Fauria

LOS ANGELES — On Thursday, for the first time in more than six months, neither Hollywood’s actors nor its writers will be on strike.

The long-awaited clearing in the industry’s stormiest season in decades comes as a deal was reached late Wednesday to end what was, at nearly four months, the longest strike ever for film and television actors.

The three-year contract must be approved by the board of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and its members in the coming days. But union leadership declared that the strike will end at 12:01 a.m. on Thursday, putting all of the parts of production back into action for the first time since spring.

Duncan Crabtree-Ireland, SAG-AFTRA’s executive director and chief negotiator, said the gains made in the deal justified the struggle.

“It’s an agreement that our members can be proud of. I’m certainly very proud of it,” Crabtree-Ireland told The Associated Press in an interview. “We said we would only accept a fair, equitable and respectful deal, and that’s precisely what this deal is. So I think our members, as we are able to release more of the details of it, will look at them and say, now this is something that was worth being on strike for.”

More than 60,000 SAG-AFTRA members went on strike July 14, joining screenwriters who had walked off the job more than two months earlier. It was the first time the two unions had been on strike together since 1960. The studios and writers reached a deal that brought their strike to an end on Sept. 26.

The union valued the deal at over a billion dollars. Crabtree-Ireland said the deal includes boosts to minimum payments to actors, a greater share of streaming revenue going to performers, a bolstering of benefit plans and protections against the unfettered use of artificial intelligence in recording performances. Details of the terms will not be released until after a meeting on Friday where board members review the contract.

The AI protections were a sticking point in the negotiations that had moved methodically, with long breaks for both sides to huddle, since they restarted on Oct. 24.

“It is something that has evolved even while we’ve been in this negotiation process,” Crabtree-Ireland said. “The capabilities of generative AI tools have expanded dramatically. So we have really been focused on making sure that the guardrails that we negotiated for were future-proof or at least future-resistant.”

The other side in the negotiations, Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers said in a statement that the “agreement represents a new paradigm. It gives SAG-AFTRA the biggest contract-on-contract gains in the history of the union.” The AMPTP said it “looks forward to the industry resuming the work of telling great stories.”

Executives from top entertainment companies including Disney, Netflix, Warner Bros. Discovery and Universal had a direct hand in negotiations.

The Writers Guild of America applauded Wednesday’s deal.

“We’re thrilled to see SAG-AFTRA members win a contract that creates new protections for performers and gives them a greater share of the immense value they create,” the union said in a statement. “When workers are united, they win!”

Although the writers strike had immediate, visible effects for viewers, including the month-long suspension of late-night talk shows and “Saturday Night Live,” the impact of the actors’ absence was not as immediately apparent. But its ripple effects — delayed release dates and waits for new show seasons — could be felt for months or even years.

Actors should quickly return to movie sets where productions were paused, including “Deadpool 3,” “Gladator 2” and “Wicked.” Other movies and shows will restart shooting once returning writers finish scripts.

And beyond scripted productions, the end of the strike allows actors to return to red carpets, talk shows and podcasts, as Hollywood’s awards season approaches.

“The SAG strike is over! I can finally say it: watch my documentary ‘Inventing the President’ Saturday night at 8 on HBO! MAX!” actor-director Albert Brooks said on social media moments after the strike ended.

“Couldn’t say a word until now!!” Brooks said on social media moments after the strike ended.

Republicans subpoena Hunter and James Biden

WASHINGTON — House Republicans issued subpoenas Wednesday to members of President Joe Biden’s family, taking their most aggressive step yet in an impeachment inquiry bitterly opposed by Democrats that is testing the reach of congressional oversight powers.

The long-awaited move by Rep. Jamie Raskin, the chairman of the House Oversight Committee, to subpoena the president’s son Hunter and brother James comes as Republicans look to gain ground in their nearly yearlong investigation. So far, they have failed to uncover evidence directly implicating the president in any wrongdoing.

But Republicans say the evidence trail they have uncovered paints a troubling picture of “influence peddling” by Biden’s family in their business dealings, particularly with clients overseas.

“Now, the House Oversight Committee is going to bring in members of the Biden family and their associates to question them for the first time,” said Raskin, a Democrat from Maryland.

The stakes are exceedingly high, as the inquiry could result in Republicans bringing impeachment charges against Biden, the ultimate penalty for what the U.S. Constitution describes as “high crimes and misdemeanors.”

The subpoenas demand Hunter Biden and James Biden as well as former business associate Rob Walker appear before the Oversight Committee for a deposition by mid-December.

Lawmakers also requested that Biden’s wife, Sara Biden, and Hallie Biden, the wife of the president’s deceased son Beau, appear voluntarily for transcribed interviews.

Hunter Biden’s attorney Abbe Lowell called the subpoenas “yet another political stunt” and said the investigation has been full of “worn-out, false, baseless, or debunked claims.”

“Nevertheless, Hunter is eager to have the opportunity, in a public forum and at the right time, to discuss these matters with the Committee,” he added.

An attorney for James Biden said there was no justification for the subpoena as the committee had already reviewed private bank records and transactions between the two brothers. The committee found records of two loans that took place when Biden was not in office or a candidate for president.

“There is nothing more to those transactions, and there is nothing wrong with them,” attorney Paul Fishman said in a statement late Wednesday. “And Jim Biden has never involved his brother in his business dealings.”

The White House has continuously dismissed the investigation as a political ploy aimed at hurting the Democratic president. They say the probe is a blunt attempt to help former President Donald Trump, the early-front runner for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination, as he runs again for the White House.

These subpoenas and interview requests are yet further proof that this sham impeachment inquiry is driven only by the damages Democrats and pro-impeaching Donald Trump, Rep. Jimmie Raskin, the top Democrat on the Oversight Committee, said in a statement.
Thank You, Veterans

Thank you to all who have served in the United States military.

We understand the unique challenges, financial and otherwise, that our veterans, military and their families face, and are here to support you.

We’re here for you. Scan QR code or visit servicecu.org/military.
Israel agrees to 4-hour pauses in Gaza fighting

By Amer Madhani  Associated Press

Israel has agreed to put in place four-hour daily humanitarian pauses in its assault on Hamas in northern Gaza starting on Thursday, the White House said, as President Joe Biden pressed Israel on Wednesday to pause its military operations in the territory to allow for the immediate and increased delivery of assistance, Blinken said the situation would drive Palestinians toward further radicalism and effectively end prospects for any eventual resumption of peace talks to end the conflict.

Biden said Thursday that there was “no possibility” of a formal cease-fire at the moment, and said it had “taken a little longer” than he hoped for Israel to agree to the humanitarian pauses. Biden had asked Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to institute the daily pauses during a Monday call and said he had also asked the Israelis for a pause of at least three days to allow for negotiations over the release of some hostages held by Hamas.

Biden’s push for an even longer pause comes as part of a renewed diplomatic push to free hostages taken by Hamas and other militant groups to the Gaza Strip during their Oct. 7 surprise attack on Israel. Israeli officials estimate that militants still hold 239 hostages, including children and the elderly, from the attack that also saw 1,400 Israelis killed. U.S. officials say it believes fewer than 10 Americans are among those held captive.

Kirby told reporters Thursday that pauses could be useful to “getting all 239 hostages back with their families to include the less than 10 Americans that we know are being held. So if we can get all the hostages out, that’s a nice finite goal.”

“Humanitarian pauses can be useful in the transfer process,” he added.

Indirect talks were taking place in Qatar — which also played a role in the freeing of four hostages by Hamas last month — about a larger release of hostages. CIA Director William Burns was in Doha on Thursday to discuss efforts to win the release of hostages in Gaza with the Qatari prime minister and the head of Israel’s Mossad intelligence agency, according to a U.S. official.

Burns met with Mossad chief David Barnea and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

Kirby confirmed that the U.S. continues to have “active discussions with partners about trying to secure the release of hostages,” noting in particular Qatar’s help.

“We know they have lines of communication with Hamas that we don’t,” Kirby said of Qatar. “And we’re going to continue to work with them and regional partners to try to secure the release of all the hostages.”

Secretary of State Antony Blinken had warned Israel last week that it risked destroying an eventual possibility for peace unless it acted swiftly to improve humanitarian conditions in Gaza for Palestinian civilians as it intensifies its war against Hamas.

In a blunt call for Israel to pause military operations in the territory to allow for the immediate and increased delivery of assistance, Blinken said the situation would drive Palestinians toward further radicalism and effectively end prospects for any eventual resumption of peace talks to end the conflict.
Helming a film of firsts

Female leads and female villain? Check and check. But behind the scenes, ‘The Marvels’ also makes Nia DaCosta the youngest and the first Black female director in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

- Profile, Page 15
- Review of ‘The Marvels,’ Page 17
Should robots be humanlike?

Startups say functionality and lessons learned during development more important than design

By Matt O'Brien
Associated Press

Building a robot that's both humanlike and useful is a decades-old engineering dream inspired by popular science fiction. While the latest artificial intelligence craze has sparked another wave of investments in the quest to build a humanoid, most of the current prototypes are clumsy and impractical, looking better in staged performances than in real life. That hasn't stopped a handful of startups from keeping at it.

"The intention is not to start from the beginning and say, 'Hey, we're trying to make a robot look like a person," said Jonathan Hurst, co-founder and chief robot officer at Agility Robotics. "We're trying to make robots that can operate in human spaces."

Do we even need humanoids? Hurst makes a point of describing Agility's warehouse robot Digit as human-centric, not humanoid, a distinction meant to emphasize what it does over what it's trying to be.

What it does, for now, is pick up tote bins and move them. Amazon announced in October it will begin testing Digits for use in its warehouses.

Agility Robotics' human-centric robot Digit performs maneuvers Aug. 16 at the company's office in Pittsburgh. Amazon announced in October that it will begin testing Digits for use in its warehouses.

New 1MORE headphones good for bass

By Gregg Ellman

Tribune News Service

1MORE has unveiled their Penta Driver P50 wired headphones, which feature five drivers: one diamond-like carbon dynamic driver and four exclusive planar units.

The feel and sound of the 1MORE Penta Driver earbuds is exceptional. 1MORE produced the P50s to showcase a unique and sophisticated design that is visually stunning and acoustically impressive.

The diamond-like carbon dynamic driver in the new Penta Driver P50 wired headphones is an industry first, according to 1MORE. The sound it helps produce has incredible clarity and accuracy in reproducing bass frequencies. Every playlist of different music types held that clear sound at head-banging volume levels, all without the need for extra amplifiers.

To achieve this sound, 1MORE enlisted the help of Grammy award-winning sound engineer Luca Bignardi. 1MORE also emphasized the construction and appearance of the new earbuds, which use premium materials, including an aluminum alloy body.

They have been tested on many ear models for a comfortable fit with pre-formed ear hooks and delicately designed 45-degree curved nozzles.

Each P50 earbud attaches on or off the detachable cable with a 3.5mm connector. An in-line controller manages music selections, pause, volume and hands-free calls. Most smartphones and tablets are made for wireless headphones only, but adapters are readily available. I primarily tested the earbuds using the 3.5mm headphone port built into my laptop. Extra ear tips are included.

Online: usa.1more.com, $169.99

Grammy award-winning sound engineer Luca Bignardi helped with the Penta Driver P50s.
DaCosta makes her mark with ‘Marvels’

‘Candyman’ director the youngest, 1st Black woman to helm MCU film, also 1st in franchise with female leads and villain

By Jake Coyle
Associated Press

is DaCosta, director of the upcoming “The Marvels,” has a diagnosis for the recent struggles of superhero movies. It basically comes down to, she says, “Mo’ money, mo’ problems.”

Success inevitably breeds bigger budgets. Box-office expectations get inflated. Even superhero spandex can’t sustain endless cycles of wash, rinse and repeat.

“Growth has to stop at some point,” DaCosta says. “As you make more and more films, you want those films to be more interesting, more dynamic and to appeal to different audiences. But that requires risk. And there’s a lot of interesting, more dynamic and to appeal to different audiences. But that requires risk.

“I mean, this my third film in six years and I’m onto my fourth,” she says. “I’m from New York City and my family’s mostly there and I’ve never shot there since I’ve been working. My mom once forgot to invite me to a family thing because she forgot I was in town. Stuff like that makes me go, ‘I need to connect more.’”

DaCosta was drawn to what she calls “a really crazy, sci-fi space opera” that was wacky and tonally different from most MCU films.

“I wanted to honor what they set out to do, which is make something very frankly strange,” she says.

The heart of the film for DaCosta is about the dichotomy of Danvers and Ms. Marvel. While Danvers has been tirelessly doing the solitary work of Captain Marvel out in deep space, Ms. Marvel’s foundation is her family.

DaCosta, a self-described workaholic, can relate.

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That’s hard, though, when you’re one of Hollywood’s fastest-rising directors. DaCosta’s ascent has been meteoric but steady, even though she’s more comfortable with self-deprecation than self-promotion. Instead, her level-headed filmmaking talent — particularly for conjuring atmosphere and playing with perspective — has fueled her success.

After making “Candyman,” a Marvel movie was, DaCosta says, “definitely not in my near future.” But it also wasn’t entirely off her radar. She’s wanted to direct one since she started making films and traces her interest directly to Sam Raimi’s “Spider-Man.” She saw it when she was 12. “And I still love it,” she says.

When DaCosta was tapped to helm “The Marvels,” Feige encouraged her to reach out to other Marvel movie directors for advice. The bit that most stuck with her came from “Black Panther” director Ryan Coogler. He said simply: “Be yourself.”

“I was like, ‘Wait, what?’ Then I kind of got it,” DaCosta says. “He was like. Just bring yourself to it. It’s a big thing. It’s really a Kevin Feige movie; it’s a Marvel film. But they chose you for a reason.”
Capturing the substance and style of 1970

‘Holdovers’ set in that year, shot largely with equipment and lenses from same period

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

The great films of the 1970s have long loomed in the imagination of filmmakers raised during one of the most fertile periods of American movies. Alexander Payne wanted to take it a step further.

Payne’s latest film, “The Holdovers,” isn’t just set in 1970, it seeks to imbibe the humanistic spirit of films like “The Last Detail,” “Harold and Maude,” “The Landlord” and “Paper Moon” — all movies he screened for his cast and crew.

“We were very fully making a ’70s movie,” Payne says, recently speaking by phone from his desk in Omaha, Neb.

Payne, 62, shot “The Holdovers,” set at a New England boarding school, largely with filmmaking equipment and camera lenses from that period. He mixed it in mono.

“We were trying to play the exercise of: We are in 1970 making this movie,” he says. “The Holdovers,” released widely this weekend, is Payne’s first film in six years and it’s one of his best. Payne, the filmmaker of “Election,” “Sideways” and “The Descendants,” has long made “the kind of films they don’t make anymore”: smart, funny, melancholic dramas for adults. And yet he’s kept making them. After decades of making contemporary films that in some way evoke a ’70s sensibility of cinema, he’s finally made the genuine article.

“I was just trying to replicate the experience of the movies I love as much as possible,” Payne says. “I don’t think it makes the movie quaint. I hope it lends it the warmth of nostalgia, the warmth of a lost time, maybe even some traces of memory.”

“The Holdovers” reunites Payne with Paul Giamatti nearly two decades after memory.”

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“For Payne, it was a long-overdue reunion.

“I wanted to work with that guy again for 20 years,” he says. “I was waiting for the right thing — and created it. I told (screenwriter) David Hemingston: ‘We’re writing for Paul Giamatti. That’s who we’re writing for.’”

“He’s the finest actor,” Payne adds. “He’s the best actor. Not casting aspersions on others, I just think there’s nothing he cannot do.”

When Payne screened “The Holdovers” for buyers at last year’s Toronto International Film Festival, it prompted heated interest. Focus snapped it up for $30 million — far more than is typical — a sign of the indie distributor’s belief in the movie as a crowd-pleaser and an awards contender. The three lead actors are likely to be in the Oscar mix.

But while Giamatti and Randolph are well-known performers, Sessa is appearing in his first film. After sifting through some 800 submissions, Payne felt like he hadn’t found someone to play Augus. He and the casting director decided to call up the schools they were going to be shooting in to see if their drama departments had anyone to recommend.

“One of the schools we were going to be shooting was Deering Academy in West-

York taking classes on film acting. This guy can just do it,” Payne says. “I learned a long time ago that the best actors are also the best technically. From day one, man, this guy could hit his marks and do his dialogue backward and forward. He’s built it to do it. And then you see him go toe-for-toe with Paul Giamatti, give him a run for his money.”

Payne’s last film was his biggest budget gambit: “Downsizing,” a sci-fi satire of an overpopulated Earth in which people can be made miniature. After “Downsizing” struggled at the box office and found mixed reviews, Payne dabbled in a number of projects (he had been attached to direct, among others, “The Menu” and “Landscapers”), but “The Holdovers” is the one that stuck.

It started for him years earlier after seeing a similarly plotted 1930s French film by Marcel Pagnol called “Merluze.” Payne, who had written all of his films except “Nebraska,” didn’t feel he had the right personal experience. (He attended an all-boys Jesuit day school in Omaha, Neb.) Instead he turned to Hemingston and “beveled the edges” of the witty and soulful script he turned in.

But as long-term and ’70s-oriented as making “The Holdovers” was, it struck Payne as a contemporary story, too. “Trump years and Nixon years,” he says.

“Gravity led me and my collaborators to 1970 for some reason. I can’t necessarily articulate it,” Payne says. “It’s obviously not a message film or any crap like that. As Marx would say, all films are political films.”
‘The Marvels’ tells unabashedly female superhero story with humor, lightness

By Katie Walsh
Tribune News Service

The Marvels’ tells unabashedly female superhero story with humor, lightness

By Katie Walsh
Tribune News Service

‘The Holdovers’ an instant addition to holiday film canon
From left, Dominic Sessa, Paul Giambatti and Da’Vine Joy Randolph star in “The Holdovers.”

Friday, November 10, 2023

“The Marvels” is a largely aimed at young men. But in the most part, like all the MCU Marvels, “The Marvels” is quite entertaining for women and the female audience. There’s a mu­

There’s a double-layered sense of self­reflective nostalgia baked into Alexander Payne’s misfit holiday movie “The Holdovers.” Set in 1970, there’s nostalgia for the time period, which is textured and rendered with care and conviction on­screen. But the film itself, a warm, spicy brew of humor, poignancy and irascible charm, also inspires the odd desire to be rewatching it while you’re living with her family in Jersey City.

An early fight scene set to Missy Elliott’s “Ratata” features the body­swap confusion, and has a swerving, dynamic flow and rhythm as the trio crashes from outer space to Kamala’s house to Nick Fury’s (Samuel L. Jackson) S.A.B.E.R. space station. DaCosta’s swooping camera dances in time with the actors, and it’s a tremendously energetic and inventive scene. One wishes the entirety of the movie was this stylistically innovation­

But at an hour and 45 minutes, it skips along with zipperly humor and light on its feet.

Much of that energy can be attributed to Iman Vellani, who plays Kamala Khan, aka Ms. Marvel (you may have seen her on Disney+­), whose awesomest brightness and levity allow her to steal the whole movie out from under star Brie Larson, who reprises her role as Carol Danvers, aka Captain Marvel. It helps that Kamala is just happy to be superhero­ing with the big girls; in the sequel, Carol is grappling with the fallout of her actions from the first film, and the bloom is off the superhero rose for her, which could explain the air of awkward discomfort in Larson’s performance.

Teyonah Parris proves to be the heart of the film as Monica Rambeau, the grown daughter of Carol’s best friend Maria (Lashana Lynch), who has passed away from cancer. Carol and Monica have become estranged over the years, while Monica has gained her superpowers (walking through a witch hex on “WandaVision”), but the multiverse has other plans in store. When Carol touches a glowing intergalactic rip in space­time, her powers become entangled with those of Monica and Kamala. Every time they use their powers, they body­swap, which makes things quite complicated for teenage Kamala, living with her family in Jersey City.

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There’s not a whole lot of gravitas to go around, but DaCosta’s script, co­written with Megan McDonnell and Elissa Karsilak, has some startling real­world resonance, dealing with themes of climate apocalypse, refugees and the pillaging of natural resources through war. Our antagonist is Dar­Been (Zawe Ashton), who seeks to restore her own planet’s environment after Captain Marvel destroyed the Supreme Intelligence. She’s one of those overly sympathetic villains it’s impossible to root against, though, so the stakes of “The Marvels” are pretty wobbly. The film flies, but it never lets any emotional weight fully land.

Tonal­ly, “The Marvels” embraces the goofy nature of a sci­fi superhero movie aimed at a female audience. There’s a musical interlude featuring K­dra­ma superstar Park Seo­­joo, and a scene with a herd of space kittens that makes reference to “Cats.” That kind of sincere and self­deprecating humor is the Marvel hallmark—if audiences are ready to move on from that, it is no fault of the engaging and earnest “The Marvels.”


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Tribune News Service

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We find ourselves on the snowy campus of Barton, a tony all­boys private school, over the holidays, where the administration has shut off the heat, leaving the few stragglers with nowhere to go to bunk in the infirmary.

There is also a warmth to the sentiment of “The Holdovers,” though the characters are irascible and cranky, none too pleased to be there.

In the witty and wondrous script by David Hemmingston, our players are Mr. Hunham (Paul Giambatti), an ancient civilization teacher known as “Wallye” for, well, his wallye, and reviled for his gleefully sadistic grading and creative insults. He’s been tricked by another teacher into supervising the holdovers, but he doesn’t have much else to do or anywhere else to be anyway. The group of boys includes the brilliant but troublesome Angus Tully (Do­

mincii Sessa); their meals are provided by Mary (Da’Vine Joy Randolph), the cafeteria manager who is grieving the loss of her only son, who died in Vietnam. There are a few other students around, but they are soon dispatched in a helicopter for skiing at Haystack, and our unlikely trio ultimately embark on a surprising emotional journey in which they learn and grow from each other in their own gruffly sentimental ways.

Angus is a rebellious jerk, but he’s brilliant, and has the capacity to change and grow. And in believing in his fu­ture, Mr. Hunham and Mary liberate themselves from their own emotional prisons, moving forward in their lives where they’ve been stuck grinding their gears.

Payne affords this story the time and patience that it deserves, as Hemingson’s script slowly peels back the layers of character, pushing past their walls, guarded by sharp barbs, to reveal their sorrow, and their joy. This isn’t a story of found family that stays together, but merely a snapshot of a moment in time, in which an expect­

ed experience with other people leads to growth and change, even if it’s just learning to be decent to one anoth­er.

“The Holdovers” is an instant addition to the holiday movie canon, and it’s not hard to let it wiggle its way into your heart, providing an especially potent tonic for feel­

ing sad, lonely or out­of­sorts around the holiday time.

“The Holdovers” is rated R for language, some drug use and brief sexual material. Running time: 113 minutes. Now in AAFES theaters and streaming on Prime Video.
From left, director Jimmy Chin, actor Jodie Foster as Bonnie Stoll, director Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi and actor Annette Bening as Diana Nyad on the set of “Nyad,” which tells the story of Nyad, who swam 100-plus miles from Cuba to Key West in 2013 at age 64. (Kimberly French/Netflix/AP)

“Really, our job has been to create the space and the environment for them to perform at their best and bring a certain vibe on set as well. But it was an extraordinary experience working with some of the greatest actors of our time.”

Jimmy Chin
“Nyad” co-director

The film casts her in a complex light, prickly and egotistical, but also repeatedly shows her adherence to rules. “Diana Nyad was not afraid to pursue her dreams, to be ambitious, to be hungry and fight for what she wants,” Vasarhelyi said. “This opportunity to create two very rich roles for two pretty remarkable women that you don’t normally get to see, I think that was the reason why we did this.”

They got some of the best in the business to help, as well, including Oscar-winning cinematographer Claudio Miranda, who had plenty of experience in the water-shooting Ang Lee’s “Life of Pi.” The resources on “Nyad” were a little different, though. Vasarhelyi laughed that if “Life of Pi” gave Miranda a Formula One racecar, their film could only get him roller skates.

“Everything just takes so much longer,” Chin said. “Even the prosthetics, it’d be four hours in the chair and then you only get a few takes. Or you’d get a perfect take but the wave machine wasn’t working. So you have to reset, move the boat all the way back. It was a lot.”

But then sometimes everything would come together on the first take, like Nyad’s triumphant moment stepping on the beach.

“We didn’t know what Annette was going to bring in that moment, you know? Even in a table read, you’re not sure what you’re going to get,” Chin said. “But she nailed it on the first take.

“Everyone was crying. We’re not so much proud for us, but proud for our cast and crew.”
Making waves

Sports biopic ‘Nyad’ showcases Bening as lead but gets huge lift from Foster’s supporting turn

By Jake Coyle
Associated Press

I n ‘Nyad,’ there are two feats of perseverance on display. First, there is the real Diana Nyad (Annette Bening) who accomplished a marathon swim from Cuba to Florida across 100-plus miles of open, shark-infested waters. Then there is the mettle of Nyad’s support team to tolerate the singularly self-absorbed and stubborn Nyad. Both, in the film, are an endurance sport.

“Nyad,” now in theaters and streaming on Netflix, is in many ways a conventional sports drama, defined by long odds and personal triumph. But there is enough here to help the film, directed by the intrepid filmmak- ers Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi and Jimmy Chin, if not swim against the tide of sports-biopic convention then at least ride a swift current to the finish line.

First and foremost, there’s the fact that this is a sports drama led by two actresses in their 60s: Bening and Jodie Foster, who plays Diana’s best friend and personal trainer Bonnie Stoll. When “Nyad” gets underway, the setting isn’t the 1970s, when Nyad’s record swims made her a headline-grabbing sensation. It’s Diana’s 60th birthday, which for her only marks her long distance from a real challenge. “Where’s the oven?” she says.

Diana soon thereafter gets back in the pool, resolving to complete the Cuba-to-Florida swim, a route some moviegoers may associate more with the Fast-Boats of Michael Mann’s “Miami Vice” than athletic pursuit. For Diana, the 50-plus-hour endeavor is a matter of completing a long-ago abandoned dream and a way to prove to herself (and everyone else) that age is no match for her will.

It’s the rare role that could be said to be both shark and Oscar bait. Yet Bening’s performance has little vanity to it. Her Diana is obsessively single-minded to the point of unlikely. When Diana hits the ocean, Bening turns into a ferociously forward-moving force who won’t let any- thing — not thunderstorms, nor jellyfish stings — stop her in her quest. Just keep swimming! “She’d leave Dory in the dust.”

Diana also comes close to out-swimming the people trying hardest to help her. Though the film is principally a showcase for Bening, it’s Foster’s supporting turn that lifts “Nyad.” Foster is a rare screen presence these days, which only makes her warmth and ease all the more powerful here. “Nyad” is balanced between Diana’s admirably insane ambition and Bonnie’s loyalty (up to a point) support for her friend. In any case, it’s a reminder, like a pall of cold water, of just how good Foster can be.

Other supporting characters are along for the ride, too, most notably Rhys Ifans’ crusty sea-dog navigator John Bartlett. He’s a cliche, but a darn likable one. Nyad has, herself, often been a brash and savvy self-promoter less likely to share the spotlight.

It’s to the movie’s credit that it pushes back against its prickly protagonist at the same time it extols her.

But “Nyad” does accept Nyad’s ultimate accomplishment, even if some have disputed it. Her 2013 swim to the Florida Keys was never ratified by the World Open Water Swimming Association, and fellow marathon swimmers have cast doubts on it. Nyad has forcefully maintained she completed the swim, without assistance. At times, “Nyad” bends over backwards to depict Nyad as conscientious of the rules.

Vasarhelyi and Chin, in their narrative debut, mix in documentary footage throughout the film, smoothly transitioning from the nonfiction world they come from.

“Nyad” relies on flashbacks to Diana’s past — including an encounter with an unnamed swim coach Nyad said sexually assaulted her and others — to dig into what fuels her.

And just like Alex Honnold of “Free Solo” and the British cave divers of “The Rescue,” “Nyad” convincingly argues that to accomplish something great — to really dream big — you may need a dose of delusion, too.

*Dyad* is rated PG-13 for thematic material involving sexual abuse, some strong language and brief partial nudity. Running time: 121 minutes. Now streaming on Netflix.
Lessons learned in a Chinese eatery

Chin’s memoir a candid, sometimes funny reflection on growing up Asian American and gay in Detroit in the ‘70s, ‘80s

By TERRY TANG
Associated Press

Many parents tell their children never to talk to strangers. But Curtis Chin’s parents urged their six kids to ask customers at that Chinatown restaurant about their backgrounds.

It was their way of showing the children a world outside the Detroit restaurant’s four walls.

“That is something my parents taught me — not to be afraid of people, not to be afraid to ask questions, not to be afraid of asking for help even,” Chin said in a phone interview from his Los Angeles home. “I would have to say that the Chinese restaurant and my parents are probably my greatest teachers in life.”

From co-founding the Asian American Writers’ Workshop to producing documentaries like “Vincent Who?” about the 1982 killing of Vincent Chin, Curtis Chin has been championing other Asian Americans for over 30 years. Now, it’s his turn in the spotlight.

His memoir, “Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant,” has made several fall “must-read” lists including in The Washington Post and Time magazine. It’s a candid, sometimes funny reflection on growing up Chinese American and gay in Detroit in the ‘70s and ‘80s.

Chin delves into racism, gay rights and other social justice issues, but not by force-feeding them. Like a welcoming restaurant server, he invites the reader to share in digestible bites of memories from childhood up through college graduation. Instead of chapters, anecdotes are dished out in menu sections such as “appetizers and soups,” “rice and noodles” and “main entrees.” They just happen to be memories of a bustling Chinatown.

Chin’s memoir is a “family comedy” memoir with his grandparents as a focal point. But when the national conversation shifted in 2020 with George Floyd’s killing and pandemic-driven anti-Asian hate, he shifted his focus to growing up Asian American and working class.

Recent hate crimes have evoked comparisons to Vincent Chin’s beating death at the hands of two white autoworkers outside his bachelor party. The assailants blamed foreign competition for the auto industry’s hardships and assumed he was Japanese.

The slaying was personal for Curtis Chin. Their families were not related but knew each other. Curtis Chin’s uncle was Vincent Chin’s best man. In his memoir, Chin describes the sadness and outrage in the community when the attackers only got probation and a $3,000 fine for a manslaughter plea. It was a watershed moment for Asian Americans nationwide, including Chin, then a high school freshman.

“I feel like that’s why I’ve spent so much of my life trying to open up opportunities for more people of color or more Asian Americans to tell our stories because I feel like that’s what’s going to improve our lives or help prevent the next Vincent Chin,” Chin said.

His book has inspired an exhibition at the Detroit Historical Museum. “Detroit’s Chinatown” opened last month.

Lily Chen, who curated the exhibit, said 20 people were interviewed for oral histories. Several others contributed artifacts, including a 70-year-old mahjong set, as well as videos and photos.

“Seeing people like Curtis of a generation above mine do this really brave thing of telling their story is such a big inspiration for wanting to trace the long history of Detroit’s Chinatown,” said Chen, who like Chin is Asian American and a member of the LGBTQ+ community. “When older generations of people tell their stories, it is so incredibly powerful for younger generations because it says not only are we here today, we’ve been here.”

Chen and other celebrating Asian Americans is coming full circle as many want to show up for him on his book tour. Asian American and Pacific Islander groups are behind several upcoming events.

“I just can’t impress upon it enough how much I feel like my whole community is rallying behind me for this,” Chin said. “In some ways, being an older author coming out with my memoir I feel like my parents are probably my greatest teachers in life.”

Curtis Chin, shown Oct. 10, has a memoir, “Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant.”

The trajectory of the Chin family business matches the ups and downs of the city’s Chinatown. Chin’s great-grandfather opened Chung’s Cantonese Cuisine in 1940 in Detroit’s original Chinatown. The restaurant became a community hub and, like other businesses, relocated in 1960 when the city demolished the area for a highway and other development.

Chung’s moved to Cass Avenue. The Cass Corridor became a second Chinatown. That’s where Chin, born in 1968, spent his formative years. Chung’s closed in 2000, after 60 years and an estimated “10 million eggrolls.”

In his heyday, Chung’s drew in customers who varied across race and class. Local politicians, journalists and drag queens are among the patrons Chin recalls in the book. How his parents treated each person made an impression.

“It didn’t matter if you were the mayor of Detroit or if you were the pimp and prostitute standing on the street corner,” Chin said. “They really tried to judge each customer for who they were as a person. And that’s a value that my parents really taught me.”

Roland Hwang, a Detroit native who co-founded American Citizens for Justice a year after Vincent Chin’s racially motivated killing, has fond childhood memories of a bustling Chinatown.

He would watch butchers chopping up chickens, or get a dragon puppet and play with other Chinese American kids. Chung’s was among the restaurants he ate at.

It wasn’t until 1999 that he met Curtis Chin and they became friends. Hwang thinks the memoir does a service for the community.

“This book sort of raises the profile of this aspect of history of Chinese Americans in Detroit. Physically speaking, there’s not much left of the Chinatown,” Hwang said. “People don’t realize how fragile ethnic enclaves are whether it’s Chinatown or J-Town (Japantown).”

When Chin started writing a decade ago, he envisioned a

Chin, born in 1968, spent his formative years at Chung’s Cantonese Cuisine.
Reims: The toast of Champagne country

With a Gothic cathedral that dates back more than 800 years, venerable Champagne cellars, a playful Art Deco style and a vibrant pedestrian zone, Reims is intoxicating. And thanks to France’s slick high-speed train network, it’s just 45 minutes from Paris — an easy day trip.

Reims (pronounced like “race”) has a turbulent history: This is where French kings were crowned, where Champagne first bubbled, where WWI devastation met miraculous reconstruction and where the Germans officially surrendered in 1945, bringing World War II to a close in Europe. The town gives you an informative, entertaining peek at the entire story.

Start at Reims Cathedral — a glorious example of Gothic architecture and one of Europe’s greatest churches. Built under the direction of four different architects, the church was started in about 1211 and mostly finished just 60 years later. Thanks to this quick turnaround, it’s remarkable for its unity and harmony. As a royal cathedral, it’s to England what Western Abbey is to England. Thank the church was started in about 1211 and mostly finished just 60 years later. Thanks to this quick turnaround, it’s remarkable for its unity and harmony. As a royal cathedral, it’s to England what Western Abbey is to England.

For a memorable experience, join the crowd in front of the cathedral for a free, 25-minute sound-and-light show on most summer evenings. In addition to spiritual nourishment, Reims offers a more earthly delight — Champagne. Though many wine-growing regions in France produce sparkling wines, only the bubbly beverage from this region beside Parliament Champagne. While the ancient Romans planted the first grapes here, Champagne was not “invented” until the late 17th century, and then it was by virtue of necessity — the local climate and soil did not produce competitive still wines.

Flying buttresses support Reims’ cathedral, a glorious example of Gothic architecture.

According to the story, in about 1700, after much fiddling with double fermentation, it was in nearby Haut-villers that Dom Pérignon stumbled onto the bubbly treat. On that happy day, he ran through the abbey, shouting, “Brot­thers, come quickly ... I’m drinking stars!” Today the result is commonly regarded as the finest sparkling wine in the world. Reims offers many opportunities to visit its world-famous Champagne cellars. All charge entry fees, most have several daily English tours and most require a reservation (only Taittinger allows drop-in visits). Which should you visit? Martel offers the most personal and best-value tour. Taittinger and Mumm have the most impressive cellars (Mumm is also close to the city center, and offers one of the best cellar tours). Veuve Clicquot is popular with Americans and fills up weeks in advance. Bring a sweater, even in summer, as the cellars (caves) are cool and cramped.

Allies surely celebrated with Champagne on May 7, 1945, after Germans signed the document of surrender for all German forces. WWII buffs enjoy visiting the Museum of the Surrender (Musée de la reddition), the place where it happened. The news was announced the next day, turning May 8 into Victory in Europe (V-E) Day.

The museum has an extensive collection of artifacts, but the biggest thrill is the war room, where Eisenhower managed Allied operations — and where the European part of the war ultimately ended.

Though World War II left the city un­scathed, World War I had devastated Reims. It was the biggest city on France’s Western Front, and it was hammered — around 65 percent of Reims was destroyed by shelling. Parts of the city center were entirely rebuilt in the 1920s. That’s why the town is now dotted with the stylized features — geometric reliefs, motifs in ironwork, rounded corners, and simple concrete elegance — of Art Deco. If it looks eclectic, that’s because the mayor at the time said to build any way you like — just build.

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Armistice Day among reasons for mid-November’s significance

Of all significant dates across a calendar year, there’s a certain number that stands out, and not only for its un­usual appearance: 11/11. Depending on where you might be, Nov. 11 can be a solemn date of remembrance, the moment in memory of the country’s fallen. In the presence of members of the royal family, government officials, former prime ministers, the mayor of London, representatives of all branches of the armed forces and other official figures, the service and sacrifices of those who served will be honored. The national two minutes of silence at 11 a.m. marks the start of the Cenotaph service. The event is open to all, although space is limited. No special passes or tickets are necessary to attend. Whitehall opens at 8 a.m. on the day, and it’s ad­visable to reach the area in good time. The sidewalk area surrounding the Cenotaph provides a good vantage point for the march past. Video screens erected in the immediate area ensure most comers will have something to see.

Those in Belgium can also experience Armistice Day ceremonies, the largest of which are held at the Colonne du Congres in Brussels and the city of Ypres, scene one of the costliest battles of WWI. The sounding of the Last Post under the Menin Gate in Ypres is a traditional key moment in memory of the country’s fallen.

St. Martin’s Day

Throughout Germany, predominantly Catholic com­munities in particular celebrate the feast day of St. Mar­tin with great emotion. On or about Nov. 11, children will march in parades and sing homages to the saint while proudly carrying their homemade lanterns on sticks, and St. Martin’s famed deed of cutting his great coat in half to cover a half-naked beggar will be re-enacted. Bonfires and the distribution of baked goods also ensue.

In Heidelberg, St. Martin will be feted starting at 5 p.m. Nov. 12. As per tradition, a parade will kick off at St.-Anna-Gasse in the Old Town and make its way to the Kornmarkt, where the legend of the cutting of the cloak will be performed on stage. Entry is free.

Outside of Germany, St. Martin’s day is also widely celebrated by feasting and wine-drinking. Good places to experience such festivities include Prague and the Slovakian cities of Ljubljana and Maribor.

Carnival season begins

The Fifth Season, a term that refers to the period of time leading up to carnival’s big moment, Rose Monday, has a very specific kickoff time: 11:11 a.m. on Nov. 11. In Cologne, tens of thousands of costumed revelers will gather at the Hafencity, where the three main charac­ters of the Prince, Peasant and the Maiden launch this season within the seasons. In Duesseldorf, carnival sea­son officially begins when the jester known as Hoppeditz awakens from his off-season slumber in front of the city’s Town Hall. Meanwhile, those in Mainz will gather at Schillerplatz for the reading of what is perhaps best translated as the Fool’s Basic Law.
More than 90% of Saar Historical Museum exhibitions on regional, local history located beneath Saarbruecken Castle

Descending 500 years into Europe’s past

By Alexander Riedel

During fall and winter, Europe’s museums and art galleries are often a great way to get out of the cold and rain while exploring a new town.

On a crisp afternoon recently, my wife and I took one of these welcome detours in Saarbruecken. We were immediately struck by the imposing facade of the Saarbruecken Castle, which is home to the Saar Historical Museum.

The museum entrance is tucked away in a side access point that could be easily overlooked. After passing through the small bookshop, we entered an exhibition space with a temporary display tracing the post-World War II love affair between Germans and their automotive industry.

The exhibit was thoughtfully curated, offering English translations via QR codes for visitors who don’t speak German. While my wife and I are not particularly passionate about cars, we found ourselves engrossed in the photographs and old ads highlighting the Saar region’s resilience.

A witness to both French and German history, the palace’s mood. Meticulously curated displays feature artifacts, documents and interactive installations offering a glimpse into the lives of the people in the Saar region.

Displays depicted the impact of both world wars on the region. Letters, uniforms and personal items shed a local light on the hardships and serve as a solemn reminder of the region’s resilience.

The most impactful exhibit, however, was a large basement room examining Nazi rule in Saarland. The Gestapo claimed the palace as its local headquarters.

Visitors can explore an original jail cell and see inscriptions that detainees wrote on the walls. The messages in French, Polish and other languages left us in a somber mood.

Unbeknownst to us until afterward, on our arrival we had walked over a memorial to what happened in this underground chamber.

In the early 1990s, German college students and their professor went on a mission to memorialize the Jewish cemeteries that once existed in Germany.

They secretly inscribed the names of 2,146 cemeteries on cobblestones before replacing them face down, as a silent remembrance of the victims of the Nazi regime.

Descending a staircase, we entered a subterranean space showing fortifications and artifacts that span more than 500 years of French-German history.

Evidence points to fortifications overlooking the Saar River at this location since the 10th century, a time when the region was marked by shifting fiefdoms and territorial disputes.

Starting in the 16th century, the medieval castle underwent a Renaissance makeover, resulting in a more opulent and refined palace structure above. What remained from the medieval castle was the imposing stone keep integrated into later designs.

Descending over a metal gangway, we explored the defensive structures and gun emplacements. Props allowed us to imagine the gunners’ thankless tasks when the castle walls were still in the open air.

A particular curiosity was the ball court in the former moat. Barely recognizable now, the small area once served as a training ground for an early version of tennis, and a wall offered space for a game similar to racquetball.

A witness to both French and German history, the palace burned in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Disputes regarding its reconstruction led to its auction by none other than Napoleon Bonaparte in 1809.

Changes continued throughout much of the 20th century. The most notable addition was the construction of the contemporary glass-and-steel centerpiece by the German architect Gottfried Boehm in the 1980s.

After exploring the dusty underground tunnels, we visited the museum’s permanent exhibit, which takes visitors on a journey through the region’s local history, from the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 to the 1960s.

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In the early 1990s, German college students and their professor went on a mission to memorialize the Jewish cemeteries that once existed in Germany.

They secretly inscribed the names of 2,146 cemeteries on cobblestones before replacing them face down, thus creating what is today recognized as the “Invisible Memorial.”

As we stepped back into the cool evening air over these stones, not knowing which ones held the engraved reminders, we paused at the palace’s garden terrace to appreciate how much change this place has seen over time.

For hours of exploration, we decided that this was one of the most informative local historical museums we’ve visited. It is well worth a stop, rain or shine.
A new take on noodles in Italy

By Brian Erickson
Stars and Stripes

Living in Italy, you can throw a stone in any direction and hit a restaurant that serves pasta or pizza. But what if you want noodles doused in broth instead of sauce?

In that case, the drive just got shorter for the Aviano community. Mic Ramen opened in September as Pordenone’s first ramen restaurant. It’s a sister location of the Mic Ramen near the Army garrison in Vicenza.

Social media reviews have raved about it, so I decided to check it out. On a Wednesday at lunchtime, most of the tables were occupied in the anime-adorned, two-story restaurant.

Owner Nicole Chen is a fan of Japanese animation and said she thought customers would embrace it as well. If you’re a fan, you’ll recognize what you see immediately.

I’ve eaten ramen in a few different places, but I haven’t had the opportunity to try it in Japan, so I asked for a recommendation.

I was directed to the miso ramen, which is widely available throughout Japan. But Japanese people most often associate it with the northern island of Hokkaido. As with barbecue or pizza in the United States, ramen can vary depending on the region in Japan.

My bowl included noodles slightly thicker than spaghetti, a large piece of pork by ramen standards, sprouts, half a marinated egg and a sheet of nori.

I know this will probably make some curse me. But every time I’ve had ramen in the past, the first thing I did was add soy sauce. I guess after many of the flavorless dishes I’ve had, I always expect I will need it.

Not this time, though. The flavor was a delightful balance of savory and slightly sweet notes, harmoniously blended together. The toppings added freshness and crunch to the dish.

I also ordered takoyaki, fried pastry balls typically filled with a small piece of tako, or octopus. It’s another widely found dish in Japan, but it’s probably most famous in Osaka.

The set of four had octopus and mayonnaise, topped with tonkatsu sauce, bonito flakes and seaweed powder.

If you’re shy about a strong taste of seafood, you don’t need to worry with takoyaki. The zesty flavor was more about the dough and the mayonnaise.

The menu has two children’s options as well as appetizers, bao sandwiches, rice balls and a few dry noodle dishes if you are looking for something other than ramen. While I might try other items when I return, I won’t be skipping the main event.

photos by Brian Erickson/Stars and Stripes

A bowl of miso ramen and a takoyaki appetizer at Mic Ramen in Pordenone, Italy, about 20 minutes from Aviano Air Base. The restaurant opened its doors to customers on Sept. 10.

Mic Ramen
Address: Viale Marconi 14/A, Pordenone, Italy
Hours: Wednesday through Monday, 12:30-3 p.m. and 6:30-10:30 p.m.
Closed Tuesdays.
Prices: Appetizers range from 3-6 euros. Main dishes range from 5.80-14 euros. Drinks range from 3-6.50 euros.
Information: Phone: +39 388 852 0205; Instagram @micramenpordenone

Brian Erickson

A street view of the new Mic Ramen in Pordenone, Italy.

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For all those who have served, continue to serve, and support America’s Marine Corps, we salute and honor your service!
In plane sight

Why we love to watch others’ in-flight movies

By Sofia Andrade
The Washington Post

You’re sitting on an airplane, and before you pick a movie — or maybe despite having done so already — you start watching someone else’s screen. Though you can’t explain exactly why you’d rather watch a faraway show on a too-small screen without any audio, you can’t look away.

Maybe it’s easier to leech off someone else’s movie selection than a choice of your own. Maybe it’s the risk of being caught, the allure of spying on a private moment. In-flight movies are just better on a stranger’s screen.

Why we spy

The appeal of peeking at another person’s in-flight entertainment is well-documented online. On X, formerly known as Twitter, a user confesses: “I cannot focus on a movie on an airplane unless it is on someone else’s screen and I am also watching a movie and listening to music and reading a book.” Another writes that “the voyeurism of watching a movie on someone else’s screen just adds to the experience.”

These sneaky experiences are more common now than they were a few decades ago, when seat-back, personal screens first started to take hold in the airplane industry. But “shoulder surfing” is nothing new. The term refers to the act of spying on someone else’s phone or laptop screen, ATM or other electronic device behind their back — a practice that’s more common than one might think.

Mohamed Khamis, an associate professor in computer science at the University of Glasgow, studies the privacy and security implications of technology. He says that shoulder surfing is so popular in part because it doesn’t require any special skills, unlike hacking into accounts or tapping phone calls.

The behavior also carries little risk of getting caught. While researching people’s ability to recognize when they are being shoulder-surfed, he found that it often goes unnoticed; people underestimated the amount of times others were spying on their screen.

“The impulse to shoulder surf, he added, can be simply explained by boredom and curiosity. It’s why he has looked over at other passengers’ screens while on a flight.

“This is something that’s been around for a long time,” he said. “Even when people were reading books and newspapers and stuff, people would also look at each other’s content.”

Habiba Farzand, a Ph.D. student on Khamis’ team, said while shoulder surfing can happen anywhere, it’s most common on public transport. This often means trains and buses, but can apply to airplanes as well. “And sometimes, the device is right in the line of sight,” she said.

On an airplane, it can be hard for travelers to avoid looking at the screens in front of them, even if unintentionally.

In their research, Khamis and Farzand have found that the risk of shoulder surfing can affect people’s behavior when using screen technology in public. This can mean dimming a screen, tilting devices away from potential prying eyes or turning screens off altogether.

On airplanes, where any sort of privacy is difficult to come by, these response behaviors can take on different forms.

In a popular post last year, one generous Reddit user revealed that they make sure to turn on their screens.

“Picking a movie on a plane is hard because you don’t want to watch something very bad (obviously) or very good (too good for a plane!),” declared “Jeopardy!” host Ken Jennings in an X post this spring.

Good genres for plane watching, he continued, included rom-coms, “regular athlete,” “Quiet British person ... does something eccentric” and “Michael Clayton for the 1,000th time.”

Missing from Jennings’ highly specific genre list: slasher movies and overtly steamy flicks. Both genres are ripe for producing uncomfortable experiences should the viewer become aware of the many other eyes watching their screens.

Considering the possibility of prying eyes is an individual choice, but it’s courteous to steer clear of content you wouldn’t want other passengers — especially children — to see.

But in rare cases, the choice is made for you. For passengers on a recent United flight, a technical mishap forced the entire flight to watch Will Ferrell’s 2004 comedy “Anchorman,” according to a popular Reddit post.

Pictures from the flight show rows upon rows of Ron Burgundy.

With so many screens in view on an airplane, the urge to see what others are watching can be irresistible.
Aiming higher for ultra-longer flights

Qantas’ plan for nearly 20-hour nonstop trip from Sydney to London will be long-haul record

By Mary Ann Anderson
Tribune News Service

S

Sydney, Qantas Airways, there will soon be a new sheriff in town, or, in the sky, as competition for the world’s longest nonstop flight is winging its way forward. The world is about to become smaller, its farthest-flung corners closer than ever before, and it happens all in one long, long, long flight.

Although ultra-long flights are nothing new, every few years or so, an airline embarks on a journey to stretch the limits of imagination and set a new record that makes traveling the globe nonstop easier. This time around, it’s Qantas, the national airline of Australia. Qantas is taking off in 2025 with a Sydney to London route that will cover 9,190 nautical miles and take 20 hours to complete. Before that flight takes off and you want to sample the current world’s longest nonstop flight, look to Singapore Airlines. According to OAG Aviation, the company that officially keeps track of aviation fun facts, the record holder since 2021 for the world’s longest flight in distance is Singapore Airlines’ New York JFK to Singapore Changi route, clocking in at an extraordinary 18 hours and 40 minutes and leaving in its vapor trail a distance of 8,279 nautical miles, calculated using great-circle distance. Its next competitor is, well, itself, with a flight from Newark Liberty International to Singapore Changi measuring in at 8,277 nautical miles, just two miles shorter than the blue-ribbon winner of JFK to Singapore. Both flights are operated by the comfortable ultra-long-range Airbus A350-900.

The next two longest flights is Qantas’ Perth to Heathrow flight at 17 hours and 45 minutes and 7,829 nautical miles, followed by yet another Qantas flight from Dallas-Fort Worth to Melbourne at 17 hours and 45 minutes for 7,814 nautical miles. Nautical miles differ from land miles and are based on the circumference of the earth. A nautical mile equals one minute of latitude. The Singapore Airlines flight from JFK to Singapore, then, is 9,537 land miles as compared with its 8,279 nautical miles. Considering this nonstop flight in perspective. A satellite-tagged bar-tailed godwit, a beautifully feathered, sandpiper-like wading bird equipped by Mother Nature for long-distance travel, flew directly if not tenaciously across the Pacific from Alaska to Tasmania, some 8,425 miles, without stopping for food or rest. The journey took 11 days and one hour, and not once did it complain of jet lag. Also just for fun, consider that a satellite-tagged bird equipped by Mother Nature for so long and not drop out of the sky. It travels nonstop at lightning speeds of 17,500 miles per hour, meaning it orbits Earth every 90 minutes or so. Every day, the crew is treated to 16 sunrises and sunsets.

Whether aviation, avian or aeronautics of space, there’s always a record to be broken. The upcoming Qantas flight from Sydney to London, part of the airline’s Project Sunrise program, takes off in 2025 with a specially designed widebody Airbus A350 that generously will have fewer seats than other long-haul aircraft. Instead of the 300-plus passenger count that is normal for long-haul flights, these marathon flights will have just 238 seats, which in turn means more legroom and cabin space. That means more comfort for passengers as the plane whisks across the continents.

Qantas lounges and inflight meals, for example, are directed by Chef Neil Perry, one of the best known chefs in Australia, while Singapore Airlines’ International Culinary Panel consists of epicurean titans including Georges Blanc of France, Matt Moran of Sydney, Sanjeev Kapoor of Mumbai, Yoshihiro Murata of Kyoto, and Zhu Jun of Shanghai.

Project Sunrise is, according to Qantas’ website, “the final frontier of aviation,” with the goal of delivering more direct routes to Australia and significantly reducing travel time of up to four hours as compared to one-stop flights.

Qantas also promises a “second to none” flying experience inspired by medical and scientific research. With the timing of the flights, passengers could wake up to two sunrises within one flight. Of course, if you pony up to fly first class for the epic flight, Qantas plans for extra-wide beds, a 32-inch ultra-high-definition television, a 22-inch-wide recliner lounger chair and access to its sophisticated and snazzy first class lounges at airports around the world, all of which come complete with world-class restaurants in case you plan to eat before you fly to leave more time to sleep onboard the aircraft.

It’s reasonable to wonder how airplanes can stay up in the air for so long and not drop out of the sky. In a nutshell, it’s because long-haul aircraft makers like Boeing and Airbus use more fuel-efficient, lighter materials and better aerodynamics. Crew fatigue isn’t an issue, as flight attendants and pilots are swapped out and rest in private compartments hidden away behind secret staircases. Meals, of which you can expect two or three on most ultra-long-haul flights, are often overseen by renowned chefs.

The enclosed first class suite aboard the A350, the ultra-long-range Airbus that will fly between Sydney and London beginning in 2025, will have 50% more suite space than the A380 and features a 22-inch-wide reclining armchair and 80-inch long flat bed.
The fields along Fox’s Gap in central Maryland are mostly forest now, grown over since the day in September 1862 when thousands of men fought here. The former Wise Farm, where Union and Confederate soldiers spilled copious amounts of blood, is now a placid clearing bordered by two rural asphalt roads. A parking space occupies the spot where the farmhouse once stood. The Appalachian Trail runs across the site.

At one end of the clearing rests a small obelisk surrounded by a waist-high wall. The monument commemorates a major general of the Union Army who fell mortally wounded there as dusk fell on the ridgeline and savage combat dwindled there on Sept. 14, 1862.

Just yards away, a simple, inscribed slab marks where a Confederate brigadier general fell dead of a gunshot wound that morning.

The air is chill, and the autumn leaves are floating from the trees in central Maryland, but time is still ripe for a brisk hike or overnight backpacking trek on the 40 miles of Appalachian Trail that crosses this Mid-Atlantic state, mostly atop South Mountain.

A highlight of a late October trip along 30 miles of the trail was a stop at the Fox’s Gap battlefield to contemplate the struggle that took place there.

The gaps along South Mountain make convenient starting and ending points for a multiday trek.

SEE CIVIL WAR ON PAGE 27
**WEEKEND: TRAVEL**

**Civil War: Appalachian Trail, historic sites accessible from cities nearby**

FROM PAGE 26

backpacking trip, a day hike or a trail run.

The forests of oak and maple, sassafras and hickory break for several overlooks along the trail. Historic sites, like the three mountain gaps where the Battle of South Mountain took place, give reason to pause.

The trail is just an hour’s drive from Washington, D.C., and 25 minutes from Frederick, Md., attesting to the numbers of Boy Scout troops, dogwalkers and point-to-point trail runners sharing the trail that weekend. Military folks were conspicuously present.

We spent four days and three nights on the easy stretch of trail in Maryland. From Crampton’s Gap, we hiked to one of two shelters at Fox’s Gap, not far off the battlefield. From there, we continued to Turner’s Gap, where the Battle of South Mountain continued the afternoon of Sept. 14, 1862. Much of the battlefield is preserved in the form of state parks, trail easements or private conservation efforts. Signage at each site explains the action that took place there.

South Mountain was a ferocious, daylong fight that pitted 28,000 Union soldiers against 18,000 Confederates. Of the 5,010 casualties, 768 died. The rebels held out long enough to allow Confederate commander Robert E. Lee to capture the Union garrison at Harper’s Ferry, then in Virginia, consolidate the three wings of his army and fall back to Sharpsburg, Md., on the banks of Antietam Creek. The two armies met there three days later for combat that eclipsed the bloody mountain fight nearby.

Crampton’s Gap is also the site of Gathland State Park and a 19th-century monument to war correspondents erected by Civil War journalist George Alfred Townsend, pen name “Gath,” who also covered Lincoln’s assassination and built his home and the 50-foot-high memorial arch on the former battlefield.

We left a vehicle at a parking lot at Gathland and shouldered our packs for the long climb up the ridge heading north.

We arrived at mid-afternoon at Fox’s Gap, where the Battle of South Mountain began that September morning. So close to Halloween, the haunting, bucolic scene still evoked its memory.

Three monuments mark significant events of the battle and a walking trail with signs tells the basic story, but the presence of a shambling, sagging stone wall that witnessed the fight warrants graveyard solemnity at the site. Take a moment to stand near the North Carolina monument, alone in the forest, to contemplate the savagery committed there.

At the old Wise Farm, a patch of open ground remains of the cultivated acres south of Old Sharpsburg Road (now Reno Monument Road) where Union soldiers from Ohio and Michigan closed on North Carolina Confederates for some rare hand-to-hand and bayonet combat of the Civil War.

Our route continued north past the first monument to George Washington, a tall, stone, beehive-looking structure erected at a South Mountain overlook in the early 19th century; the Annapolis Rocks, a go-to lookout popular with Maryland’s population and just two miles from busy Interstate 70; and High Rock, another popular lookout where visitors leave their marks in spray paint.

We strode for miles through the hardwoods, surrounded by the colors of the season and gulping large drafts of fresh air until we stumbled over Maryland’s final stretch, a boulder deposit obstructing the final mile before Pennsylvania.

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**The first monument to George Washington was erected in 1827 on South Mountain, Md. The Appalachian Trail passes nearby.**

**The Ensign Cowan Memorial Shelter is one of several shelters along the Appalachian Trail in Maryland.**

**A stone wall courses through woods, once a farmer’s field, where Union and Confederate troops fought savagely in September 1862.**
Jeff Tweedy is known to fans as a prolific songwriter and poignant lyricist. So it may come as a surprise that the frontman of the Grammy-winning rock band Wilco has long found the act of writing intimidating. "I've always been really afraid of prose because I wasn't good in school. I was always underachieving. And part of it was I always felt overwhelmed by how much there is to say," he said. Perhaps ironically, that fear is in part what compelled a young Tweedy to start writing music four decades ago. "Songwriting is condensing things and giving yourself the freedom to omit lots of things, just to try and get the essence of an emotion or the essence of a story to come through," he said.

But as he geared up to release his third book, out Nov. 7, Tweedy admitted the task of writing no longer daunts him the way it once did. Having already tackled a memoir and a "how to" book on songwriting, Tweedy is now shifting his attention to other musicians and the ways their art has influenced him in "World Within a Song."

The book is just as much about the circumstances in which Tweedy experienced these eclectic 50 tracks as it is about the songs themselves — the comfort that hearing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" with his Judy Garland-loving mom brought him as a kid or the ways in which Minutemen’s "History Lesson — Part II" bred his longing to be a rock star.

And while Tweedy, whose unabashed love for music is still palpable after decades in the industry, recognizes the benefits of the unfettered access to songs that streaming platforms grant, he also laments what is lost when listeners don’t have to “work for it” in their search for music. "I think that there was something really important about the way my generation and previous generations invested themselves in music. The only way to get it was to pay for it. And once you had made just even that outlay of cash, you made time to find a way into it," he said. "Now, I think if you don’t like something immediately, there’s 10,000 other..."
Springsteen heads to Europe; Creed to reunite

While we typically focus far too much on what’s happening stateside each month, here’s a Thanksgiving treat: Let’s lead with European dates this time around.

Or, more specifically, Bruce Springsteen’s European dates. The Boss (assuming all health issues will be taken care of by then, of course) will hit the European road in May of next year, kicking things off in Cardiff, Wales on May 5. The run, along with his E Street Band, will go all the way through July 25 when things wrap up at London’s Wembley Stadium. This, of course, will come after his North American dates — some of which will be held over from 2023 and will begin in Phoenix on March 19. Springsteen was on his way to the top of the live music charts for 2023 earlier this year when peptic ulcer disease forced the singer to shut things down for what was originally seen as a temporary, foreseeable future. A consolation prize was PoliStar naming The Boss’ tour at No. 2 on its mid-year top 10, having already raked in a little less than $150 million by the middle of 2023.

Speaking of PoliStar, our monthly check in its Live 75 list, which ranks active tours by tickets sold for shows performing over the last 30 days, reveals that the week of Oct. 30 saw The Weeknd running away with the top spot, selling an average of about 55,000 tickets in the aforementioned time period. Coldplay, of all bands, came in at No. 2 with an average of 50,000 tickets sold, while Guns N’ Roses landed at the No. 4 spot with an average of about 22,000 tickets sold. Shania Twain rounded out the list at No. 10 with an average of approximately 12,000 tickets sold over the last 30 days.

And while Twain might be most associated with country music, her crossover work in the pop realm has proved as fruitful in mind … how about some New Order, the Chicago-based band’s predecessor…

Perhaps just as magical? A Creed reunion. And no. I’m not kidding. The ’90s rockers are getting the band back together and plan to hit the road with 3 Doors Down, Daughtry, Switchfoot, Tonic, and (high fives for this!) Canadian greats Big Wreck. It will be a summer jaunt and they’ll be hitting the bulk of outdoor amphitheaters with arms wide open beginning July 17. If that’s not enough rock for you, Lynyrd Skynyrd and ZZ Top announced last week that they will reboot their successful 2023 run in 2024 as they commence The Sharp Dressed Simple Man Tour for a run of spring dates. Those kick off March 8 in Savannah, Ga., and after taking a break between April and August, will conclude Sept. 22, 2024, in Ridgefield, Wash.

Be sure not to forget your cheap sunglasses, all while giving your best three steps to the proceedings. Or something like that. Hey, there. Happy concert-ing!

Tweedy: Singer’s love of music shines through

FROM PAGE 28

songs that you want to go to and find something that’s going to hit you right away.”

To combat that throwaway culture, Tweedy makes a habit of listening to music he’s not into, trying to discern why that is — a practice, he says, that often confuses “the algorithm” used by streaming services to predict people’s tastes.

“I don’t like not liking music. And so a lot of times I visit stuff thinking, ‘I know I’m not a big fan of this, but I want to know what other people are hearing in it,’ he explained. “I think there’s really something interesting about listening to things that you don’t love or don’t think were made for you.”

Although often dubbed an alternative country band, Wilco has bent genres since they first formed 30 years ago, solidifying their reputation for experimentation and innovation with their seminal 2002 record, “Yankee Hotel Foxtrot” — their bestselling album to date.

“We’ve tried hard to kill genres for ourselves,” Tweedy said of the Chicago-based band’s perspective on their country associations. “It’s an artistic tool, in a way. When somebody is coming to your music with a preconceived notion, then you have some friction to push against. And that’s artistically enticing.”

That genre defiance continues with their 13th studio album, “Cousin,” released in September. The band has spent most of 2023 touring, despite Tweedy’s ongoing battle with osteoarthritis in his hips. The pain is at times debilitating, and even walking short distances proves difficult for the 56-year-old. During a recent show in Los Angeles, though, Tweedy’s pain was hardly apparent during a two-hour set.

While the discomfort is at times distracting for him, he says the act of performing does, for brief moments, make him forget.

“Music has an amazing magical power to transport you from pain, emotional and physical, for sure. And I do feel like I go somewhere else most of the night,” he said.

Bruce Springsteen, who was sidelined by peptic ulcer disease, will get back on the road in March.

Kids On The Block?! That’s right, the boy band, along with Paula Abdul and DJ Jazzy Jeff, will head out for The Magic Summer 2024 Tour next year, hitting a total of 40 North American cities along the way. As for what it is that said magic precisely entails, Donnie Wahlberg, he of NKOTB fame, claimed that “the true magic of the tour is the music, the moments and the shared memories that we get to create with our amazing fans each night,” in a recent interview. Oh, OK, then.

Cat Power replicates Bob Dylan’s infamous ’66 concert, without boos

BY SCOTT BAUER

Associated Press

“Cat Power Sings Dylan: The 1966 Royal Albert Hall Concert” is a faithful song-by-song recreation, without the boos, of Bob Dylan’s infamous concert — from the tour where he played electric guitar for the first time.

Unlike Dylan’s divisive 1966 shows, no one seeing singer-songwriter Cat Power in 2022 when this was recorded — also at the famed Royal Albert Hall — was likely so angered or surprised by what they heard that they felt compelled to walk out or hurl insults. Her acoustic first set, followed by second set complete with a full, plugged-in band, is rightfully met with thunderous applause.

Back in 1966, when Dylan angered folk music traditionalists by plugging in and playing his new songs backed by a band, fans stomped their feet, jeered and walked out. In Manchester, England, one attendee was so angered that he famously yelled “Judas!” at Dylan just before he launched into “Like a Rolling Stone.”

The moment gained fame on bootlegs that wrongly attributed perhaps the most famous heckle in rock history to the Royal Albert Hall concert in London.

Of course, Cat Power, otherwise known as Chan Marshall, returns not to the Manchester Free Trade Hall but to the Royal Albert Hall for this live re-creation of the famous show. But it’s not a copy. She puts her own stamp on the material while not deviating from Dylan’s 1966 arrangements.

She delivers the first set solo acoustic just as Dylan did, alone with harmonica and guitar. She sings up spine-tingling versions of some of Dylan’s best work including “Visions of Johanna,” “Desolation Row” and “Mr. Tambourine Man.”

Then she returns in the second set with a full band to deliver purer Dylan: “Ballad of a Thin Man,” “Just Like Tom Thumb’s Blues” and closing, just as Dylan did, with “Like a Rolling Stone,” one of the greatest rock songs ever written.

Unlike the original Dylan show, which he released in full in 1998, Cat Power’s electric set is more of a celebration than a tussle with the audience.

Cat Power could never replicate that combative energy, but she doesn’t have to. While remaining faithful to the songs and the live arrangements, she shines a light on Dylan’s genius and the beauty of the music nearly 60 years after the original concert, while leaving her own mark.
That Christmas season, I decided I wanted to become a cowboy. It was the dawn of the 1960s, and I was a scrawny kid in Columbus, Ohio. Cowboys exuded bravery; they rescued people; they galloped across the wide plains with fierce glints in their eyes. Come evening, they kicked up dust from inside the floor-model TV screen in our living room on North Fifth Street. “Gunsmoke,” “Laredo,” “The Rifleman,” “The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp” and “Have Gun – Will Travel” suddenly became my favorites.

The Ohio winter kept us inside for long stretches, so there I was, lying across our living room floor, sinking into the lore and legend of the American cowboy. I begged Santa to bring me the all-black cowboy outfit worn by Paladin (Richard Boone), the main character on “Have Gun – Will Travel.” Paladin had such style.

We lived — my sisters, my brother and I — with my grandparents and my mom, who was yet again between hotel kitchen jobs. Money was tight. Still, I dashed down the stairs on Christmas morning and there it was, laid out, my Paladin cowboy outfit, with two pearl-handled six-shooters in holsters and silver beads sewn into the hat.

I was soon quick-drawing my six-shooters on imaginary bandits lurking in our basement. When weather permitted, I took to the outdoors as Paladin, looking for varmints. Cowboy lingo had entered my vocabulary.

We lived six blocks from the state fairgrounds coliseum where the rodeo came to town every year. I saw flesh-and-blood cowboys up close, galloping on horseback. I was the happiest horseless cowboy around.

Yet, now, looking back through the eyes of a little Black boy, one thing was constant with all of my beloved cowboys, from TV screen to local rodeo: They were all white. I adored them, sure enough, but none of these cowboy figures looked like the grown Black men I knew.

It was but the glory and myth of the way America — on both small and big screens — introduced cowboys. Black cowboys were mostly absent, washed away.

It’s been thrilling, therefore, to watch the first three episodes of the series “Lawmen: Bass Reeves” (which premiered Nov. 5 on Paramount+). The eight-episode series stars David Oyelowo as Reeves and is executive-produced by, among others, Taylor Sheridan, Jessica Oyelowo, David Glasser and David Oyelowo himself. Sheridan is the creator of Paramount’s “Yellowstone” juggernaut and its spinoffs, which consistently have drawn high ratings. Cowboys are having a moment.

In the new show, Reeves escapes slavery, takes a bride, tries farming, fails at it, and eventually comes to the attention of a judge who has heard about his prowess as a tracker. Reeves is offered a job as a deputy U.S. marshal. There is not any fanfare around his appointment, no matter how historic.

Upon the rough-and-tumble frontier, Reeves — sometimes accompanied by other deputies — is soon seen making arrests, knocking down doors, galloping hard toward trouble and outwitting crooks. His legend grows.

“You a lawman or an outlaw?” a small Black kid, mesmerized, asks Reeves.

“A bit of both, I reckon,” Reeves answers.

SEE REEVES ON PAGE 31

Bass Reeves was a Black hero on horseback. TV has finally found him.
Reeves: Real-life lawman’s legacy needed no embellishment

FROM PAGE 30

Illustrating for me how little Black boys, like myself, were also missing from all those old cowboy shows. Few cinematic treatments in any genre, however, have been as tethered to myth as cowboys have. In the 1860s, cowboys were vulnerable to mythmaking. They existed in a rural landscape often visited by dime-store novelists. Fictions flew like wild geese from town to town. The number of vicissitudes through shoot-outs seemed to multiply on the back end of telegrams. Good Samaritan acts morphed into tales of unimaginable heroism. A genre was created that saw few boundaries when it came to telling the truth.

In the 1962 John Ford western movie “The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance,” there is an exchange between two characters, one asking a reporter about a possible story: “You’re not going to use the story, Mr. Scott?” “No, sir,” the reporter answers. “This is the West. Sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.”

Bass Reeves was a revered law enforcement legend during his lifetime. Unlike other Wild West figures who were lauded in hagiography, Reeves needed no embellishment.

There was a factual paper trail. Born in 1838, he had been enslaved, and that could be proved, as could his escape from the Confederate Army into which he and his enslaver had been forced. The Emancipation Proclamation finally freed him. He lived with Native Americans for a while, learned multiple languages. He gave farming a try when he abandoned tribal living.

A reputation soon spread that Reeves could hunt and track things, including people. His renown got him hired as a lawman. He studied old arrest warrants and documents linked to Reeves, nearly every fact Reeves worked on in the position west of the Mississippi. He worked mostly in and around Arkansas and present-day Oklahoma. White people were so astonished by his presence they often looked at him as if he had just dropped from the sky. There were thousands of arrests. And untold shootouts. The lawman Bass Reeves died in 1910 — and then his legacy was forgotten.

The whitewashing of his legacy had actually begun before his death. S.W. Harman published a book, “Hell on the Border,” in 1899 about the various lawmen who operated throughout the federal district overseen by Judge Isaac Parker, the area where Reeves mostly worked. Since Reeves had apprehended a legion of dangerous criminals — sometimes donning disguises to do so — it was assumed he’d be a major figure in the Harman book.

“But he’s omitted. And that’s just trag­ic!” says Sidney Thompson, author of two Bass Reeves historical novels, “Follow the Angels, Follow the Doves,” and, jumping to the Harman title, “Hell on the Border” — which the Paramount+ series is based on.

On the phone from Oklahoma, Thompson, 58, says he never knew of Reeves until he heard actor Morgan Freeman talking about him while being interviewed on a television show. Freeman lamented he couldn’t find much material on Reeves.

Above: David Oyelowo as Bass Reeves. Below: Lauren E. Banks plays Reeves’ wife, Jennie, in the Paramount+ series “Lawmen: Bass Reeves.”

Thompson then became obsessed with Reeves. He enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of North Texas and hoped would show Black cinema’s growth and counter the damage Griffith’s picture had done.

By the 1940s, the cowboy myth was in full swinging form throughout America. Cowboy pictures helped sustain the financial success of Hollywood, populated with legendary performers: Randolph Scott, John Wayne, Tex Ritter, Rory Calhoun, Alan Ladd and Gary Cooper. They shot the bad guys. They elevated white women to angelic dimensions. They de­feated Indigenous tribes.

It was one-sided history. The visionary writer James Baldwin wrote a lot about cinema. “It comes as a great shock to see Gary Cooper killing off the Indians, and although you are rooting for Gary Cooper, (you realize) that the Indians are you,” he wrote.

Hollywood is trying to take corrective measures in addressing its past, which is a long-overdue and noble thing to do. But we are in an era of book banning and rampant misinformation about Black history, even about the slavery world that Reeves escaped. “Bass Reeves” brings justice to a world that had tortured him.

It is a good thing that Reeves is kicking up dust again.

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FROM PAGE 30

President Abraham Lincoln signed the 1862 Homestead Act in an effort to get people to go west and farm. Any Blacks encountered by Reeves were most likely beneficiaries of that act. If one successfully farmed over a period of a few years, the land would be given to them, provided they paid certain fees and taxes.

In 1904, Oscar Micheaux, an enterpris­ing Black man born in Illinois, began dreaming of getting land in South Dakota. He took advantage of a homesteading lottery and became a farmer. But eventually he had to flee to fling America’s first major Black director. Micheaux, who died in 1951, also was forgotten, only to be rediscovered in the 1970s.

The myth of the screen cowboy had received one of its earliest boosts with the 1915 opening of “The Birth of a Nation,” D.W. Griffith’s racist “epic” in which white men on horseback seek to avenge the Black gains made during Reconstruction. That film — an orgy of violence perpetrated by stereotyped Blacks against white damsels in distress — was so popular it was treated to a special screening at Woodrow Wilson’s White House.

The movie, with its colossal success, would haunt the cinematic aspirations of Blacks for decades. It would propel Micheaux to make films — “Within Our Gates,” “The Exile” and “The Homesteaders” — among his most popular — that he hoped would show Black cinema’s growth and counter the damage Griffith’s picture had done.

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Why are some people so afraid of clowns?

Unpredictability, inscrutability among patterns psychologists have noted among coulrophobics

By Teddy Amenabar
The Washington Post

For 15 years, psychology professor Philip John Tyson has been teaching classes on phobias. At the start of every semester, he asks his students the same question: What are you afraid of?

Students routinely cited spiders, makes and claustrophobic spaces, but a consistent minority would say they were “terrified of clowns,” said Tyson, an associate professor of psychology at the University of South Wales. He wanted to know why.

Tyson and his colleagues began researching “coulrophobia,” or fear of clowns. Although the prevalence of clown phobia isn’t clear, one recent survey in the United States found that about 5% of the population said they were afraid — or very afraid — of clowns. Tyson’s team used its own surveys to identify more than 500 people who suffered from clown fear and then asked them to rate their feelings about clowns.

What would they do if they encountered a clown on the street?

How long have they feared the red-nosed jokers?

What makes somebody creepy?

The clowns would like to have a word

Jon Davison, a clown performer, teacher, director and researcher at the London Metropolitan University, said the reports of coulrophobia don’t match up with what he sees himself or hears from other performers. He said that in 38 years of clowning, he has only on two occasions come across fear of clowns. Clowns typically aren’t trying to unnerv or unsettle their audiences when they perform, he said.

“In fact, completely the opposite,” Davison said. The goal is to portray this person who is “helpless, vulnerable and, actually, doesn’t have a clue about how the world works.”

Clowns want audiences to laugh at their performances but they’re also trying to get people to sympathize with their character, who’s often “at the mercy of our society.”

“However, you sense the humanity,” he said. “It’s like a little kid.”

What makes somebody creepy?

Tyson and colleagues are in the process of studying whether it’s certain aspects of clown makeup — specifically, the white and red paint — that elicit the fear or phobia.

James Greville, a lecturer in psychology at the University of South Wales, said one theory is that the white face paint can be perceived as a “deadly pallor,” pale and lifeless and something to be avoided. And the red lipstick or accents on a clown’s face may feel threatening because they tap into our wariness of blood or a contagious infection.

Frank McAndrew, a psychology professor at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., said he “firmly believes” clowns have “wonderful intentions” to entertain audiences, but that doesn’t change whether some people are on guard when they see a clown. People don’t want to become the butt of a joke, McAndrew said.

“Nobody comes out of an interaction with a clown looking dignified,” he said. “For a lot of people who want to present themselves well in public, the clown is a threat.”

In 2016, McAndrew co-authored a study called “On the Nature of Creepiness,” surveying more than 1,300 people to better understand the behaviors and characteristics that may lead someone to feel creeped out. In one section, the respondents rated 21 different occupations from “not at all creepy” to “very creepy.”

Clowning scored the highest among the group, rating higher in creepiness than a taxidermist, sex shop worker or funeral director.

There’s a lot of uncertainty regarding an interaction with a clown, McAndrew said. You’re not sure how the performer is going to respond — and that can be unnerving.

“There’s this very easy connection between clowns and horror,” he said. “I don’t think they became creepy to us because people started putting them in haunted houses. I think they got put in haunted houses because people found them creepy to begin with.”
Finding support after scam

Friends, parishioners step up to help retired priest who lost life savings

BY REBECCA JOHNSON
Chicago Tribune

The Rev. Robert Banzin had saved up about $61,000, which he planned to use to replace his 20-year-old car and pay for medication and other expenses. But these plans are now on hold.

The 85-year-old retired Catholic priest was robbed of his life savings in a financial scam, which friends and colleagues, who say he’s a “wonderful” and “positive” influence, are helping replenish through fundraising.

“I just felt totally abused,” Banzin said. “This is my money. I worked all my life for it.”

Banzin said the ordeal started on Aug. 17 when he received an email from what he thought was PayPal, telling him there was a $699 charge on his account from eBay. Knowing this charge was “ridiculous,” Banzin contacted a PayPal support phone number he found online. Instead of the online payment company, he said he accidentally contacted a group of fraudsters.

“They said, ‘We’re investigators, I’ll put you with an investigator from PayPal,’” Banzin said. “They sort of dragged me in, sucked me in. (They said) they’re going to help me stop the hackers from getting at my money and to replenish my account, eventually totaling more than $61,000.

He said he reported the fraud to his bank, the FBI and the Chicago police, but he learned that it’s unlikely he’ll ever get his money back or that these agencies will catch the people responsible. He also retained an attorney. The Chicago police said detectives are investigating the case.

Over the course of about a week and a half, Banzin said he was convinced to first send a wire transfer, a form of payment that is nearly untraceable, before handing over his bank account information. He said he was convinced to then send a wire transfer, a form of payment that is nearly untraceable, before handing over his bank account information. He said he was convinced to then send a wire transfer, a form of payment that is nearly untraceable, before handing over his bank account information. He said he was convinced to then send a wire transfer, a form of payment that is nearly untraceable, before handing over his bank account information. He said he was convinced to then send a wire transfer, a form of payment that is nearly untraceable, before handing over his bank account information. He said he was convinced to then send a wire transfer, a form of payment that is nearly untraceable, before handing over his bank account information. He said he was convinced to then send a wire transfer, a form of payment that is nearly untraceable, before handing over his bank account information. He said he was convinced to then send a wire transfer, a form of payment that is nearly untraceable, before handing over his bank account information. He said he was convinced to then send a wire transfer, a form of payment that is nearly untraceable, before handing over his bank account information. He said he was convinced to then send a wire transfer, a form of payment that is nearly untraceable, before handing over his bank account information. He said he was convinced to then send a wire transfer, a form of payment that is nearly untraceable, before handing over his bank account information.

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NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

ACROSS
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21 What integrals calculate
22 Got comfortable with
23 Holiday building marking (GABARDINE)
25 Stay up all night
26 Chocolate brand with a mountain logo
27 Like some language
28 Slangy term of endearment
29 "You ____?"
30 "You ____?
31 Ready for battle, say
32 Galette fruit
33 "Weapon" in a backyard water fight
34 Elixir
37 Captcha target
38 Gave in
44 James of "The Thumbs-up" (SATEEN)
46 Location for a tragus piercing
52 Fare that's filled and drain, maybe
55 Fends (off)
57 Lead-in or wife or life
58 "Pay attention!"
59 Mongolian word in an honorary title
60 Brooklyn art school
61 Hiking through a mountain logo (GABARDINE)
62 Common Father's Day gift
63 Towel word
64 "Love, Reign ____ Me"
65 Visual-arts style
66 Rapper who originated the Japanese word "GABARDINE"
67 Blacklist"
68 Mother
69 "The Girl on the Pier" (2015)
70 Latin "Behold!"
71 Chug in a bathtub drain, maybe
72 Monkeys (around)
73 Part of an old-age plan, for short
74 Nev. neighbor
75 Where Six Flags theme parks originated
76 Severe punishment
77 Floor
78 Washington post (SATEEN)
79 Precursor to the main act (NEOPRENE)
80 Type of quasiparticle
81 Unrepeated instances
82 Kind of comb
83 Rainbow creator
84 Musical artist
85 Rainbow creator
86 Trick-taking card game
87 "As It ____" (Harry Styles hit)
88 Like most running..."ignorance"
89 Easily shockable sort
90 Car model whose commercials, e.g.
91 Thumbs (through)
92 Dark plain on the moon's surface
93 "____ United, English soccer team"
94 Painter Rivera
95 "WandaVision" inspired Homer's "Odyssey"
96 ____ United, English soccer team
97 "WandaVision"
98 Voting groups
99 Mother
100 Country that's more than 2,600 miles long
101 Country that's more than 2,600 miles long
102 "Understood"
103 Philadelphia 76ers
104 Pharmacy giant
105 Carnival performer
106 "It's found next to every 2,600 mile long"
107 Got close to, with "on"
108 "Understood"
109 "What's the matter?"
110 Reacts to a grand gesture, maybe
111 Famed New York City restaurant

DOWN
1 Grand piano
2 Skirt style
3 Ornate garden features
4 Skirt style
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In the Ukraine war, which side is the GOP on?

By Trudy Rubin
The Philadelphia Inquirer

T he “party of Putin,” also known as the Republican Party, seems determined to help Vladimir Putin defeat Ukraine.

By boosting the Russian president, the GOP is not only undermining U.S. security and supporting a dangerous adversary, but it is also helping Hamas in its effort to destroy the Israeli state.

You don’t believe me? Consider the following:

The House Republican majority, cowed by its MAGA wing and encouraged by Donald Trump, has rushed to abandon Ukraine. Mike Johnson, the newly installed speaker, rapped up a combined military assistance package for Israel and Ukraine and eliminated aid for Kyiv.

And now, even Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who previously pushed back forcefully against GOP isolationists, seems to have been swayed by the extremists. That is dangerous for U.S. security and for Israel, as well.

At first, McConnell tried to fight back against MAGA recklessness.

“One may say our support for Ukraine comes at the expense of more important priorities. But as I’ve said every time I get the chance, this is a false choice,” McConnell said late last month. “If Russia prevails, there’s no question that Putin’s appetite for empire will actually extend into NATO, raising the threat to the U.S. transatlantic alliance and the risk of war for America.”

Too true.

Yet McConnell now appears to have been trapped into tying further Ukraine military aid to fixing the southern border, a process that will take months or years if it ever happens — leaving Ukraine without the military support it will need this winter and onward.

The GOP might as well tell Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky: “Drop dead.”

What’s so bizarre about this GOP blind spot is that Putin has positioned himself as the staunch ally of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran — all groups that most Republicans rail against. By helping Putin, Republicans are strengthening all three.

A senior Hamas delegation visited Moscow on Oct. 26, as did a top Iranian official. The Kremlin refuses to call Hamas a terrorist group and has not condemned Hamas’ actions on Oct. 7. A stunned Israeli foreign ministry condemn ed Hamas’ hosting of Hamas as a reprehensible step that gives support to terrorism.

Certainly, Hamas thinks Russia is supporting it (as it has done for many years).

“We have factories producing Kalash nikov assault rifles and their ammunition. We have a Russian license to produce Kalashnikov ammunition in Gaza. There are countries that support us politically. Even Russia sympathizes with us,” Ali Baraka, a senior Hamas official, boasted on Russia Today’s Arabic news channel.

“Russia is happy that America is getting embroiled in the Palestinian war. It eases the pressure on the Russians in Ukraine. One war eases the pressure in another war. So we’re not alone on the battlefield,” he said.

Russia has given Putin an opportunity to pose as the champion of the Global South against Western or Israeli policies. Or as Putin describes it, “The ugly neocolonial system of international relations.”

But anyone who buys that nonsense (including some Americans on the progressive left) ignores the grim fact that Putin is the ultimate colonizer, trying to destroy the sovereign state of Ukraine and force it back under the control of a rebuilt Russian empire.

Moreover, the Kremlin critique of Israel’s bombing of Gaza — Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov denounced “indiscriminately using force against civilians” — is nauseatingly hypocritical.

Russia deliberately pulverized hospitals and markets in Syria and has deliberately targeted Ukrainian civilians, schools, hospitals, and markets for the past two years.

If this isn’t enough to wake the GOP isolationists to the danger of helping Putin, let us consider that Iran is providing Russia with weapons to target Ukraine. In return, U.S. intelligence sources suspect (although this is not confirmed yet) that Syria may be providing Iran’s terrorists with weapons.

With Russian-made surface-to-air defense systems to be used against Israel.

These systems were gifted to Damascus by the Kremlin. Such a gift would require a green light from Moscow. They would be a thankyou to Tehran for its drones.

So let’s sum up the plot of this theater of the absurd: The GOP wants to cut aid to Ukraine (or make its passage impossible) even as the current temporary funding bill expires at the end of November.

At that point, U.S. aid to Ukraine runs out, meaning that Kyiv may be fighting without enough ammunition at a critical juncture in its effort to push back Russia.

Contrary to many media reports, a stalemate in Ukraine’s efforts is not inevitable, because Ukraine has been making progress in cutting off Russian supply routes to Crimea.

If President Joe Biden would only, finally, send the kind of long-range ATACMS missiles Kyiv needs (he hasn’t), contrary to a lot of bad news reporting, Ukraine could finish that job.

Instead, to repeat, Republicans are playing into Putin’s hands, helping Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran.

In so doing, they are increasing the danger to Israel — and to America.

Which side are you on, boys? Which side are you on?

Trudy Rubin is a columnist and editorial board member for The Philadelphia Inquirer.

Democrats fret as the bad news mounts for Biden

A Las Vegas Review Journal

week is an eternity in politics, let alone a year. Yet that hasn’t stopped Democrats from entering panic mode over a new poll showing widespread voter dissatisfaction with President Joe Biden.

The New York Times on Sunday revealed the results of a survey it conducted with Siena College of six battleground states — including Nevada — in the 2024 presidential election. The numbers were stunning, to say the least.

The findings show Biden losing to Donald Trump in five of the states — Michigan, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Arizona and Nevada — by at least four points. The president faces a 10-point deficit in Nevada.

In Washington, the president leads 49% to 44%.

Biden carried all six states in 2020.

Of particular note, the survey found that “the multiracial and multigenerational coalition that elected Mr. Biden is fraying,” according to the Times. “Demographic groups that backed Biden by landslide margins in 2020 are now far more closely contested, as two-thirds of the electorate sees the country moving in the wrong direction.”

In fact, “the more diverse the swing state, the farther Mr. Biden was behind, and he led only in the whitest of the six.”

Trump has huge negatives but Biden is already deeply and similarly unpopular.

The explanation for this appears to be rooted primarily in the James Carville adage, “It’s the economy, stupid.” Voters across all income levels, the survey found, “felt that Mr. Biden’s policies had hurt them personally, while they credited Mr. Trump’s policies for helping them.” By a 59-37 margin, voters trusted Trump as a better steward of the economy than Biden.

The president’s age — he turned 81 this month — is also a major concern. Seventy-one percent of respondents said Biden was too old to be an effective leader, “an opinion shared across every demographic and geographic group in the poll.”

There’s plenty of time for the president to make up ground, of course. Democrats bucked similar doomsday predictions in 2016. But, as the Times notes, “buck to re-election, in large part thanks to their emphasis on abortion. Perhaps a similar scenario plays out in the coming year.”

Yet the game plan guiding Democrats over the last six months has been clear: to prevent a visibly declining president who presided over 9 percent inflation, $5 a gallon gas, an explosion in the national debt and chaos on the border from re-election as long as the GOP nominee was the baggage-laden Trump. As the Times poll reveals, that strategy could be more wishful thinking than political reality.

Trump has huge negatives ... but Biden is already deeply and similarly unpopular.
Bizarro

That's when your mother and I met,
And that's when my company merged
with General Mega Dynamics.

Loose Parts

The Myopic Invisible Man

ACROSS
1 Asian holiday
4 Music booster
7 Gold-loving king
12 Baba
13 Stephen of “Still Crazy”
14 Keen
15 “Top Gun” target
16 Domino product
18 Summer in Arles
19 Furtive type
20 Belgrade resident
22 Golf’s Ernie
23 “Hulk” actor Eric
27 Not ‘neath
29 Swapped
31 Cameo shapes
34 Sulk
35 Luggage carrier
37 Tom Collins liquor
38 “Jabberwocky” starter
39 Wise bird
40 One in a pod
57 Take courses?
58 Hosp. sections

DOWN
1 Domesticates
2 Select group
3 Striped cat
4 Curved lines
5 Not as nice
6 Talk show group
7 Pandemic cover-up
8 Hosp. area
9 Burrowed
10 premium
11 Sun. talk
12 Sunrise direction
13 Resident
14 Campus mil. group
15 — kwon do
16 Half of a ’60s group
17 Domesticates
18 Select group
19 Striped cat
20 Curved lines
21 Not as nice
22 Talk show group
23 Pandemic cover-up
24 Hosp. area
25 Burrowed
26 premium
27 Sun. talk
28 Sunrise direction
29 Resident
30 Campus mil. group
31 — kwon do
32 Half of a ’60s group

Eugene Sheffer Crossword

Answer to Previous Puzzle

CRYPTOQUIP

XOKCHV JAVBHMB BAFH
XDBHYDHB AQBFH KJYBI IAT
FAVBHMXD IATYDGHF AO blow:
FATVHGKYOXDC CXQV.

Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: AT THE HEADSCARF-
MANUFACTURING COMPANY, EVERYBODY CALLS THEIR VICE PRESIDENT “SECOND
BANDANA.”

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: X equals I
ACROSS
1 Tax prep pro
4 London gallery
8 Top choice, for short
12 Taunting laugh
13 Wax-coated cheese
14 Battery fluid
15 Land in la mer
16 Use a fruit knife
17 Aid for Dr. House
18 Ceremony on Veterans Day
21 Moines
22 Auto fuel
23 Seine city
26 Briny expanse
27 Apply cream
30 Sparkling Italian wine
31 USO audience
32 Lady—("Poker Face" singer)
33 Actress West
34 Young fellow
35 Duck down
36 Erie Canal mule
37 Celeb gossip source
38 Musical groups in a Veterans Day parade
45 Boast
46 Hawaiian city
47 Spanish gold
48 Similar
49 Scored 100 on 50 Sailor
51 Bygone fliers
52 "Finding Nemo" fish
53 Ram's mate

DOWN
1 Swank
2 — Alto, Calif.
3 Throat clearer
4 Homes on reservations
5 Photographer Ansel
6 Pois base
7 Comes into view
8 Almanac data
9 "Superfood" berry
10 In — veritas
11 Biblical garden
1502, in Old Rome
19 1502, in Old Rome
20 Motorist’s org.
23 Shriver of tennis
24 Solid-rock insert
25 Numbered rd.
26 "Ice Age" sloth
27 June honoree
28 Bio stat
29 Rail
31 Round Table knight
32 Sphinx site
33 Back muscle, briefly
34 35 Represent
36 Zodiac dozen
37 10th U.S. president
38 Some corp. recruits
39 Annoys
40 Cannes milk
41 Puerto —
42 Part of a chord
43 Sketch
44 Achy

Answer to Previous Puzzle
Washington hired as new Angels manager

By Greg Beacham
Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Los Angeles Angels hired Ron Washington to be their new manager Wednesday, turning to a veteran baseball mind in an attempt to end nearly a decade of losing.

The 71-year-old Washington became the majors’ oldest current manager and only the second active Black manager, joining Dave Roberts of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

“I’m lost for words, but not the work it will take!” Washington told The Associated Press by text message.

Washington led the Texas Rangers from 2007-14, winning two AL pennants and going 664-611. He spent the past seven seasons as Atlanta’s third base coach, helping the Braves win their 2021 World Series title.

Washington replaced Phil Nevin, who wasn’t re-signed last month after 1½ losing seasons in charge of the long-struggling Angels. Los Angeles is mired in stretches of eight consecutive losing seasons and nine straight non-playoff seasons, both the longest streaks in the majors.

Washington has never shied away from work: He’s regularly among the first on the field, hitting hundreds of grounders to infielders.

Arte Moreno, the Angels’ 77-year-old owner, clearly hopes the experienced Washington can get the most out of a long-underachieving franchise with a big payroll and three-time AL MVP Mike Trout, but almost no team success to show for it. Shohei Ohtani, the team’s superstar two-way player, became a free agent this week.

Washington got a two-year contract. He’s the fourth manager in the last six seasons for the Angels following the departure of Mike Scioscia, who spent 19 years running the Halos’ bench before walking away after the 2018 season. Brad Ausmus, Joe Maddon and Nevin all have tried and failed to reverse the Angels’ slide.

Washington’s successful tenure at Texas had plenty of bumps along the way. He tested positive for cocaine use during the 2009 season and offered to resign, but he kept his job and the Rangers to the World Series in 2010 and again in 2011.

Washington abruptly resigned from the Rangers on Sept. 5, 2014, surprising the baseball world. His departure came weeks later, he acknowledged having an extramarital affair and cited it as the reason for leaving Texas, which had intended to bring him back in 2015.

With a reputation as a personable, old-school manager with an ebullient personality and an exciting edge, Washington also knows the AL West well. Along with his time in Texas, he spent 13 seasons over two stints as a coach with the Oakland Athletics.

Washington is also one of the most respected infield coaches in the game’s history — and former A’s third baseman Eric Chavez once gifted Washington one of his Gold Gloves because he played such a vital role. His drills and viewpoints have been used across the majors to improve players’ performance, and he helped the Braves’ infielders throughout his most recent coaching stop — all four Atlanta infielders made the 2023 NL All-Star team, along with former Washington disciples Freddie Freeman and Dansby Swanson.

Washington passes Bruce Bochy of Texas and Brian Snitker of Atlanta, both 68, as Major League Baseball’s oldest current manager. Dusty Baker was the oldest at 74 before retiring this month as Houston Astros manager, and he was also the only Black manager besides Roberts.

GMs careful with words on Ohtani sweepstakes

By David Brandt
Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The race to add two-way baseball superstar Shohei Ohtani is in its back-buster free agency deal is off to a clandestine start.

“Special player, that’s all I’ll say,” said Chris Young, general manager of the World Series champion Texas Rangers.

“We’re going to be interested in looking at everything that’s available that can make us better,” New York Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said.

“We may ask some questions, but I can’t tell you we’re diving all in,” Houston Astros general manager Dana Brown said.

All 30 Major League Baseball general managers have gathered this week at baseball’s GM meetings in Scottsdale, though the meetings were cut short after a stomach virus that spread and affected over 30 executives. Privately, they’re surely discussing the developing Ohtani sweepstakes, which could cost the winning team upward of $500 million. But publicly, questions about the potentially historic bidding have been met with careful statements.

Even the team that employed the Japanese sensation the past six seasons — the Los Angeles Angels — doesn’t seem to have a good read on his future.

“There’s going to be a lot of attention on it and I understand why,” Angels GM Perry Minasian said. “Great player. We’ll see how the offseason develops. We’ve got our plan and we’re going to try to execute that plan and see where it leads us.”

Ohtani is one of the most fascinating cases for baseball’s free agency system since it began in 1976.

He’s 29 years old and just produced one of the best two-way seasons in MLB history, batting .304 with 44 homers while also having a 10-5 record on the mound with a 3.18 ERA.

It’s unclear how much value he’ll provide as a pitcher in the coming seasons. He had Tommy John surgery in September for the second time in six years, and the list of pitchers who have successfully returned after having the procedure done twice is fairly short.

Rookie World Series winner Nathan Eovaldi, Jameson Taillon and Daniel Hudson are a handful who have had success. Two-time All-Star Justin Verlander had the surgery three times and still came back to have a few more solid seasons. Current Dodgers star Walker Buehler — who recently had his second TJ surgery — hopes to join that group.

Even if Ohtani can’t contribute much on the mound, he’s one of the game’s elite hitters. He’s also a good enough athlete that he could be an option for first base or the outfield as he gets older.

There’s also an off-the-field component that can’t totally be quantified. Ohtani has reached a celebrity status that few other current baseball players can even imagine, and his arrival in any city would undoubtedly mean a huge boost for fan interest.

Instead of setting the free-agent market this off-season, Ohtani is a market all his own.

“He brings so much to the game, so much excitement, he’s got a fan base, he’s an exciting player,” said Brown, the Astros GM. “I would love to have him, but are we going to go out and pursue Ohtani? We may ask some questions, but I can’t tell you we’re diving all in.”

Then he said what pretty much every GM in Arizona was saying this week.

“We will definitely ask questions, though.”

Ohtani is the crown jewel of this year’s free-agent class, which appears a little short on franchise-altering players, particularly among hitters. Cody Bellinger is a former MVP who had a great bounce-back year with the Cubs. Four-time Gold Glove winner Matt Chapman is a top-quality third baseman. Tim Anderson is a two-time All-Star who is looking for a change of scenery.

The pitching scene is a little more robust, with veterans Aaron Nola, Sonny Grey, Jordan Montgomery and Japanese star Yusei Kikuchi on the market but none of them come close to bringing the juice — on or off the field — that Ohtani provides.

Still, a half-billion bucks? Former Angels teammate Mike Trout has the richest contract in the sport’s history at $426.5 million over 12 years, signed in 2019.

You don’t base an offseason on one single player,” Minasian said. “You have to have Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, Plan D, and so on and so forth. We’re going to work like we always do. We’re going to be aggressive, we’re going to have a lot of conversations and see how everything goes.”

The Seattle Mariners are among a handful of teams that would seem a logical fit for Ohtani, given the upward trajectory of the franchise, the city’s history with former Japanese star Ichiro Suzuki and its relatively large Asian population.

Seattle GM Jerry Dipoto agreed that the Mariners have a lot to offer — though he wasn’t specifically talking about Ohtani.

“I think that’s with any free-agent courtship,” Dipoto said. “It’s the one time in a baseball player’s life that you’re recruiting like a college program. You’re trying to sell your city, you’re trying to sell your vision, you’re trying to sell your people.”
Wembanyama’s NBA education is in full swing

French teen is passing the early tests

**By Tim Reynolds**
Associated Press

Here’s some of what San Antonio’s Victor Wembanyama has experienced so far in the NBA: Scoring 38 points in a game, playing in a back-to-back for the first time, being part of two 40-point losses, wasting a huge lead and losing, overcoming a huge deficit and winning.

It’s been an education.

And by all accounts, the French rookie who stands nearly 7-foot-4 is passing the tests.

Wembanyama’s numbers so far: 19.4 points, 4.4 rebounds and 2.6 blocks per game. The last player to have such averages over the first seven games of his career was Shaquille O’Neal in 1992. Back then, the consensus was O’Neal was one of a kind. The refs are familiar today.

“We’ve never seen anything like this,” Indiana coach Rick Carlisle said. “Every night is a challenge.”

His coach might disagree.

Spurs coach Gregg Popovich, left, speaks with rookie forward Victor Wembanyama during a game against the Raptors. The Hall of Famer continues to make no effort to downplay his new star’s enormous potential.

“His going to be a great player. But he’s got some day, just like every other player,” Popovich said. “You have a system and he’s got to learn it. He’s got to learn the league. He’s never played against any of these guys or with any of these guys on our team. It’s just a process. There’s no formula. You just try not to skip any day, just like every other player.”

He’s going to be a force in this league for a long time,” Suns forward Kevin Durant said. “Once he continues to get experience under his belt, he’s just going to get even better.”

There have been rough nights as well. The Spurs lost to the Los Angeles Clippers by 40 last week, then lost to Indiana by 41 on Monday night. They became just the second team in NBA history to have two 40-point losses in the first seven games of the season; the other was the 2017-18 Suns, who went on to be the league’s worst team that year.

The Spurs have decidedly higher aspirations and so does Wembanyama. Popovich has never been one for false or effusive praise, but even raves about Wembanyama’s coachability, his relationships with teammates, his outlook on life and calls him “a very special young man.”

“He just comes to work every day, just like every other player,” Popovich said. “He has a system and he’s got to learn it. He’s got to learn the league. He’s never played against any of these guys or with any of these guys on our team. It’s just a process. There’s no formula. You just try not to skip any steps. Luckily, he’s an intelligent, coachable young man and he’ll eventually get there. He will be a great player. But he’s got some learning to do first, just like any other player.”

Wembanyama dunks during overtime against the Houston Rockets during their game in San Antonio on Oct. 27.
Washington, Oregon set for final clash in Pac-12

By Pat Graham
Associated Press

DENVER — The Pac-12 comes down to two as the season enters the home stretch.

Two teams — No. 5 Washington (9-0) and No. 6 Oregon (8-1) — remain in prime contention for a College Football Playoff spot.

Two programs — Washington State and Oregon State — are about to be left behind when Pac-12 teams scatter after this season.

For the 10 bolting Pac-12 schools, it’s off to the promise of greener pastures in mega-conferences. But just how big is too big where we are a few weeks from the Pac-12 title game — or beyond — just yet.

Washington’s path still includes No. 13 Utah this weekend, followed by a trip to Oregon State and closing the regular season against rival Washington State.

The Ducks still have to go through Arizona and then host Oregon State.

“The Pac-12 is absolutely awesome at eating their own late in the season,” Carter said of a conference that has roots dating back more than 100 years. “So I would gently caution a lot of folks that where we are now may not be where we are a few weeks from now.”

And a title in any conference, especially after a move to a superconference, is a difficult proposition. That resonates even more for those teams who’ve hovered in the middle-to-lower end of the Pac-12 sideline are No. 12 Oregon State and Washington State.

All this in such an entertaining Pac-12 season, too. The Huskies and Ducks are the league’s top contenders, with another clash potentially taking place in the conference championship game on Dec. 1 in Las Vegas. Hypothetical- ly speaking, the Ducks would be a 6½-point favorite, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

It was a month ago that Heisman Trophy candidate Michael Penix Jr. and the Huskies held on for a 36-33 win after the Ducks missed a last-second field goal.

Don’t pencil Oregon and Washington into the Pac-12 title game — or beyond — just yet.

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Undrafted players stay mindful of roots

BY SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

If Carl Granderson and Te­rence Steele splurged after joining a short list of un­drafted free agents to sign big contracts, they aren’t telling.

The New Orleans edge rusher and Dallas offensive lineman fit the profile of players who wait three days and never hear their names called during the draft, feeling as far as possible from NFL riches.


“I guess your lifestyle changes a little bit,” said Carolina receiver Adam Thielen, who once followed little bit,” said Carolina receiver Adam Thielen, who once followed their roots.

Steele signed an $87 million, five-year extension with $50 million guaranteed about a week before the season started, jumping to second behind former Dallas quarterback Tony Romo ($55 million) in guaranteed money for undrafted players over the past 20 years, according to ESPN.

About three weeks later, Gran­derson agreed on a $52 million extension with up to $35 million guaranteed with the Saints. He’s fourth on that list.

This season, Steele, who came out of Texas Tech, is playing on a $4.3 million second-round tender. Granderson, a former Wyoming standout who grew up in Northern California, is on a $3.9 million deal.

Their salaries are about to jump three-fold, or more than 10 times what they were making annually as rookies.

“It still doesn’t even feel real, re­ally,” Steele said nearly two months after signing. “The first person I called was my mom and dad. They were super proud of me. All the hard work and all the dedication.”

Implying these undrafted players have hit the lottery would seem to put luck over all that hard work and dedication, not to men­tion the talent necessary to survive all the roster cuts along the way.

But they don’t really scoff at the notion. Sometimes I sit and think about how far I’ve come, how no one wanted me 10 years ago and how all the hard work has paid off,” Tampa Bay edge rusher Sha­quill Barrett said. “I feel real fortune­ate for the opportunity to get a four-year deal. Now I just want to do everything I can to show the Bucs I deserved it.”

Barrett’s path was a little differ­ent from Steele, Granderson and Thielen’s. Those three signed big contracts with the teams that grabbed them after their respec­tive drafts.

The former Colorado State player picked Denver and was a backup in 2015 on a Super Bowl­winning defense that featured Von Miller and Pro Football Hall of Fame DeMarcus Ware.

After four seasons, Barrett signed a $4 million, one-year “prove it” deal with Tampa Bay, led the league with 19 1/2 sacks in 2019 and had the $15.8 million franchise tag slapped on him.

The long-term security finally came in 2021, when Barrett signed a $68.5 million, four-year con­tract. The 30-year-old is fifth on the list of most guaranteed money over the past 20 years at $34.5 mil­lion.

“Of course, I wasn’t happy,” Barrett said of the franchise tag. “I wanted a long-term deal, thought I had earned one. I didn’t like the franchise tag, but you’re talking about $16 or $17 million. That’s more money than I had ever made in my life. And, I understood they wanted to see more.”

Injuries cleared the way for Steele to play all 16 games, with 14 starts at right tackle, as a rookie in 2020. He was one of the few bright spots in a difficult debut season in Dallas for coach Mike McCarthy and now has 48 starts over three­plus seasons.

The 26-year-old hasn’t missed a start this year after tearing a knee ligament in December last season.

Granderson, whose draft stock might have been affected by a sexual misconduct case that led to probation, became a full-time starter this season and should fin­ish with a career high in sacks.

Thielen, who came out of Man­kato State, was seldom used for two years by the Vikings before recording 2,649 yards receiving and 13 touchdowns over the next two seasons and signing a $85 mil­lion, four-year contract with $33 million guaranteed.

After being released by Minne­sota this past offseason, Thielen signed a $25 million, three-year deal with the Panthers with $14 million guaranteed a few months before turning 33.

The Wolverines know this game won’t be as easy.

“They’re a super-talented team,” Michigan quarterback JJ McCarthy said. “They’re well coached. It’s going to be a good one for us to see where we’re at.”

The Wolverines are in control of their fate. They play at Maryland on Nov. 18 before hosting No. 3 Ohio State in the season finale. For that game to mean more, Michi­gan must deal with Penn State’s rising offense, which has played well since Ohio State shut it down in a 20-12 loss on Oct. 21.

The Nittany Lions have scored 30 or more points in every game except the one in Columbus. They have scored 84 points and totaled 746 yards in the last two weeks.

“It’s one of those games where we can’t kill ourselves with mis­takes because they’ll capitalize,” Penn State quarterback Drew Al­lar said. “We just have to do a good job of just, you know, eliminating all the unforced errors that, you know, can come back and bite us.”

Swirling scandal
Since Michigan’s alleged sign­stealing scheme became public nearly three weeks ago, coach Jim Harbaugh and his players have had to deal with the distraction.

Zak Zinter, an All-Big Ten of­ensive guard, has embraced the outside noise.

“There’s a lot of noise going on outside the building,” he said. “If someone thinks we’re the villain, I’m fine with being the villain. Sometimes, the villain wins and takes down the superhero.”

Secondary motivation
McCarthy has had good chemis­try with wideouts Roman Wilson and Cornelius Johnson, who’ve combined for 60 catches, 1,011 yards and 11 touchdowns.

It’s cause for concern for a Penn State secondary that’s allowed an average of 280 passing yards and two touchdowns per game over the last three weeks.

Penn State edge rusher Adisa Isaac and some of his defensive teammates put in extra time preparing for No. 2 Michigan.

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King said he was taking prepa­rations personally after struggling to contain Marvin Harrison Jr. in Columbus.

“That loss, it brought us closer,” King said. “I feel like this stretch in November is really where we going to do a lot of our talking.”

R-E-S-P-E-C-T
Michigan running back Blake Corum hasn’t faced a defense like Penn State’s this season.

“Penn State is a great football team,” Corum said. “Great de­fense, top 10 in every category.”

Corum is pretty good, too. He has scored 17 touchdowns, including 16 touchdowns, scoring each on the ground.

Even though the Wolverines will be facing a ranked team for the first time since losing to TCU in the 2022 College Football Playoff, Harbaugh insisted the Wolverines’ previous opponents put up a fight.
Chargers continue offensive struggles

By JOE REEDY
Associated Press

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Justin Herbert was expected to be directing one of the NFL’s elite offenses this season.

As the Los Angeles Chargers reach the midway point, though, the offense remains a work in progress.

The Chargers (4-4) go into Sunday’s game against the NFC North-leading Detroit Lions ranked 15th in the league in total offense, averaging 341 yards per game.

“We are where we are right now. I think that this group is still figuring it out together, but I like the group that we are coaching and I like the way this group’s competing,” coach Brandon Staley said.

The offense gained only 191 yards in last Monday’s 27-6 win over the New York Jets. It was the first time since 2010 the Chargers had fewer than 200 offensive yards, but only the fifth time in franchise history they won when it happened.

An outing such as that certainly wasn’t expected when the Chargers hired Keilen Moore as offensive coordinator during the offseason.

Moore’s system was built on taking more chances downfield along with more balance in the running game.

Despite a 2-2-1 start, there were some signs that the offense was ready to break out. That has not been the case, though, since the bye week.

“Games like that against the Jets can be frustrating. We would have loved to have moved the ball better, to score a bunch of points. It didn’t go our way,” Herbert said. “But, for us, it was important to stay together, stick together, do everything that we can to convert those third downs, get the ball moving and be smart and safe with the football.”

Herbert has been inconsistent since breaking the middle finger on his non-throwing, left hand during the third quarter of the Oct. 1 game against Las Vegas with a 62.8% completion rate and an 87.8 passer rating in the past four games.

Despite three touchdowns from Austin Ekeler in the past two games, the Chargers are averaging only 82.5 rushing yards in the past four weeks, the seventh-lowest rate in the league during that span. Ekeler will remain the lead running back as Staley indicated he doesn’t foresee an even split in carries between Ekeler and Joshua Kelley.

There are also concerns on the offensive line and at wide receiver.

Will Clapp has struggled at center since taking over for Corey Linsley, who doesn’t have a timetable to return as he continues to deal with a heart issue. Herbert has been sacked five times in two of the past three games.

With Joshua Palmer sidelined at least the next three games because of a sprained knee, first-round pick Quintin Johnston will be expected to pick up the slack as Herbert looks for another option in addition to Keenan Allen.

In a crowded AFC, where 11 teams are .500 or better, Los Angeles needs to quickly fix its offensive shortcomings if it hopes to make the playoffs for a second straight season.

Browns running back Jerome Ford is wrapped by Ravens linebacker Jeremiah Moon, left, and safety Geno Stone on Oct. 1. Baltimore’s defense ranks No. 1 in points allowed (13.8), touchdowns allowed (10) sacks (35) and red zone (33%), while Cleveland is first in total defense (234.8 yards), passing (145) and third-down efficiency (26%). The two teams meet against Sunday in Baltimore.

Clash of top two defenses when Browns face Ravens

By Tom Withers
Associated Press

BEREA, Ohio — Deshaun Watson, who returned last week after missing four games — with a right shoulder strain, Watson was expected to practice leading into the game but obviously that’s how we start every week focusing on stopping the offense, averting 341 yards per game.

The Browns believe they have the talent to do it, along with more balance in the running game.

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STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — As their teammates filed out of practice earlier this week, Penn State defensive ends Adisa Isaac, Chop Robinson and Dani Dennis-Sutton lingered at the far end of the facility.

The Nittany Lions’ most disruptive defenders stutter-stepped and bull-rushed their way around and through assistant coaches, putting in extra work before the biggest game of the season.

They seek to upstage Michigan’s top-ranked defense when the No. 2 Wolverines (9-0, 6-0 Big Ten) visit Beaver Stadium on Saturday.

“This is a statement game from our defense because you know a lot of people around the country believe that Penn State is unable to take the next step,” corner Kalen King said. “And I feel like this game is the perfect opportunity for us to go out and prove ourselves against a powerhouse team like Michigan.”

The Nittany Lions (8-1, 5-1) also want to keep their conference title hopes alive. The Wolverines, who’ve arguably been just as good on offense as they have been on defense, can snuff them out.

They’ve foiled everything every opponent has thrown at them so far.

Michigan is allowing just 6.7 points and 231.4 total yards per game. No team has taken a single snap inside Michigan’s 10-yard-line this season.

PENN STATE looks to upstage Michigan’s defense

By TRAVIS JOHNSON
Associated Press
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SEE STATEMENT ON PAGE 46

GMs tight-lipped about Ohtani sweepstakes

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