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'Cry Macho' and 'Morning Show' new this week
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VIRUS OUTBREAK

Quarantine quarters at Yokota base under review

By Seth Robson
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Pictures posted on social media by an Air Force spouse of filthy, moldy accommodations set aside for families in coronavirus quarantine have prompted the base commander to announce a thorough review.

The images posted Sunday on the Yokota Spouses & Families Facebook page and a response from base officials sparked more than 800 comments, with many blaming Air Force leaders for the conditions.

In a statement Tuesday afternoon, 374th Airlift Wing commander Col. Andrew Campbell thanked those who brought their concerns to his attention.

"Yokota's leadership team is dedicated to ensuring the facilities used reflect the care and respect we have for our community," he wrote. "As the Wing Commander, I'm responsible for any lapse in fo-

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Heather Ann Knef

An Air Force spouse posted photographs to Facebook of a dilapidated apartment where they were sent for quarantine.

'We've got to get this right'

Austin Carrigg

Melanie Carrigg, 9, seen with her mother Austin Carrigg, is enrolled in the Army's Exceptional Family Member Program, which aims to keep her father, Master Sgt. Joshua Carrigg, assigned only to bases that can meet her special medical and educational needs.

Army looks to improve program for families with special needs

By Rose L. Thayer
Stars and Stripes

The Carrigg family felt trapped in an impossible situation.

Master Sgt. Joshua Carrigg and his wife Austin were preparing in February to bring home their daughter Melanie after she had a stroke that led to three months in hospitals. During her hospital stay, Melanie, now 9 years old, was flown from the family's duty station in Los Angeles to doctors in Boston with experience treating Down syndrome and moyamoya, a rare blood vessel disease.

Melanie is enrolled in the Army's Exceptional Family Member Program, or EFMP, which aims to keep soldiers assigned only to locations that can meet the special needs of their family members.

The Fort Irwin, Calif., EFMP office had initially denied the family's move to Los Angeles, but the Army moved them there anyway, Austin Carrigg said. As Melanie's health worsened, so did her parents' anxiety.

The couple had asked the Army to expedite a request to move them closer to Boston, but the officials were fighting the request on technicalities.

"We were living in a moment where we didn't know what life was going to look like," Austin Carrigg said. "If we went home to L.A., we didn't know how we were going to keep her safe."

The Carriggs worked through their chain of command and the congressional inquiry process, finally catching the attention of Sgt.

SEE PROGRAM ON PAGE 5

BUSINESS/WEATHER

S. Korea to fine Google $177M over software

Associated Press

SEOUL — South Korea's competition watchdog plans to fine Google at least $177 million for allegedly blocking smartphone makers like Samsung from using other operating systems, in what would be one of the country's biggest antitrust penalties ever.

Google said it plans to challenge the fine. It has accused South Korean authorities of disregarding how its software policy benefits hardware partners and consumers.

Tuesday's announcement came as South Korea also began enforcing a revised telecommunications law that prohibits app market operators like Google and Apple from requiring smartphone users to pay with their in-app purchasing systems. It is the first nation to adopt such regulations.

South Korea has always closely scrutinized how foreign technology companies behave in its market. Much of the focus in recent years has been on Google and Apple as officials vowed to prevent them from abusing their dominant market positions in mobile internet.

Joh Sung-wook, chairwoman of South Korea's Fair Trade Commission, said Google has hampered competition since 2011 by obligating its electronics partners to sign "anti-fragmentation" agreements. This has prevented the companies from installing modified versions of Google's operating systems on devices like smartphones and smartwatches. That gave Google an easy way to cement its leadership in mobile software and app markets, she said.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Sept. 15)	$1.22
Dollar buys (Sept. 15)	0.8229
British pound (Sept. 15)	$1.42
Japanese yen (Sept. 15)	107.00
South Korean won (Sept. 15)	1,143.00

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	.3769
Britain (Pound)	1.3877
Canada (Dollar)	1.2652
China (Yuan)	6.4393
Denmark (Krone)	6.2877
Egypt (Pound)	15.7271
Euro	.8456
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7791
Hungary (Forint)	295.86
Israel (Shekel)	3.2126
Japan (Yen)	109.82
Kuwait (Dinar)	.3006
Norway (Krone)	8.6133
Philippines (Peso)	49.77
Poland (Zloty)	3.85
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7508
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3416
South Korea (Won)	1,169.59
Switzerland (Franc)	.9202
Thailand (Baht)	32.89
Turkey (New Lira)	8.4520

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

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Interest Rates Discount rate	0.25
Federal funds market rate	0.09
3-month bill	0.06
30-year bond	1.90

WEATHER OUTLOOK

WEDNESDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

WEDNESDAY IN EUROPE

THURSDAY IN THE PACIFIC

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

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MILITARY

Air Force vets file lawsuit over discharges

By Nikki Wentling
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two veterans filed a class-action lawsuit Monday against the Air Force, claiming the service branch discriminated against service members with mental health conditions by kicking them out with other-than-honorable discharges.

Those discharges, also known as "bad paper," carry a stigma and prevent veterans from receiving many government benefits, such as Department of Veterans Affairs home loans, health care and education benefits.

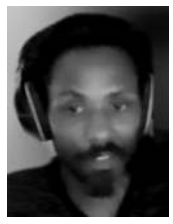
The Pentagon established an Air Force Discharge Review Board to allow discharged airmen to appeal their discharge status, and the Defense Department instituted a policy in 2017 to give "liberal consideration" to veterans looking to upgrade their bad paper in situations where a service-related medical disorder could have led to their misconduct.

The lawsuit claims the Air Force Discharge Review Board ignored the policy and denied upgrades when they were warranted. The complaint, citing Air Force data, states that between January 2017 and December 2019 the board rejected 72% of veterans seeking upgrades because of their diagnoses of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and other mental health conditions.

"I've tried going through established channels to get my discharge upgraded, but I've been let down by the Air Force," said Martin Johnson, one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit. "It feels like I have no other option than to bring this complaint today on behalf of myself and thousands of other veterans who have, like me, been unfairly denied discharge upgrades."

Johnson said he deployed to Iraq in 2007 and returned to discover his wife was having an affair. He began suffering from mental health issues and received medical treatment for depression. After a string of minor infractions, such as not mowing his lawn in accordance with base housing guidelines, the Air Force discharged Johnson in 2009 with bad paper.

Since then, he's been diagnosed with major depressive disorder, social anxiety disorder and PTSD. He sought a discharge upgrade with the help of an attorney but was denied by the Air Force Discharge Review Board in May.


Johnson

"It's been very hard," Johnson said Monday during a news conference. "I've been walking around acting like everything is my fault."

Johnson is being represented by the Yale Veterans Legal Services Clinic, which helps veterans with the legal process of securing government benefits. The clinic, which is made up of law students, settled a similar case against the Army in April. The court ordered the Army Discharge Review Board to reconsider thousands of cases going back to 2011 in which discharge upgrades were denied. The clinic is also arguing a case against the Navy Discharge Review Board.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., who has advocated for veterans with other-than-honorable discharges, said Monday that following the settlement with the Army, the Air Force should institute the "liberal consideration" policy without the impetus of another lawsuit.

"I cannot express my sense of outrage, given that the Army has already changed its policy as a result of legal action," Blumenthal said. "Simple decency, as well as respect for the law, require the Air Force to change its policy. The fact this legal action is necessary is shameful and disgraceful."

Also involved in the lawsuit is an anonymous plaintiff who's referred to in the complaint as Jane Doe.

Doe, who joined the Air Force in 2013, was raped by a fellow airman. She later entered into a relationship with another airman who verbally and physically abused her. During the same time, she received letters of reprimand for arriving late to duty and not filling out documentation correctly. She later failed a physical fitness test and was sent for a mental health evaluation. Doe was separated with an other-than-honorable discharge in 2016.

She sought relief from the Air Force Discharge Review Board in 2020, and her psychiatrist testified on her behalf. The board rejected her appeal.

In the lawsuit, the plaintiffs asked the court to order the Air Force to upgrade Johnson's and Doe's discharges and to review past requests for upgrades that have been denied.

"The Air Force forcibly separates countless veterans from the military with less-than-honorable discharges due to minor infractions, and refuses to acknowledge that their mental health or sexual trauma played a role in shaping their conduct," the lawsuit states. "These veterans are forever stigmatized, rejected from jobs, and barred from benefits like education and health care due to their discharge status."

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With hot water fixed, Marine base's tower residents take on mold

By Jonathan Snyder
Stars and Stripes

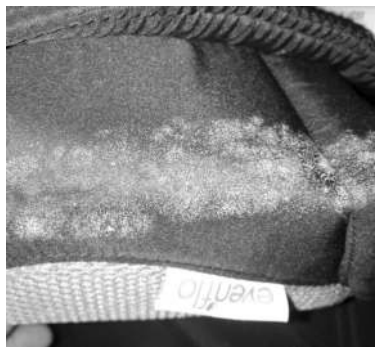
MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — When the hot water went out in the five-story, residential Bara Tower on Aug. 22, the base housing office estimated a fix would take up to four months.

The office directed tenants to the base gym, where they could shower until the hot water was restored. That was unacceptable to Marine spouse Breanda Webb, who instead bathed her infants in water she heated on her stovetop and carried to the bathtub.

"That's not an option for me to take my kids to shower at the gym," she told Stars and Stripes last Thursday. "Am I supposed to place my infants on the shower floor? That's unsanitary."

Webb said she was not alone in her frustration, and the sudden lack of hot water was another issue on a list that affects many tower residents. She also raised questions about the housing office's handling of problems with mold.

Faced with numerous complaints, the base facilities department fixed the problem itself after outside contractors estimated four months of repairs, base spokesman Maj. Joshua Diddams told Stars and Stripes by email Friday. The department cannibalized needed parts from elsewhere on base.


Marine spouse Breanda Webb says she cleans every day to combat mold in her apartment.

"Ultimately, similar units were salvaged from another building and installed on Sept. 2, which was the fastest way to restore hot water to our residents," Diddams said.

Webb then turned the attention focused on the hot-water outage and to another familiar problem in base housing in Japan — mold.

"My house is infested with mold," she said, "and I have been complaining for months about this and I just keep getting ignored."

Concerned for the health of her three children, Webb said she cleans every day to slow the problem. Her husband, Marine Staff Sgt. Shaquille Webb, helps clean, too, she said. The family has thrown out clothes, toys and furniture.

Photos by Jonathan Snyder/Stars and Stripes

A hot-water outage at Bara Tower on Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, was expected to take up to four months the repair. After resident complaints, the base fixed the problem in less than two weeks.

"The infants were inhaling mold until we caught it, and they were sick all the time," she said. "We had to throw out their bassinets because it had mold in them."

Diddams, the base spokesman, said the base tries to address mold problems through constant maintenance and repairs.

"In the last six months, the Housing Office at MCAS Iwakuni has only identified six issues potentially related to mold which have required work orders," he said.

The housing office provides base residents with a portable dehumidifier. It also suggests they set thermostats above 74 degrees Fahrenheit and keep windows closed on humid days.

Webb said the housing office deep cleaned the air conditioning vents and replaced two squares of carpet in the family's apartment only for the mold to quickly return.

For Webb and many other base residents struggling with this issue, the remedy lies in a diagnosis linked to mold exposure.

"If the lodging is deemed unsafe, in conjunction with the Clinic's Preventative Medicine Department, the residents will be moved to alternate lodging while repairs are made," Diddams said.

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MILITARY

Monkey sightings have post residents on lookout

By Erica Earl
Stars and Stripes

As if typhoon season, earthquakes and the coronavirus weren't enough, here come the monkeys.

Camp Zama, headquarters of U.S. Army Japan southwest of Tokyo, recently warned residents on post and at a housing area nearby to be on the lookout for wild monkeys patrolling their neighborhoods.

The animals were sighted early this month in a wooded area near the post airfield and at Sagamihara Housing Area about 3½ miles away.

The monkeys "could easily enter the installation," according to a Sept. 4 post on the camp official Facebook page, "as they have previously."

The neighboring cities of Zama and Sagamihara inform Camp Zama when wildlife is around the post and housing area, U.S. Army Garrison Japan spokesman Timothy Flack told Stars and Stripes by email Friday.

"This is not the first time that wild monkeys have been spotted on or near Camp Zama, but fortunately we have not had any incidents involving property damage or injury in the past," he said. "Our communication with the community is key to avoiding incidents."

The monkeys have mostly been spotted northwest of the airfield and in the 900 block of the housing area, according to the Facebook post.

Japanese macaques, the type of monkey spotted in and around Camp Zama, are common throughout most of Japan, and inhabit forested mountain slopes right down to the fringes of Tokyo, the world's largest urban area.

Japanese macaques are "gentle creatures that display frequent social interactions" and are seldom aggressive, according to the New England Primate Conservancy website.

Nonetheless, staring at them eye to eye can provoke an aggressive response, such as baring their teeth, according to JapanVisitor.com. Further unwanted attention could result in a bite.

They travel in troops, are active during the day and sleep in trees at night.

Flack said the monkeys pose a nuisance because their behavior is unpredictable and they risk spreading disease, causing property damage and spreading litter from garbage containers.

Pixabay

Japanese macaques are common throughout most of Japan and inhabit forested mountain slopes right down to the fringes of Tokyo.

Base residents should not approach or feed the monkeys and should contact the directorate of public works if they come across any on the installation, according to the Facebook post.

Monkeys are not the only wild animals that turn up on bases in Japan, Flack said.

Crows sometimes dive-bomb passersby who come too close during nesting season. Tanukis, or raccoon dogs, are elusive Japanese natives sometimes glimpsed trotting in out-of-the-way corners.

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Hawaii-based soldier admits to beating wife to death

By Wyatt Olson
Stars and Stripes

SCHOFIELD BARRACKS — A 23-year-old Hawaii-based soldier pleaded guilty Monday to the premeditated murder of his wife in January as part of a plea deal that calls for at least 50 years in prison.

During a hearing at Schofield Barracks, Spc. Raul Hernandez Perez calmly described how he crushed the skull of Selena Roth, 25, with four blows of a baseball bat as she slept in her home on Schofield.

As he stopped swinging the weapon and gazed down upon her, he said he saw her chest rising and falling.

"I panicked because I thought she was still alive," Hernandez Perez said. He went downstairs to the kitchen, got a knife, climbed the stairs and stabbed her four times. He stuffed her body into a large garbage can and covered it with trash.

Hernandez Perez

Military police discovered her body three days later after family members called the base for a welfare check.

Hernandez Perez also pleaded guilty to disobeying his first sergeant's order to have no contact with Roth.

The plea agreement reached between the soldier and the prosecution calls for a prison term of 50 to 65 years.

Col. Mark Bridges, a judge in the 25th Infantry Division Staff Judge Advocate's Office, will determine the length of imprisonment after hearing sentencing testimony from members of Roth and Hernandez Perez's families. His parents were expected to testify Tuesday.

Roth's older sister, Aubrey Rangel, described how the murder has decimated the lives of her parents and her other brothers and sisters.

"Our family is not the same; we will never be the same," Rangel said. Family members are prone to panic attacks, with some no longer able to hold jobs or find joy in living life, she said.

Sobbing at times, Rangel described how the sight of trash cans has become a nightmare trigger for the family.

"None of us can look at trash cans," she said.

The victim's mother, Joanne Roth, recalled how she and her husband adopted Roth as a baby and how she excelled in school.

"Her goal in high school was to letter in every sport — and she pretty much did," Joanne Roth said.

She and other family members knew something was wrong when Roth stopped taking calls or responding to other messages after Jan. 9, Joanne Roth said.

"To be murdered by a stranger is tragic," she said. "But to be murdered by someone who's supposed to love you is heartbreaking."

Hernandez Perez and Roth married on Jan. 9, 2020, but their marriage was rocky, with frequent quarreling, according to evidence presented by prosecutors during an Article 32 hearing in May. He filed for divorce in October 2020 and later obtained a restraining order against her.

He moved out of their home and into barracks at Schofield.

Despite all that, the couple got together for their first anniversary on Jan. 9, went to a movie and were out late.

Hernandez Perez told the court he was too tired to drive home and stayed the night. He woke up about 4 a.m. and began thinking about the divorce.

"I kept getting angrier and angrier," he said, describing the "tipping point" as when he recalled Roth had threatened to kill his mother as retribution for the divorce.

"I thought I had to get rid of her in some other kind of way," he said.

Roth thought of the baseball bat downstairs. Shortly afterward, it was in his hands.

"I stood over her," he said. "I thought to myself that I'm not the kind of person who could commit a crime like this."

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Japan, US and S. Korea discuss N. Korea day after test missile launch

Associated Press

TOKYO — Senior diplomats from Japan, the United States and South Korea gathered Tuesday in Tokyo to discuss North Korea's missile and nuclear development a day after Pyongyang announced it successfully tested new long-range cruise missiles, suggesting advancement of its military capabilities.

The three-way meeting included U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Sung Kim, South Korea's Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Noh Kyu-duk and Japan's Director-General for Asian and Oceanian affairs Takehiro Funakoshi.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi told a regular news conference Tuesday that the trilateral meeting had been scheduled before North Korea's test-firing of the missiles, but the meeting the day after would be a "good occasion to reconfirm close cooperation among the three countries and discuss the latest North Korean situation."

Japanese officials and some experts said North Korea's weekend missile test-firing was a "new threat" to the region.

On Monday, the state-run Korean Central News Agency reported that the missiles showed they can hit targets 930 miles away.

The North hailed its new missiles as a "strategic weapon of great significance," suggesting that they were developed with the intent to arm them with nuclear warheads. North Korea says it needs nuclear weapons in order to deter what it claims is hostility from Washington and Seoul.

Japan and South Korea are separate key allies for the U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

MILITARY

Program: Official looking for overhaul of EFMP system

FROM PAGE 1

Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston, who intervened on their behalf. He helped push through the reassignment, which landed the family in Washington, D.C., in April — a much more manageable distance to Boston.

The Carrigg family's circumstances were unique, but Grinston said he knows the failure of the EFMP to land them at a duty station able to support their family was not. Many families have told him they are frustrated with the EFMP and base assignments. As Grinston has traveled across the country, Army spouses have shared story after story about failures of the program, which includes family members who have a special medical or educational need.

Some of the problems included that families are not always told a base cannot support their needs until they arrive there and learn the truth, or that families request care promised at a new base and are denied. In other cases, families are told the care doesn't exist, but when they discover it does, they can't get approval to move there. Some families have also said, in some cases, when they get to a base that has the appropriate resources, the waitlist is so long that they can't get access to care.

Grinston said he wants to fix those problems.

Austin Carrigg

Melanie Carrigg, 9, seen with her mother Austin, is enrolled in the Army's Exceptional Family Member Program, which aims to keep her father, Master Sgt. Joshua Carrigg, assigned only to bases that can meet her special medical and educational needs.

'Cases can be complex'

Grinston said he will use the family feedback about the various programs that factor into the assignment process for the EFMP families to determine how to make it work better. That means coordinating with Army Human Resources Command, Medical Command, Installation Management Command, the deputy chief of staff for installation and the EFMP coordinators and managers working at Army bases. By connecting all these pieces, he aims to find the problems in the system and create a smoother, effective process.

"We've got to get this right. It can just be so hard on the families because some of these cases can be complex," Grinston said last month after a meeting with assignment managers at Fort Knox, Ky. "When you move, as an exceptional family member in that program, it becomes phenomenally hard and I think the more we can do to make that less stressful, the better our families will be."

When a soldier is up for a new job, Human Resources Command creates a six-week window for them to review the jobs open in their career field at that time. They can rank their choices, then the command slots soldiers into jobs that progress their career and meet the needs of the Army.

For the 10% of soldiers in the EFMP, there's an extra step. The EFMP takes the soldier's ranked choices and removes any base found that does not meet the special needs of their family member.

The system is simple until multiplied by the roughly 480,000 active-duty soldiers. Just within the ranks of E-6 to E-8, up to 15,000 soldiers could be seeking new jobs using the six-week assignment window, according to Human Resources Command. In total, that's about 50,000 moves a year within three enlisted ranks.

Grinston has stepped in on multiple occasions to help a family stuck in a bad assignment, and he recognized it would be better for them if the Army could adjust its systems to get more cases right from the start. Then it would free up resources to help only the most complex situations that rise up to his level on a case-by-case basis.

"We're never going to get it 100% correct. If we get it wrong, we need to engage," he said.

Austin Carrigg is the CEO of the recently launched nonprofit, Exceptional Families of the Military, which advocates for legislation and provides support to military families who are part of the EFMP. In a survey conducted last year, 10% of the 194 respondents said their family was not able to receive all their required care at their duty station.

"I applaud the Sergeant Major of the Army for taking the first step in trying to assess the situation, but I also realize his hands are tied unless EFMP undergoes a massive transformation," she said. "For me, progress will be when a family can ask an EFMP manager where care was found and that manager hands over a list. They are already checking availability, why not share with the family where the care was found?"

The other side

Speaking to assignment managers, Grinston heard they are often fighting time constraints, out-of-date information and highly unique situations that can't be resolved with one-size-fits-all policies. One soldier told Grinston that his own family member's EFMP profile took six months to update, even though the condition was managed through primary care, not a specialist.

Some of the solutions could involve adding the EFMP updates to other soldier processing systems to catch information before it expires, improving communication between medical providers and the EFMP coordinators so that updating information can happen faster, and using artificial intelligence and computer programs to offer real-time data on the resources available at each base.

Right now, the EFMP doesn't vet bases until after a soldier provides their ranked choices to Human Resources Command. This means that it's up to the soldier to do research on their own in hopes of stacking their top choices with bases that will pass the EFMP criteria.

Grinston said the Army is testing an update to the online human resources portal used by soldiers during the assignment process that would provide an answer immediately about whether a base and a special needs family member are a good match. This would prevent the assignment window from closing before a soldier can fully vet their options, or from losing an opportunity to another soldier while they wait for EFMP approval.

When the Army does find a location where a family has all their needs met, Grinston said he wants to make it easier to be able to stay there through a process known as EFMP stabilization. Right now, the process requires the soldier complete a "significant" packet of paperwork, much of which is already on file. Grinston envisions the request becoming just the click of a button.

The process only stabilizes the family, however, not the soldier. In the survey from Exceptional Families of the Military, about 12% of respondents said they were separated from their service member, citing reasons that included a restricted tour overseas, keeping children in specific schools or treatments, and choosing to stay behind because the assignment was short term.

Austin Carrigg said support of leadership helped get her family through their struggles at the beginning of the year, and they feel they now have a safe place to bring Melanie home. She has relearned some of the skills she lost in her stroke, such as walking, running and standing on her tiptoes.

Despite the progress, every time the mother sees something her daughter struggling with a skill that she lost, she wonders if the stroke could have been prevented had they never moved to Los Angeles.

"I think that's the hardest thing that we live with," Austin Carrigg said. "We're trying to piecemeal her old life back together for her and she doesn't understand why it's different."

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Quarters: Families describe filthy conditions of quarantine spaces

FROM PAGE 1

cus to that end. Along with Yokota's leadership team, I'm executing a comprehensive review of how we manage COVID-related isolation and quarantine."

Campbell said he has given another colonel authority to make needed changes related to the facility's cleanliness and its team's readiness to properly host and support the community.

Air Force spouse Heather Ann Knef posted images of a dilapidated apartment where her family was sent for 14 days of quarantine after her daughter tested positive for the coronavirus.

The photographs show a dirty bathroom, stained carpet, food waste spattered on kitchen floors and appliances, holes in the ceiling and walls and what looks like mold growing on fixtures.

The family was overwhelmed by the smell of mold and mildew when they arrived at the unit, Knef said in her post.

"Not to mention you can see mold everywhere you look," she wrote. "This room wasn't even cleaned before they forced us to quarantine here. There is pee and poop on the toilets, toothpaste in the sink, food and filth on the carpets, trash on the bathroom floor, rust everywhere, food crusted on the microwave and the shower is still wet from the last people that stayed here."

No one should be expected to live such conditions like this, Knef said in her post.

"They are sending sick, vulnerable COVID patients from the comfort of their home to quarantine in this filth," she wrote.

The 374th Airlift Wing addressed Knef's post on the popular Facebook page with one of its own Monday evening that blamed a breakdown in administrative processes and communication for sending the family to an apartment that hadn't been cleaned.

"When the accidental assignment was identified by wing personnel, the family in question was reassigned to another unit," the message said.

Knef, however, said the second unit was also in poor condition.

Her concerns were echoed by Alexandra Kliber, 36, who said she was sent to the tower in August along with her sons, ages 2 and 10, to care for her husband, Air Force Capt. Eric Kliber, 38, who had tested for the coronavirus, she said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

Eric Kliber was severely ill, but his request to be hospitalized was refused and the family had to go to the temporary quarters, she said.

"The carpets were full of mildew," she said. "It was hard to keep my 2-year-old off them."

Knef's post drew almost 500 comments about the tower's condition and questioning the need for people to be there when they could quarantine at home.

Temporary assignment to the tower is a hardship, but it's one of the community's most effective tools for mitigating virus spread, according to the wing's post, which prompted more than 300 additional comments.

Some questioned the impact of quarantines on people who had already faced more than a year of restrictions due to the pandemic. Others said unsanitary conditions in the quarantine tower have been present for more than a year.

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AFGHANISTAN

Afghan pilots who fled in government aircraft reach UAE

By Alex Horton
The Washington Post

A group of Afghan air force pilots who escaped to Uzbekistan in their military aircraft arrived in the United Arab Emirates on Sunday, a U.S. congressman said, part of a long journey that they hope will end in the United States.

The flight carrying about 175 Afghans arrived in Abu Dhabi, the first wave of as many as 450 air force personnel, said Rep. August Pfluger, R-Texas, who has followed the developments through a constituent married to one of the pilots.

Taliban militants have targeted Afghan troops and police for retribution but reserve special disdain for pilots, Pfluger said, because the air force gave the central government a substantial battlefield advantage before it collapsed last month. "The pilots are really the ones who brought the most lethal effects to the Taliban," he said, adding that U.S. military commanders had focused on training pilots and supplying aircraft as a key strategy for years.

Pfluger said the pilots' departure was a result of tense negotiations between the Uzbek government and the U.S., which had pledged to evacuate its allies, including interpreters and other people who aided the coalition throughout the war. The Taliban had pressured the Uzbek government to send the pilots back to Afghanistan, his office said.

"It has not been a smooth process," Pfluger said, "but I'm happy they're in another country."

The Afghans, who include pilots, maintenance crew members, other service members and relatives, were directed to a "humanitarian city" in Abu Dhabi, he said.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters Monday that he was unaware of any Defense Department role in evacuating the Afghan pilots. U.S. Central Command, which oversees military operations in the region including at the Al Dhafra air base in Abu Dhabi, did not respond to a request for comment. The State Department did not immediately provide comment.

More than 600 Afghans, mostly military personnel but including some civilians, had fled to Uzbekistan, Pfluger said, in what became an immediate problem for the Uzbek government. An Afghan military plane crashed there Aug. 16, one of several flights that Uzbek officials described as "illegal" crossings.

More than 150 mostly low-level security forces later returned to Afghanistan voluntarily. At least six were detained by the Taliban, according to Pfluger's office.

The dozens of aircraft the pilots used to flee are still in Uzbekistan, Pfluger said. Kirby said the U.S. is in talks with "neighboring nations" about what to do with them.

The Afghan air force used U.S.-provided aircraft, including attack planes, transport planes and Black Hawk helicopters. The U.S. spent about $8.5 billion to stand up and support the air force, according to The Associated Press.

Pfluger's constituent, a hairstylist in San Angelo, Texas, married her husband in 2019 after meeting him in San Antonio while he was in pilot training at a U.S. air base there, she said. She spoke on the condition of anonymity, citing fears of retribution against her husband's relatives, who remain in Afghanistan.

Claudia Nix/Naval Station Rota, Spain

Evacuees from Afghanistan board a flight on Sept. 2 to the United States at Naval Station Rota in Spain.

Flights to US for evacuees suspended at least 1 more week for measles cases

By Caitlin Doornbos
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — There will be no flights to the United States for Afghan evacuees for at least another week after several cases of measles were detected among recent arrivals, chief Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Monday.

The White House halted the operation Friday after the first cases were discovered. The decision to stop flights for seven more days was based on the recommendation of the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention after five evacuees were diagnosed with measles when they arrived in the U.S., Kirby told reporters at the Pentagon.

About 25,600 of the more than 124,000 people who U.S. and coalition forces evacuated from Afghanistan before the final flights took off from Kabul's airport Aug. 30 are living on military bases in the U.S. as they await approval to stay in the country, according to the most recent data released Sept. 3. Tens of thousands more remain at staging sites in Europe and the Middle East before they can travel to the U.S.

One of the measles cases was confirmed last week at Fort McCoy in Wisconsin, another at Fort Pickett in Virginia and three were detected upon arrival at Dulles International Airport near Washington, D.C., from overseas staging bases.

Fort McCoy and Fort Pickett are among the eight military installations in the U.S. accepting evacuees, along with Fort Bliss in Texas, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey, Fort Lee and Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia, Camp Atterbury in Indiana and Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico.

"They have been housed separately and are receiving medical care, and the CDC is doing contact tracing and allows people to self-isolate as needed," Kirby said. "We want the people who work on these bases and the families who live there to know how seriously we're taking it and that we are separating these individuals from the rest of the cohort there."

Measles is a highly contagious viral infection that can be fatal, especially in children. The vaccine for measles has mostly eliminated the illness in the U.S., but there have been small outbreaks in communities with low vaccination rates.

In 2019, the U.S. suffered the largest outbreak in nearly 20 years with 1,282 cases reported, according to the CDC, but that number dropped to eight last year.

The Defense Department will also "be working very quickly on the appropriate immunizations" for the evacuees, Kirby said. The military is now giving the measles, mumps and rubella — or MMR — vaccine to Afghan evacuees already at U.S. bases and will soon begin giving the shot to the evacuees while they are still overseas.

"All arriving Afghans are currently required to be vaccinated for measles as a condition of their humanitarian parole," Kirby said.

The evacuees are also offered coronavirus vaccinations at Dulles and the military installations, but they are not mandatory, Air Force Gen. Glen VanHerck, commander of U.S. Northern Command, told reporters at the Pentagon on Aug. 27.

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1st evacuees arrive outside Tokyo with help from Japanese government

By Hana Kusumoto
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Ten Afghans who left their country after the Taliban took control in August arrived in Japan this week, according to the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Four arrived on Sunday night and another six on Monday via commercial flights to Narita International Airport outside Tokyo, according to Ministry of Foreign Affairs news releases on Monday and Tuesday. They are the first Afghans to arrive in Japan after the Taliban took over Afghanistan, according to Kyodo News.

The group was composed of Afghan employees of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, and their family members, who traveled overland from Afghanistan to a neighboring country on their own, Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato said during a news conference Monday. He did not identify the neighboring country, citing security concerns.

JICA is a governmental agency that provides aid to promote economic and social development in developing countries.

The Japanese government issued the Afghans short-term visas and bought them airplane tickets after they expressed their wish to evacuate to Japan, Kato said.

He said they received health checkups at Narita and will be quarantined as part of Japan's requirements for international arrivals to curb the coronavirus's spread.

Kato said Japan will support the evacuees whether they wish to travel to a third country or stay in Japan. He said the government would consider asylum applications from any of the Afghans in a routine fashion.

"Although they have not applied for refugee status, if they wish to apply, the Japanese government will examine each case based on the latest situation in Afghanistan and will give appropriate authorization to those who qualify," Kato said.

Late last month, Japan sent Self-Defense Force aircraft to Afghanistan to evacuate Japanese and Afghans who worked at the Japanese Embassy and for JICA, the Mainichi newspaper reported on Monday.

The aircraft, however, were only able to evacuate one Japanese and 14 Afghans to Pakistan on behalf of the United States, Kyodo News reported. The Japanese and Afghans the Self-Defense Force expected to fly out were delayed by the Aug. 26 terrorist bombing that killed 13 U.S. service members, according to Japanese media reports at the time.

Kato said Japan will continue to secure the safety of those Japanese and local workers remaining in Afghanistan and assist any wishing to evacuate through diplomatic efforts, including negotiations with the Taliban, and by cooperating with related countries such as the United States and Qatar.

About 500 Japanese and Afghans who worked for the Japanese government remain in Afghanistan, with their families, according to the Mainichi report.

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AFGHANISTAN

Blinken defends withdrawal from Afghanistan

By Matthew Lee
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Antony Blinken pushed back Monday against harsh Republican criticism of the handling of the military withdrawal from Afghanistan, saying the Biden administration inherited a deal with the Taliban to end the war, but no plan for carrying it out.

In a sometimes contentious hearing Monday before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Blinken sought to blunt complaints from angry GOP lawmakers about the administration's response to the quick collapse of the Afghan government and, more specifically, the State Department's actions to evacuate Americans and others.

Blinken echoed White House talking points blaming the Trump administration for the situation that President Joe Biden inherited in Afghanistan. "We inherited a deadline. We did not inherit a plan," he said, maintaining that the administration had done the right thing in ending 20 years of war.

"We made the right decision in ending America's longest-running war," said Blinken, who was to testify on Tuesday before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Republicans savaged the withdrawal process as "a disaster" and "a disgrace." And while some Democrats allowed that the operation could have been handled better, many used their questions to heap criticism on former President Donald Trump.

The State Department has come under heavy criticism from both sides for not doing enough and not acting quickly enough to get American citizens, legal residents and at-risk Afghans out of the country after the Taliban took control of Kabul on Aug. 15. Some seeking to leave remain stranded there, although Blinken could not provide an exact number. He said roughly 100 U.S. citizens remain along with about "several thousand" green card holders.

"This was an unmitigated disaster of epic proportions," said Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas, the top Republican on the committee. He said the abrupt withdrawal along with leaving some Americans and Afghans behind had "emboldened the Taliban" and other U.S. adversaries. "I can summarize this in one word: betrayal."

His GOP colleagues Steve Chabot of Ohio and Lee Zeldin of New York were even more blunt. "This is a disgrace," Chabot said. "This was fatally flawed and poorly executed," said Zeldin. "I believe that you, sir, should resign. That would be leadership."

The chairman of the committee, New York Rep. Gregory Meeks, urged his colleagues to keep politics out of their criticism. But he acknowledged that there had been problems. "Could things have been done differently? Absolutely," he said.

Republican congressman Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, who has been ostracized by many in the GOP for his criticism of Trump, placed blame for the situation on both Trump and Biden. "The Trump administration failed in the setup and the Biden administration failed in the execution," Kinzinger said.

Blinken tried to calmly deflect allegations of unpreparedness by noting that the Biden administration had inherited a U.S.-Taliban peace deal from its predecessor, along with a languishing program to grant visas to Afghans who had worked for the U.S. government.

Blinken, who had publicly predicted in June that a complete Taliban takeover would not happen "from a Friday to a Monday," also tried to preempt criticism of the prediction by noting that no one in the U.S. government expected the Afghan government to fall as quickly as it did.

"Even the most pessimistic assessments did not predict that government forces in Kabul would collapse while U.S. forces remained," Blinken said in prepared remarks released ahead of his appearance. He also defended the evacuation effort, saying it succeeded despite near insurmountable odds.

"The evacuation was an extraordinary effort — under the most difficult conditions imaginable — by our diplomats, military, and intelligence professionals," he said. "In the end, we completed one of the biggest airlifts in history, with 124,000 people evacuated to safety."

But Republicans, in particular, have been demanding answers as to why American citizens were left behind in the chaotic days and weeks before the military completed its withdrawal on Aug. 30.

In a preview of GOP questions, the Republican National Committee released a statement earlier Monday with the banner headline "Fire Blinken," demanding that he be held to account for what it described as a litany of failings.

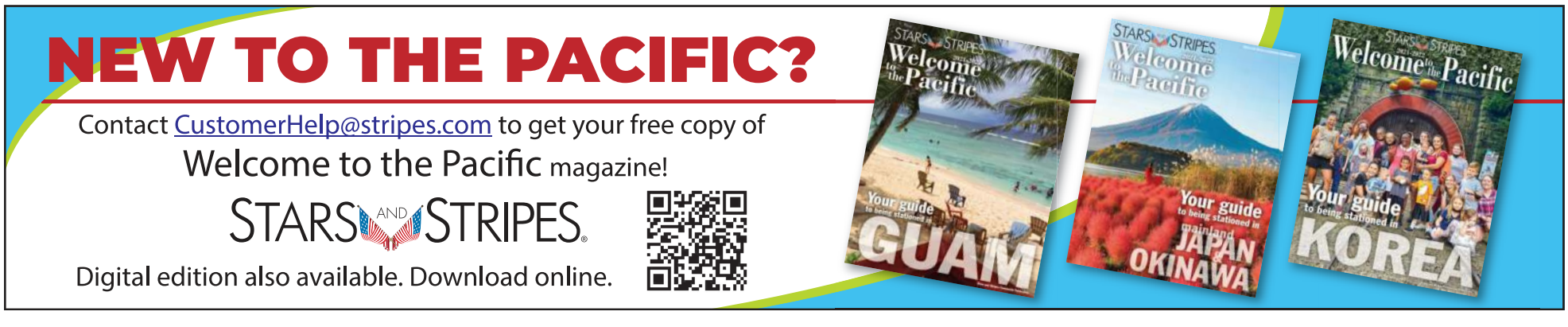
After the more than five-hour hearing concluded, the GOP committee doubled down on its demand.

"Today's hearing makes Blinken's failures and lies abundantly clear," RNC chairwoman Ronna McDaniel said. "Biden has no choice but to fire Blinken, hold him accountable, and take responsibility for the disaster he created."

Blinken is very close to Biden and his job as America's top diplomat is almost certainly safe, but criticism of the administration's handling of the Afghanistan withdrawal has not been limited to Republicans.

J. Scott Applewhite/AP

Secretary of State Antony Blinken appears remotely on a TV monitor to answer questions from the House Foreign Affairs Committee at the Capitol in Washington on Monday.



MILITARY

Book: Milley feared Trump might start war

Chairman secretly called China

BY ISAAC STANLEY-BECKER
The Washington Post

Twice in the final months of the Trump administration, the country's top military officer was so fearful that the president's actions might spark a war with China that he moved urgently to avert armed conflict.

In a pair of secret phone calls, Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, assured his Chinese counterpart, Gen. Li Zuocheng of the People's Liberation Army, that the United States would not strike, according to a new book by Washington Post associate editor Bob Woodward and national political reporter Robert Costa.

One call took place on Oct. 30, 2020, four days before the election that unseated President D0nald Trump, and the other on Jan. 8, 2021, two days after the Capitol siege carried out by his supporters in a quest to cancel the vote.

The first call was prompted by Milley's review of intelligence suggesting the Chinese believed the United States was preparing to attack. That belief, the authors write, was based on tensions over military exercises in the South China Sea, and deepened by Trump's belligerent rhetoric toward China.

"General Li, I want to assure you that the American government is stable and everything is going to be OK," Milley told him. "We are not going to attack or conduct any kinetic operations against you."

In the book's telling, Milley went so far as to pledge he would alert his counterpart in the event of a U.S. attack, stressing the rapport they'd established through a backchannel. "General Li, you and I have known each other for now five years. If we're going to attack, I'm going to call you ahead of time. It's not going to be a surprise."

Li took the chairman at his word, the authors write in the book, "Peril," which is set to be released next week.

In the second call, placed to address Chinese fears about the events of Jan. 6, Li wasn't as easily assuaged, even after Milley promised him, "We are 100 percent steady. Everything's fine. But democracy can be sloppy sometimes."

Li remained rattled, and Milley, who did not relay the conversation to Trump, according to the book, understood why. The chairman, 62 at the time and chosen by Trump in 2018, believed the president had suffered a mental decline after the election, the authors write, a view he communicated to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., in a phone call on Jan. 8. He agreed with her evaluation that Trump was unstable, according to a call transcript obtained by the authors.

Believing that China could lash out if it felt at risk from an unpredictable and vengeful American president, Milley took action. The same day, he called the admiral overseeing the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the military unit responsible for Asia and the Pacific region, and recommended postponing the military exercises, according to the book. The admiral complied.

Milley also summoned senior officers to review the procedures for launching nuclear weapons, saying the president alone could give the order — but, crucially, that he, Milley, also had to be involved. Looking each in the eye, Milley asked the officers to affirm that they had understood, the authors write, in what he considered an "oath."

The chairman knew that he was "pulling a Schlesinger," the authors write, resorting to measures resembling the ones taken in August 1974 by James Schlesinger, the secretary of defense at the time. Schlesinger told military officials to check with him and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs before carrying out orders from President Richard Nixon, who was facing impeachment at the time.

Though Milley went furthest in seeking to stave off a national security crisis, his alarm was shared throughout the highest ranks of the administration, the authors reveal. CIA Director Gina Haspel, for instance, reportedly told Milley, "We are on the way to a right-wing coup."

The book also provides fresh reporting on President Joe Biden's campaign — waged to unseat a man he told a top adviser "isn't really an American president" — and his early struggle to govern. During a March 5 phone call to discuss Biden's $1.9 trillion stimulus plan, his first major legislative undertaking, the president reportedly told Sen. Joe Manchin III, D-W.Va., "if you don't come along, you're really f—ing me." The measure ultimately cleared the Senate through an elaborate sequencing of amendments designed to satisfy the centrist Democrat.

The president's frustration with Manchin is matched only by his debt to House Majority Whip Rep. James Clyburn of South Carolina, whose endorsement before that state's primary propelled Biden to the nomination and gave rise to promises about how he would govern.

When Clyburn offered his endorsement in February 2020, it came with conditions, according to the book. One was that Biden would commit to naming a Black woman to the Supreme Court, if given the opportunity. During a debate two days later, Clyburn went backstage during a break to urge Biden to reveal his intentions for the Supreme Court that night. Biden issued the pledge in his final answer, and the congressman endorsed him the next day.

ALEX BRANDON/AP

Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley speaks at the Pentagon on Saturday during the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"Peril," the authors say, is based on interviews with more than 200 people, conducted on the condition they not be named as sources. Exact quotations or conclusions are drawn from the participant in the described event, a colleague with direct knowledge or relevant documents, according to an author's note. Trump and Biden declined to be interviewed.

On Afghanistan, the book examines how Biden's experience as vice president shaped his approach to the withdrawal. Convinced that President Barack Obama had been manipulated by his own commanders, Biden vowed privately in 2009, "The military doesn't f— around with me."

It also documents how Biden's top advisers spent the spring weighing, but ultimately rejecting, alternatives to a full withdrawal. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin returned from a NATO meeting in March envisioning ways to extend the mission, including through a "gated" withdrawal seeking diplomatic leverage. But they came to see that meaningful leverage would require a more expansive commitment, and instead came back around to a full exit.

Milley, for his part, took what the authors describe as a deferential approach to Biden on Afghanistan, in contrast to his earlier efforts to constrain Trump. The book reveals recent remarks the chairman delivered to the Joint Chiefs in which he said, "Here's a couple of rules of the road here that we're going to follow. One is you never, ever ever box in a president of the United States. You always give him decision space." Referring to Biden, he said, "You're dealing with a seasoned politician here who has been in Washington, D.C., 50 years, whatever it is."

His decision just months earlier to place himself between Trump and potential war was triggered by several important events — a phone call, a photo op and a refusal to rule out war with another adversary, Iran.

The immediate motivation, according to the book, was the Jan. 8 call from Pelosi, who demanded to know, "What precautions are available to prevent an unstable president from initiating military hostilities or from accessing the launch codes and ordering a nuclear strike?" Milley assured her that there were "a lot of checks in the system."

The call transcript obtained by the authors shows Pelosi telling Milley, referring to Trump, "He's crazy. You know he's crazy. ... He's crazy and what he did yesterday is further evidence of his craziness." Milley replied, "I agree with you on everything."

Milley's resolve was deepened by the events of June 1, 2020 when he felt Trump had used him as part of a photo op in Lafayette Square during protests that began after the killing of George Floyd. The chairman came to see his role as ensuring that, "We're not going to turn our guns on the American people and we're not going to have a 'Wag the Dog' scenario overseas," the authors quote him saying privately.

Trump's posture, not just to China but also to Iran, tested that promise. In discussions about Iran's nuclear program, Trump declined to rule out striking the country, at times even displaying curiosity about the prospect, according to the book. Haspel was so alarmed after a meeting in November that she called Milley to say, "This is a highly dangerous situation. We are going to lash out for his ego?"

Trump's fragile ego drove many decisions by the nation's leaders, from lawmakers to the vice president, according to the book. Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., was so worried that a call from President-elect Biden would send Trump into a fury that the then-Majority Leader used a back channel to fend off Biden. He asked Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, formerly the No. 2 Senate Republican, to ask Sen. Christopher Coons, the Democrat of Delaware and close Biden ally, to tell Biden not to call him.

So intent was Vice President Mike Pence on being Trump's loyal second-in-command — and potential successor — that he asked confidants if there were ways he could accede to Trump's demands and avoid certifying the results of the election on Jan. 6. In late December, the authors reveal, Pence called Dan Quayle, a former vice president and fellow Indiana Republican, for advice.

Quayle was adamant, according to the authors. "Mike, you have no flexibility on this. None. Zero. Forget it. Put it away," he said.

But Pence pressed him, the authors write, asking if there were any grounds to pause the certification because of ongoing legal challenges. Quayle was unmoved, and Pence ultimately agreed, according to the book.

When Pence said he planned to certify the results, the president lashed out. In the Oval Office on Jan. 5, the authors write, Pence told Trump he could not thwart the process, that his role was simply to "open the envelopes."

"I don't want to be your friend anymore if you don't do this," Trump replied, according to the book, later telling his vice president, "You've betrayed us. I made you. You were nothing."

Within days, Trump was out of office, his governing power reduced to nothing. But if stability had returned to Washington, Milley feared it would be short-lived, the authors write.

The general saw parallels between Jan. 6 and the 1905 Russian Revolution, which set off unrest throughout the Russian Empire and, though it failed, helped create the conditions for the October Revolution of 1917, in which the Bolsheviks executed a successful coup that set up the world's first communist state. Vladimir Lenin, who led the revolution, called 1905 a "dress rehearsal."

A similar logic could apply with Jan. 6, Milley thought as he wrestled with the meaning of that day, telling senior staff: "What you might have seen was a precursor to something far worse down the road."

NATION

Downgraded storm dumps rain on Gulf Coast

BY JUAN A. LOZANO
Associated Press

HOUSTON — Tropical Storm Nicholas slowed to a crawl over the Houston area Tuesday after making landfall earlier as a hurricane, knocking out power to a half-million homes and businesses and dumping more than a foot of rain along the same area swamped by Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

Nicholas could potentially stall over storm-battered Louisiana and could bring life-threatening floods across the Deep South over the coming days, forecasters said.

Nicholas made landfall early Tuesday on the eastern part of the Matagorda Peninsula and was soon downgraded to a tropical storm. It was about 10 miles southeast of Houston, with maximum winds of 45 mph as of 10 a.m. CDT Tuesday, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

Galveston saw nearly 14 inches of rain from Nicholas, the 14th named storm of the 2021 Atlantic hurricane season, while Houston reported more than 6 inches of rain. That's a fraction of what fell during Harvey, which dumped more than 60 inches of rain in southeast Texas over a four-day period.

Nicholas is moving so slowly it will dump several inches of rain as it crawls over Texas and southern Louisiana, meteorologists said. This includes areas already struck by Hurricane Ida and devastated last year by Hurricane Laura. Parts of Louisiana are saturated with nowhere for the extra water to go, so it will flood, said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy.

DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

Adrian Bentancourt cleans up debris from a fence that was blown down by Hurricane Nicholas on Tuesday, in Galveston, Texas. Galveston got 14 inches of rain from Nicholas, since downgraded to a tropical storm.

"It's stuck in a weak steering environment," McNoldy said Tuesday. So while the storm itself may weaken "that won't stop the rain from happening. Whether it's a tropical storm, tropical depression or post-tropical blob, it'll still rain a lot and that's not really good for that area."

The storm was moving northeast at 6 mph and the center of Nicholas was expected to move slowly over southeastern Texas on Tuesday and over southwestern Louisiana on Wednesday.

Nicholas, expected to weaken into a tropical depression by Tuesday night, could dump up to 20 inches of rain in parts of southern Louisiana. Forecasters said southern Mississippi, southern Alabama and the western Florida Panhandle could see heavy rainfall as well.

Much of Texas' coastline was under a tropical storm warning that included potential flash floods and urban flooding. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said authorities placed rescue teams and resources in the Houston area and along the coast.

In Houston, officials worried that heavy rain could inundate streets and flood homes. Authorities deployed high-water rescue vehicles throughout the city and erected barricades at more than 40 locations that tend to flood, Mayor Sylvester Turner said Monday.

"This city is very resilient. We know what we need to do. We know about preparing," said Turner, referencing four major flood events that have hit the Houston area in recent years, including devastating damage from Harvey.

Meteorologist Kent Prochazka of the National Weather Service told The Associated Press early Tuesday that Nicholas' winds downed trees in coastal counties and caused some gas stations to lose awnings.

"Right before it made landfall, it abruptly intensified into a hurricane and as it moved inland, the pressures began to rise with it. The winds have relaxed slightly and now we're getting down into tropical storm force (winds)," he said.

More than 500,000 homes and businesses were without power in Texas by midmorning Tuesday, according to the website poweroutage.us that tracks utility reports.

Numerous school districts along the Texas Gulf Coast canceled classes Monday and Tuesday because of the storm. The weather threat also closed multiple COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites in the Houston and Corpus Christi areas and forced the cancellation of a Harry Styles concert scheduled for Monday evening in Houston.

A tornado or two may be possible Tuesday along the upper Texas and southwest Louisiana coast, according to the weather service.

FDA experts among group opposing US booster shot plan

Associated Press

The average person doesn't need a COVID-19 booster yet, an international group of scientists — including two top U.S. regulators — wrote Monday in a scientific journal.

The experts reviewed studies of the vaccines' performance and concluded the shots are working well despite the extra-contagious delta variant, especially against severe disease.

"Even in populations with fairly high vaccination rates, the unvaccinated are still the major drivers of transmission" at this stage of the pandemic, they concluded.

The opinion piece, published in The Lancet, illustrates the intense scientific debate about who needs booster doses and when, a decision the U.S. and other countries are grappling with.

After revelations of political meddling in the Trump administration's coronavirus response, President Joe Biden has promised to "follow the science." But the review raises the question of whether his administration is moving faster than the experts.

The authors include two leading vaccine reviewers at the Food and Drug Administration, Drs. Phil Krause and Marion Gruber, who recently announced they will be stepping down this fall. Among the other 16 authors are leading vaccine researchers in the U.S., Britain, France, South Africa and India, plus scientists with the World Health Organization, which already has urged a moratorium on boosters until poor countries are better vaccinated.

In the U.S., the White House has begun planning for boosters later this month, if both the FDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention agree. Advisers to the FDA will weigh evidence about an extra Pfizer shot Friday at a key public meeting.

Georgetown University's Larry Gostin said the paper "throws gasoline on the fire" in the debate about whether most Americans truly need boosters and whether the White House got ahead of scientists.

JAE C. HONG/AP

Parsia Jahanbani prepares a syringe with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in a mobile clinic in Santa Ana, Calif., last month. An international group of scientists is arguing the average person doesn't need a booster yet.

"It's always a fundamental error of process to make a scientific announcement before the public health agencies have acted and that's exactly what happened here," said Gostin, a lawyer and public health specialist.

The FDA did not respond to requests for comment Monday morning.

The U.S. already offers an extra dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines to people with severely weakened immune systems.

For the general population, the debate is boiling down to whether boosters should be given even though the vaccines are still offering high protection against severe disease — possibly in hopes of blocking milder "breakthrough" infections among the fully vaccinated.

Last week, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said new data showed that as delta surged, the unvaccinated were 4.5 times more likely than the fully vaccinated to get infected, over 10 times more likely to be hospitalized and 11 times more likely to die. Still, government scientists are also weighing hints that protection is waning among older adults who were vaccinated early last winter.

The writers of Monday's commentary reported reviewing worldwide studies since delta began surging, mostly of U.S. and European vaccines. The team concluded "none of these studies has provided credible evidence of substantially declining protection against severe disease."

Because the body builds layers of immunity, gradual drops in antibody levels don't necessarily mean overall effectiveness is dropping "and reductions in vaccine efficacy against mild disease do not necessarily predict reductions in the (typically higher) efficacy against severe disease," they wrote.

The more the virus spreads, the more opportunity it has to evolve into strains that could escape current vaccines. The Lancet reviewers suggest there could be bigger gains from creating booster doses that better match circulating variants, much like flu vaccine is regularly updated, than from just giving extra doses of the original vaccine.

"There is an opportunity now to study variant-based boosters before there is widespread need for them," the scientists wrote.

NATION

Biden: Bills can help on climate

After visit to fire-damaged areas, Biden turns to Colorado to pitch investments in clean energy

BY ALEXANDRA JAFFE AND DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press

LONG BEACH, Calif. — While legislators craft the details back in Washington, President Joe Biden is pitching his massive domestic spending package with a visit to a renewable energy lab in Colorado to highlight how the investments in clean energy in his plan would help combat climate change.

The trip to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Denver will cap off the president's two-day swing to the West, and offer Biden the chance to continue linking the need to pass the spending package to the urgent threat posed by climate change. Biden spent Monday in Boise, Idaho, and Sacramento, Calif., receiving briefings on the devastating wildfire season and viewing the damage by the Caldor Fire to communities around Lake Tahoe.

"We can't ignore the reality that these wildfires are being supercharged by climate change," Biden said, noting that catastrophic weather doesn't strike based on partisan ideology. "It isn't about red or blue states. It's about fires. Just fires."

During both of his Monday stops, Biden held out the wildfires across the region as an argument for his $1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill and additional $3.5 trillion package of spending. The president said that every dollar spent on "resilience" would save $6 in future costs. And he made the case that the rebuilding must go beyond simply restoring damaged systems and instead ensure communities can withstand such crises.

"These fires are blinking 'code red' for our nation. They're gaining frequency and ferocity," Biden said after concluding his tour of the Caldor Fire damage. "We know what we have to do."

The climate provisions in Biden's plans include tax incentives for clean energy and electric vehicles, investments to transition the economy away from fossil fuels and toward renewable sources such as wind and solar power, and creation of a civilian climate corps.

Biden has set a goal of eliminating pollution from fossil fuel in the power sector by 2035 and from the U.S. economy overall by 2050.

While in California, Biden also campaigned for Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom, who is facing a recall election Tuesday. Speaking at a rally in Long Beach, Biden framed the recall as a battle against "Trump Republicans trying to block us from beating this pandemic" and characterized Newsom's leading Republican opponent as "another Trump climate denier."

The president's two-day Western swing comes at a critical juncture for a central plank of his legislative agenda. Lawmakers on Capitol Hill are working to assemble details of the infrastructure-plus plan — and how to pay for it, a concern not just for Republicans.

Besides unified Republican opposition in Congress, Biden needs to overcome the skepticism of two key centrist Democrats in the closely divided Senate. Joe Manchin, of West Virginia, and Kyrsten Sinema, of Arizona, have expressed concerns about the size of the $3.5 trillion spending package.

Manchin said Sunday, "I cannot support $3.5 trillion," citing his opposition to a proposed increase in the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28% and vast new social spending envisioned by the president. Manchin also complained about a process he said feels rushed.

In California, Biden appeared to respond to those concerned about the plan's size, saying the cost "may be" as much as $3.5 trillion and would be spread out over 10 years, a period during which the economy is expected to grow. He also insisted that, when it comes to addressing climate change, "we have to think big."

"Thinking small is a prescription for disaster," he said.

The 100-member Senate is evenly split between Democrats and Republicans. Given solid GOP opposition, Biden's plan cannot pass the Senate without Manchin's or Sinema's support.

The White House is trying to turn the corner after a difficult month dominated by a chaotic and violent U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the surging delta COVID-19 variant that have upended what the president had hoped would mark a summer in which the nation was finally freed from the coronavirus.

Biden acknowledged his polling numbers have dipped in recent weeks, but argued his agenda is "overwhelmingly popular" with the public. He said he expects his Republican opponents to attack him instead of debating him on the merits of his spending plan.

J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., speaks with Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Texas, left, and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., on the steps of the U.S. Capitol on Monday. As congressional Democrats speed ahead this week in pursuit of President Joe Biden's $3.5 trillion plan for social and environmental spending, Manchin says the cost will need to be slashed to $1 trillion to $1.5 trillion to win his support.

Dems seek tax hikes for wealthy, corporations to fund $3.5T plan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Democrats unveiled a sweeping proposal for tax hikes on big corporations and the wealthy to fund President Joe Biden's $3.5 trillion rebuilding plan, as Congress speeds ahead to shape the far-reaching package that touches almost all aspects of domestic life.

The proposed top tax rate would revert to 39.6% on individuals earning more than $400,000, or $450,000 for couples, and there would be a 3% tax on wealthier Americans with adjusted income beyond $5 million a year. For big businesses, the proposal would lift the corporate tax rate from 21% to 26.5% on incomes beyond $5 million, slightly less than the 28% rate the president had sought.

In all, the tax hikes are in line with Biden's own proposals and would bring about the most substantive changes in the tax code since Republicans with then-President Donald Trump slashed taxes in 2017. Business and anti-tax groups are sure to object. But Democrats are pressing forward.

Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., the chairman of the tax-writing Ways & Means Committee, said Monday the proposals, taken together, would "expand opportunity for the American people and support our efforts to build a healthier, more prosperous future."

It's an opening bid at a daunting moment for Biden and his allies in Congress as they assemble the massive package that is expected to become one of the largest single domestic policy measures considered in decades. The president's "Build Back Better" agenda includes spending on child care, health care, education and strategies to confront climate change. It is an ambitious undertaking on par with the Great Society or New Deal.

Republican critics decry the sweep of Biden's plan, suggesting it slopes toward a Western European-style socialism, and they particularly reject the taxes required to pay for it, bristling because it would reverse the GOP tax cuts that were approved just a few years ago.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said the proposal is "the last thing American families need." All GOP lawmakers are expected to vote against it.

But Republicans are largely sidelined as Democrats rely on a budget process that will allow them to approve the proposals on their own, if they can muster their slight majority in Congress.

Democrats have no votes to spare to enact Biden's agenda, with their slim hold on the House and the Senate split 50-50 and Vice President Kamala Harris the tie-breaker if there is no Republican support. Democratic congressional leaders have set a target of Wednesday for committees to have the bill drafted.

One Democratic senator vital to the bill's fate says the cost will need to be slashed to $1 trillion to $1.5 trillion to win his support.

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., has suggested it's time for a "strategic pause," and cautioned there was "no way" Congress will meet the late September goal from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., for passage, given his wide differences with liberal Democrats on how much to spend and how to pay for it.

"I cannot support $3.5 trillion," Manchin said Sunday, citing in particular his opposition to raising the corporate tax rate above 25%, a figure he says will keep the U.S. globally competitive.

Manchin is not alone, as other centrist lawmakers have raised concerns. Restive Democrats from high-tax, heavily Democratic states like New York, New Jersey and California are pushing for a repeal of the $10,000 cap on state and local tax deductions that was imposed by the 2017 Trump law. Neal indicated Monday that the issue is under serious consideration.

Finding compromise will be a daunting project as progressives, including Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., are angling for the most robust package possible. As chairman of the Budget Committee helping to write the bill, Sanders has noted that he and other members of the liberal flank had initially urged an even more robust package of $6 trillion.

"For me, this is not a particular number, but it is making sure that we meet this moment," said Rep. Katherine Clark, D-Mass., a member of House leadership. "The pandemic has shown us that we cannot continue to have an economy of haves and have nots."

The White House welcomed the preliminary tax plan, which keeps to Biden's promise not to tax anyone making less than $400,000.

The proposal "makes significant progress towards ensuring our economy rewards work and not just wealth," said deputy press secretary Andrew Bates.

The House, Senate and White House are working together to align their plans ahead of this month's deadlines.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man arrested, exposed himself to toll collectors

FL ORLANDO — A Florida man has been arrested on several indecent exposure charges at various toll booth workers over a week's span.

The Florida Highway Patrol said in a statement that the man was booked into the Osceola County Jail.

Spokeswoman Kim Montes said the investigation was conducted by state troopers. All seven instances happened on three days around 7 a.m. as the man entered the cash lanes of the toll plazas. Toll workers told troopers the man had no clothes on and was "showing his privates."

He was identified through a photo comparison and his identity matched.

Buffalo carved out of butter featured at fair

KS HUTCHINSON — Kansas's state animal — the buffalo — is being celebrated at the State Fair this year with a 700-pound butter sculpture.

The Hutchinson News reported that a sculptor from Iowa, Sarah Pratt, had to do some research on buffaloes before she designed this year's butter statue.

Pratt said that if she winds up with any extra butter out of the 700 pounds she has to work with she may add a buffalo calf or some sunflowers.

Pratt, who teaches school by day, lives in West Des Moines with her husband and three children, all of whom help her out with sculpting — from the Kansas State Fair to fairs in Iowa or Illinois.

Coast Guard rescues 3 from sinking sailboat

NJ LONG BRANCH — Coast Guard authorities said they rescued three people after a vessel began taking on water off the coast of New Jersey.

Officials said Monmouth County 911 dispatchers called to report the emergency three miles east of Long Branch.

Coast Guard officials said a rescue swimmer was lowered from a helicopter and helped all three people aboard the motor lifeboat. They were taken to Shark River Marina. Officials said all three had life jackets and no injuries or medical concerns were reported.

Petty Officer Stephen Lehmann told the Asbury Park Press that the 25-foot vessel, which was last seen drifting, will be salvaged by its owner.

Inquiry after cars towed to scrap yards without OK

GA LUDOWICI — Local and state law enforcement agencies are investigating whether the owners of a southeast Georgia tow truck company stole more than 20 vehicles from a repair shop.

Long County sheriff's deputies told WTOC-TV that vehicles were taken by South Georgia Towing from the Immaculate Concepts auto repair shop in Ludowici to scrap yards, possibly after the business unexpectedly closed.

Hinesville resident Miranda Pugh, who owns a truck that was awaiting repairs at the shop said she never gave anyone permission to take her truck. She said relatives called her after noticing her vehicle was gone.

The Long County Sheriff's Office asked the Georgia Bureau of Investigation for help last month. The state agency is identifying owners of towed vehicles.

EMILY MATTHEWS, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE/AP

One last taste of summer

Kyle Raymond, left, and Nicole Ganow, of Lawrenceville, walk around a Taste of Lawrenceville's One Last Summer event on Sunday at Bay 41 in the Lawrenceville neighborhood of Pittsburgh. The event included 11 vendors and live music by guitarist Byron Nash. Organizers decided to hold one last festival before the weather turns.

THE CENSUS

32 **The number of people arrested during a college football game between the University of Wisconsin and Easter Michigan University in Madison, Wis.** University police say 45 people were also ejected during the game. Police say 30 of the 32 citations were issued to UW students. The list included 30 citations for underage alcohol, one for possession of alcohol on UW lands and one for UW code theft, WISC-TV reported. There were 22 first aid calls during the game, which the Badgers won 34-7.

Artifacts found dating to before state was founded

AL FLORENCE — Archaeologists are analyzing pieces of pottery, nails and glass found at Pope's Tavern, an inn and stagecoach stop for travelers dating back to the early 1800s before Alabama achieved statehood.

A state team funded by a grant recently conducted a dig at the northwest Alabama site, which is the site of a museum that focuses on the history of the city of Florence.

Museum curator Brian Murphy told the TimesDaily that pottery was the most common item discovered during the work.

"They pulled out a bunch of artifacts that are being cleaned and processed right now," Murphy said. "They will give us a really good image of the types of materials and type of utensils used, and really a glimpse into the daily life of the people who lived there and used that space."

The crew also found the brick remains of an old structure that could have been a hearth or outbuilding, he said.

Pope's Tavern was built in the 1830s, he said, and artifacts found on the grounds dated to the 1820s and 1830s.

Issue causes ground to buckle in neighborhood

MI DETROIT — A building in southwest Detroit has been damaged after ground beneath it shifted.

The cause of the ground buckling has not yet been determined, city officials said Sunday night.

No injuries were reported.

The damaged marijuana dispensary was considered to be at-risk to collapse on sidewalks and utility lines and will be demolished. The shop's general manager Ashley Babcock told The Detroit News that some employees were inside the building at the time the ground shifted but no one was hurt.

Detroit's Public Works department, DTE Energy and the Great Lakes Water Authority were trying to determine what caused the ground to shift.

State's book festival will be virtual event this year

WV CHARLESTON — This year's West Virginia Book Festival has decided to go virtual due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases, officials said.

The free event will still be held Oct. 22-23 at the Charleston Coliseum & Convention Center, but events will be hosted online, the Charleston Gazette-Mail reported.

"The health and safety of our guests, volunteers, presenters and sponsors is our top priority, and due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Kanawha County, we felt it was prudent to cancel in-person activities this year," festival co-chair Sarah Mitchell said in a statement. "Instead, book festival presentations will be streamed live online, so book lovers can still engage with our renowned literary guests."

Some of the authors scheduled to appear include Pulitzer Prize winner Colson Whitehead, best-selling author and West Virginia native Homer Hickam, and children's author Jon Scieszka.

3 more Vermont inmates, 2 staff tested positive

VT WATERBURY — Three more inmates and two more staff members at Vermont prisons have tested positive for COVID-19, bring the total to 15 cases among inmates and three among staff at four of the state's six correctional facilities, the Department of Corrections said.

One incarcerated person at Northern State Correctional Facility in Newport and two at Northwest State Correctional Facility in St. Albans were found to be infected, the department said. The two positive cases in staff were at the Southern State Correctional Facility in Springfield.

The Newport prison now has a total 13 inmates with COVID-19, officials said.

From The Associated Press

NATION

Chinese students rejected for visas in US amid tension

By Fu Ting
Associated Press

After a semester online, Wang Ziwei looked forward to meeting classmates who are returning to campus at Washington University in St. Louis. But the 23-year-old finance student said the United States revoked his student visa on security grounds.

Wang is among at least 500 students the Chinese government says have been rejected under a policy issued by then-President Donald Trump to block Beijing from obtaining U.S. technology with possible military uses. Students have argued it is applied too broadly and fume at what they have said is an accusation they are spies.

"The whole thing is nonsense," Wang said. "What do we finance students have to do with the military?"

The students join companies and individuals whose plans have been disrupted by U.S.-Chinese tension over technology and security, Beijing's military buildup, the origins of the coronavirus, human rights and conflicting claims to the South China Sea and other territory.

The policy blocks visas for people who are affiliated with the ruling Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army or universities deemed by Washington to be part of military modernization efforts.

U.S. officials say they believe thousands of Chinese students and researchers participate in programs that encourage them to transfer medical, computer and other sensitive information to China.

Washington cites Beijing's strategy of "civil-military fusion," which it says treats private companies and universities as assets to develop Chinese military technology.

"Joint research institutions, academia and private firms are all being exploited to build the PLA's future military systems — often without their knowledge or consent," the State Department said in a 2020 report.

Trump's successor, Joe Biden, has given no indication of what he might do.

Chinese officials appealed to U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman to drop the visa restrictions when she visited in July, according to The Paper, a Shanghai online news outlet.

The policy is necessary to "protect U.S. national security interests," the U.S. Embassy in Beijing said in a statement. It said the policy is a response to "some abuses of the visa process" and is "narrowly targeted."

More than 85,000 visas for Chinese students have been approved over the past four months, according to the embassy.

"The numbers show clearly that the United States stands ready to issue visas to all those who are qualified — including Chinese students and scholars," it said.

Separately, a group of 177 Stanford University professors sent an open letter this month asking the U.S. Justice Department to end the China Initiative, another Trump-era program that investigates researchers in the U.S. The letter signers said it has raised concerns about racial profiling and discouraged scholars from staying in or coming to the country.

China is the biggest source of foreign students in the U.S., according to U.S. government data. The number fell 20% in 2020 from the previous year, but at 380,000 was still nearly double that of second-ranked India.

Thomas Häntzschel, FBN/AP

A calf enters an astroturf-covered pen nicknamed "MooLoo" to urinate at the Research Institute for Farm Animal Biology in Dummerstorf, Germany.

Scientists in Germany potty train cows to use 'MooLoo'

Associated Press

It turns out that cows can be potty trained as easily as toddlers. Maybe even easier.

It's no bull. Scientists put the task to the test and 11 out of 16 cows learned to use the "MooLoo" when they had to go.

Just like some parents, the researchers used a sweet treat to coax the cows to push through a gate and urinate in a special pen. And it took only 15 days to train the young calves. Some kids take quite a bit longer.

"The cows are at least as good as children, age 2 to 4 years, at least as quick," said study senior author Lindsay Matthews, an animal behavioral scientist at New Zealand's University of Auckland who worked with colleagues on the tests at an indoor animal research lab in Germany.

What started with a half-in-jest question on a New Zealand radio talk show about the very real problem of livestock waste resulted in a serious study published Monday in the journal Current Biology. And it wasn't just a "wow, this could be fun" academic question. Massive amounts of urine waste is a serious environmental issue, Matthews said.

Urine contains nitrogen, and when mixed with feces becomes ammonia, which is an environmental issue with acid rain and other problems, Matthews said. It can also taint the water with nitrates and create the airborne pollutant nitrous oxide, he said.

And cows do pee a lot. A single cow can produce about 8 gallons of urine a day, Matthews said. In 2019, nitrous oxide comprised 7% of all the U.S. greenhouse gases, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

"I am not surprised they can train calves to urinate in set locations, but I am surprised no one has demonstrated this before," said Duke University animal cognition scientist Brian Hare, who wasn't part of the research. "The critical question is can it and will it scale?"

If it could be done, toilet training animals makes it easier to manage waste products and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, said Donald Broom, a professor of animal welfare at the University of Cambridge in England.

At the lab in Dummerstorf, Germany, the researchers mimicked a toddler's training, putting the cows in the special pen, waiting until they urinated and then giving them a reward: a sweet liquid of mostly molasses. Cows do have a sweet tooth, Matthews said. If the cows urinated outside the MooLoo after the initial training, they got a squirt of cold water.

Then in two sets of experiments, the researchers let the Holstein cows roam about the indoor facility. When they had to urinate, 11 of them pushed into the pen, did their business and got their sweet reward.

There are a couple caveats to this experiment.

No. 1, they gave diuretics to the cattle to get them to urinate more because they had limited time to run the experiments under ethics guidelines.

And No. 2, they didn't do No. 2. They only trained cows to use the MooLoo to urinate, not defecate.

Urine is a bigger problem, at least in Europe, Matthews said. But he predicted they could train cows to poop in a certain place too.

Oldest US veteran of WWII celebrates his 112th birthday

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — A Louisiana man who is the oldest living World War II veteran in the United States has marked his 112th birthday.

Lawrence Brooks celebrated Sunday with a drive-by party at his New Orleans home hosted by the National World War II Museum, The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate reported. He also received greetings from Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards, who tweeted, "Mr. Brooks, the entire state of Louisiana thanks you for your service and we all wish you a joyous birthday."

The museum has previously hosted parties for Brooks, although the coronavirus pandemic has caused those events to shift to drive-by celebrations for the past two years.

This year's festivities included a Jeep parade, a live performance from the museum vocal trio and entertainment from New Orleans musicians. The city also recognized Brooks' birthday with an official proclamation.

Born in Norwood, La., in 1909, Brooks has lived in New Orleans since 1929. Drafted in 1940, he was a private in the Army's mostly Black 91st Engineer Battalion, a unit that was stationed in New Guinea and the Philippines and built infrastructure such as bridges, roads and airstrips.

In an oral history about his service posted on YouTube, Brooks also described how he was delivering a load of barbed wire to the front when one of the engines of the C-47 he was traveling in went out.

After they dumped the barbed wire to conserve weight, he made his way to the cockpit. He told the pilot and co-pilot that since they were the only two with parachutes, if they had to jump for it, he was going to grab on to one of them.

"We made it though," he said laughing. "We had a big laugh about that."

WORLD

Putin slams presence of US, other foreign troops in Syria

Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — Russian President Vladimir Putin criticized the presence of foreign troops in Syria, saying they are there against the will of the Syrian government and are blocking the consolidation of the war-torn country, the Kremlin said Tuesday.

Putin was referring to hundreds of U.S. troops stationed in eastern Syria and working with Kurdish-led fighters in battling the militant Islamic State group, as well as Turkish forces in northern Syria. Speaking during a rare meeting in Moscow on Monday night with his Syrian counterpart Bashar Assad, he said the presence of the foreigners is illegal because they don't have permission to be there from the United Nations or Syria's government.

Russia joined Syria's 10-year conflict in September 2015, when the Syrian military appeared close to collapse, and has since helped in tipping the balance of power in favor of Assad, whose forces now control much of the country. Hundreds of Russian troops are deployed across Syria and they also have a military air base along Syria's Mediterranean coast.

Assad has rarely made trips abroad in the past decade since Syria's conflict began, except to visit key allies Russia and Iran. Assad and Putin discussed cooperation between their armies and ways to continue operations to gain control of the last rebel-held areas in Syria, state media in Damascus reported.

MIKHAIL KLIMENTYEV, SPUTNIK, KREMLIN POOL PHOTO/AP

Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, sits with Syrian President Bashar Assad during their meeting in the Kremlin in Moscow, on Monday.

Putin later announced he was going into self-isolation because of coronavirus cases in his inner circle. Assad and his wife tested positive for coronavirus in March, and recovered three weeks later.

"This clearly violates international law and doesn't allow you to make maximum efforts to consolidate the country," Putin was quoted as telling Assad about the foreign forces, according to a Kremlin statement.

Putin in self-isolation due to COVID cases in inner circle

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin entered self-isolation after people in his inner circle became infected with the coronavirus, the Kremlin said Tuesday, adding that the leader himself tested negative for COVID-19.

Putin, who is fully vaccinated with Russia's Sputnik V, held several public engagements indoors Monday and even said that he may have to quarantine soon. An aide at the time sought to suggest he was speaking generally and insisted Tuesday that no one's heath was endangered.

During a daily conference call with reporters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Putin is "absolutely healthy" but had come in contact with someone who contracted the virus. Asked if Putin tested negative for the virus, Peskov said "definitely, yes."

Peskov didn't say when Putin began self-isolating, when he tested negative, how long he would remain in self-isolation or who among the president's contacts was infected. He did say there were several cases.

Russian authorities have been regularly criticized for underplaying the pandemic and for rarely imposing measures to control it even in the face of surges in cases. Russia's death toll is currently running at its highest level of the pandemic, with just under 800 fatalities a day. Nevertheless, hardly any virus restrictions are currently in place.

Putin has hardly ever worn a mask publicly, though he appeared to work largely remotely and was rarely seen in public for a period before he was vaccinated.

On Monday, Putin attended several public events, most of which were indoors and where it appeared from images on TV that no one wore masks. He shook hands with Russian Paralympians and pinned medals on them, attended military exercises alongside Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu and others, and met with Syrian President Bashar Assad, whose hand he also shook.

Peskov has confirmed media reports that people who meet in-person with Putin or attend events with him have to undergo "rigorous testing" or quarantine ahead of time.

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OPINION

Moderates are the real health care progressives

By Ramesh Ponnuru
Bloomberg Opinion

One-point-five trillion dollars is a lot of money. But by reportedly saying that's the most he is willing to have the federal government spend on a package of social, climate and infrastructure programs, Sen. Joe Manchin, of West Virginia, is forcing his fellow Democrats to make choices they avoid in their $3.5 trillion plan. Some of the most difficult for them involve health care.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's priority is strengthening the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. Subsidies for it were expanded earlier this year, but only on a temporary basis. She wants to make them permanent. Sen. Bernie Sanders, the socialist Democrat from Vermont and chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, is more eager to expand Medicare. When Senate Democrats introduced their budget resolution last month, Sanders touted its Medicare provisions and didn't mention Pelosi's health care priorities. He has criticized the House Democrats' budget bill for offering inadequate dental benefits under Medicare.

It's a split that highlights two different ways of thinking about the progressive project. The question for Democrats is which matters more: advancing the goal of a government-directed health care system or giving more help to Americans with low incomes? Or, to put it another way: socialism or redistribution?

The Medicare expansion that the left wing of the Democratic Party favors would offer more federal benefits for everyone: rich, poor and in-between. Americans aged 60 to 64 would for the first time be eligible for Medicare. As a group they have a higher net worth than the national average. They are also the age group of working adults most likely to have private health insurance.

Dental insurance was uncommon when Medicare began in the 1960s, and the traditional program still does not offer it. Adding dental benefits has some appeal as a way of updating it. But 43% of seniors have chosen a private Medicare Advantage plan, and 89% of them include dental benefits. Full implementation of a new dental benefit in the traditional program would cost $60 billion a year. Chris Pope, a health policy scholar at the conservative Manhattan Institute, points out that it's low-income working-age adults who have the worst access to dental care — and Medicaid, the program that covers them and their children, spends only $14 billion a year on such care.

If your objective is to provide help to those who need it most, expanding Medicare is an odd way to go about it; boosting dental benefits under Medicaid would be one of many superior alternatives. Sanders' plan makes more sense as a way of furthering the goal of Medicare for all, something near and dear to the hearts of Sanders-style Democrats. Putting people between 60 and 64 in Medicare would extend its reach, give it more power over health markets and enlarge its political constituency. Adding dental benefits would make the traditional program more attractive than Medicare Advantage, which Sanders wants to abolish (too capitalistic). Extending Medicare might be more attractive to voters if it includes universal dental coverage, something that not even Canada, with its single-payer health system, provides.

Showering money on people who don't need it is a feature of these proposals rather than an unfortunate side-effect. The point is to build a new system that includes everyone and that, eventually, no one will be able to escape. It's a line of thinking that dovetails nicely with a critique of Obamacare that has always had currency within the political left: It was too complicated, too market-oriented, and too politically damaging, and expanding popular entitlement programs would have been a wiser course. Rep. Pramila Jayapal, the Washington state Democrat who chairs the House Progressive Caucus, advocates Medicare expansion in these terms: "We need to recognize that while the ACA did many good things, just providing subsidies to private insurance is not the way to move forward."

There is something to that critique. One study has found that ACA enrollees reap fewer than 50 cents of every dollar the government spends on subsidizing them. Spending more money on the program without reforming it, as the Democrats propose to do and Pelosi has at the top of her health care agenda, may accomplish less for the public good than they think. These proposals are, however, at least better targeted toward people who need public assistance than the Medicare-expansion ideas are.

So far, debate over these different approaches has been muffled. Asked whether expanding Medicare would mean the ACA got "short shrift," Pelosi recently replied: "I think both will be present. That's not a problem." But to govern is to choose — and Manchin seems to be insisting on it.

Bloomberg Opinion columnist Ramesh Ponnuru is a senior editor at National Review and a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

COVID is on its way to becoming just another virus

By David Fickling
Bloomberg Opinion

In the days before COVID-19, I'd often get frustrated by the response that doctors would give when I turned up at their clinics with some infection or other: "It's just a virus," they'd say.

As someone who's long been fascinated by the detective work that goes into tracing the origins and history of infections, the answer always seemed too perfunctory. Which virus was it? Where and when did this strain emerge? How many other people were getting infected with this same variant this year?

Those questions aren't of much relevance to most general practitioners, because the majority of viruses simply burn themselves out as part of the teeming backdrop of endemic infections that roll around the globe each year. At some point, with rising immunity from vaccinations, infections and booster shots, COVID-19 will join that club.

Early last year, the world urgently needed to raise its sense of alarm around the SARS-CoV-2 virus, and see it as the imminent threat it was rather than a more routine infection on a par with influenza. Right now, though, the vaccinated parts of the planet need to mentally send themselves in the opposite direction. It's time to remind ourselves that, for those who've been inoculated, COVID-19 is no longer a horseman of the apocalypse but instead is gradually becoming "just a virus."

That's broadly the place that some of the countries that have advanced furthest in their vaccination programs are reaching. In Singapore, where 81% are fully immunized, the Ministry of Health has started prioritizing data on hospitalizations rather than infections, since the vast majority of cases are now relatively benign. Israel is riding out a surge in new cases without returning to lockdowns for the vaccinated, since the vast majority of infections no longer result in serious illness.

The calls from some quarters to stop publishing daily case totals may be premature for a disease that's still killing thousands of people a day. At some point, though, when COVID-19 has passed from its current pandemic status to the endemic situation where it fades into the background, we're likely to be as vague on daily or even annual case numbers as we are in the case of influenza.

It's hard to believe that an infection that's killed more than 4.5 million people could be thought of in such a routine way, but viruses through history have flipped between endemic and pandemic status with remarkable frequency.

The "Russian Flu" pandemic that circled the world in the late 1970s appears to have been an unremarkable seasonal flu strain from the 1940s and 1950s, possibly released to the world anew via a laboratory accident. People over the age of 25, who'd been exposed to the variant in their childhood, were largely immune. Yellow fever, which shaped the history of the Americas for four centuries through its devastating effects on expeditionary military forces who lacked immunity, has now largely vanished from urban areas of the Western Hemisphere, while remaining a devastating infection in sub-Saharan Africa.

A July study in the journal Microbial Biotechnology even presented an argument that a coronavirus strain called HCoV-OC43 might have been responsible for an 1889 outbreak also known as the Russian Flu, arguably the first true modern global pandemic. That particular strain now crops up as one of the main causes of the common cold, a classic example of an endemic infection that doctors safely dismiss.

We're not at that stage yet. Fully vaccinated, I feel relatively sanguine about the likelihood that at some point in the years ahead I, too, will be exposed to COVID-19. Still, fully inoculated friends who recently moved from Sydney to New York and caught the virus within weeks of arrival have suffered a vicious infection that spread to their unvaccinated preteen son. That's reason to keep treating this disease with respect, at least until everyone has had the chance to be vaccinated and we have a clearer sense of how long protection against severe infection persists.

This terrible scourge will always be with us, but in a milder, less troubling form. After the trauma of the past two years, it's hard to believe that we'll ever look upon that prospect with a sense of equanimity — but that's what must ultimately happen. The moment we've beaten COVID-19 won't be when we eradicate it from the human population, but when we've reached a level of vaccinated and natural immunity where we no longer have reason to fear it. That moment will come — and when it does, even this dreadful infection will be just another virus.

David Fickling is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering commodities, as well as industrial and consumer companies.

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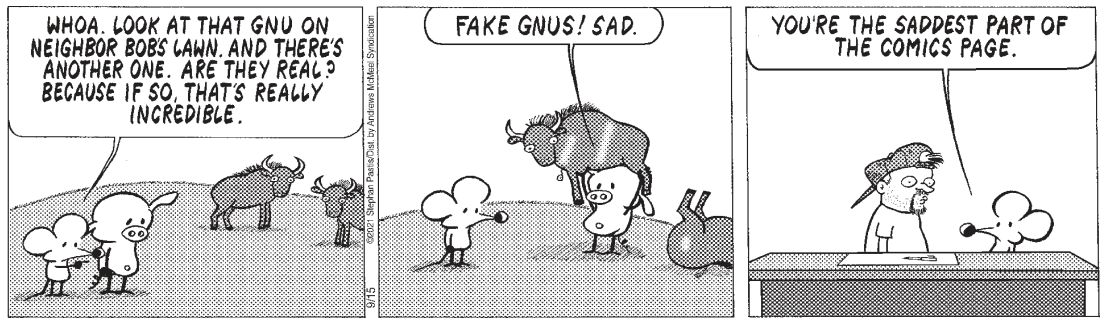
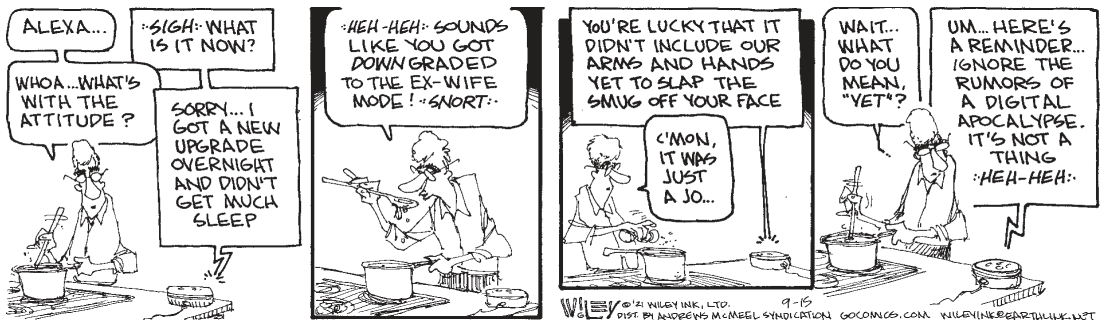
Frazz

Dilbert

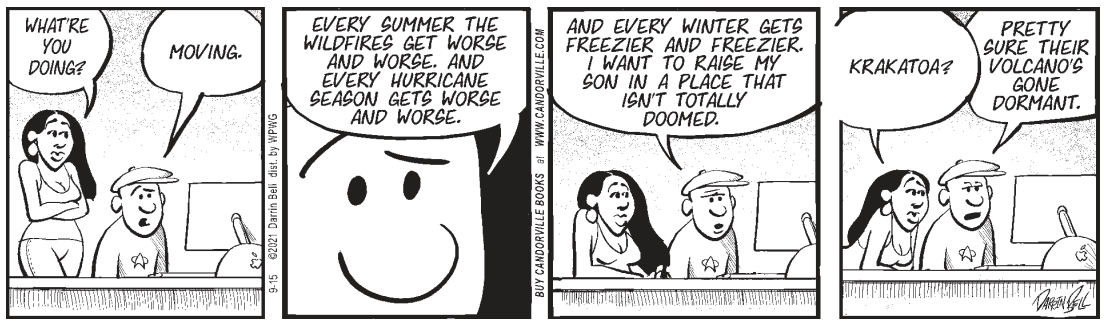
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



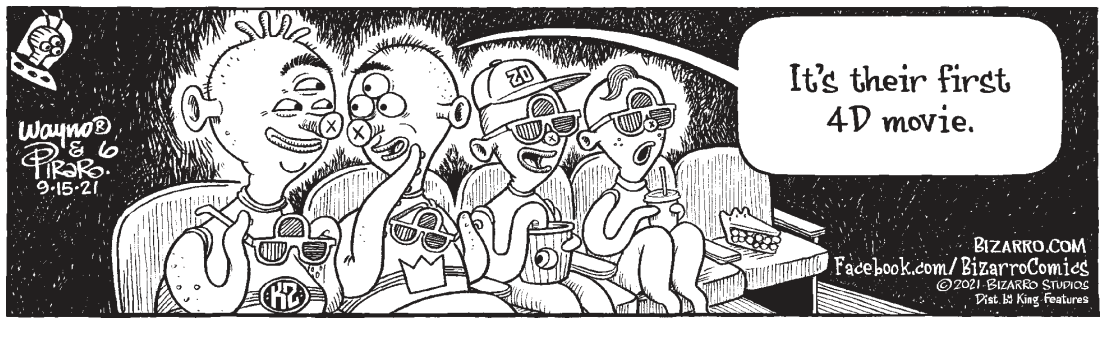
Candorville



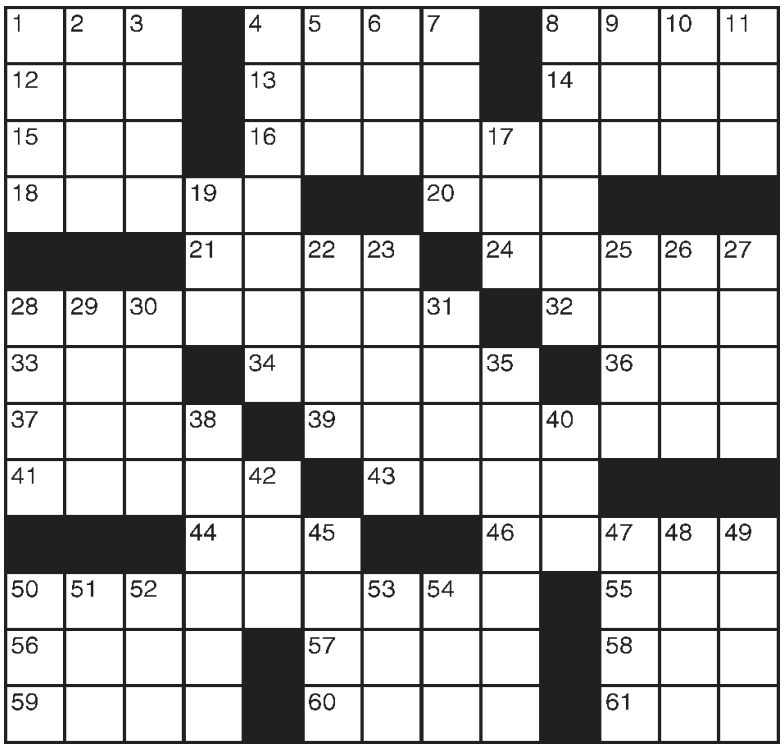
Carpe Diem

Beetle Bailey

Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

1 Owned
4 Lingerie item, for short
8 iPhone downloads
12 Outback bird
13 "Exodus" author
14 Painter Joan
15 Skier Tommy
16 Sushi bar quaffs
18 Kebab accompaniment
20 Aachen article
21 Editing mark
24 Musical symbols
28 Goes crazy
32 Memory method
33 Sashimi fish
34 "The Crucible" setting
36 Snitch
37 Courage
39 Full of
41 Bo Peep's charges
43 Doc's "Now!"
44 Table support
46 "Bye Bye Bye" band
50 Actual
55 Vacuum's lack
56 Leer at
57 Pyramid part
58 Nipper's co.
59 Afrikaner
60 Incite
61 Cotillion celeb

DOWN

1 Rope fiber
2 Mine, to Marcel
3 Face-off
4 Teens' deadlines
5 Onassis nickname
6 Amp plug-in
7 "Got it"
8 C major relative
9 Brooch
10 Opposite of "post-"
11 "Mayday!"
17 Victory
19 Billboards
22 Tale teller
23 Designer Perry
25 Actress Spelling
26 Coup d'—
27 Third son
28 Alger's "before"
29 "Nope!"
30 Evening, in an ad
31 Skilled
35 Gad about
38 eBay user
40 Scale amts.
42 Church seat
45 Oodles
47 Three feet
48 Pleasing
49 Beach crawler
50 Filch
51 Conceit
52 Pub pint
53 Knock
54 Baton Rouge sch.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

Y	O	R	K		R	A	P	T		L	A	P
T	U	B	A		A	G	A	R		I	L	E
D	R	I	V	E	T	H	R	U		N	B	C
			N	A	S	A		S	N	E	A	K
I	N	F	E	R			S	T	U	D		
N	O	O	R		C	H	A	M	B	R	A	Y
C	O	O		S	L	I	M	E		I	S	O
A	B	D	I	C	A	T	E		E	V	E	R
		D	R	O	P			N	I	E	C	E
M	O	R	A	L		D	R	A	G			
O	V	I		D	R	I	V	E	H	O	M	E
D	E	V		E	I	N	E		T	R	E	O
E	R	E		D	O	O	R		Y	A	W	N

9-15 CRYPTOQUIP

VOGP VNJJ G REX RE VODB NP ZABF GTPDZ GBR KZNBXF KGUS G ZEAXO RZGVNBX? TDPUO G FSDPUO.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF I COULD CHOOSE ANY GUY TO ACCOMPANY ME FOR A LUNCH OUTING ON THE GRASS, I'D PICK NICK.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals W

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FACES

APPLE TV+

Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon and Billy Crudup (background) star in "The Morning Show."

Out this week: 'Cry Macho,' McCreery, 'Morning Show'

The Associated Press

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV, streaming services and music platforms this week.

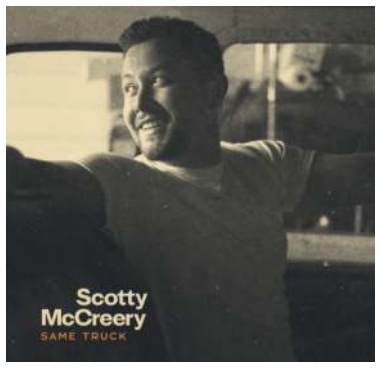
Movies

■ Clint Eastwood has gone back to his Western roots with "Cry Macho," which the 91-year-old directs and stars in as a former rodeo star who's hired to bring a young man in Mexico back to his father in the U.S. It's adapted from a 1975 N. Richard Nash novel. Like all Warner Bros. films in 2021, "Cry Macho" will debut simultaneously in theaters and on HBO Max on Friday.

■ A teen dreams of becoming a drag queen in "Everybody's Talking About Jamie," a coming-of-age musical-comedy that hits Amazon Prime Video on Friday. It's inspired by the true story of a 15-year-old kid from the U.K. who wore a dress to his school prom, which became the subject of a documentary and then a successful West End production. Max Harwood leads as Jamie New. Jonathan Butterell, who also directed the stage show, directs.

■ Also on Amazon Prime on Friday is a new film from actor-writer-director Mélanie Laurent who has adapted "The Mad Women's Ball," Victoria Mas' prize-winning novel about women in the Salpêtrière asylum in 1885 Paris. Lou de Laâge stars as a wealthy, educated and rebellious woman who refuses to conform to her father and brother's expectations and is thus institutionalized.

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr



JEFF RAY/Triple Tigers

Scotty McCreery's new album is called "Same Truck."

Music

■ Self-titled albums are important milestones, and Lindsey Buckingham is releasing one on Friday at age 71. It's the former Fleetwood Mac singer and guitarist's first solo release since 2011's "Seeds We Sow" and his seventh solo studio collection. "Lindsey Buckingham" was finished nearly four years ago and has as its singles, "I Don't Mind," "Scream" and "On the Wrong Side."

■ Cynthia Erivo drops a defining album on Friday, the 12-track "Ch. 1 Vs. 1." The Tony-, Grammy- and Emmy-winner (not to mention Oscar-nominated actor) has released a few singles already, including the soul/R&B anthem "Glowing Up," with the lyrics "Diamonds don't shine / Until they've been buried alive." The all-original material is executive produced by Will Wells.

■ Scott McCreery's fifth album, titled "Same Truck," is out Friday. Its singles include "Carolina to Me" — with the North Carolina tourist board-ready lyrics "We all believe what we believe/ But everything that's heaven to you / Is Carolina to me" — and the real-life newlywed's romantic ditty "You Time." McCreery has said the album's title emerged during a fraught 2020 — "less divide, more togetherness."

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

Television

■ Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon and Steve Carell and Billy Crudup and we could go on, but "The Morning Show" audience knows the exceptional cast. They also are acutely aware they've waited since the season one finale aired in December 2019 to find out what happened after Alex (Aniston) and Bradley (Witherspoon) turn the show into a #MeToo megaphone. The first of season two's 10 episodes is out Friday on Apple TV+.

— AP Television Writer Lynn Elber

Cynthia Erivo

JOEL C RYAN, INVISION/AP

Leno bets on reboot of 1950s game show

BY LYNN ELBER
The Associated Press

If leaving the storied role of "The Tonight Show" host mandates retirement, Jay Leno ignored the memo.

Since his longtime late-night gig ended in 2014, Leno has kept up a brisk pace. He pops up regularly on TV projects from fellow comedians Jerry Seinfeld, Larry Wilmore, Tim Allen, Dennis Miller and others.

His passion for anything with wheels and an engine is on display in "Jay Leno's Garage," returning Sept. 22 on CNBC. And he's got a new game show, a syndicated reboot of "You Bet Your Life," which debuted Monday.

"Everything past 'The Tonight Show' was gravy," Leno said. "So the fact I have anything going is fun."

"You Bet Your Life" first aired from 1950 to 1961 with famed comedian Groucho Marx, followed by a short-lived 1992 remake with Bill Cosby.

In the new version, Leno shares host duties with Kevin Eubanks, the former "Tonight" band leader who'd gleefully rib the comedian when a joke fell flat.

"People seem to like that camaraderie, because we are friends and we know each other," Leno said.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Leno discussed following in the game-show footsteps of a comedy great, and what makes for a good contestant. Remarks have been edited for clarity and brevity.

Associated Press: Why add the game show to your plate?

Leno: It seems like the time is ripe for this kind of show. It's really light and it's fun and has no politics involved.

Contestants are more media savvy than they were in Groucho Marx's day, and more likely to play to the camera. How does that affect the show?

Leno

When you do a show in LA, the cheapest, most efficient way to do it is to get people within 10 miles of the studio, (and) if they're not in show business they have some connection to it. For the last year we sent out feelers to Florida, Louisiana, all over, and we fly people in. We choose the ones that seem like characters. And you really see when they come here, they're like, 'It's my first time in LA and Oh, my God.' There's an excitement and a nervousness you don't get from the people who bump into Brad Pitt every day at the deli.

You were a kid when 'You Bet Your Life' aired. Was watching Marx inspirational for you as a comedian?

He was always my favorite Marx brother because I never was a 'put on a funny hat, throw a pie' kind of comedian. I always liked people with verbal skills: Bob Newhart, Johnny Carson. I liked people who appeared normal but said funny things, as opposed to putting on costumes. I enjoyed the Marx Brothers movies, but I liked Groucho because he was the wise guy.

McDonald, Odom to host 74th Tony Awards specials

New York Daily News

This year's Tony Awards will feature some Broadway-grown star power.

Tony and Grammy award winners Audra McDonald and Leslie Odom Jr. have been tapped to host the 74th Annual Tony Awards on Sept. 26.

McDonald, who made Tony Award history in 2014 with a record six wins, will host the awards portion of the evening, which streams exclusively on Paramount+ at 7 p.m. EDT.

Odom Jr., of "Hamilton" fame, is set to emcee the live concert event, "The Tony Awards Present: Broadway's Back!," at 9 p.m. EDT on CBS, in addition to streaming on Paramount+ and the CBS app.

The concert will include special performances from the three Tony-nominated best musical contenders "Jagged Little Pill," "Moulin Rouge! The Musical" and "Tina – The Tina Turner Musical."

The performances will be followed by the live presentation of three Tony Awards: best play, best revival of a play, and best musical.

"Broadway is a part of my DNA and I'm so thrilled to see it open back up again," Odom Jr. said. "There are so many talented artists going back to work and doing what they love for audiences who have missed these tremendous performances."

Due to the coronavirus pandemic limiting performances, the Tony Awards pulled nominations from just 18 eligible plays and musicals compared to 34 shows the season before, the Associated Press reported.

SCOREBOARD/SPORTS BRIEFS

PRO SOCCER

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
New England	17	4	4	55	47	29
Nashville	10	2	11	41	38	21
Orlando City	10	5	8	38	33	29
NYCFC	10	8	4	34	38	24
Philadelphia	8	7	8	32	28	24
D.C. United	9	10	4	31	36	33
CF Montréal	8	8	7	31	30	28
Atlanta	7	7	9	30	28	28
Inter Miami CF	8	9	5	29	23	31
Columbus	7	11	6	27	27	33
New York	6	10	5	23	24	26
Chicago	6	12	5	23	24	35
Cincinnati	4	10	8	20	23	38
Toronto FC	3	14	6	15	26	49

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Seattle	13	4	6	45	36	19
Sporting KC	12	5	7	43	39	26
Colorado	12	4	6	42	32	21
LA Galaxy	11	8	4	37	36	36
Portland	10	10	3	33	32	39
Minnesota	8	7	7	31	24	25
Real Salt Lake	8	9	6	30	36	32
LAFC	8	9	6	30	35	33
Vancouver	7	8	8	29	29	33
San Jose	6	8	9	27	25	31
FC Dallas	6	10	8	26	33	37
Houston	4	10	10	22	27	36
Austin FC	5	14	4	19	21	34

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday, Sept. 10

Atlanta 3, Orlando City 0
Portland 1, Vancouver 0

Saturday, Sept. 11

LA Galaxy 1, Colorado 1, tie
Seattle 1, Minnesota 0
D.C. United 1, New York 1, tie
New England 2, New York City FC 1
Cincinnati 2, Toronto FC 0
Miami 1, Columbus 0
Nashville 1, CF Montréal 0
Houston 3, Austin FC 0
Sporting Kansas City 2, Chicago 0
San Jose 1, FC Dallas 1, tie

Sunday's game

Los Angeles FC 3, Real Salt Lake 2

Tuesday's games

FC Dallas at New York City FC
Miami at Toronto FC
New York at Columbus

Wednesday's games

Cincinnati at Atlanta
CF Montréal at Orlando City
Chicago at D.C. United
Minnesota at Sporting Kansas City
Los Angeles FC at Austin FC
Colorado at Portland
Houston at LA Galaxy
Real Salt Lake at San Jose

Friday's game

New York at Miami

Saturday's games

D.C. United at Atlanta
Columbus at New England
Nashville at Toronto FC
New York City FC at Cincinnati
LA Galaxy at Minnesota
San Jose at Austin FC
Seattle at Real Salt Lake
FC Dallas at Houston

Sunday's games

Chicago at CF Montréal
Orlando City at Philadelphia
Los Angeles FC at Portland
Vancouver at Colorado

Wednesday, Sept. 22

Nashville at Miami
New York City FC at New York
New England at Chicago

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Portland	11	4	2	35	25	11
Reign FC	10	7	2	32	27	19
North Carolina	8	5	5	29	22	10
Orlando	7	5	7	28	24	21
Chicago	7	7	5	26	20	23
Washington	6	6	5	23	19	21
Houston	6	7	5	23	20	23
Gotham FC	5	5	7	22	17	15
Louisville	4	9	5	17	15	27
Kansas City	2	11	5	11	9	28

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday, Sept. 10

Chicago 1, Houston 1, tie

Saturday, Sept. 11

Orlando 3, Louisville 1

Sunday's games

Portland 1, North Carolina 0
Reign FC 3, Washington 0

Saturday, Sept. 25

North Carolina at Gotham FC
Portland at Chicago

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Connecticut	24	6	.800	—
x-Chicago	15	15	.500	9
Washington	12	18	.400	12
New York	11	19	.367	13
Atlanta	7	22	.241	16½
Indiana	6	23	.207	17½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Las Vegas	22	8	.733	—
x-Minnesota	20	10	.667	2
x-Seattle	20	11	.645	2½
x-Phoenix	19	11	.633	3
x-Dallas	13	18	.419	9½
Los Angeles	11	19	.367	11

Sunday's games

Washington 79, Chicago 71
Minnesota 90, Indiana 80
Los Angeles 81, Seattle 53

Monday's game

Las Vegas 85, Dallas 75

Tuesday's game

Indiana at Atlanta

Wednesday's game

New York at Connecticut

Thursday's game

Los Angeles at Atlanta

TENNIS

Zavarovalnica Sava Portoroz

Monday
Portoroz, Slovenia
Purse: $235,238
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Women's Singles
Qualification

Lucia Bronzetti (4), Italy, def. Samantha Murray Sharan, Britain, 6-2, 6-3.

Tereza Mrdeza (10), Croatia, def. Emina Bektas, United States, 4-6, 6-4, 6-0.

Katie Boulter (6), Britain, def. Irina Fetecau (12), Romania, 7-6, 6-2.

Cristiana Ferrando, Italy, def. Yuliya Hatouka (11), Belarus, 7-6, 6-1.

Aleksandra Krunic (5), Serbia, def. Susan Bandecchi (9), Switzerland, 2-6, 6-1, 6-3.

Viktoria Kuzmova (2), Slovakia, def. Lucrezia Stefanini (7), Italy, 6-4, 4-6, 7-6.

Round of 32

Bernarda Pera, United States, def. Fiona Ferro, France, 6-4, 6-3.

Kristina Mladenovic, France, def. Nika Radisic, Slovenia, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.

Sorana Cirstea (4), Romania, def. Heather Watson, Britain, 6-1, 6-3.

Ana Konjuh, Croatia, def. Donna Vekic (8), Croatia, 0-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Women's Doubles
Round of 16

Andreja Klepac and Tamara Zidansek, Slovenia, def. Natela Dzalamidze, Russia, and Kaja Juvan, Slovenia, 4-6, 6-2, 10-8.

Tereza Mihalikova, Slovakia, and Anna Kalinskaya, Russia, def. Ziva Falkner and Pia Lovric, Slovenia, 6-1, 6-2.

Susan Bandecchi, Switzerland, and Lucrezia Stefanini, Italy, def. Camilla Rosatello, Italy, and Estelle Cascino, France, 7-6 (2), 6-2.

Luxembourg Open

Monday
At Kockelscheuer Sport Centre
Luxembourg
Purse: $235,238
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Women's Singles
Round of 32

Liudmila Samsonova (7), Russia, def. Misaki Doi, Japan, 6-2, 6-3.

Oceane Dodin, France, def. Anastasia Zakharova, Russia, 6-7 (4), 6-4, 6-3.

Clara Tauson, Denmark, def. Astra Sharma, Australia, 6-2, 6-2.

Ekaterina Alexandrova (4), Russia, def. Stefanie Voegele, Switzerland, 6-1, 3-6, 6-3.

Women's Doubles
Round of 16

Anna-Lena Friedsam and Lena Papadakis, Germany, def. Anna-Karolina Schmiedlova, Slovakia, and Kaitlyn Christian, United States, 6-2, 6-4.

Ulrikke Eikeri, Norway, and Varvara Gracheva, Russia, def. Alicja Rosolska, Poland, and Vivian Heisen, Germany, 4-6, 6-4, 10-8.

GOLF

World rankings

Through Sept. 12

1.	Jon Rahm	ESP	10.69
2.	Dustin Johnson	USA	8.82
3.	Collin Morikawa	USA	8.27
4.	Patrick Cantlay	USA	7.68
5.	Xander Schauffele	USA	7.49
6.	Justin Thomas	USA	7.20
7.	Bryson DeChambeau	USA	6.98
8.	Louis Oosthuizen	SAF	6.17
9.	Brooks Koepka	USA	5.85
10.	Tony Finau	USA	5.84
11.	Harris English	USA	5.66
12.	Abraham Ancer	MEX	5.56
13.	Viktor Hovland	NOR	5.46
14.	Jordan Spieth	USA	5.46
15.	Rory McIlroy	NIR	5.46

DEALS

Monday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BOSTON RED SOX — Reinstated LHP Austin Davis from the paternity list. Reinstated RHP Hirokazu Sawamura from the COVID-19 list. Returned LHP Stephen Gonsalves and RHP Brad Peacock to Worcester (Triple-A East). Reinstated RHP Eduard Bazardo from the 60-day IL.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX— Recalled C Zack Collins from Charlotte (Triple-A East). Reinstated RHP Lucas Giolito from the 10-day IL. Optioned C Seby Zavala and SS Danny Mendick to Charlotte.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Optioned RHP Scott Blewett to Omaha (Triple-A East).

HOUSTON ASTROS — Sent 3B Jacob Wilson outright to Sugar Land (Triple-A East). Sent 1B Taylor Jones and C Jason Castro to Sugar Land on rehab assignments.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Placed OF Brent Rooker on the paternity list. Recalled RHP Kyle Barraclough from St. Paul (Triple-A East).

NEW YORK YANKEES — Sent RHP Sal Romano outright to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (Triple-A East). RHP Sal Romano elected free agency instead of accepting outright assignment to Scraton/Wilkes-Barre. Optioned RHP Clarke Schmidt to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

TEXAS RANGERS — Sent 3B Andy Ibanez and LF Willie Calhoun to Round Rock (Triple-A West) on a rehab assignment.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Recalled LHP Ryan Borucki from Buffalo (Triple-A East). Optioned RHP Trent Thornton to Buffalo.

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Reinstated RHP Tyler Clippard from the 10-day IL. Optioned LHP Miguel Aguilar to Reno (Triple-A West).

CINCINNATI REDS — Reinstated SS Kyle Farmer from the paternity list.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Reinstated LHP Clayton Kershaw from the 60-day IL. Designated OF Steven Souza Jr. for assignment.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Transferred LHP Steven Brault from the 10-day IL to the 60-day IL. Claimed RHP Enyel De Los Santos off waivers from the Philadelphia.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Sent RHP Dakota Hudson to Memphis (Triple-A East) on a rehab assignment.

SAN DIEGO PADRES — Placed RHP Chris Paddack on the 10-day IL, retroactive to Sept. 12. Recalled RHP Shaun Anderson from El Paso (Triple-A West).

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Optioned SS Mauricio Dubon to Sacramento (Triple-A West). Reinstated LHP Jose Quintana from the paternity list.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Reinstated 2B Jordy Mercer from the 10-day IL. Optioned RHP Steven Fuentes to Rochester (Triple-A East). Designated SS Adrian Sanchez for assignment.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

ATLANTA FALCONS — Signed LB Brandon Coupland.

BALTIMORE RAVENS — Promoted DT Justin Ellis and DB Anthony Levine from the practice squad to the active roster.

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Signed WR Alex Erickson. Signed S Jalen Julius to the practice squad. Released WR Omar Bayless. Placed CB Myles Hartsfield on injured reserve.

DALLAS COWBOYS — Placed WR Michael Gallup on injured reserve.

DETROIT LIONS — Placed CB Jeff Okudah on injured reserve.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Signed TE Mark Vital to the practice squad. Released WR Maurice Ffrench.

MIAMI DOLPHINS — Released FB Carl Tucker from the practice squad.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Released DT T.Y. McGill.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Waived DB Jordan Miller.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Promoted S Andrew Adams from the practice squad to the active roster. Signed LS Carson Tinker. Placed CB Sean Murphy-Bunting and LS Zach Triner on injured reserve. Signed S Chris Cooper and CB Pierre Desir to the practice squad.

TENNESSEE TITANS — Signed TE MyCole Pruitt and DB Bradley McDougald to the active roster. Waived K Michael Badgley and TE Tommy Hudson. Signed OL Christian DiLauro and LB Joseph Jones to the practice squad. Released LB Jan Johnson from the practice squad.

WASHINGTON FOOTBALL TEAM — Placed QB Ryan Fitzpatrick on injured reserve. Signed QB Kyle Shurmur to the practice squad.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

SEATTLE KRAKEN — Signed F Ryan Donato to a one-year contract.

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

LOS ANGELES FOOTBALL CLUB — Signed G Jamal Blackman through 2021 with options through 2022.

AP SPORTLIGHT

Sept. 15

1899 — Willie Smith wins the U.S. Open golf title, beating George low, Val Fitzjohn and W.H. Way.

1962 — Frank Tripucka of the Denver Broncos passes for 447 yards and two touchdowns in a 23-20 win over the Buffalo Bills.

2012 — LSU beats Idaho 63-14 to give the Tigers an NCAA FBS record 40th-straight non-conference regular season victory. LSU also set a Tiger Stadium mark with 20 straight home wins. Kansas State had 39 straight non-conference regular-season wins from 1993-2003.

BRIEFLY

USC fires Helton after two games

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Clay Helton's unlikely tenure as the head football coach at Southern California began bizarrely and lasted far longer than almost anybody expected.

The folksy Southerner won a Rose Bowl and a Pac-12 title early on, but he never won over most of the Trojans' fans.

After one more embarrassing defeat for a school desperate to add to its 11 national championships, USC finally moved on.

Helton was fired on Monday, two games into his seventh season in charge. Athletic director Mike Bohn made the move two days after a 42-28 home loss to Stanford that sent the Trojans plummeting out of the AP Top 25.

Helton went 46-24 at USC.

Donte Williams, the Trojans' cornerbacks coach and associate head coach, is taking over for the rest of the season alongside offensive coordinator Graham Harrell and defensive coordinator Todd Orlando.

Williams, a Los Angeles-area native, becomes the first Black head coach in USC football history. He joined the program in 2020 from Oregon, and he has played a major role in the Trojans' recruiting advancements over the past two cycles.

Cantlay wins PGA Tour player of the year award

Patrick Cantlay closed out another victory, this time without hitting a shot.

Cantlay was voted PGA Tour player of the year by his peers, capturing the Jack Nicklaus Award that could be seen as a referendum on how players value winning the FedEx Cup.

His solid year became so much more over the final two weeks of the season when Cantlay won a six-hole playoff at the BMW Championship over Bryson DeChambeau and then captured the FedEx Cup with a one-shot victory over Jon Rahm in the Tour Championship.

It presumably was a tight race over Rahm, the No. 1 player in the world who won the PGA Tour money title and the Vardon Trophy for the lowest scoring average.

Slugger Braun retires after 14-year career

MILWAUKEE — Ryan Braun, the Milwaukee Brewers' home run leader whose production was slowed by injuries during the second half of his 14-year career, announced his retirement on Tuesday.

Braun hasn't played all season and said during spring training that he was leaning toward retirement. The 2011 NL MVP made it official Tuesday in a video the Brewers posted on Twitter.

Braun, 37, batted .296 with 352 homers and 1,154 RBIs. He ranks second among Brewers in RBIs (1,154), extra-base hits (809), total bases (3,525) and doubles (408). He ranks third in runs (1,080), hits (1,963), triples (49), stolen bases (216) and walks (586). He is fourth in games played (1,766).

Braun became a free agent after Milwaukee declined to exercise a $15 million mutual option in his contract last October. The six-time All-Star batted a career-low .233 with eight homers and 26 RBIs in 39 games last season while dealing with a back issue.

In other baseball news:

■ The Kansas City Royals are promoting general manager Dayton Moore to club president and elevating longtime assistant GM J.J. Picollo to fill his role, a person familiar with the front-office movements told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the club had not announced the moves.

LA28 committee chooses Carter as new CEO

The organizing committee for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics elevated its top marketing officer, Kathy Carter, to CEO on Tuesday as it ramps up preparations for the Games that are now less than seven years away.

Carter started work for the committee in 2018 as its chief revenue officer and is responsible for securing key deals with founding sponsors including Delta Airlines and Comcast.

Carter will continue to cut deals in an Olympic landscape that has been altered both by its own attempts to streamline the Games, along with the impact the coronavirus pandemic has had on sports and the Olympic schedule itself.

She said one of her key challenges will be "bringing together talent from an experience standpoint, but also from a diversity standpoint, that allows us to prepare for the known and, more importantly, the unknown."

With Carter, the committee now has about 10 top executives on board. Casey Wasserman, who drove the bid to bring the games back to LA, is the chair of LA28.

MLB

Giants first to clinch playoff spot

San Francisco routs San Diego 9-1 for eighth consecutive victory

By Michael Wagaman
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — It's been five years since Brandon Belt got to toast a playoff berth, so the Giants first baseman was admittedly out of practice when the champagne started to flow in San Francisco's clubhouse.

"I forgot how much this burns to get in your eyes, but it burns so good," a beaming Belt said. "We absolutely love it."

The surprising Giants became the first team to clinch a playoff spot this season, hitting four home runs to beat the San Diego Padres 9-1 on Monday night for their season-high eighth consecutive victory.

After finishing 29-31 during the pandemic-shortened 2020 season, San Francisco has turned things around in manager Gabe Kapler's second year. It has the best record in baseball (94-50) with 18 games remaining — guaranteeing it at least a wild card as it tries to hold off the rival Dodgers for the NL West title.

"This is a pretty focused and even-keeled team," said Kapler, who won a World Series ring as a player with the Boston Red Sox in 2004. "You have quite a few World Series champions in that room and people who understand that this is one step in the direction that we want to go, but not the ultimate goal."

The Giants extended their latest hot streak by getting early power at the plate and steady pitching from the bullpen after opener Dominic Leone threw two strong innings.

Tommy La Stella homered on the fourth pitch from Padres starter Yu Darvish and Evan Longoria hit a three-run drive five batters later. Mike Yastrzemski added a solo shot in the fourth, when Belt also went deep as San Francisco secured a postseason berth for the first time since 2016.

This one was unexpected for a team that won the World Series in 2010, 2012 and 2014.

Jeff Chiu/AP

San Francisco Giants pitcher Kervin Castro celebrates after the Giants defeated the San Diego Padres 9-1 on Monday in San Francisco to clinch a postseason berth.

ROUNDUP

Hey, Siri! Astros' rookie homers twice in win

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Jose Siri homered twice and added a two-run single in his first big league start, Yordan Alvarez hit a pair of 400-foot homers and the AL West-leading Houston Astros overwhelmed the last-place Texas Rangers 15-1 on Monday.

Siri became the first big league player since RBIs became official in 1920 to have two homers and five RBIs in a first career start.

"I feel really happy, I feel really proud of myself to be able to accomplish that," Siri, who finished 4-for-5 and scored three times, said through a translator.

Alex Bregman also went deep for the Astros (84-59). Carlos Correa and Jose Altuve added two-run doubles as Houston built a 9-0 lead after scoring multiple runs in each of the first three innings off three Rangers pitchers.

The 26-year-old Siri got called up by the Astros on Sept. 4 after hitting .318 in 94 games at Triple-A Sugar Land. He had made his pro debut eight years ago in the Dominican Summer League, and Houston became his fourth big league organization when he signed as a free agent last winter.

Blue Jays 8, Rays 1: Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit his major league-leading 45th home run, Alek Manoah set a career high by pitching eight shutout innings, and host Toronto dealt AL East-leading Tampa Bay its fourth loss in five games.

Tony Gutierrez/AP

The Houston Astros' Jose Siri rounds the bases after hitting a two-run homer against the Texas Rangers. He hit another homer and had five RBIs in a 15-1 win Monday in Arlington, Texas.

Teoscar Hernández had his first career five-hit game and Bo Bichette added a solo home run, his 24th, as the surging Blue Jays improved to 12-1 in September.

Guerrero moved ahead of Angels two-way star Shohei Ohtani for most home runs in the majors. He also eclipsed the single-season high set by his Hall of Fame father with Montreal in 2000.

Yankees 6, Twins 5 (10): Aaron Judge hit a tying three-run homer off Alex Colomé with two outs in the eighth inning, Gary Sánchez lined a winning single in the 10th, and host New York overcame a five-run deficit to beat Minnesota.

The Yankees won for just the fourth time in 16 games and moved one percentage point ahead of Boston for the second AL wild-card berth, one game behind Toronto, with 18 games left.

Gleyber Torres was the automatic runner on second when Sánchez singled with one out in the 10th off Ralph Garza Jr. (1-3).

Dodgers 5, Diamondbacks 1: Clayton Kershaw struck out five in his first start since July 3 and Los Angeles beat Arizona for its seventh straight home win.

Activated from the injured list earlier in the day, Kershaw had missed 57 games with elbow inflammation. The 33-year-old left-hander gave up four hits, walked one and didn't figure in the decision after throwing 50 pitches over 4⅓ innings.

Phil Bickford (4-2) got the win with one inning of scoreless relief.

Cardinals 7, Mets 0: Adam Wainwright won his fifth straight start in a rare matchup of 40-year-old pitchers, and visiting St. Louis blanked New York.

Paul Goldschmidt homered and had two RBIs for the surging Cardinals, who began the day one game behind Cincinnati and San Diego for the second NL wild card.

The Mets entered the game three games behind the Reds and Padres.

Mariners 5, Red Sox 4: Mitch Haniger made Boston pay for a costly error by first baseman Kyle Schwarber, hitting a three-run home run with two out in the seventh inning for host Seattle.

Reliever Ryan Brasier (0-1) took the loss for the Red Sox, who have allowed 33 unearned runs since the All-Star break, most in the American League.

Marlins 3, Nationals 0: Sandy Alcantara allowed one hit over eight innings and Miami won at Washington.

With two outs in the seventh, Josh Bell lined a single off the base of the right-field fence to end Alcantara's no-hit bid. The right-hander then retired his next four batters, leaving with seven strikeouts and no walks after throwing 96 pitches.

Jesus Sanchez had a first-inning RBI single and Alex Jackson doubled home two runs in the ninth. Dylan Floro worked a one-hit ninth for his 11th save.

Scoreboard

American League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	89	55	.618	_
Toronto	81	63	.563	8
New York	80	64	.556	9
Boston	81	65	.555	9
Baltimore	46	97	.322	42½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	82	61	.573	_
Cleveland	69	72	.489	12
Detroit	68	76	.472	14½
Kansas City	65	78	.455	17
Minnesota	63	81	.438	19½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	84	59	.587	_
Seattle	78	66	.542	6½
Oakland	77	66	.538	7
Los Angeles	70	73	.490	14
Texas	53	90	.371	31

National League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	76	66	.535	_
Philadelphia	72	71	.503	4½
New York	72	73	.497	5½
Miami	61	83	.424	16
Washington	59	85	.410	18

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	89	55	.618	_
Cincinnati	75	69	.521	14
St. Louis	74	69	.517	14½
Chicago	65	79	.451	24
Pittsburgh	52	91	.364	36½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
z-San Francisco	94	50	.653	_
Los Angeles	92	53	.634	2½
San Diego	74	69	.517	19½
Colorado	66	78	.458	28
Arizona	47	97	.326	47

z-clinched playoff berth

Monday's games

N.Y. Yankees 6, Minnesota 5, 10 innings
Toronto 8, Tampa Bay 1
Houston 15, Texas 1
Seattle 5, Boston 4
Miami 3, Washington 0
St. Louis 7, N.Y. Mets 0
San Francisco 9, San Diego 1
L.A. Dodgers 5, Arizona 1

Tuesday's games

Cleveland at Minnesota, 2
Milwaukee at Detroit
N.Y. Yankees at Baltimore
Tampa Bay at Toronto
Houston at Texas
L.A. Angels at Chicago White Sox
Oakland at Kansas City
Boston at Seattle
Cincinnati at Pittsburgh
Chicago Cubs at Philadelphia
Miami at Washington
St. Louis at N.Y. Mets
Colorado at Atlanta
San Diego at San Francisco
Arizona at L.A. Dodgers

Wednesday's games

Milwaukee (Woodruff 9-8) at Detroit (Manning 3-6)
Tampa Bay (Wacha 3-4) at Toronto (Ray 11-5)
Boston (Houck 0-4) at Seattle (Gonzales 8-5)
N.Y. Yankees (Cortes Jr. 2-2) at Baltimore (Means 5-7)
Cleveland (Quantrill 5-3) at Minnesota (Jax 3-3)
Houston (Urquidy 6-3) at Texas (Arihara 2-3)
L.A. Angels (TBD) at Chicago White Sox (Keuchel 8-9)
Oakland (Manaea 9-9) at Kansas City (Minor 8-12)
Miami (Rogers 7-7) at Washington (Rogers 1-0)
Cincinnati (Gutierrez 9-6) at Pittsburgh (Keller 4-11)
Chicago Cubs (Mills 6-6) at Philadelphia (Suárez 6-4)
St. Louis (Lester 5-6) at N.Y. Mets (Megill 3-4)
Colorado (Senzatela 4-9) at Atlanta (Ynoa 4-5)
San Diego (Musgrove 10-9) at San Francisco (TBD)
Arizona (Bumgarner 7-10) at L.A. Dodgers (Urías 17-3)

Thursday's games

L.A. Angels at Chicago White Sox
Oakland at Kansas City
N.Y. Yankees at Baltimore
Detroit at Tampa Bay
Houston at Texas
Colorado at Atlanta
Cincinnati at Pittsburgh
San Diego at San Francisco
Chicago Cubs at Philadelphia

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Nice save: Big 12's coaches praise move

Say swift expansion decision solidified league's future

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

Kansas State coach Chris Klieman says he was never worried the Big 12 would disband or become irrelevant, even with the lingering questions about the conference's future when Oklahoma and Texas head to the Southeastern Conference.

"I knew none of that was true," Klieman said.

The Big 12's swift response to expand with the additions of BYU, UCF, Cincinnati and Houston certainly helped answer a lot of those questions and created some stability moving forward for the league that some didn't think would survive the departures of its only football national champions.

"We got four really good programs. ... I think it solidifies the Big 12 is as a power conference that's here to stay for the long haul," Klieman said Monday during the first Big 12 coaches' teleconference of the season.

"Well, we hit a home run, the presidents, ADs, Big 12 office, whoever was involved in this. There couldn't be a better scenario," said Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy. "We kept the Big 12 status. I always felt like that we needed more than 10 teams. Now we're back to 12, we are the Big 12. And I couldn't be any more pleased with the direction that it's gone over the last week."

The Big 12 has as many of its future schools ranked in the Top 25 as it does current members, with two each. Oklahoma is third, and Cincinnati eighth. Iowa State dropped out of the top 10 to 14th after losing to Iowa and BYU is No. 23.

Only six weeks after Oklahoma and Texas accepted invitations to join the SEC by 2025, the Big 12 added four schools that will join its league before then. BYU, now playing as an independent in football, will start Big 12 play for the 2023 football season, with the three American Athletic Conference schools coming in no later than 2024.

After getting their Big 12 invitations on Friday, the four future foes all won Saturday. BYU beat Utah for its first victory against its instate rival in nine tries since 2009, and the other three had lopsided wins.

Oklahoma and Texas, which fell out of the Top 25 after a 40-21 loss at future SEC foe Arkansas, have said they will honor their current contracts with the Big 12 and do not plan to join the SEC until 2025, when the conference's current television rights contracts expire with ESPN and Fox.

Sooners coach Lincoln Riley said he didn't really have any thoughts on the Big 12 additions since it doesn't change anything now. When recruits and parents ask when the Sooners will be switching leagues, he tells them the plan is still 2025 and that he will let them know if anything changes.

"We've been trying to be pretty honest," Riley said. "They're going to get an opportunity to play a high level level here at OU, no matter what league you're in."

The Sooners are the league's only team to make the four-team College Football Playoff. And while they have lost in the semifinals in each of their four appearances, they have dominated the Big 12, winning the last six conference titles and 14 of 25 overall.

Oklahoma's departure seemingly will open the way for other teams to be at the top.

"The four teams coming in, and certainly the ones here in the Big 12, a lot can change in a couple of years. So I'm not sure, you know, we're doing anything but guessing. But, yeah, absolutely," Texas Tech coach Matt Wells said.

"I think the opportunity is there for a fair amount of the teams in the league. And I think that could be a real, real strong point of the league," Baylor coach Dave Aranda said. "You look at teams that are built similar. There's a toughness to them, there is a simple can be sophisticated approach to them. It's not going to be tricks and gadgets. It's going to be execution of fundamentals and all that."

TONY GUTIERREZ/AP

Kansas State head coach Chris Klieman said he wasn't worried the Big 12 would disband or become irrelevant after the departure of Oklahoma and Texas.

Navy keeps Jasper in reversal, other assistant out

BY NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press

Longtime assistant Ivin Jasper is staying with the Navy coaching staff after another bad loss left his status in limbo.

The Midshipmen did part ways with another member of their staff — offensive assistant Billy Ray Stutzmann says he's been dismissed after he was unable to follow the academy's COVID-19 policy for religious reasons.

On a dramatic day for the struggling program, coach Ken Niumatalolo said athletic director Chet Gladchuk decided to fire Jasper — the team's offensive coordinator for over a decade — after Navy's listless performance against Air Force on Saturday. But after further discussion, Jasper will remain in his other role as quarterbacks coach. Niumatalolo will call plays.

"It was an unfortunate situation. There's some emotion involved, obviously, but we just lost a big game," Niumatalolo said. "I think cooler heads have prevailed."

Navy went 3-7 last year, only its third losing season in 18 years. The team's option attack fizzled, and the Midshipmen have dropped their first two games this season by a combined score of 72-10. Navy lost a nationally televised game to Air Force 23-3 on Saturday, and the Midshipmen managed only one first down before the fourth quarter.

That was followed by the initial decision to relieve Jasper — in his 14th year as offensive coordinator and 20th as quarterbacks coach — of his duties.

"I don't think Mr. Gladchuk was too happy the way things transpired. He's the leader of our department, and he made the decision after the game that he was going to let Coach Jasper go," Niumatalolo said. "None of us were happy. A lot of emotions after the game — to lose to a rival like that, we didn't play well on offense."

Niumatalolo, who is in his 14th season as Navy's head coach, said losing Jasper wasn't the answer.

TERRANCE WILLIAMS/AP

Navy players raise their fists after singing "Navy Blue and Gold" after their 23-3 loss Saturday to Air Force at Annapolis, Md.

"Obviously, we're not playing well now on offense, but the things that he's done for this school and this program over the years has been monumental," Niumatalolo said. "He's beloved by people. He's beloved by his players. He's a great developer of quarterbacks but also of men."

Stutzmann, in his third season as an offensive assistant at Navy, posted a message on Twitter saying he'd been dismissed.

"The Naval Academy Athletic Association policy regarding COVID-19 requires all coaches and staff to be vaccinated against this virus. Based on my religious convictions, and after much thought and prayer, I am unable to follow the requirements of the Naval Academy's COVID-19 policy, as it has changed these last few months," Stutzmann said. "After applying for a religious exemption and attempting to further negotiate alternative working arrangements, I was ultimately relieved of my duties here at Navy. I continue to stand firm in my conviction of faith, but I understand and respect that each individual and institution has a choice on how they wish to manage these issues."

Niumatalolo let Stutzmann's statement speak for itself, but said it's a big loss for the team.

"He's added a lot to our program," Niumatalolo said. "Wish him the best of luck, he and his wife Shanelle. Wonderful young man. Got a bright, bright future in this profession."

NFL

Nassib delivers critical strip-sack

BY W.G. RAMIREZ
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Las Vegas Raiders defensive end Carl Nassib described the electric atmosphere inside a frenzied Allegiant Stadium with one word: "Bananas."

But of the 61,756 rabid fans in attendance for "Monday Night Football," one just happened to be a non-football fan.

Andrew Erazos, a 60-year-old server at a local steakhouse, is a Carl Nassib fan.

And when Nassib came out publicly as gay on Instagram in June, Erazos was moved so much he bought Nassib's jersey and couldn't wait to attend a game.

Erazos got more than he bargained for with a wild conclusion to Week 1 of the NFL season, as Nassib's strip-sack on Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson came at a critical time in overtime and helped the Raiders to a 33-27 win .

"That's amazing, that's a great story, I love that. I wish I could've seen (him)," Nassib said. "It was really special, I'm really happy that we got the win on the day that kind of made a little bit of history, which is like really nice to do."

History, as in the first regular-season NFL game with an openly gay player on the field. Nassib, who is in his second season with the Raiders, is the first active NFL player to come out as gay.

More than a dozen NFL players have come out as gay once their careers were over. Former University of Missouri defensive star Michael Sam was the first openly gay football player ever selected in the NFL Draft, when he was taken in the seventh round by the Rams in 2014. But he never made the final roster and retired in 2015 having never played in an NFL regular-season game.

DAVID BECKER/AP

Raiders defensive end Carl Nassib forces a fumble by Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson during overtime Monday in Las Vegas. The Raiders recovered the fumble and won the game three plays later.

Nassib finished with three tackles, including the monumental sack that helped Las Vegas earn its third-straight season-opening win.

"It was awesome, Carl works super hard," defensive end Maxx Crosby said. "You see that. It's the biggest play of the game. He comes out, gets a strip sack, that's what we talk about all the time. We're super proud of him. Carl's a baller and I'm proud of the guy."

With Baltimore facing a third-and-7, Nassib sacked Jackson, causing a fumble that was recovered by defensive tackle Darius Philon, and handed the ball to the Raiders at the Ravens 27-yard-line.

"I should have had two hands on the ball and could have taken a sack," Jackson said. "It happens."

Three plays later Las Vegas quarterback Derek Carr dropped back and floated a pass from the 43-yard-line to a wide open Zay Jones, who caught the ball at the 5-yard line and waltzed in for a walk-off win.

"Our defense made a signature play at the end of that game," Raiders coach Jon Gruden said. "They love football, they play for each other. We were down 14-0 to the Ravens and it didn't look pretty, it didn't look good. But when you can come back and find a way to win against a team like that, that's saying something. That's an impressive victory."

Said Nassib: "I've played in a lot of games, now this is my sixth year, I try to make sure I really remember every single game. I won't forget this one."

Rally: Raiders fell behind by 14 early in the game

FROM PAGE 24

Then Nassib delivered the strip sack of Lamar Jackson in his first game since becoming the first active NFL player to come out as gay in the offseason.

The Raiders then made another blunder by committing a delay of game before a field goal try, leading to Gruden sending the offense back on the field.

The Ravens sent a blitz and Carr lofted a pass that Jones ran under for the score, sending Las Vegas pouring out on the field for a second celebration.

"I'm glad coach trusted us, put it in our hands at the end," Carr said. "Because it always feels good to win that way, especially when you almost gave away."

The Raiders trailed 14-0 early, ending a 98-game, regular-season win streak for the Baltimore when leading by at least 14 points dating to 2004.

The loss capped a rough stretch for the Ravens, who have had a run of injuries that sidelined top three running backs J.K. Dobbins, Gus Edwards and Justice Hill, as well as cornerback Marcus Peters, for the season.

"We just didn't close the game out when we had the opportunity to do it three or four times," coach John Harbaugh said. "That's what you need to do when you have an opportunity to win, you got to win. We just didn't do that tonight."

They had won the past five openers by a margin of 177-26, but came up short in this nail-biter thanks to a strong game from Carr, who threw for 435 yards.

The overtime came after a wild back-and-forth fourth quarter that featured Las Vegas rallying to tie the game on three separate occasions, with Carr driving the team to a tying 55-yard field goal in the final 37 seconds.

Baltimore had taken the lead when Jackson scrambled 28 yards to help set up Justin Tucker's 47-yard field goal.

But Jackson is still haunted by the two late fumbles.

"That ticked me off," he said. "I hate any type of turnover."

The Raiders earlier got a forced fumble by Quinton Jefferson against Jackson to set up Josh Jacobs' 15-yard TD run, tying the game at 17.

The Ravens answered when former Raider Latavius Murray ran it in from 8 yards one play after Jackson found Sammy Watkins on a mismatch for a 49-yard pass.

Carr then connected on a 37-yard pass to Henry Ruggs III that set up a tying 10-yard TD to Darren Waller with 3:44 to play.

Spectacular play

Jackson's TD pass to Marquise Brown in the first half was a spectacular individual effort. He escaped pressure from Maxx Crosby and Yannick Ngakoue and scrambled before finding Brown in the back of the end zone for a 10-yard score.

According to NFL NextGen stats, Jackson took 7.84 seconds to throw for the fifth-longest TD pass in the past five seasons and scrambled 27 yards for his most ever on a TD.

Go for it

The Ravens went for it twice on fourth down in the first half, getting a 35-yard TD run from Ty'Son Williams on the first. Murray got stuffed by K.J. Wright on the second.

The Raiders got stopped on a fourth-and-1 run by Jacobs at the Ravens 13 in the third quarter.

Up next

Ravens: Host Kansas City on Sunday night. Baltimore has lost four straight against the Chiefs, including all three matchups between Jackson and Patrick Mahomes.

Raiders: Visit Pittsburgh on Sunday.

Scoreboard

American Conference

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Miami	1	0	0	1.000	17	16
Buffalo	0	1	0	.000	16	23
N.Y. Jets	0	1	0	.000	14	19
New England	0	1	0	.000	16	17

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Houston	1	0	0	1.000	37	21
Indianapolis	0	1	0	.000	16	28
Jacksonville	0	1	0	.000	21	37
Tennessee	0	1	0	.000	13	38

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Cincinnati	1	0	0	1.000	27	24
Pittsburgh	1	0	0	1.000	23	16
Baltimore	0	1	0	.000	27	33
Cleveland	0	1	0	.000	29	33

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Denver	1	0	0	1.000	27	13
Kansas City	1	0	0	1.000	33	29
L.A. Chargers	1	0	0	1.000	20	16
Las Vegas	1	0	0	1.000	33	27

National Conference

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Philadelphia	1	0	0	1.000	32	6
Dallas	0	1	0	.000	29	31
N.Y. Giants	0	1	0	.000	13	27
Washington	0	1	0	.000	16	20

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Carolina	1	0	0	1.000	19	14
New Orleans	1	0	0	1.000	38	3
Tampa Bay	1	0	0	1.000	31	29
Atlanta	0	1	0	.000	6	32

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Chicago	0	1	0	.000	14	34
Detroit	0	1	0	.000	33	41
Green Bay	0	1	0	.000	3	38
Minnesota	0	1	0	.000	24	27

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Arizona	1	0	0	1.000	38	13
L.A. Rams	1	0	0	1.000	34	14
San Francisco	1	0	0	1.000	41	33
Seattle	1	0	0	1.000	28	16

Thursday, Sept. 9

Tampa Bay 31, Dallas 29

Sunday's games

Arizona 38, Tennessee 13
Carolina 19, N.Y. Jets 14
Cincinnati 27, Minnesota 24, OT
Houston 37, Jacksonville 21
L.A. Chargers 20, Washington 16
Philadelphia 32, Atlanta 6
Pittsburgh 23, Buffalo 16
San Francisco 41, Detroit 33
Seattle 28, Indianapolis 16
Denver 27, N.Y. Giants 13
Kansas City 33, Cleveland 29
Miami 17, New England 16
New Orleans 38, Green Bay 3
L.A. Rams 34, Chicago 14

Monday's game

Las Vegas 33, Baltimore 27, OT

Thursday's game

N.Y. Giants at Washington

DAVID BECKER/AP

A full stadium of fans greeted the Raiders for Monday's game against Baltimore in Las Vegas.

NFL

TONY AVELAR/AP

Peyton Manning, left, and his brother Eli Manning, shown golfing at the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am in February of 2020, made their Monday Night Football debut broadcast on ESPN2 and ESPN+.

ANALYSIS

Manning Brothers talk as big a game as they played

Pair had plenty of material to work with in their Monday Night Football debut

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
Associated Press

"They're all going to be like this," Peyton Manning exclaimed after the thrilling climax to the NFL's wildest of opening weekends.

"Yeah," replied baby brother Eli, "this was fun, bro."

And not just for America's first family of football, but for fans across the country who were thoroughly entertained by the Manning brothers in their "Monday Night Football" debut broadcast on ESPN2 and streamed on ESPN+.

They not only gave audiences a Master's course in both offense and defense straight from the masterminds of professional football, but the Brothers Manning also provided riveting running commentary and plenty of their patented dry humor throughout the rip-roaring Week 1 finale.

The rave reviews for the former NFL QBs came in long before the Raiders overcame a premature bench-clearing celebration and a series of blunders to stagger away 33-27 winners in overtime against the Ravens.

"It doesn't seem very smart of ESPN to put Peyton and Eli on ESPN2," tweeted Ben McKee, who covers Peyton's alma mater, the University of Tennessee. "Not because it's not a great idea, but because surely nobody is watching the main broadcast.

"This is amazing television."

It was.

They couldn't have asked for a better game to make their dandy debut.

The Raiders trailed 14-0 early on — the Ravens had won 98 consecutive games when leading by that much — and Las Vegas scored 17 points in the final nine minutes of regulation, including a field goal after getting the ball with no timeouts and 37 seconds remaining.

The Raiders nearly let the win slip from their grasp, however. After what they thought was a game-winning touchdown was overruled on replay, they got the ball just shy of the end zone but couldn't punch it in.

The Mannings and their special guest Russell Wilson were incredulous at Derek Carr's inexcusable hard count from inside the 1-yard line that fooled his rookie right tackle Alex Leatherwood and pushed them back 5 yards.

Just when the crowd had accepted that the Raiders would have to kick a field goal and give the ball back to the Ravens, Carr's pass sailed through Willie Snead IV's fingertips, ricocheted off safety Deshon Elliot's helmet and settled into the arms of Ravens cornerback Anthony Averett in the end zone.

Then, Lamar Jackson fumbled at his own 27 — Peyton lauded Raiders defensive coordinator Gus Bradley's call that confused Baltimore's offense on the play — and the Raiders had a golden opportunity to atone for all their mistakes.

Peyton, who never liked to hear a peep from the home crowd when his team had the ball, took Raiders fans to task several times for making too much noise when Carr was barking out play calls.

"Drink your beer, quiet down. Let Carr play quarterback," he admonished the crowd at Allegiant Stadium.

Another time, Peyton, in his armchair, waived his arms as if to quiet the crowd himself.

Archie's boys also brought some brotherly jabs, like when Peyton was in the middle of demonstrating a point he wanted to make and finally just wrestled off the Ravens helmet he'd put on.

"This helmet doesn't fit," said an exasperated Peyton.

"That's shocking that a helmet doesn't fit you," Eli retorted.

"They didn't have a XXL helmet for that forehead?"

Opening weekend featured plenty of curious calls, like Cowboys coach Mike McCarthy's decision to let Greg Zuerlein attempt a 60-yarder at Tampa after he'd missed badly on a short field goal and an extra point in his return from back troubles.

BRIEFS

Ex-49ers, Saints LB Haralson dies at 37

Associated Press

Parys Haralson, a former linebacker for the San Francisco 49ers and New Orleans Saints, has died. He was 37.

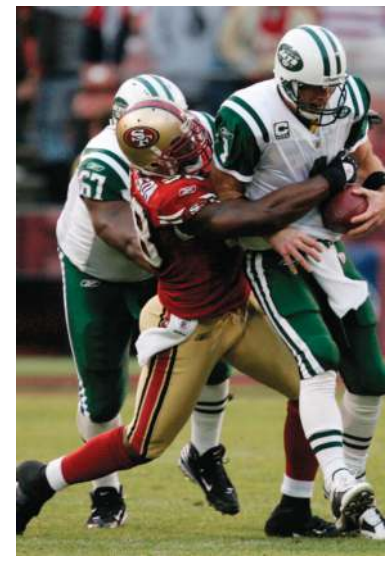
The 49ers announced Haralson's death on Monday. No details were provided.

Haralson also served as San Francisco's director of player engagement for two years.

"Parys was a beloved member of our organization that lived life with an extraordinary amount of passion and joy, while leaving an indelible mark on everyone he came across," the team said in a statement. "We extend our condolences to Parys' family and loved ones."

Haralson played college ball at Tennessee before he was selected by San Francisco in the fifth round of the 2006 NFL Draft. He was a two-time captain for the Volunteers and finished with 21 sacks.

Haralson played in 118 NFL games, including 88 starts. He had 380 tackles, 28 sacks, five fumble recoveries, three forced fumbles and five passes defensed.



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

New York Jets quarterback Brett Favre is sacked by San Francisco 49ers linebacker Parys Haralson in 2008. On Monday, the 49ers announced that Haralson had died. He was 37.

Cowboys get Martin back, Gregory joins COVID list

FRISCO, Texas — The Dallas Cowboys activated right guard Zack Martin off the COVID-19 reserve list Monday, but they will start the week without defensive end Randy Gregory because of the health and safety protocols.

Gregory went on the COVID-19 list four days after playing in the opener, a 31-29 loss to Tampa Bay. Backup tackle Brandon Knight returned along with Martin.

Martin missed the game against the defending Super Bowl champions after testing positive five days earlier. The Cowboys are at risk of having another starter sidelined for a game if Gregory can't return this week.

Gregory needs two negative tests 24 hours apart to be activated. The Cowboys visit the Los Angeles Chargers on Sunday.

Dallas will be without receiver Michael Gallup at least three weeks. Gallup was placed on injured reserve with a left calf strain. He was injured against Tampa Bay.

Even with Martin back, the Cowboys are again without one of their top three linemen after right tackle La'el Collins was suspended five games for violating the NFL's substance-abuse policy. Collins played in the opener

Tretter calls for discipline against KC assistant

CLEVELAND — Browns center JC Tretter believes Kansas City assistant coach Greg Lewis should be disciplined by the NFL for his role in a sideline skirmish with Cleveland safety Ronnie Harrison Jr. on Sunday.

Harrison was ejected from Cleveland's 33-29 loss in the first quarter after he forcefully pushed Lewis, who shoved the Browns safety after coming over to help Chiefs running back Clyde Edwards-Helaire.

Tretter, the NFL players' union president, didn't condone Harrison's behavior, but said Lewis needs to be held accountable by the league for his actions.

Injuries dampen 49ers' enthusiam after win

While there were plenty of positives from the San Francisco 49ers' season-opening 41-33 win at Detroit on Sunday from the return of edge rushers Nick Bosa and Dee Ford to an efficient performance from Jimmy Garoppolo and a breakthrough game by rookie Elijah Mitchell, the most notable developments were significant knee injuries to cornerback Jason Verrett and running back Raheem Mostert.

Coach Kyle Shanahan said Monday that tests showed Verrett tore the ACL in his right knee, knocking out the team's best player for the season at perhaps its thinnest position after just one game.

Mostert will be out eight weeks with chipped cartilage in his knee.

After winning the NFC in 2019, the Niners went just 6-10 last year when they played long stretches without Garoppolo, Bosa, Ford and tight end George Kittle among others.

SPORTS

First to clinch

Giants initial team to wrap up playoff berth ›› MLB, Page 20

NFL

Raiders wide receiver Zay Jones celebrates after scoring the game-winning touchdown during overtime of Monday's game against the Baltimore Ravens in Las Vegas.

DAVID BECKER/AP

Raiders rally past Ravens in OT

Carr's TD pass to Jones caps wild ending to opening week

BY JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — After a premature bench-clearing celebration and a couple of blunders that almost cost the Raiders the game, the party could finally begin for real after the first game with fans in Las Vegas.

The Raiders won an exhilarating and exhausting season opener thanks to a furious rally, a stellar defensive play from Carl Nassib and a perfect play call that produced a 31-yard touchdown pass from Derek Carr to Zay Jones that gave Las Vegas a 33-27 win over the Baltimore Ravens on Monday night.

"Felt like I died and woke up. And died. And woke up again," coach Jon Gruden said. "I was like a cat — I had multiple lives."

Carr engineered three game-tying drives in the fourth quarter before winning it in the wild overtime.

He appeared to win it with a 33-yard TD pass to Bryan Edwards on the first possession of overtime only to have the celebration halted when replay put the ball at the 1.

An unsuccessful QB sneak, a false start from rookie Alex Leatherwood and then an interception that deflected off Willie Snead's hands appeared to cost the Raiders the game.

SEE RALLY ON PAGE 22

RICK SCUTERI/AP

Raiders wide receiver Bryan Edwards stretches for the goal line while being tackled by Ravens cornerback Brandon Stephens during overtime. Initially thought to be a touchdown, the ball was placed on the 1.

Navy keeps Jasper, dumps Stutzmann

›› College football, Page 21