

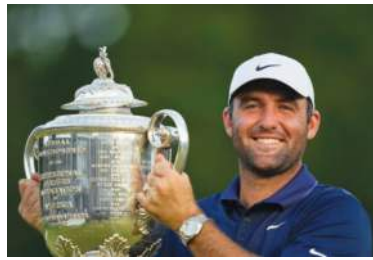
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STARS AND STRIPES®

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50¢/Free to Deployed Areas

POW benefits scrutinized by those once held captive

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

When the number of former prisoners of war receiving benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs nearly doubled without explanation, an American survivor of the "Hanoi Hilton" wanted answers.

Mike McGrath, a Vietnam veteran who spent six years in captivity and now investigates false military claims, said his research points to impostors receiving Veterans Administration POW benefits.



McGrath

The VA offers a different explanation. Officials say the surge in POW figures stems from a confusing accounting system that may count the same veteran more than once across multiple conflicts.

The department also acknowledged it does not track where a veteran was held captive.

McGrath and a network of fellow POWs and researchers say they've identified cases of veterans falsely claiming POW status to obtain benefits and prestige.

"It hurts and it's insulting because these claimants never spent a day in a prison in their life," McGrath said. "They've never been tortured."

The VA said it is not aware of any fraudulent claims, but officials did not address whether the agency has audited its POW rolls.

"VA conducts a thorough review of all POW claims to ensure service records and other dates align with their dates of service

SEE BENEFITS ON PAGE 5



MEKHI MANSON/U.S. Navy

Navy aviation ordnancemen upload ordnance to an F/A-18E Super Hornet on the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

USS Truman leaves Middle East

Deployment marked by loss of 3 fighter jets, weeks of nearly constant flight operations

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman has left the Middle East after a deployment marked by the loss of three fighter jets and weeks of nearly constant flight operations in a U.S. bid to cripple Houthi militants in Yemen.

Truman, the destroyer USS Jason Dunham and the cruiser USS Gettysburg are now in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations as part of a routine deployment, Cmdr. Tim Gorman, a spokesman for the fleet, said in a statement Monday.

The 6th Fleet AOR includes the Mediterranean Sea.



MADELYN CUEVAS/U.S. Navy

A Navy legal officer stands watch on the bridge aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman.

The carrier and its strike group will next participate in a NATO military exercise in the Mediterranean, officials said Monday. The strike group will be under the command and control of NATO as part of the Neptune Strike exercise, Allied Joint Force Command Naples said in a post Monday on X. The command didn't say when that will happen.

Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, which oversees the exercise, did not immediately respond to an email asking about the strike group's participation.

Gorman's statement did not say when Truman and the other ships left the Red Sea, which

SEE TRUMAN ON PAGE 5

BUSINESS/WEATHER

NJ Transit engineers reach tentative deal to end strike

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — New Jersey Transit's train engineers reached a tentative deal Sunday to end a three-day strike that halted service for 100,000 daily riders, including routes to Newark airport and across the Hudson River to New York City.

The union said members would return on Tuesday, when trains would resume regular schedules.

The walkout that began Friday was the state's first transit

strike in over 40 years, forcing people who normally rely on NJ Transit to take buses, cars, taxis and boats instead or consider staying home.

The main sticking point had been how to increase wages without creating a financially disastrous domino effect.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen initially announced regular train service would begin again Monday. However, moments later, union spokesperson Jamie Hor-

witz said NJ Transit informed them that it would be Tuesday at 12:01 a.m. instead. A transit agency statement said the Tuesday start was necessary because "it takes approximately 24 hours to inspect and prepare the infrastructure before returning to full scheduled service."

A union statement sent by email said the terms of the agreement would be sent to the union's 450 members who work as locomotive engineers or trainees at the passenger railroad.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates												
Euro costs (May 20)	0.87	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8336									
British pound (May 20)	\$1.30	Thailand (Baht)	33.08									
Japanese yen (May 20)	141.00	Turkey (NewLira)	38.8531									
South Korean won (May 20)	1364.00											
Commercial rates												
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770	(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 <table><tr><td>Prime rate</td><td>7.50</td></tr><tr><td>Interest Rates Discount rate</td><td>4.50</td></tr><tr><td>Federal funds market rate</td><td>4.38</td></tr><tr><td>3-month bill</td><td>4.35</td></tr><tr><td>30-year bond</td><td>4.90</td></tr></table>	Prime rate	7.50	Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50	Federal funds market rate	4.38	3-month bill	4.35	30-year bond	4.90
Prime rate	7.50											
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50											
Federal funds market rate	4.38											
3-month bill	4.35											
30-year bond	4.90											
Britain (Pound)	1.3365											
Canada (Dollar)	1.3946											
China (Yuan)	7.2095											
Denmark (Krone)	6.6311											
Egypt (Pound)	50.0501											
Euro	0.8888											
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8202											
Hungary (Forint)	357.21											
Israel (Shekel)	3.5465											
Japan (Yen)	144.99											
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3072											
Norway (Krone)	10.3103											
Philippines (Peso)	55.69											
Poland (Zloty)	3.79											
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7507											
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2949											
South Korea (Won)	1392.76											

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MILITARY

Former top enlisted touts Army relief program

Grinston returns to Humphreys as CEO of nonprofit that offers financial help

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Former Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston returned to the largest U.S. military installation overseas for the first time in three years to raise awareness about an often-overlooked program offering financial aid to soldiers in crisis.

Speaking Monday to about 500 soldiers at a Humphreys motor pool, Grinston — now the CEO of Army Emergency Relief — explained the nonprofit organization’s mission to provide interest-free loans and grants to Army members and their families facing emergencies.

“Most people don’t know anything about [Army Emergency Relief],” he told the crowd. “It really disappoints me because there’s a lot of soldiers out there that need our help, and they don’t



TREVARES JOHNSON/Stars and Stripes

Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston, now CEO of Army Emergency Relief, visits with soldiers Monday at Camp Humphreys, South Korea.

know what we do.”

Founded in 1942 by Secretary of War Henry Stimson and Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Marshall, the program has distributed more than \$2 billion to 4 million soldiers since its inception, according to the organization’s website.

The program covers a range of emergency needs, including

travel and funeral expenses, temporary lodging, medical bills not covered by insurance, and child car seats.

In 2024, Army Emergency Relief dispersed more than \$41 million in non-interest loans and \$8.3 million in grants, according to the nonprofit. That year, it also provided over \$9 million in scholarships to Army spouses and

children, relief spokesman Sean Ryan said at the motor pool.

Grinston, who joined the program last year, said he personally reviews some applications and has encountered thousands of “gut-wrenching” stories of soldiers in need.

He said one of his first cases involved a staff sergeant with Stage 4 cancer seeking help so his wife could visit him in Texas. The couple received a \$4,000 grant to cover a rental car and lodging.

“What I don’t want is them to worry about that,” Grinston told Stars and Stripes at the motor pool. “Imagine that your husband is going through cancer treatment and ... that’s what you’re worried about? The government travel card? We’re going to give you that money.”

Grinston encouraged soldiers to seek help when they need it — either through their chain of command or by contacting Army Emergency Relief directly.

“They’re sitting here struggling with all of these problems, so that’s what I talk about all the time,” he said. “Please come and talk to us if you need help.”

Among those helped by Army Emergency Relief was Staff Sgt.

Nathaniel Mayes of the 23rd Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division. He said the program provided an \$800 loan when he was preparing for a permanent change of station move to Germany a few years ago.

The all-season tires on Mayes’ car did not meet Germany’s strict road requirements and he needed to replace them with winter tires before shipping the vehicle, he said at the motor pool Monday.

Mayes said he only had “\$500 to my name until the next paycheck,” before he spoke with his first sergeant and received a loan from Army Emergency Relief.

“It was a relief,” he said. “It helped me out and it was less stressful because it was 0% interest.”

Grinston enlisted in 1987 as an artilleryman and served in Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield. He retired in 2023 after 36 years of service, including four as the Army’s top enlisted leader.

He last visited South Korea in November 2022 to meet with soldiers at Humphreys and Camp Casey, approximately 25 miles north of Seoul.

Soldier runs 7-minute mile in full bomb suit

By CONNOR PIGNATELLO
syracuse.com

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Travis Chewning-Kulick is used to running marathons.

He’s run 11 of them, including the Boston Marathon — his favorite — five times. The Liverpool, N.Y., native has also completed several local events. He’s been an avid runner since elementary school and continues to run upwards of 50 miles a week.

But on April 25 at Fort Cavazos in Texas, Capt. Chewning-Kulick ran a race he’d rather not repeat.

Wearing a 50-pound bomb suit, Chewning-Kulick ran a mile around the track at Fort Cavazos in 7 minutes, 4 seconds, breaking the previous world record by 20 seconds.

His mother served in the Army for 24 years, and Chewning-Kulick has grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins who have served.

“I’ve been around the Army my whole life,” Chewning-Kulick said. “I’ve been exposed to it and I really align with the mission statement and the values of serving a purpose greater than yourself and helping out those both here and overseas.”

While at West Point, Chewning-Kulick ran on the marathon team and competed in two marathons a year. He ran the Boston Marathon each spring in addition to marathons in Philadelphia, New York City, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Mexico.

Before he moved to Texas in the spring of 2023, Chewning-Kulick spent time in Florida, Virginia and Kansas. At Fort Cavazos, he’s the commander of the 752nd Ordnance Company.

After running a good time in a physical fitness test back in 2021, Chewning-Kulick’s platoon sergeant looked up the world record time for the bomb suit mile and suggested he give it a try.

“Ever since then,” Chewning-Kulick said. “It’s kind of been a bug in my ear.”

In less than a month, Chewning-Kulick will be moving from Texas back to West Point, where he’ll be an



BOWDEN DRAKE-DEESE/U.S. Army

Capt. Travis Chewning-Kulick, commander of the 752nd Ordnance Company, pushes through the last few yards of a mile on April 25 to beat the record for fastest one-mile run in a bomb suit in Fort Cavazos, Texas. Chewning-Kulick is waiting for verification that he broke the record set in 2017 by 20 seconds.

instructor in the mechanical engineering department. He’s interested in teaching a class on weapons engineering, a topic very similar to his current position in explosive ordnance disposal.

As Chewning-Kulick’s final months in Texas approached, he began spending more time doing speed training on the track to ready himself for an attempt at the world record as a sort of “last hurrah” for those he’s served with at Fort Cavazos.

He did a test run in the bomb suit beforehand and then readied himself for the world record attempt.

Chewning-Kulick’s fellow soldiers and company commanders helped pace him and hundreds more watched him from the stands.

First Sgt. Edwin Vazquez, who shares the 752nd EOD command with Chewning-Kulick and helped pace him during the race, was impressed.

“It’s even hard for me to keep up with him while he’s wearing the bomb suit,” Vazquez said after the race.

Though Chewning-Kulick admitted his splits were uneven and he didn’t get into much of a rhythm with 50 pounds of explosive ordnance protective gear weighing him down, he completed the four laps around the 400-meter track in time to easily break a world record that had stood since 2017.

“First lap, I probably went out a little too fast because I got excited with the crowd,” Chewning-Kulick

said after the race. “I found something in that last 400 to bring it home.”

Chewning-Kulick’s move back to New York will allow him to visit home in Liverpool far more often. He hasn’t been back since Christmas 2023.

His world record run is awaiting official verification by Guinness World Records, which could take up to six months.

And he has designs on keeping that record.

“If someone breaks the record and runs faster than me, just the competitive nature in me will drive me to do it again,” Chewning-Kulick said. “But without that external motivation, I have no desire to just run in a bomb suit for fun.”

MILITARY

Carrier pilots begin landing drills on Iwo Jima

BY ALEX WILSON
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

Naval aviators kicked off 13 days of carrier-landing practice Monday on Iwo Jima as the aircraft carrier USS George Washington prepares for its first deployment since returning to Japan in November.

Pilots of fixed-wing aircraft from Carrier Air Wing 5 — F-35C Lightning IIs, F-18 Super Hornets, EA-18G Growlers and E-2D Hawkeyes — must qualify for carrier landings on the remote island ahead of the carrier’s annual patrol, Naval Forces Japan announced Friday.

Training started Monday and continues through May 31, with

sorties day and night, according to a news release.

In the past, senior pilots have flown at least six sorties — three during the day and three at night — with at least seven touch-and-go landings. Junior pilots typically undergo more extensive training and may complete a dozen or more touch-and-goes.

A spokesman for Naval Forces Japan, Cmdr. Paul Macapagal, declined to provide this year’s requirements.

“The training each pilot needs for qualification is based upon various factors including individual pilot training requirements to maintain readiness,” he said by email Monday.

Most of the training will take

place on Iwo Jima, also known as Iwo To, where the wing has carried out its annual training since 1991. Other U.S. airfields in Japan, including Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo, serve as alternative training sites in case of bad weather or other circumstances.

The island is not a permanent training site due to its remote location — about 750 miles southeast of Japan’s main island — and lack of alternative landing sites.

The Japanese government remains committed to finding an alternative training area for the carrier-landing practice, Naval Forces Japan said.

Japan’s Defense Ministry in January 2023 began work on a new training site on Mageshima,

an island 20 miles south of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan’s four main islands.

Initially slated for completion in 2027 at an estimated cost of \$1.6 billion, the project has been delayed three years by significant hurdles, according to Japanese defense officials.

Poor weather delayed supplies to the island, and material excavated on the island proved unsuitable for earthen filling, the Kumamoto Defense Branch Office told Stars and Stripes in September.

Additionally, the January 2024 earthquake on the Noto Peninsula disrupted supplies and manpower for the island.

The project is now expected to be completed in 2030 and cost up-

wards of \$2.4 billion, a Defense spokesperson said Friday.

The spokesperson said a more precise cost estimate was not possible due to the project involving large-scale construction “on an isolated island located in the open sea with no social infrastructure at all.”

The base will include an 8,000-foot main runway, a 6,000-foot crosswind runway, a port and storage facilities, according to the ministry.

“As of May 2025, land-based construction work is being carried out on the construction of runways and airfield-related facilities, while offshore construction work is being carried out on berthing facilities,” the spokesperson wrote.

Medic killed during WWII to join Okinawa Peace Memorial

BY BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

A Navy corpsman killed during the Battle of Okinawa will be the first American in five years added to a memorial on the island commemorating the battle.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Vernon Martin — a pharmacist’s mate with H Company, 3rd Battalion, 29th Marines, 6th Marine Division — will be added this month to the Cornerstone of Peace at Peace Memorial Park in Itoman city, Okinawa prefecture announced Monday.

His name joins those of 16 Okinawans and 325 from elsewhere in Japan going onto the memorial this year, according to a list the prefecture released Monday.

Martin, of Niles, Mich., was killed when a shell fragment struck him in the chest on May 15, 1945, as 6th Marine Division fought to take Sugar Loaf Hill in Okinawa’s capital city, Naha, ac-



Martin



KEISHI KOJA/Stars and Stripes

A Navy corpsman killed in the Battle of Okinawa will join another 341 names to be added this year to the Cornerstone of Peace at Okinawa Peace Memorial Park in Itoman, Okinawa, Japan.

cording to his death certificate from the U.S. Navy.

Born Sept. 7, 1926, Martin enlisted on Sept. 24, 1943, according to his casualty report. He was one of eight children born to Dorothy and Roy Martin, his niece, Donna Piazza, who lives in Niles, said by

phone Friday. She learned from Stars and Stripes that her uncle’s name would be added.

Robert McGowan II, whose father served alongside Martin as a Marine sergeant and squad leader, worked with Marine Corps spouse Steph Pawelski to find the

documents needed to add Martin’s name, McGowan said.

“I’m so glad he’s finally going to get there,” Piazza said.

Martin will be the first American added to the memorial since 2020.

The names will be etched be-

fore June 23, or Irei No Hi, the day when Okinawa remembers the end of the Battle of Okinawa, a spokeswoman for the prefectural Peace and Subnational Diplomacy Promotion Division said by phone Monday. This year marks the battle’s 80th anniversary.

Some Japanese government officials may speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

The memorial park marks the location of the battle’s final action. A memorial event takes place on that day each year at the site.

The Cornerstone of Peace was built in 1995, 50 years after the battle. The monument displays the names of nearly 250,000 who died during the fighting: 14,011 Americans and 227,977 Japanese.

Most of the 325 names being added from Japan’s main islands are of sailors who perished on the Imperial Navy battleship Yamato, once the largest battleship afloat.

The Battle of Okinawa began April 1, 1945, and lasted 82 days. More than 14,000 Americans, about 110,000 Japanese troops and at least 140,000 Okinawan civilians were killed during or after the fighting.

Air Force Academy graduation in limbo for 9 men’s soccer players

The Gazette, Colorado Springs
COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — With less than two weeks until graduation, nine senior Air Force Academy soccer players and their families are unsure if they will march with their classmates after an alleged hazing incident that most reportedly did not witness.

According to family members, the senior members of the academy soccer team have been informally told that they may not graduate on time as a disciplinary measure related to off-field incidents that took place during the fall se-

mester. Commencement is scheduled May 29 at Falcon Stadium.

“Graduation is in two weeks, and we have no idea if we’re going to see our kids graduate,” said Mark Stoup, a soccer parent and retired colonel who taught at the academy 2000 to 2003.

In an emailed statement Thursday to The Gazette, an academy spokesman acknowledged an investigation and subsequent disciplinary actions following “allegations of physical, unprofessional, and demeaning misconduct inflicted on other members of the

men’s soccer team.

Four academy soccer parents, including Stoup, spoke with The Gazette. Three would speak only on condition of anonymity. One parent shared a redacted paragraph from a letter of reprimand that characterized the alleged hazing incident as “disgraceful.”

All nine senior soccer players received similar letters, according to the parents.

Stoup said the initial incident, which took place in August, was a welcoming initiation for freshman players, meant to build camarade-

rie. The practice known as “dog-piling” involves players piling on top of someone. It is consensual, and freshmen could opt out of it without fear, one parent said.

In September, during a road trip, another incident took place in a hotel room.

Details are sparse because the senior players are reportedly bound by nondisclosure agreements, but a freshman is said to have complained to a family member that he felt he had been inappropriately touched during the hotel room incident. This complaint

launched an inquiry by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and resulted in eight players being suspended effective Oct. 23.

By February, the OSI investigation had been completed with no charges filed, Stoup said. On April 15, the academy announced completion of the investigation and that it had initiated unspecified disciplinary action.

On April 24, the senior players received letters of reprimand for their failure to stop the incidents from happening, according to several parents.

MILITARY

Benefits: VA blames unusual method of counting recipients

FROM PAGE 1
before delivering any benefits,” VA press secretary Peter Kasperowicz said in a statement.

Diverging numbers

McGrath said he first noticed discrepancies in 2008 when VA data on living POWs began to diverge from Defense Department records.

By July 2024, the VA in a report to Congress tallied 1,191 living POWs from Southeast Asia. In 2008, the VA listed 661, which was in line with a Defense Department fact sheet produced in 2017. McGrath believes just 326 remain alive today.

More recent conflicts show even greater inconsistencies: McGrath’s research indicates 31 POWs survived the Gulf War and post-9/11 conflicts, yet the VA lists 1,142. Stars and Stripes was able to verify each of the 31 names on McGrath’s list following a review of past news articles and press releases. No additional names were found during the review.

A December letter from Guy Kiyokawa, VA assistant secretary for the Office of Enterprise Integration, to former Rep. Doug Lamborn acknowledged that 899 Vietnam-era POWs listed by the VA were not on DOD rosters.

The VA validates veteran claims at the time of enrollment and exclusion from the DOD tally does not warrant a claim reversal, Kiyokawa said.

The VA could not provide pre-

cise counts of living POWs receiving benefits by conflict.

VA chief data officer Lisa Rosenmerkel told Stars and Stripes in March that the agency only tracks POWs by congressionally defined periods of service, not by war. This can lead to double-counting if a veteran’s service spans multiple periods.

If you served from 1956 to 1970, “we would count you in Korea and Vietnam,” Rosenmerkel said. “I know it’s super confusing, but unfortunately this is the most kind of granularity we can show.”

She also confirmed that the VA does not track the location of captivity.

Rosenmerkel said she didn’t know why earlier tallies aligned with DOD data while current numbers do not.

A life’s work

McGrath, 85, is a former Navy fighter pilot shot down over North Vietnam in 1967. He spent nearly six years in captivity.

McGrath was tortured at the infamous Hoa Lo prison, which is better-known as the “Hanoi Hilton.”

“All the POWs were broken past name, rank and serial number,” he said. “They either broke you or they killed you.”

He has spent decades researching POW claims with the nonprofit NAM-POWs, where he serves as historian. In the 1990s, he teamed up with stolen valor investigator Mary Schantag, chair of the

P.O.W. Network.

The pair researched press reports and tips about people who were claiming POW status but were not on any Defense Department lists.

They built a private database of verified POWs starting with the Vietnam War and began reporting suspicious cases to the VA inspector general and news outlets.

Schantag said the VA has denied Freedom of Information Act requests for supporting documentation on some cases. She provided Stars and Stripes with VA records showing two Vietnam-era benefit recipients who do not appear on official POW lists.

“They would rather get several wrong than miss a real guy,” Schantag said.

McGrath frequently lobbied lawmakers to get around what he saw as VA stonewalling.

The VA defines a POW as a service member “forcibly detained or interned” by an enemy or hostile force. During wartime, DOD makes determinations, but during peacetime, the VA may rule on its own, including on cases supported by “buddy statements” or supplementary documentation.

POWs are eligible for a range of benefits, including pensions, medical care, education assistance, home loans and burial services.

Rosenmerkel said the VA’s review process is thorough.

“There’s no self-attestation,” she said. “We are running it down if they are saying that they were a



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The North Vietnamese Hoa Lo prisoner of war camp was known as the “Hanoi Hilton,” seen in 1973. Mike McGrath, a retired naval officer who was imprisoned there, says the Department of Veterans Affairs tally of former POWs is inflated.

former prisoner of war. We have a really detailed process documented.”

She declined to release redacted data on claims — such as is done with toxic exposure cases — citing concerns about inadvertently revealing identities.

Meanwhile, McGrath’s work has support from other former POWs and military officials.

“I’d like to see the record corrected and the people who do this stuff exposed, and I think they should pay the money back,” said Hal Kushner, an Army flight sur-

geon and POW for more than five years in Vietnam.

Roger Shields, former deputy assistant secretary of defense for POW/MIA affairs at the end of the Vietnam War, agreed the VA’s numbers don’t add up.

“We were very, very careful to keep these lists of people who were missing and who were prisoners,” Shields said. “Whatever the VA thinks they have, they need to say what it is and why they think that they’re prisoners of war, and they need to address the issue.”

Pentagon announces plans for defense partnership with UAE

BY LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon plans to establish a major defense partnership with the United Arab Emirates, a rare designation that could pave the way for joint arms development and closer military ties between the U.S. and a key nation in the Middle East.

The letter of intent, signed Friday in Abu Dhabi by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and UAE Defense Minister Mohammed Mubarak Al Mazrouei, is intended to jump-start bilateral cooperation, the Defense Department said Monday in a statement.

Part of the collaboration includes a new deal between the U.S. Defense Innovation Unit and the UAE’s Tawazun Council to conduct joint research and development.

The UAE is also entering the U.S. National Guard State Part-



SEAN MORIARTY/U.S. Air Force

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and his United Arab Emirates counterpart signed a letter of intent for bilateral cooperation.

nership Program, where it will be paired with the Texas National Guard to bolster military modernization efforts and work on combined air and missile defense, cy-

bersecurity and disaster response, the Pentagon statement said.

The pact follows President Donald Trump’s visit to the region last week, which included a stop in the UAE.

The administration also recently signed off on \$1.4 billion in military sales to the nation, which drew criticism from some congressional Democrats, who raised humanitarian concerns about the UAE’s role in ongoing conflicts in Sudan.

The major defense partner designation institutionalizes a relationship that already had been close, with the UAE making large investments in U.S. weaponry in recent decades.

India signed a similar agreement with the U.S. in 2016, which led to further security agreements and expanded access to U.S. defense equipment.

Truman: Vinson still in region

FROM PAGE 1
is part of the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, citing operational security.

But open-source intelligence analysts said on X that satellite imagery showed Truman and Gettysburg transiting the Suez Canal toward the Mediterranean on Saturday. Navy images posted online showed Truman operating in the Mediterranean on Sunday.

It’s unclear whether the destroyer USS Stout, also part of the strike group, was in the 6th Fleet area of responsibility as well.

Truman’s departure leaves just a single aircraft carrier, USS Carl Vinson, in the Middle East.

The Truman’s departure comes nearly two weeks after President Donald Trump paused Operation Rough Rider, an aggressive air campaign aimed at stopping attacks on military and commercial ships in the Red Sea by the Iran-backed Houthis.

Last week, Vinson was operating in the Arabian Sea along with



MICHAEL SHEN/U.S. Navy

The aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman sails through the Mediterranean Sea on Sunday.

the destroyers USS Sterett and USS William Lawrence and the cruiser USS Princeton, USNI New reported May 12.

Since March 15, U.S. forces have hit more than 1,000 Houthi targets in Yemen, killing group leaders and fighters and degrading the group’s capabilities, the Pentagon said last month.

In declaring a ceasefire on May 6, Trump said the Houthis didn’t want to fight anymore and had agreed to stop attacking ships in the vital waterway.

PACIFIC

Friendship Festival draws throngs to base

BY JUAN KING
AND JEREMY STILLWAGNER
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Tens of thousands of visitors shrugged off a rainy day and streamed through the gates of this airlift hub in western Tokyo over the weekend for the 49th annual Friendship Festival.

The two-day event featured aircraft displays, live performances and dozens of food and souvenir booths. Organizers said the open-base festival is intended to strengthen ties between service members and their Japanese hosts.

“We hope this festival will foster mutual understanding, deepen our friendship and unite our one community,” Col. Richard McElhaney, 374th Airlift Wing commander, told the crowd from the flightline after the kickoff.

Rain drenched Saturday morning but appeared to do little to deter attendance. The 374th Airlift Wing did not have attendance figures available Monday.

“I was pleasantly surprised at the massive number of people already running when we opened that front entrance right there,” said Maj. Matthew Helm, a project

officer for the 459th Airlift Squadron.

He said he hoped to match last year’s record turnout of 290,000 visitors over two days.

About 100 booths were set up across the flightline, with roughly 50 aircraft on static display, Helm said.

Guests lined up to purchase shirts, hoodies, patches, coins and other souvenirs from the many units and organizations that call Yokota home.

Weather was much better Sunday, when thousands more lined up to see and photograph C-130J Super Hercules airlifters, CV-22 Osprey special-operations tiltrotors, F-16 Fighting Falcon fighters and other aircraft.

Festival volunteer Monica Williamson sold umbrellas, tote bags and snow cones from her booth on Saturday.

“My favorite flavor is going to be the red, white and blue — the Americano,” she said of the frozen treat. “I hope everybody has a good time and everybody sells out.”

The Friendship Festival is one of the largest annual public events hosted by U.S. forces in Japan and has been a tradition since 1977.



PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

Visitors line up to view a CV-22 Osprey during the Japanese-American Friendship Festival at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo on Saturday.



Visitors endure the rain during the festival on Saturday.



A visitor checks out a C-17 Globemaster III.



An airman dresses up as a hot dog during the festival.

7th Fleet flagship makes historic stop in New Zealand

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The amphibious command ship USS Blue Ridge arrived in Wellington Harbor last week, marking a historic first visit to New Zealand for the flagship of the 7th Fleet, the service said.

The ship’s port call Friday was also the first by a U.S. warship in the island nation in four years. The last Navy vessels to visit were the guided-missile destroyers USS Howard in 2021 and USS Sampson in 2016, according to a 7th Fleet news release.

A 1987 New Zealand law bans visits by nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed warships, a long-standing obstacle for many Navy vessels. In keeping with U.S. policy, the Navy does not confirm or

deny the presence of nuclear weapons aboard its ships.

However, the law allows the New Zealand prime minister to waive the restriction if satisfied that no nuclear weapons are present.

The Blue Ridge departed Yokosuka Naval Base on April 3. Since then, it has visited Australia, Fiji and New Caledonia, according to the Navy.

Although the ship serves as a mobile command center during wartime, in peacetime it functions as a platform for diplomacy and humanitarian efforts.

The vessel is “engaging with regional allies and partners to address shared maritime security priorities,” fleet spokesman Victor Murkowski told Stars and

Stripes in a May 6 email.

“The work we do with our allies and partners plays a crucial part in our ability to enhance interoperability, deter aggression, and preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific,” he wrote.

Interoperability refers to the ability of armed forces from different countries to use each other’s equipment and training methods effectively.

The Sampson’s 2016 port call was the first visit by a U.S. warship to New Zealand in three decades, following a thaw in military relations that included the 2010 Wellington Declaration aimed at increased cooperation.

New Zealand is part of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance with the United States,

United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. It also occupies a key position in the third island chain, a strategic line stretching from Alaska’s Aleutian Islands through Hawaii and down to New Zealand.

That geography plays a role in the broader island chain strategy — a decades-old military doctrine that has regained focus amid U.S. efforts to counter China’s expanding influence in the Indo-Pacific. The strategy emphasizes a network of fortified positions across the region to deter or respond to conflict.

The Blue Ridge’s visit reflects the “deep ties” between the U.S. and New Zealand, 7th Fleet commander Vice Adm. Fred Kacher said in Friday’s release.

“Our partnership is rooted in our common values and respect, and our visit here represents an important opportunity for us to further strengthen the bond between our nations and our navies,” he said.

While in port, 7th Fleet staff will meet with counterparts to discuss “improving operational readiness, advancing future military capabilities, and enhancing the U.S.-New Zealand bilateral relationship overall,” according to the release.

The port call also serves as a refueling and resupplying opportunity, and crew members are also expected to participate in various local activities including performances, ship tours and sightseeing, 7th Fleet said.

PACIFIC

Battle tested

Chinese warplane's combat debut over Kashmir riles tense geopolitics

By CATE CADELL
AND KARISHMA MEHROTRA
The Washington Post

When Pakistani officials last week told Beijing's diplomats that its Chinese-made jets and missiles had downed several Indian aircraft, including French warplanes, the response was quiet jubilation. After many years and billions spent in development, their arms were finally tested in battle — and delivered.

But the focus quickly shifted from elation to escalation, according to two people familiar with official Chinese discussions.

As cross-border fighting raged last week, a flurry of meetings were already underway in both Islamabad and Beijing, with Chinese diplomats scrambling to assess the potential fallout. Among their concerns was that any overt display of China's battlefield success could shatter its fragile détente with India — just as Beijing is trying to present itself as a stabilizing force in Asia in contrast to Washington's volatility.

This week, Chinese officials and state media struck a careful tone, touting the success of Beijing's military technology while urging restraint between the two nuclear-armed neighbors, who have held to a ceasefire since Sunday. But outside official channels, China's tightly controlled social media has erupted with nationalist fervor over its apparently successful live combat test.

New Delhi this week released new details drawing attention to the role of Chinese weaponry in the clash against Pakistani forces and pushed back against claims it bested Indian defenses. In a Wednesday statement, New Delhi claimed its forces had “bypassed and jammed Pakistan's Chinese-supplied air defense systems” within just 23 minutes.

The unease among Chinese officials — and the carefully calibrated messaging — underscores Beijing's delicate role as a burgeoning proxy military power in South Asia, a region that could become the first true proving ground for its arsenal and its effectiveness against Western weaponry.

“The situation is being managed very carefully in China. There is no doubt that [Beijing] wants to show ... the strength of its military industry development, but it's not the right time to be pulled into frivolous fights,” said one person in Beijing who was briefed on discussions between Chinese officials last week and who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

In Washington, President Do-



Taiwan Ministry of National Defense

A Chinese J-10 fighter jet flies near Taiwan in August 2022.

nald Trump claimed a ceasefire — made before any official word from India or Pakistan — as a fleeting diplomatic win amid faltering efforts to broker peace in Ukraine and the Middle East. Washington has pushed back against Beijing's expanding military ties with nuclear-armed Pakistan, raising concerns over regional stability and proliferation risks. Last September, the United States imposed sanctions on several Chinese firms that supply Pakistan's ballistic missile program.

China has deepened its economic and military ties with Pakistan in recent years, now supplying around 80% of its imported arms. The partnership serves to counterbalance India, which has had a long-standing border dispute with China. Chinese and Indian forces clashed in 2020 in the contested Galwan Valley, leading to deaths on both sides, and only last year did the two sides agree to a de-escalating joint patrolling agreement.

Beijing remains cautious about pushing New Delhi too far. When relations soured following the Galwan Valley clashes, Washington moved quickly to draw India closer into the coalition of nations countering China's growing influence in Asia. At a 2022 White House meeting, President Joe Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi signed a deal to co-produce fighter jet engines in India, declaring the two nations “among the closest partners in the world.”

Indian officials have pushed back on elements of Trump's account of the Kashmir ceasefire. Still, analysts say New Delhi remains constrained by the need to finalize a trade deal within the 90-day negotiating window. On Thursday, Trump claimed India had offered a deal with “no tariffs” on American goods.

“For China, India is a very important relationship, even though they're competitors. It does not want to push India further into the U.S. orbit,” said Nishank Motwani, a senior fellow at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

China has poured trillions of dollars into building a high-tech military it hopes will rival that of the United States in the coming decades — but has had few opportunities to battle-test those investments. The mounting evidence that Chinese jets may have downed modern French-made aircraft likely comes as a relief to Beijing.

“If Pakistan's equipment were to fail, that is egg in the face of the Chinese,” said Milan Vaishnav, senior fellow and director of the South Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

India last week launched a missile attack on Pakistani targets in retaliation for the April 22 killing of 26 mostly Hindu tourists in Kashmir, a border region claimed by both countries. India accused Pakistan of supporting the attackers, which Islamabad has denied.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister

Ishaq Dar told Parliament following the skirmish that five Indian warplanes were shot down by Chinese J-10C jets and that Chinese diplomats were kept abreast of the unfolding situation. “Being a friendly nation, they expressed great happiness,” he said, in comments reported by Pakistani media. New Delhi has not confirmed that any of its aircraft were lost, but at a Monday news conference, officials showed images of what appeared to be debris from PL-15E Chinese air-to-air missiles.

If confirmed, the clashes would mark the first real battlefield use of both the Chinese-made J-10C and the PL-15E missiles reportedly recovered by Indian forces.

According to a Washington Post analysis, the Indian retaliatory strikes damaged runways and infrastructure at at least six military airfields — the most significant combat exchange in decades between the rival nations, which have fought two wars over the region since 1947.

Trump announced last Saturday that the two sides had reached a ceasefire agreement brokered by the United States following a “long night of talks.” On Monday he said the agreement was struck after his administration said it “wouldn't do any trade” with the two sides if they didn't stop fighting. Indian officials have since denied trade was discussed at all and disputed that Washington played a significant role in the ceasefire.

In 2021, Pakistan became the

first known foreign buyer of China's J-10C fighter jets. Debuting at Pakistan's National Day parade in 2022, the jets have featured in at least one cross-border mission over Iran last year but had never seen combat.

Analysts say the skirmish likely offered Beijing more than a combat test of its jets and missiles — it also gave a window into India's military readiness, including its use of drones and intelligence capabilities that enabled precision strikes inside Pakistan.

“This is the first time also India's been using offensive capability drones, for example ... and then at the same time, what it is doing in terms of electronic warfare and jamming to down Pakistani assets,” Motwani said. “China will be learning a lot. For its own benefit vis-à-vis India, and at the same time when the dust has settled, Pakistan will be sharing that intel as well with China.”

The showdown between Chinese and French-made jets also offers the United States and its allies a rare opportunity to assess the potential performance of Chinese fighters in the Indo-Pacific theater.

The J-10 is common in the Chinese military's sorties over Taiwan and the South China Sea, and has been deployed to intercept U.S. military aircraft. Last year, Australia raised protests with Chinese counterparts after a J-10C fighter jet launched flares in front of an Australian military helicopter that was accompanying an Australian destroyer in the Yellow Sea.

Under Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, the Pentagon has issued interim guidance that elevates a potential conflict over Taiwan above all other theaters, outlining plans to reorient the sprawling U.S. military apparatus toward the Indo-Pacific.

Air superiority is likely to prove decisive in any conflict over the Taiwan Strait or the South China Sea. Last month, the U.S. approved a \$5.58 billion deal to sell 20 F-16s to the Philippines — a key ally in countering China's influence in the Indo-Pacific — prompting Beijing to accuse Washington of “turning Asia into a powder keg.”

This week, Chinese analysts and social media commentators wasted no time linking the reported prowess of the Chinese fighter jets to a potential showdown with Taiwan.

“The conflict between India and Pakistan is likely to be a rehearsal for the imminent collapse of Taiwan's imported equipment,” said Hu Xijin, former editor in chief of the hawkish Chinese state media newspaper Global Times.

EUROPE

Trump: Ceasefire talks to start ‘immediately’

President says he had ‘excellent’ call with Putin on ending Ukraine war

By JOSH BOAK
AND ZEKE MILLER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Monday that Russia and Ukraine will “immediately” begin ceasefire negotiations after what he described as an “excellent” call with Russian President Vladimir Putin that lasted more than two hours.

Trump also spoke with Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders in hopes of making progress toward a ceasefire.

“The conditions for that will be negotiated between the two parties, as it can only be, because they know details of a negotiation that nobody else would be aware of,” Trump said in a social media post. The conversations came after the White House said the U.S. leader has grown “frustrated” with both leaders over the continuing war in Ukraine.

After the call, Putin said Russia was ready to continue discussing an end to the fighting, but he indicated there was no major breakthrough in what he termed a “very informative and very frank” conversation with Trump. Putin said the warring countries should “find compromises that would suit all parties.”

“At the same time, I would like to note that, in general, Russia’s position is clear. The main thing

for us is to eliminate the root causes of this crisis,” the Russian president said.

Trump has struggled to end a war that began with Russia’s invasion in February 2022. That



Putin

makes these conversations a serious test of his reputation as a deal maker after having claimed he would quickly settle the conflict once he was back in the White House, if not even before he took office.

Trump expressed his hopes for a “productive day” Monday — and a ceasefire — in a social media post over the weekend.

His effort also included calls to NATO leaders. But ahead of the call, Vice President JD Vance said Trump is “more than open” to walking away from trying to end the war if he feels Putin isn’t serious about negotiation.

“He’s grown weary and frustrated with both sides of the conflict,” White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters Monday ahead of the call.

“He has made it clear to both sides that he wants to see a peaceful resolution and ceasefire as soon as possible.”

The Republican president is banking on the idea that his force



Luis M. ALVAREZ / AP

President Donald Trump spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin about the war in Ukraine for more than two hours Monday.

of personality and personal history with Putin will be enough to break any impasse over a pause in the fighting.

Trump’s “sensibilities are that he’s got to get on the phone with President Putin, and that is going to clear up some of the logjam and get us to the place that we need to get to,” said Trump’s envoy, Steve Witkoff.

Still, there are fears that Trump has an affinity for Putin that could put Ukraine at a disadvantage with any agreements engineered by the U.S. government.

Bridget Brink said she resigned last month as the U.S. ambassador

to Ukraine “because the policy since the beginning of the administration was to put pressure on the victim Ukraine, rather than on the aggressor, Russia.”

Brink said the sign that she needed to depart was an Oval Office meeting in February where Trump and his team openly berated Zelenskyy for not being sufficiently deferential to them.

“I believe that peace at any price is not peace at all,” Brink said. “It’s appeasement, and as we know from history, appeasement only leads to more war.”

Trump’s frustration about the war had been building before his

post Saturday on Truth Social about the coming calls.

Trump said his discussion with Putin would focus on stopping the “bloodbath” of the war. It also was to cover trade, a sign that Trump might be seeking to use financial incentives to broker some kind of agreement after Russia’s invasion led to severe sanctions by the United States and its allies that have steadily eroded Moscow’s ability to grow.

Trump’s hope, according to the post, is that “a war that should have never happened will end.”

His treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, said Sunday on NBC’s “Meet the Press” that Trump had made it clear that a failure by Putin to negotiate “in good faith” could lead to additional sanctions against Russia.

Bessent suggested the sanctions that began during the administration of Democratic President Joe Biden were inadequate because they did not stop Russia’s oil revenues, due to concerns that doing so would increase U.S. prices.

The United States sought to cap Russia’s oil revenues while preserving the country’s petroleum exports to limit the damage from the inflation that the war produced.

Putin recently rejected an offer by Zelenskyy to meet in-person in Turkey as an alternative to a 30-day ceasefire urged by Ukraine and its Western allies, including Washington. Instead, Russian and Ukrainian officials met in Istanbul for talks, the first such direct negotiations since March 2022.

Election puts Romania back on pro-European course

Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania — A pro-European Union centrist managed an upset in Romania’s presidential election, beating out a hard-right nationalist who had channeled people’s anger at the political establishment to surge in the polls. But the new leader now must contend with deep societal divisions that the tense vote laid bare.

Final results from the presidential race showed Nicusor Dan winning 53.6% of the vote, ahead of the hard-right candidate George Simion, who during the campaign portrayed his movement as championing conservative values like patriotism, sovereignty and the family, and who styled himself as the Romanian analogue to U.S. President Donald Trump.

Sunday’s victory for the pro-EU candidate marked a significant comeback in a tense election that many viewed as a geopolitical choice for the former Eastern Bloc country between East or West.

But as Dan, a 55-year-old math-

ematician, pro-Western reformist and mayor of Bucharest, takes over Romania’s presidency, fault lines remain in the country where endemic corruption, inequality and an erosion of trust in traditional institutions and parties have fueled a broad rejection of the political establishment.

Dan’s decisive win on Sunday was a major turnaround from the first round of elections on May 4, where Simion — a nationalist who has advocated for uniting Romania with neighboring Moldova and is banned from entering Ukraine — had nearly double Dan’s share of votes to become the clear front-runner for the second round.

Simion’s surge to prominence came after Romania’s first attempt to hold the presidential election late last year in which far-right outsider Calin Georgescu topped first-round polls. The country’s political landscape was upended after a top court voided the ballot, alleging electoral violations and Russian interference.

Capitalizing on the furor over



EDUARD VINATORU/AP

Presidential candidate Nicusor Dan smiles before casting his ballot in Fagaras, Romania, Sunday.

the annulment of that election, Simion allied with Georgescu, who was banned in March from running in the election redo, and

promised to appoint him prime minister if Simion secured the presidency.

While Simion was considered the favorite for the second round, a high voter turnout of 64.7% in Sunday’s ballot — more than in any Romanian election of the past quarter-century — is thought to have benefited Dan.

Adding to the high turnout were approximately 1.6 million votes from members of Romania’s large diaspora, which is primarily concentrated in Western Europe. Estimates suggest that between 4 and 5 million Romanians live abroad — nearly a quarter of the country’s population. Most emigrated after Romania joined the EU in 2007, seeking relief from high unemployment and low wages.

As a member of the EU and one of the easternmost members of the NATO military alliance, Romania plays a pivotal role in Western security infrastructure — especially since Russia’s full-scale invasion of neighboring Ukraine

in February 2022.

After that invasion, NATO bolstered its presence on Europe’s eastern flank by sending additional multinational battlegroups to Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovakia, and Bucharest has played an increasingly prominent role in the alliance, donating a Patriot missile system to Ukraine and opening an international training hub for F-16 jet pilots from allied countries.

Dan said Monday he had a call with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte and that he conveyed to Rutte that Romania “will remain a steadfast ally” within the alliance. “At the same time, we rely on NATO to guarantee Romania’s unwavering security,” he said.

Many observers saw Sunday’s vote as crucial to maintaining Romania’s place within the network of Western alliances — especially amid fears that the Trump administration is reconsidering its security commitments to the United States’ European partners.

NATION

Biden diagnosed with prostate cancer

By JOSH BOAK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former President Joe Biden has been diagnosed with prostate cancer, his office said Sunday.

The finding came after the 82-year-old reported urinary symptoms, which led doctors to discover a nodule on his prostate. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer on Friday, with the cancer cells having spread to the bone.

“While this represents a more aggressive form of the disease, the cancer appears to be hormone-sensitive which allows for effective management,” his office said. “The President and his family are reviewing treatment options with his physicians.”

In a post on Monday morning, Biden posted a photo of himself and his wife, Jill Biden, and wrote: “Cancer touches us all. Like so many of you, Jill and I have learned that we are strongest in the broken places. Thank you for lifting us up with love and sup-



STEPHANIE SCARBROUGH/AP

Political leaders sent well wishes to former President Joe Biden after hearing of his diagnosis.

port.”

Prostate cancers are graded for aggressiveness using what’s known as a Gleason score. The scores range from 6 to 10, with 8, 9 and 10 cancers behaving more aggressively. Biden’s office said his score was 9, suggesting his cancer is among the most aggressive.

When prostate cancer spreads to other parts of the body, it often spreads to the bones. Metastasized cancer is much harder to treat than localized cancer be-

cause it can be hard for drugs to reach all the tumors and completely root out the disease.

However, when prostate cancers need hormones to grow, as in Biden’s case, they can be susceptible to treatment that deprives the tumors of hormones.

Outcomes have improved in recent decades and patients can expect to live with metastatic prostate cancer for four or five years, said Dr. Matthew Smith of Massachusetts General Brigham Cancer Center.

“It’s very treatable, but not curable,” Smith said. “Most men in this situation would be treated with drugs and would not be advised to have either surgery or radiation therapy.”

Many political leaders sent Biden their wishes for his recovery.

President Donald Trump, a longtime opponent, posted on social media that he was saddened by the news and “we wish Joe a fast and successful recovery.”

Biden’s vice president, Kamala

Harris, said on social media that she was keeping him in her family’s “hearts and prayers during this time.”

“Joe is a fighter — and I know he will face this challenge with the same strength, resilience, and optimism that have always defined his life and leadership,” she wrote.

Former President Barack Obama said his thoughts and prayers were with Biden, his former vice president, lauding his toughness. “Nobody has done more to find breakthrough treatments for cancer in all its forms than Joe, and I am certain he will fight this challenge with his trademark resolve and grace,” Obama wrote.

The health of Biden was a dominant concern among voters during his time as president. After a calamitous debate performance in June while seeking reelection, Biden abandoned his bid for a second term. Harris became the nominee and lost to Trump.

But in recent days, Biden rejected concerns about his age despite

reporting in the new book “Original Sin” by Jake Tapper and Alex Thompson that aides shielded the public from the extent of his decline while serving as president.

In February 2023, Biden had a skin lesion removed from his chest that was a basal cell carcinoma, a common form of skin cancer. And in November 2021, he had a polyp removed from his colon that was a benign but potentially pre-cancerous lesion.

In 2022, Biden made a “cancer moonshot” one of his administration’s priorities with the goal of halving the cancer death rate over the next 25 years. The initiative was a continuation of his work as vice president to address a disease that had killed his older son, Beau, who died from brain cancer in 2015.

His father, when announcing the goal to halve the cancer death rate, said this could be an “American moment to prove to ourselves and, quite frankly, the world that we can do really big things.”

More cuts sought before Trump’s big bill advances

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Mike Johnson acknowledged there are still details to “iron out” on President Donald Trump’s big tax breaks bill as conservative Republicans insist on quicker cuts to Medicaid and green energy programs before giving their full support.

House Republicans narrowly advanced the 1,116-page package in a rare weekend vote late Sunday, but just barely, as GOP leaders promise more negotiations ahead. It’s all setting up a difficult week for the GOP leadership racing toward a Memorial Day deadline, a week away, to pass the package from the House on their own, over staunch opposition from Democrats.

“The bill does not yet meet the moment,” said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, a leader of the House Freedom Caucus, in a social media post after the late-night session. “We can and must do better before we pass the final product.”

Johnson is working to hold his slim House majority together to pass the president’s top domestic priority of extending tax breaks while pumping in money for border security and deportations — all while finding at least \$1.5 trillion in spending cuts elsewhere.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Monday it’s “absolutely essential” that Republicans unite and pass the bill so that Trump can deliver on the agenda.

Republicans criticizing the



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., joined from left by Majority Whip Tom Emmer, R-Minn., and Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-La., talks to reporters last month at the Capitol in Washington.

measure argued that the bill’s new spending and tax cuts are front-loaded, while the measures to offset the cost are back-loaded. In particular, they are looking to speed up the new work requirements that Republicans want to enact for able-bodied participants in Medicaid. They also want to more quickly end nationwide tax breaks for green energy projects.

Majority Leader Steve Scalise said on CNBC Monday that work requirements for some Medicaid beneficiaries would begin in early 2027, a big change from the 2029 start date that is in the bill.

Scalise said GOP leaders are

looking to give the administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Dr. Mehmet Oz, the time he needs to implement the work requirements, but would be “moving that date up dramatically.”

Late last week, the House Budget Committee failed to advance the package when four conservative Republicans objected. But it was able to do so Sunday on a vote of 17-16, with the four holdouts voting “present” to allow it to move ahead, as talks continue.

Johnson, who met late Sunday with lawmakers ahead of voting, indicated he wants to impose the

work requirements “as soon as possible” but acknowledged it may take states longer to change their systems.

“There will be more details to iron out and several more to take care of,” said Johnson, R-La.

Democrats have decried the cuts Republicans are proposing to Medicaid and food stamps to offset the costs of the tax breaks.

“This spending bill is terrible, and I think the American people know that,” Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., told CNN’s “State of the Union” on Sunday. “There is nothing wrong with us bringing the government in balance. But there

is a problem when that balance comes on the back of working men and women. And that’s what is happening here.”

The four Republicans who had blocked the bill last week — Roy and Reps. Ralph Norman of South Carolina, Josh Brecheen of Oklahoma and Rep. Andrew Clyde of Georgia — cast their “present” votes Sunday. Norman pointed to a recent downgrade of the nation’s credit rating in making his arguments for steeper reductions.

At its core, the sprawling legislative package permanently extends the existing income tax cuts that were approved during Trump’s first term in 2017 and adds temporary new ones that the president campaigned on in 2024, including no taxes on tips, overtime pay and auto loan interest payments. The measure also proposes big spending increases for border security and defense.

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a nonpartisan fiscal watchdog group, estimates that the House bill is shaping up to add roughly \$3.3 trillion to the debt over the next decade.

Johnson is not just having to address the concerns of the deficit hawks in his party. He’s also facing pressure from centrists who will be warily eyeing the proposed changes to Medicaid, food assistance programs and the rolling back of clean energy tax credits.

If the bill passes the House this week, it would then move to the Senate, where Republicans are also eyeing changes.

NATION

Economy holds, for now

Firms, consumers brace for impact of Trump's tariffs

BY PAUL WISEMAN,
CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
AND ANNE D'INNOCENZIO

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For months, American consumers and businesses have been hearing that President Trump's massive import taxes — tariffs — would drive up prices and hurt the U.S. economy. But the latest economic reports don't match the doom and gloom: Inflation actually eased last month, and hiring was solid in April.

For now, the disconnect has businesses and consumers struggling to reconcile what they were told to expect, what the numbers say and what they are seeing on the ground. Trump and his supporters are quick to point out that the trade wars of his first term didn't translate into higher overall inflation across the economy.

So is it time to breathe easy? Not yet, economists say. Trump's tariffs are still huge — the highest since the Great Depression of the 1930s. They're unpredictable: The president frequently announces tariffs only to suspend them days later and to conjure up new ones. And they are still working their way through the system.

"We had a good jobs report. We had a cool inflation report, and that's great," said Ernie Tedeschi, director of economics at Yale University's Budget Lab. "But that should not give us comfort about what next month will be, particularly on inflation."

Walmart, for example, warned its customers last week that prices will be going up for everything from clothing to car seats. Prices for some items like bananas have already increased.

True, the truce with China last Monday dramatically reduced the risks to the U.S. economy, and U.S. and global stock markets rallied last week in relief. The United States dropped the import tax that Trump angrily imposed on China — America's third-biggest source of imports — from an eye-watering 145% to 30%; Beijing cut its retaliatory tariffs from 125% to 10%. Economists at JPMorgan Chase, who had forecast last month that the China tariffs made a recession likely, don't expect one now.



DAMIAN DOVARGANES / AP

Walmart warned its customers last week that prices will be going up for everything from clothing to car seats because of President Donald Trump's import taxes.

But even with the lower levies on China, the Yale Budget Lab reported that the cost of Trump's trade war will be high. Climbing prices will reduce the purchasing power of the average household by \$2,800. Shoe prices will rise 15% and clothing 14%. The tariffs will shave 0.7 percentage points off U.S. economic growth this year and increase the unemployment rate — now a low 4.2% — by nearly 0.4 percentage points.

Trump has plastered 10% taxes on imports from almost every country on Earth. He's also imposed 25% duties on cars, aluminum, steel, and many imports from Canada and Mexico.

The Yale Budget Lab estimates that Trump policies will push the average U.S. tariff rate to 17.8%, highest since 1934 and up from around 2.5% when Trump took office. (Other economists put his tariff rate at 14% to 15%.) During Trump's first term, the average tariff rose just 1 percentage point despite all the headlines generated by trade policies. Now, according to the budget lab, they are rising 15 percentage points.

And the tariffs have only begun to bite. In April, the import tax revenues collected by U.S. Customs and Border Protection came to a tariff rate of just 4.5%, a fraction of what's coming, Tedeschi said. That's partly because of delays in rolling out the tariffs, including technical glitches that prevented customs agents from collecting them for a couple of weeks.

The full impact has also been delayed because companies beat the clock by bringing in foreign goods before Trump's tariffs took effect. Retailers and importers had also largely halted shipments of shoes, clothes, toys and other items due to new tariffs, but many are resuming imports from China.

Tedeschi, who was chief econo-

mist at President Joe Biden's Council of Economic Advisers, also notes that it just takes time for tariffs to translate into higher prices. During Trump's first term, his January 2018 levies on foreign washing machines didn't yield more expensive appliances until April that year. Still, a Federal Reserve study this month found that duties Trump imposed in 2018 and 2019 meant higher prices as soon as two months later, suggesting consumers could start paying more in June.

Things have changed from the first time Trump was in the White House. During his first term, companies essentially passed along the entire cost of his tariffs. Now American consumers, still scarred by the burst of inflation that followed the COVID-19 pandemic, may be more reluctant to accept higher prices.

"Consumers weren't inflation exhausted in 2018 the way that they are now," Tedeschi said. Surveys by Federal Reserve banks in Atlanta and Dallas have found that most companies would eat at least some of the tariff costs this time around. And one reason that the Labor Department's producer price index fell in April was that retailers and wholesalers reported lower profit margins, a sign that they may have been absorbing some of the tariff cost.

The economic damage doesn't just come from the cost of tariffs, but from the erratic way the president imposes them. For instance, the 145% China tariffs were just suspended for 90 days.

Consumers are clearly fearful that the duties will boost prices, as consumer confidence surveys have plummeted since Trump began ramping up his tariff threats in February. The Conference Board's consumer confidence index has fallen for five straight months to its lowest level since the

depths of the pandemic in May 2020.

Snowy Owl Coffee Roasters in Sandwich, Mass., which imports beans from Brazil, Nicaragua, Burundi and other countries, is only now planning to raise its prices this week to cover the cost of the 10% tariffs. It plans to add 25 cents to 35 cents to the price for each cup.

"Tariffs are increasing costs and they're adding to a lot of uncertainty around the potential for a downturn," said Shayna Ferullo, 44, co-owner of Snowy Owl. "We are looking closely at the year ahead with the goal of consolidating and operating really, really tightly."

Ferullo will also have to pay much more than she budgeted to renovate her shop in Brewster, Mass. — one of her three retail locations — because the contractor has raised his estimate, partly due to tariffs on building supplies. She has already elected to not fill one job after an employee left and is looking at ways automation could help reduce her labor costs, though she hasn't laid off any of her 35 employees.

Jared Hendricks, CEO of Village Lighting Co., last month halted shipments of supplies he gets from China — holiday storage bags, wreaths, holiday lights and garlands. Now that the U.S. and China have reached a truce, he's trying to get the products to the United States in time for the holidays.

Meanwhile, he's figuring out how to foot a \$1 million bill for the tariffs. He's hoping he can cover the cost by raising prices 10% to 15%.

In the meantime, he's trying to secure a loan against his house to pay for the levies.

"We are moving forward," he said, "but at great cost, personal risk, and weariness."

Bessent: Tariffs may hike prices at Walmart

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent acknowledged Sunday that Walmart, the largest U.S. retailer, may pass along some of the costs from President Donald Trump's tariffs to its shoppers through higher prices.



Bessent

Bessent described his call with the company's CEO a day after Trump warned Walmart to avoid raising prices from the tariffs at all and vowed to keep a close watch on

what it does.

As doubts persist about Trump's economic leadership, Bessent pushed back against inflation concerns, praised the uncertainty caused by Trump as a negotiating tactic for trade talks and dismissed the downgrade Friday of U.S. government debt by Moody's Ratings.

Yet Walmart does not appear prepared to "eat the tariffs" in full, as Trump has insisted the company and China would do.

Bessent said he spoke Saturday with Walmart CEO Doug McMillon, stressing in two news show interviews that what he thought really mattered for Walmart customers was the decline in gasoline prices. Gas is averaging roughly \$3.18 a gallon, down from a year ago but also higher over the past week, according to AAA.

"Walmart will be absorbing some of the tariffs, some may get passed on to consumers," Bessent said on CNN. "Overall, I would expect inflation to remain in line. But I don't blame consumers for being skittish after what happened to them for years under Biden," a reference to inflation hitting a four-decade high in June 2022 under then President Joe Biden as the recovery from the pandemic, government spending and the Russian invasion of Ukraine pushed up costs.

Walmart did not comment on Bessent's description of his conversation with McMillon.

In a social media post on Saturday morning, Trump said Walmart should not charge its customers more money to offset the new tariff costs.

Bessent said Walmart on its earnings call on Thursday had been obligated under federal regulations "to give the worst-case scenario so that they're not sued," suggesting in an NBC interview that the price increases would not be severe in his view.

NATION

Central US braces for more severe storms

By DYLAN LOVAN
AND CAROLYN KASTER
Associated Press

LONDON, Ky. — Officials in Kansas and Texas were evaluating damage on Monday after tornadoes touched down overnight, just days after more than two dozen people were killed in storms that swept through parts of the Midwest and South.

Kentucky was hardest hit by last week's storms.

A devastating tornado damaged hundreds of homes, tossed vehicles, left many homeless, and killed at least 19 people, most of them in southeastern Laurel County.

Meteorologists predicted a fresh "multi-day" mix of dangerous weather conditions across the central U.S. with heavy rains, thunderstorms and potential tornadoes, according to the National Weather Service.

A powerful tornado tore through Reno County, Kan., late Sunday, moving through rural areas and into the small community of Plevna, county Emergency Management officials said in a news release on Monday.

The tornado damaged several homes, trees and utility poles, then continued to cause damage for about 5 miles north and east of the city. Damage was extensive, but no injuries or deaths were reported.

A National Weather Service team planned to head out Monday to survey Plevna tornado damage, said Andy Kleinsasser, a meteorologist with the service's office in Wichita.

There were no known injuries or fatalities, Kleinsasser said. The tornado started in Stafford County and cut a path that was at least 20 miles long through Reno County, he said.

In the western part of Kansas, Interstate 70 was reduced to one lane near Grinnell, a town of 260 people, because of tornado damage and downed power lines.

The city of Greensburg, Kan., said on social media Monday



PHOTOS BY CAROLYN KASTER/AP

A destroyed home is seen from above on Sunday in London, Ky., after a severe storm passed through.

morning that there were power outages but it was safe after the "storm scare."

In 2007, Greensburg was slammed by an EF5 tornado that was more than 1.5 miles wide and packed winds up to 205 mph, leveling more than 90% of the town of 1,400 and killing 12.

The weather service confirmed a "large and extremely dangerous" tornado Sunday afternoon near Mingus, Texas, about 70 miles west of Fort Worth.

Significant damage but no immediate casualties were reported in Palo Pinto County, which includes Mingus, a sheriff's office dispatcher said.

Officials were evaluating damage Monday morning, said county Emergency Management Coordinator Chad Jordan.

The Kentucky storms emerged from a weather system Friday that killed seven in Missouri and two in



Hailee Allen holds a family picture saved from Lynn and Don White's home on Saturday in London, Ky.

northern Virginia, authorities said.

Damage assessments were underway Sunday as Kentucky readied its request for federal disaster

assistance, Gov. Andy Beshear said.

Some of the two dozen state roads that had closures could take days to reopen.

In St. Louis, Mayor Cara Spencer said five people died, 38 were injured and more than 5,000 homes were affected.

On Sunday, city inspectors were going through damaged areas to condemn unsafe structures, Spencer said.

About 130 miles south, a tornado in Scott County killed two people, injured several others and destroyed several homes, Sheriff Derick Wheatley wrote on social media.

About 1,200 tornadoes strike the U.S. annually, and they have been reported in all 50 states.

Researchers found in 2018 that deadly tornadoes were occurring less frequently in the traditional "Tornado Alley" of Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas and more frequently in parts of the more densely populated and tree-filled mid-South.

Meanwhile, triple-digit temperatures were forecast for parts of south Texas with the potential to break daily records. The hot, dry air also sets the stage for critical wildfire conditions through early this week in southern New Mexico and West Texas.

Up to a foot of snow was expected in parts of Idaho and western Montana.

The Trump administration has massively cut staffing of National Weather Service offices, with outside experts worrying about how it would affect warnings in disasters such as tornadoes.

The office in Jackson, Ky., which was responsible for the area around London, Ky., had a March 2025 vacancy rate of 25%; the Louisville, Ky., weather service staff was down 29%; and the St. Louis office was down 16%, according to calculations by weather service employees obtained by The Associated Press.

The Louisville office also was without a permanent boss — the meteorologist in charge — as of March, according to the staffing data.

Experts said any vacancy rate above 20% is a critical problem.

Court allows Trump to strip protections from some Venezuelans

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday allowed the Trump administration to strip legal protections from 350,000 Venezuelans, potentially exposing them to deportation.

The court's order, with only one noted dissent, puts on hold a ruling from a federal judge in San Francisco that kept in place Temporary Protected Status for the Venezuelans that would have otherwise expired last month. The justices provided no rationale, which is common in emergency appeals.

The status allows people already in the United States to live and work legally because their native countries are deemed unsafe for return due to natural disaster or civil strife.

A federal appeals court had earlier rejected the administration's request to put the order on hold while the lawsuit continues.

The case is the latest in a string of emergency appeals President Donald Trump's administration has made to the Supreme Court, many of them related to immigration. Last week, the government asked the court to allow it to end humani-

tarian parole for hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela, setting them up for potential deportation as well.

The high court also has been involved in legal battles over Trump's efforts to swiftly deport Venezuelans accused of being gang members to a prison in El Salvador under an 18th century wartime law called the Alien Enemies Act.

The administration has moved aggressively to withdraw various protections that have allowed immigrants to remain in the country,

including ending the temporary protected status for a total of 600,000 Venezuelans and 500,000 Haitians. That status is granted in 18-month increments.

The protections had been set to expire April 7, but U.S. District Judge Edward Chen ordered a pause on those plans. He found that the expiration threatened to severely disrupt the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and could cost billions in lost economic activity.

Chen, who was appointed to the bench by Democratic President Barack Obama, found the govern-

ment hadn't shown any harm caused by keeping the program alive.

But Solicitor General D. John Sauer wrote on behalf of the administration that Chen's order impermissibly interferes with the administration's power over immigration and foreign affairs.

Congress created TPS in 1990 to prevent deportations to countries suffering from natural disasters or civil strife.

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said she would have rejected the administration's emergency appeal.

NATION

Officials investigate tall ship's collision

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Federal officials are investigating a Mexican Navy vessel that crashed into the Brooklyn Bridge, killing two sailors and injuring 19 others.

The National Transportation Safety Board said the investigative team arrived late Sunday and includes experts in nautical operations, marine and bridge engineering and survival factors.

The agency said in a post on X that officials will discuss later Monday their investigation into the cause of the Saturday crash, which is likely to take months.

On Sunday, the damaged ship, named the Cuauhtemoc, was moored at Pier 35 in lower Manhattan as the investigation by both the U.S. and Mexican governments got underway.

Most of the crew from the training vessel, meanwhile, have since returned to Mexico, according to the country's Navy.

On a post on X, Mexico's Navy said that 172 cadets along seven officers arrived early Monday at the port of Veracruz, which is on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and home to Mexico's naval school.

It added that said that two cadets remain in New York, getting medical attention and it said that their condition is stable.

The 300-foot vessel struck the Brooklyn Bridge as it attempted to leave its dock on the East River.



Bystanders watch the Cuauhtemoc, a masted Mexican Navy training ship, at Pier 35 after it collided with the Brooklyn Bridge on Sunday in New York.

YUKI IWAMURA/AP

As it struck the underside of the bridge, the vessel's three masts broke with sailors seen on widely shared videos dangling on harnesses high up on the poles. The ship then drifted listlessly toward a crowded pier.

The bridge escaped major damage but at least 19 of the ship's 277 sailors needed medical treatment, according to officials. Two of the four people who suffered serious injuries later died.

Among those killed was América Yamilet Sánchez, a 20-year-old sailor who had been studying engineering at the Mexican naval academy. Her family has said she died after falling from one of the Cuauhtemoc's masts.

Simian suspects

Capuchins kidnap howler babies, researchers say

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A baby howler monkey clung to the back of an older male monkey, its tiny fingers grasping fur. But they're not related and not even the same species.

Scientists spotted surprising evidence of what they describe as monkey kidnappings while reviewing video footage from a small island of Panama. The capuchin monkeys were seen carrying at least 11 howler babies between 2022 and 2023.

"This was very much a shocking finding," said Zoë Goldsborough, a behavioral ecologist at the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior in Germany. "We've not seen anything like this in the animal kingdom."

The monkeys' motivations remain under investigation. Capuchins are house cat-size monkeys found in South America and Central America. They are long-lived, clever and learn new behaviors from each other. One group of capuchins in Panama has even learned to use stone tools to crack open nuts and seafood.

Goldsberg and other researchers at Max Planck and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute had set up more than 80 cameras to study capuchin tool use, but were surprised to see the first howler babies appear in early 2022.



MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE OF ANIMAL BEHAVIOR/AP

A baby howler monkey clings to a young adult male capuchin monkey on Jicarón Island, Panama, in 2022.

The footage showed the capuchins walking and pounding their stone tools with baby howlers on their backs. But cameras did not capture the moments of abduction, which scientists said likely happened up in the trees, where howlers spend most of their time.

The findings were published Monday in the journal *Current Biology*.

In most or all cases, the baby howlers died, researchers said. Infant howler monkeys would normally be carried by their mothers while still nursing. All the babies in the video — from a few weeks to a few months in age — were too young to be weaned.

"A hopeful part of me wants to believe some escaped and went back to their mothers, but we don't know," said Margaret Crofoot of Max Planck and the Smithsonian..

The videos recorded a few instances of young capuchin males still carrying howler babies that had died, likely from starvation.

STARS AND STRIPES

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The Daily Guide to Navigating The Military Business Market

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WORLD

Aid trucks enter Gaza after nearly 3 month blockade

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — The first aid trucks have entered Gaza following nearly three months of Israel's complete blockade of food, medicine and other supplies, Israel and the United Nations said Monday.

Five trucks carrying baby food and other aid entered the territory of over 2 million Palestinians via the Kerem Shalom crossing, according to the Israeli defense body in charge of coordinating aid to Gaza, COGAT.

The U.N. called it a "welcome development" but said far more aid is needed to address the vast humanitarian crisis. Food security experts last week warned of famine in Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier said his decision to resume limited, "basic" aid to Gaza came after pressure from allies who said they couldn't support Israel's renewed military offensive if there are "images of hunger" coming from the Palestinian territory.

The U.N. humanitarian chief, Tom Fletcher, said the few trucks were a "drop in the ocean of what is urgently needed." He said an additional four U.N. trucks were cleared to enter Gaza. Those



JEHAD ALSHRAFI/AP

Palestinians struggle to get donated food at a community kitchen in Jabalia, northern Gaza Strip, Monday.

trucks may enter tomorrow, according to COGAT.

During the ceasefire, some 600 aid trucks entered Gaza each day.

Fletcher added that given the chaotic situation on the ground, the U.N. expects the aid could be looted or stolen. He urged Israel to open multiple crossings in northern and southern Gaza to permit a regular flow of aid.

Still, the announcement raised hope among Palestinians that more desperately needed food,

medicine and other supplies would enter.

Israel over the weekend launched a new wave of air and ground operations across Gaza, and the army ordered the evacuation of its second-largest city, Khan Younis, where Israel carried out a massive operation earlier in the 19-month war that left much of the area in ruins.

Israel says its offensive is a bid to pressure Hamas to release the remaining hostages abducted in

the Oct. 7, 2023, attack. Hamas has said it will only release them in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli pullout.

Netanyahu said Monday that Israel plans on "taking control of all of Gaza," as well as establishing a new system to distribute aid that circumvents Hamas. He has said Israel also will encourage what he refers to as the voluntary emigration of much of Gaza's population to other countries.

The Trump administration has voiced full support for Israel's actions, though in recent days it has expressed growing concern over the crisis.

President Donald Trump — who skipped Israel on his trip to the region last week — voiced concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, as did Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who said that he was "troubled" by it.

In a video statement posted to social media, Netanyahu said Israel's "greatest friends in the world" had told him, "We cannot accept images of hunger, mass hunger. We cannot stand that. We will not be able to support you."

Netanyahu said the situation was approaching a "red line" and a "dangerous point," but it was not clear if he was referring to the cri-

sis in Gaza or the potential loss of support from allies.

The video statement appeared aimed at pacifying anger from Netanyahu's nationalist base at the decision to resume aid. Two far-right governing partners have pressed Netanyahu not to allow aid into Gaza.

At least one of them, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, appeared to be on board.

"No more raids and going in and out, but conquering, cleansing and remaining until Hamas is destroyed," he said. "We are destroying what is still left of the Strip, simply because everything there is one big city of terror."

The aid that would be let in would be "minimal," Netanyahu said, without specifying precisely when it would resume, and would act as a bridge toward the launch of a new aid system in Gaza, in which a U.S.-backed organization will distribute assistance in hubs that will be secured by the Israeli military.

U.N. agencies and aid groups have rejected the plan, saying it won't reach enough people and would weaponize aid in contravention of humanitarian principles. They have refused to take part in it.

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WORLD

UK, EU ink new deals 5 years after Brexit

Associated Press

LONDON — Britain and the European Union hailed a new chapter in their relationship Monday after they sealed new agreements on defense cooperation and easing trade flows at their first formal summit since Brexit.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who met European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and other senior EU officials in London for talks, said the deals will slash red tape, grow the British economy and reset relations with the 27-nation trade bloc since the U.K. left the EU in 2020.

Britain's opposition parties slammed the deals as backtracking on Brexit. "We're becoming a rule-taker from Brussels once again," Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch said.

Under the deals, a new U.K.-EU defense and security partnership

will allow the U.K. to access a EU defense loan program worth \$170 billion.

Other agreements include removing some checks on animal and plant products to ease food trade across borders and a 12-year extension of an agreement allowing EU fishing vessels in U.K. waters.

While the EU is the U.K.'s largest trading partner, the U.K. has been hit with a 21% drop in exports since Brexit because of more onerous border checks, laborious paperwork and other non-tariff barriers.

Post-Brexit visa restrictions have also hobbled the cross-border activities of professionals such as bankers or lawyers, as well as cultural exchanges, including touring bands and school trips.

Since becoming prime minister in July, Starmer has sought to re-

set relations with the EU, following years of tensions in the wake of the U.K.'s 2016 Brexit referendum.

Post-Brexit relations have been governed by a trade agreement negotiated by then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Starmer thinks that can be improved in a way that boosts trade and bolsters security.

Starmer hailed Monday's agreements — the third package of trade deals struck by his government in as many weeks following accords with the U.S. and India — as "good for jobs, good for bills and good for our borders."

The defense pact will allow Britain's defense industry to access cheap loans from a new EU loan program to buy military equipment, in part to help Ukraine defend itself.

In trade, officials say they will reduce routine border checks and

costs on some food imports and exports to make it easier for goods to flow freely. The changes will mean the U.K. can sell products like British burgers and sausages to the EU again, officials said.

"We know we've had lorries waiting for 16 hours, fresh food in the back not able to be exported, because frankly it's just going off, red tape, all the certifications that are required, we absolutely want to reduce that," Cabinet Office minister Thomas-Symonds, who led the negotiations, told the BBC.

In fisheries, the deal means European fishing boats will have access to U.K. waters until 2038. While economically minor, fishing has long been a sticking point and symbolically important issue for the U.K. and EU member states such as France. Disputes over the issue nearly derailed a Brexit deal back in 2020.

The talks also included a youth mobility plan that's expected to allow young Britons and Europeans to live and work temporarily in each other's territory, though no details were provided.

That remains a politically touchy issue in the U.K., seen by some Brexiteers as inching back toward free movement. The U.K. has similar youth mobility arrangements with countries including Australia and Canada.

Starmer has stressed that the U.K. won't rejoin the EU's frictionless single market and customs union, nor agree to the free movement of people between the U.K. and the EU.

Some of the trade-offs may prove difficult for Starmer, who faces growing challenges from the pro-Brexit and anti-immigration Reform U.K. party and accusations of "betraying" Brexit.

JD Vance invites new pope to visit US

Associated Press

ROME — Vice President JD Vance extended an invitation to Pope Leo XIV to visit the United States during a meeting at the Vatican on Monday ahead of a flurry of U.S.-led diplomatic efforts to make progress on a ceasefire in Russia's war in Ukraine.

Vance gave the first American pope a letter from President Donald Trump and the first lady inviting him. The Chicago-born pope took the letter and put it on his desk and was heard saying "at some point," in the video footage of the meeting provided by Vatican Media.

Vance, who converted to Catholicism in 2019, also gave the Augustinian pope a copy of two of St. Augustine's most seminal works, "The City of God" and "On Christian Doctrine," the vice president's office said. Another gift: A Chicago Bears T-shirt with Leo's name on it.

"As you can probably imagine, people in the United States are extremely excited about you," Vance told Leo as they exchanged gifts.

Leo gave Vance a bronze sculpture with the words in Italian "Peace is a fragile flower," and a coffee-table sized picture book of the papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace. Leo noted that Francis had chosen not to live in them and added, "And I may live in, but it's not totally decided."



SIMONE RISOLUTI/AP

Pope Leo XIV meets with Vice President JD Vance, center, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, left, on the occasion of their meeting at the Vatican, Monday.

Vance led the U.S. delegation to Sunday's formal Mass opening the pontificate of the first American pope. Joining him at the meeting on Monday was Secretary of State Marco Rubio, also a Catholic, Vance spokesperson Luke Schroeder said. The two then also met with the Vatican foreign minister, Archbishop Paul Gallagher.

"There was an exchange of views on some current international issues, calling for respect for humanitarian law and international law in areas of conflict and for a negotiated solution between the parties involved," according to a Vatican statement.

The Vatican listed Vance's delegation as the first of several audiences Leo was having Monday with people who had come to Rome for his inaugural Mass, including other Christian leaders and a group of faithful from his old diocese in Chiclayo, Peru.

The Vatican, which was largely

sidelined during the first three years of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has offered to host any peace talks while continuing humanitarian efforts to facilitate prisoner swaps and reunite Ukrainian children taken by Russia.

After greeting Leo briefly at the end of Sunday's Mass, Vance spent the rest of the day in separate meetings, including with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

He also met with European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Italy's Premier Giorgia Meloni, who said she hoped the meeting could be a "new beginning."

In the evening, Meloni spoke by phone with U.S. President Donald Trump and several other European leaders ahead of Trump's expected call with Russia's President Vladimir Putin on Monday, according to a statement from Meloni's office.

Russia bans 'undesirable' Amnesty International

Associated Press

The Russian authorities on Monday outlawed Amnesty International as an "undesirable organization," a label that under a 2015 law makes involvement with such organizations a criminal offense.

The decision by the Russian Prosecutor General's office, announced in an online statement, is the latest in the unrelenting crackdown on Kremlin critics, journalists and activists that intensified to unprecedented levels after Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

The designation means the international human rights group must stop any work in Russia, and it subjects those who cooperate with it or support it to prosecution, including if anyone shares Amnesty International's reports on social media.

Amnesty International did not immediately comment on the move.

Russia's list of "undesirable organizations" currently covers 223 entities, including prominent independent news outlets and rights groups.

Among those are prominent news organizations like Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty or Russian independent outlet Meduza, think tanks like Chatham House, anti-corruption group Transparency International, and Open Russia, an opposition group founded by Mikhail Khodorkovsky, an exiled tycoon who became an opposition figure.

After Open Russia was declared undesirable in 2021 and disbanded to protect its members,

its leader, Andrei Pivovarov, was arrested and convicted on charges of carrying out activities of an undesirable organization.

He was sentenced to four years in prison and released in 2024 in the largest prisoner exchange with the West since Soviet times.

Amnesty International was launched in 1961.

The group documents and reports human rights violations around the globe and campaigns for the release of those it deems unjustly imprisoned.

It has released reports on Russia's war in Ukraine, accusing Moscow of crimes against humanity, and has spoken out against the Kremlin's crackdown on dissent that has swept up thousands of people in recent years.

Amnesty International's recent statements on Russia included decrying a prison sentence handed to prominent election monitoring activists Grigory Melkonyants as a "brazen and politically motivated clampdown on peaceful activism."

It also spoke out against a series of arrests of publishing professionals in Russia last week over alleged "LGBTQ+ propaganda" in books.

"This shameless heavy-handed use of state apparatus against literature is as absurd as it is terrifying," said Natalia Zviagina, Amnesty International's Russia director.

In its statement, the Prosecutor General's office accused the group of running "Russophobic projects" and activities aimed at Russia's "political and economic isolation."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man who stabbed Rushdie gets 25-year sentence

NY MAYVILLE — A man who attacked Salman Rushdie with a knife in front of a stunned audience in 2022, leaving the prizewinning author blind in one eye, was sentenced Friday to 25 years in prison.

Hadi Matar, 27, stood quietly as the judge pronounced the sentence. He did not deny attacking Rushdie, and when he was invited to address the court before being sentenced, Matar got in a few last insults at the writer. He said he believed in freedom of speech but called Rushdie “a hypocrite.”

“Salman Rushdie wants to disrespect other people,” said Matar, clad in white-striped jail clothing and wearing handcuffs. “He wants to be a bully, he wants to bully other people. I don’t agree with that.”

Rushdie, 77, did not return to western New York for the sentencing but submitted a victim impact statement in which he said he has nightmares about what happened, Chautauqua County District Attorney Jason Schmidt said. The statement was not made public. Rushdie, through his agent, declined to comment after the sentencing.

New atomic clock created, named most reliable clock

CO BOULDER — A new atomic clock is one of the world’s best timekeepers, researchers said — and after years of development, the “fountain”-style clock is now in use helping keep official U.S. time.

Known as NIST-F4, the clock is at the Boulder, Colo., campus of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

The clock relies on cesium atoms, which oscillate between quantum states at a frequency of over 9 billion times per second. NIST-F4 uses lasers to cool a ball of cesium atoms to near absolute zero, then measures the frequency of the atoms as they pass through a microwave chamber.

As they rise and fall like water in a fountain, the atoms oscillate, “ticking” more than 9 billion times per second.

The length of that second is so reliable that the clock would be off by less than a second if it had started running 100 million years ago, researchers said.

Colleges lay off workers, freeze hiring due to cuts

MD BALTIMORE — At the University of Maryland at Baltimore, administrators are laying off about 30 people and eliminating about 30 vacant positions. Towson University is implementing a hiring pause. And Morgan State University is consolidating some programs in addition to cutting jobs and vacancies.

The moves come as the Trump administration threatens to further cut research and other federal



GREG EANS, THE (OWENSBORO, KY.) MESSENGER-INQUIRER/AP

Remember a bygone battle

Chuck Bangle, right, and his son, George Bangle, talk in their camp that is set up as an 8th Kentucky Regiment Confederate Army camp while participating in the reenactment of the Battle of Sacramento, on Saturday, in Sacramento, Ky.

funding to universities, and after the Maryland state legislature passed a budget with deep reductions to help close a \$3 billion spending gap — and amid an already-difficult fiscal environment for smaller state schools.

The state cuts included a 7% reduction — amounting to \$155 million — to the University System of Maryland, which is made up of 12 schools and three regional centers. Each school must now find ways to raise revenue or reduce costs to offset the loss.

University holds speaker’s diploma for Gaza speech

NY NEW YORK CITY — New York University said it is withholding the diploma of a student who used his commencement speech to condemn Israel’s war in Gaza and what he referred to as the United States’ “complicity in this genocide.”

“The only thing that is appropriate to say in this time and to a group this large is a recognition of the atrocities currently happening in Palestine,” Logan Rozos, a graduating student from NYU’s Gallatin School, said in a speech Wednesday to cheers and applause.

Pro-Israeli groups demanded that NYU take action after footage of the speech was shared online.

The university issued an apology the same day and announced it would withhold the student’s diploma while it pursues disciplinary action against him.

NYU spokesman John Beckman said in a Wednesday statement that the student “lied about the speech he was going to deliver” and misused his role “to express his personal and one-sided political views.”

Spider monkey saved from possible dealer’s home

CA VALLEJO — A baby spider monkey is starting a new chapter at the Oakland Zoo after she was rescued by authorities during a methamphetamine bust in Solano County earlier this month.

On May 6, Solano County sheriff’s deputies seized half a pound of methamphetamine during a traffic stop in the unincorporated area of Vallejo, authorities said. The driver, identified as 50-year-old Clifford Vicenty, was taken into custody and charged with possession of a controlled substance for sale, according to the Sheriff’s Office.

But that turned out to be only the tip of the iceberg.

The next day, detectives served a search warrant at Vicenty’s Vallejo home and found another

pound of methamphetamine, more than \$2,000 cash, two rattlesnakes and the baby spider monkey, authorities said. The total street value of confiscated meth is estimated to be \$26,000, according to the Sheriff’s Office.

Vicenty now faces additional charges related to illegal possession of exotic animals and controlled substances. The 18-month-old spider monkey was taken to the Oakland Zoo’s Veterinary Hospital for treatment.

Governor vetoes slavery reparations study

MD ANNAPOLIS — Maryland Gov. Wes Moore announced Friday he will veto a measure to create a commission to study potential slavery reparations in the state, saying that while it was a difficult decision, the issue already has been studied and now is the time “to focus on the work itself.”

Moore, a Democrat who is the state’s first Black governor and the only Black governor currently serving, wrote in his veto letter that he applauded the legislature’s work on the bill.

“But in light of the many important studies that have taken place on this issue over nearly three decades, now is the time to focus on the work itself: Narrowing the racial

wealth gap, expanding homeownership, uplifting entrepreneurs of color, and closing the foundational disparities that lead to inequality — from food insecurity to education,” Moore wrote.

The governor also noted in his veto letter that Black politicians have risen to the highest levels of government in the state in recent years.

Train strikes pedestrians, at least 2 women dead

OH FREMONT — Two people were killed and at least one person was missing after multiple pedestrians were struck by a train in northern Ohio, authorities said.

The group was hit Sunday evening in Fremont, near Lake Erie between Toledo and Cleveland, WTOL-TV reported.

Fremont Mayor Danny Sanchez confirmed two fatalities, telling reporters they were a 58-year-old woman and her 38-year-old daughter. He said a toddler was hurt and that the missing person is a 5-year-old child. He said crews were searching the Sandusky River near the Miles Newton Bridge.

Sanchez said the group was from Fort Wayne, Ind., and on a fishing trip.



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OPINION

Costs high when honest intel work gets people fired

By DAVID IGNATIUS
The Washington Post

S herman Kent, the godfather of intelligence analysis, argued that the first obligation for his profession was to give policymakers accurate and unbiased information, through what he called “a mastery of background knowledge, evaluation and structuring of all-source material, and tradecraft expertise.”

That operating principle went out the window earlier this month, as Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard fired the top two officials of the National Intelligence Council (NIC), Fox News reported.

The officials had overseen a careful analysis that challenged arguments that the Venezuelan government directs the Tren de Aragua gang — which is President Donald Trump’s rationale for invoking the Alien Enemies Act against the gang’s members.

Telling inconvenient truths to presidents is what intelligence analysts are supposed to do. CIA analysts have done this for decades — for instance, in challenging U.S. military strategies during the Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Presidents never like to be told they’re wrong, and they often persist in misguided policies, regardless of the evidence. But in this administration, it seems, truth-telling is a cause for dismissal.

Gabbard compounded the mistake by ordering a bureaucratic reshuffle of intelligence analysis. She will relocate the National Intelligence Council from the CIA to her ODNI headquarters.

And her organization will also take over production of the President’s Daily Brief, the document that shapes national security policy decisions across the government, according to The New York Times.

This is ironic, given that one of Gabbard’s aims was to streamline and downsize her office.

Intelligence community angst is the last thing Trump needs at a time when he has taken on unusually challenging foreign-policy missions, including attempting to

negotiate peace in the Ukraine and Gaza wars and to strike a new nuclear deal with Iran.

Rather than searching analysis, Trump might get mush. As the 2002 CIA study of Kent’s legacy noted: “When an intelligence staff has been screened through [too fine a mesh], its members will be as alike as tiles on a bathroom floor — and about as capable of meaningful and original thought.”

The trigger for Gabbard’s putsch was probably an April 7 report by the National Intelligence Council titled “Venezuela: Examining Regime Ties to Tren de Aragua.”

After reviewing the evidence, the report said that the Venezuelan government of President Nicolás Maduro “probably does not have a policy of cooperating with TDA and is not directing TDA movement to and operations in the United States.” Intelligence reports alleging such direct links are “not credible,” the report argued.

The dry report had big implications, because Trump’s rationale for his March 14 decision to invoke the Alien Enemies Act to deport allegedly TDA-linked migrants was that the group acted “at the direction, clandestine or otherwise, of the Maduro regime in Venezuela.”

U.S. District Judge Stephanie L. Haines cited Trump’s assertion in her recent ruling that the TDA deportations under the Alien Enemies Act were legal and that the court couldn’t challenge whether Trump has “sufficient support” for his claims.

The price for questioning Trump’s contention became viscerally clear in recent days.

Gabbard fired acting NIC director Michael Collins and his deputy, who had overseen the Venezuela report (along with hundreds of other products reviewed by the NIC).

The purge followed a social media campaign against Collins by MAGA activist Laura Loomer, who had earlier pressed successfully for the firing of Lt. Gen. Timothy Haugh, the director of the National Security Agency, along with a half-dozen

staffers of the National Security Council.

On April 20, Loomer had posted a brief work history for Collins and a complaint: “Why do we still have Biden holdovers and career anti-Trump bureaucrats at the National Intelligence Council undermining President Trump and his agenda?” In a later post, she repeated the demand that “the NIC senior officials should be fired,” again with details about Collins.

The MAGA message was underlined by the Fox News story on May 13 breaking the news that Collins and his acting deputy would be fired. “ ‘It takes time to weed them out and fire them,’ one official told Fox News Digital, adding that ‘plans to eliminate non-essential offices within ODNI that we know are housing deep state leakers are underway.’ ”

Intelligence analysts “are terrified,” said a longtime senior CIA official who talked with analysts after they emerged from an all-hands meeting in which Gabbard’s move was announced.

“ ‘They want to do their jobs,’ this official said.

With an inexperienced DNI and her staff looking over their shoulders, “people will second-guess themselves. They will worry that if someone decides they’re ‘deep state,’ they will lose their security clearances and their jobs,” this former official said.

John McLaughlin, a former CIA acting director who for many years supervised the agency’s analysts, said the advice he would give young officers today is “just keep doing your job professionally.”

The abiding rule for a good analyst, he said, is: “Be humble. Open your eyes. You don’t know everything. You’re predicting the future. Be explicit about what you know and don’t know.”

The unlikely truth is that this approach, sometimes careful to a fault, is what in fact characterizes the intelligence professionals MAGA derides as the deep state.

Sometime in the future, Trump will ask his intelligence advisers about a policy initiative — Will this work? Does it make sense? — and there won’t be anyone left to give him an honest answer.

Blue states find ‘free’ health care can get expensive

Las Vegas Review-Journal

T his will be unpleasant news to progressives, but handing out “free” stuff can get darned expensive. The budget dreamers in one-party California are the latest to be shocked — shocked! — that they can’t escape this iron-clad law of economics.

Over the past decade, Democrats in Sacramento have expanded the state’s Medicaid eligibility rules to cover almost 38% of the state’s population, including those in the country illegally.

The growth began in 2015 when California allowed the children of low-income illegal immigrants to qualify for the taxpayer-supported health care program. Then, last year, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill to cover adults 26-49 years old even if they lacked legal status.

Supporters argued that the move would save money in the long run by encouraging the poor to seek preventive care. But whether it accomplishes the latter, it’s a virtual lock that it will never achieve the former —

that’s a certainty right up there with death and taxes.

Indeed, The Associated Press reports that California’s Medicaid program is hemorrhaging red ink.

Turns out that “free” health care for illegal migrants is costing \$2.7 billion more than anticipated, leaving a Medicaid budget hole of \$6.7 billion.

The Newsom administration, the wire service revealed, recently took out a \$3.44 billion loan from the state’s general fund to cover the program’s costs for this month.

California Democrats are now pondering the unthinkable.

They may have to tighten pandemic-era eligibility rules that remain in place, raise taxes, cut coverage or even embrace the radical notion that forcing taxpayers to foot the bill for the medical care of millions of illegal immigrants may not be the wisest public policy.

The Golden State’s experience isn’t unique. In Illinois — where Democrats and

public-sector unions also dominate politics — the AP reports that Gov. J.B. Pritzker has proposed a \$330 million cut to the state’s Medicaid program to deal with higher than expected costs.

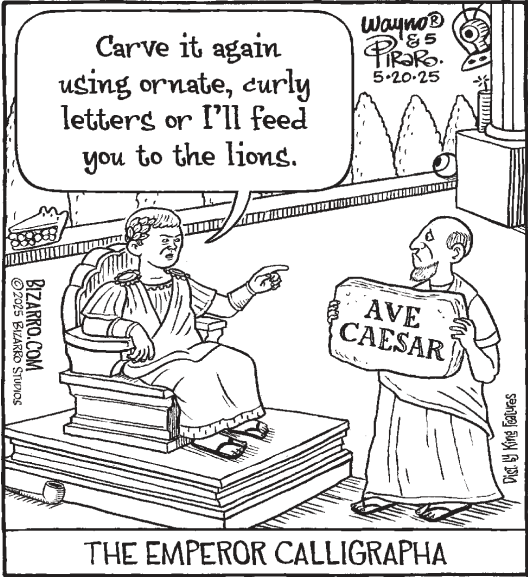
Illinois also has expanded coverage to include many state residents who are in the country illegally. New York similarly allows illegal residents on the Medicaid rolls. In January, Gov. Kathy Hochul called the skyrocketing trajectory of the program’s costs “unsustainable.”

None of these deep-blue-state governors has yet admitted that their misguided policies have helped create the fiscal bog from which they now struggle to extricate themselves.

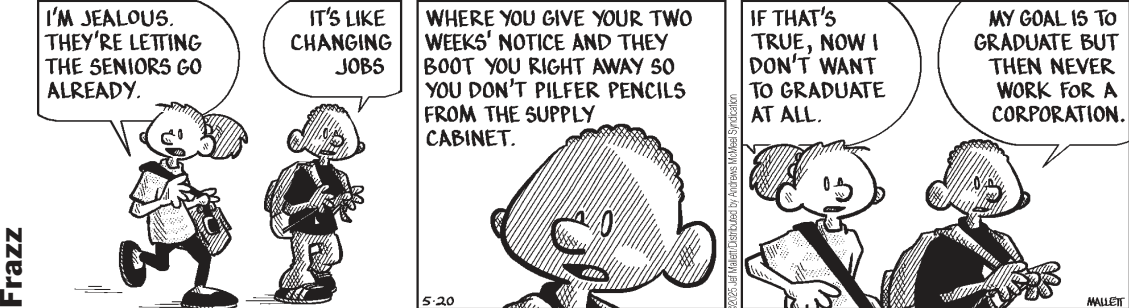
At least two of them — Govs. Newsom and Pritzker — have their eyes on the White House.

Obviously they aren’t content with running their own states into the ground and seek to impose their fiscal illiteracy on the rest of the nation. Voters beware.

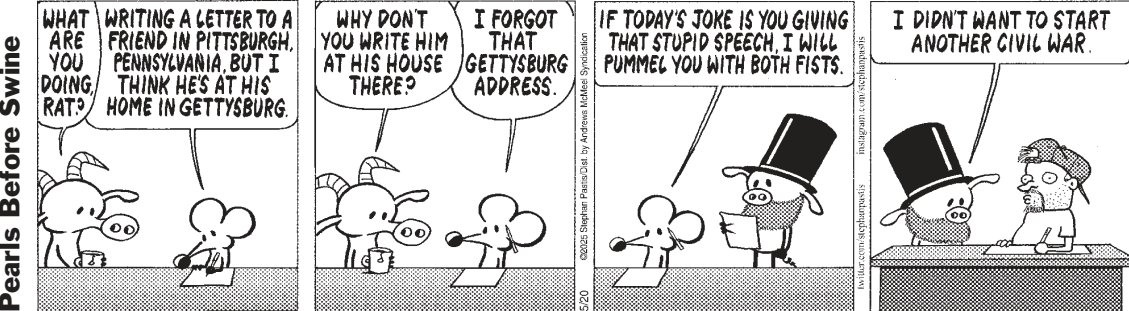
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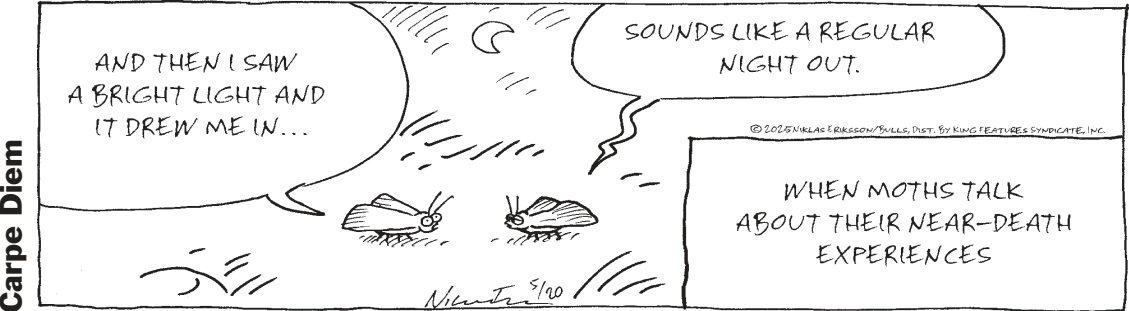
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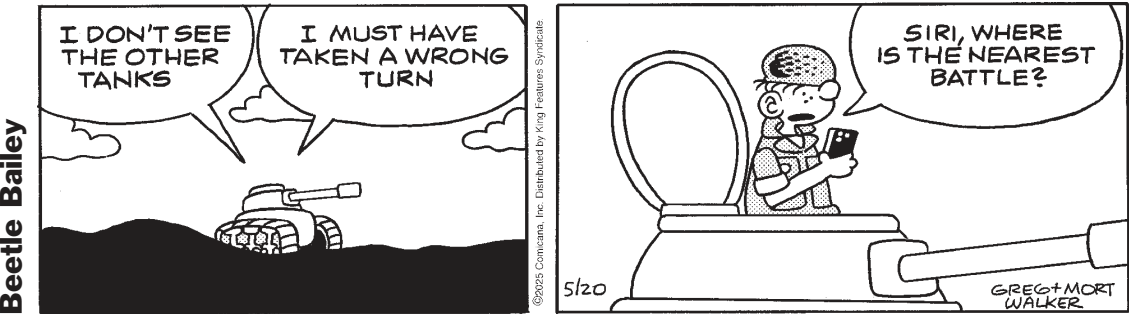
Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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- ACROSS
- DOWN
- 26 Big D.C. employer
- 27 "— had it!"
- 28 Big fusses
- 29 Jellystone bear
- 31 Supported a charity
- 34 Chariot trailer
- 35 Swerved
- 37 The Spartans' sch.
- 38 Greek cheese
- 39 Cambodia neighbor
- 40 Revise
- 41 Lawyer (Abbr.)
- 44 Big bird
- 45 Science guru
- 46 Sushi fish
- 47 Trio after Q

Answer to Previous Puzzle

G	Y	M	S		A	N	G		G	A	B	E
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5-20

CRYPTOQUIP

Z R B Q B W O Z E G H G E G I V M B Q G
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Q G U U G N .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: POPULAR DOG BREED THAT'S GOT A NATURAL KNACK FOR PERFORMING MAGIC TRICKS: THE LABRACADABRADOR.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals V

FACES

Is this Mission: Accomplished?

Tom Cruise avoids answer, but appears to bid film franchise an emotional goodbye at Cannes

By JADA YUAN
The Washington Post

It was always going to be tough for Tom Cruise to top his last premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, for “Top Gun: Maverick” in 2022, when eight fighter jets swooped over the proceedings, trailing red, white and blue smoke to match the colors of the French and American flags.

At that Cannes — his first return to the festival in 30 years — Cruise was treated like a heroic savior of a movie industry that was just then recovering from the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, and presented with a surprise honorary Palme d’Or. Sure enough, “Maverick” soon went on to make more than \$1 billion worldwide.

Coming back this time for last week’s premiere of his eighth and ostensibly last turn as Ethan Hunt in “Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning,” Cruise seemed less like a conquering hero than a touched and moved 62-year-old movie star taking it all in.

Cruise’s arrival was treated like a major event, with a 40-piece orchestra and DJ playing the Mission: Impossible theme live — highly unusual for a Cannes red carpet — as he bounded up the steps May 14 in aviator sunglasses. He did his Tom Cruise thing, taking selfies with fans and getting a standing ovation as he walked in the theater, to which he placed his hand on his heart and mouthed “Thank you” to the whistling and cheering crowd.

And when the crowd again rose to its feet, whooping again the moment the credits rolled, it seemed to be less for the movie as a whole — which critics called “a fun mess” and “enjoyably unhinged” in mixed reviews — than for Cruise’s years and years of gladiatorial body-punishing and death defiance, all to satisfy audiences and his own obsession, or passion, or whatever you want to call it.

As far as recent Cannes farewells go, Cruise was less outwardly emotional than Harrison Ford in 2023, who wept while saying goodbye to Indiana Jones at 80, or Martin Scorsese, who looked choked up during the 10-minute standing ovation for “Killers of the Flower Moon” that same year — when he was also 80 and thinking about what he wants to do with the time he has left.

Cruise, who is half-naked in many parts of the movie and doing wind sprints for the rest of it, is

simply moving on to a new phase. He smiled and again put his hand on his heart during the five-minute standing ovation.

Director Christopher McQuarrie told the crowd that they had worked on this and the film that preceded it, “Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning,” for seven years, with stoppages for COVID and the two industry-upending guild strikes. He talked about not fitting in as a kid but then getting to grow up and have “my very own action figure who is actually willing to do just about any crazy thing I ask him to do.” And before handing the microphone to Cruise, he praised his “insanely unwavering devotion to the craft.”

“I’m just grateful for 30 years of being able to entertain you [with] this franchise,” Cruise told the crowd. “And grateful to you, my friend,” he said, addressing McQuarrie, who helmed and co-wrote the last four Mission: Impossible films, as well as “Jack Reacher,” another action-thriller starring Cruise.

Cruise also hinted that though he may not make more Mission: Impossible movies, he and “McQ,” as he calls McQuarrie, have plans to do many more stunt-tastic films. The title, “Final Reckoning,” sounds pretty final, but Cruise artfully dodged the question when asked about the future of the franchise at a public Q&A with McQuarrie earlier that day. (“I just want you all to enjoy it,” he said. “Enjoy this and know [that] the culmination has come to this moment right now.”)

At the premiere, he turned to McQuarrie and said: “I look forward to making a bunch of other kinds of movies together. Can’t wait.”

Although “Final Reckoning” had already premiered in Tokyo, no place honors movies quite like Cannes. Outside the theater, the first people in the “last-minute” line had been waiting for 12 hours in tuxes and gowns for the mere possibility that there would be enough empty seats for them.

Cruise had spent the hours before the movie doling out life lessons, when he joined McQuarrie during an onstage Q&A billed as the director’s master class.

They spoke about their love of silent movies, evidenced in the new movie’s near-wordless stunt scenes — including one in a submerged submarine filled with floating torpedoes that’s rolling off



PHOTOS BY JOEL C RYAN, INVISION/AP

Tom Cruise poses for photographers May 14 at the Cannes international film festival in southern France. Below: Cruise and “Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning” director Christopher McQuarrie.



Director McQuarrie, right, praised Cruise’s “insanely unwavering devotion to the craft.”

a sea cliff, and another in which Cruise fights bad guys while hanging off the wing of a biplane. They also talked about their shared vision of entertainment as art — and wanting to make movies that will get their messages to the maximum number of people.

When asked about fear, Cruise said he finds it an important and invigorating emotion, and that he welcomes failure because that’s when you learn the most.

“People can be paralyzed by making decisions,” Cruise said.

“And I tell every single person, it’s better to have done it and tried than to just sit here and wish you had. ... Just keep creating. Don’t ask permission to do it. Just do it.”

That submarine sequence, by the way, was filmed in a rotating steel room they submerged in an 8.5 million-liter tank of water, and they never got a chance to test it. Everything went wrong, and they had to improvise, they explained. What you see in the movie is exactly what they filmed.

McQuarrie’s biggest lesson, though, might be that you should never show Cruise a TikTok of an idiot daredevil doing anything. McQuarrie “foolishly” showed his star a video, thinking Cruise would find it amusing, “and he said, ‘I could do that,’” the director said. And that’s how the climactic sequence of Hunt walking on the wing of a biplane wound up in the movie.

McQuarrie continued: “I’m often asked, ‘Does Tom suggest something that I say “no” to?’ No. Do I regret suggesting many things to Tom? Yes.”

‘Bloodlines’ a hit with \$51M; The Weeknd’s movie falters

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

Death is not looming for the “Final Destination” franchise at the box office.

Its sixth installment, “Final Destination: Bloodlines,” drew big crowds to movie theaters this weekend and easily topped the domestic charts with \$51 million in ticket sales, according to studio estimates Sunday. The movie earned the same internationally, adding up to a \$102 million global debut.

The same enthusiasm did not meet Abel “The Weeknd” Tesfaye’s experimental thriller “Hurry Up Tomorrow,” which opened outside of the top five with an estimated \$3.3 million.

“It was always going to have a tough time coming up against ‘Final Destination: Bloodlines,’” said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. “There was a lot of buzz.”

“Final Destination: Bloodlines” opened in 3,523 locations riding in on a wave of strong reviews (93% on Rotten Tomatoes) and viral marketing tactics, including a picture of logs on the back of trucks — a callback to one of the more infamous “Final Destination” death traps.

The successful debut effectively revives a 25-year-old franchise that hasn’t had a new film since 2011. It also continues a hot streak for Warner Bros., which has had near back-to-back hits in Ryan Coogler’s “Sinners” and “A Minecraft Movie.” All three were in the top five this weekend.

Disney’s “Thunderbolts*” landed in second with \$16.5 million, pushing its global total past \$325 million. “Sinners” placed third with \$15.4 million, bringing its global total to \$316.8 million. “A Minecraft Movie,” which has made \$928.6 million globally, added \$5.9 million. Amazon MGM Studios’ “The Accountant 2” rounded out the top five.

“Hurry Up Tomorrow” opened in sixth place. The film, which Tesfaye co-wrote and Trey Edward Shults directed, is a kind of companion piece to his album and tour. He plays a fictionalized version of himself as an insomniac musician. Jenna Ortega and Barry Keoghan also star.

Neither critics nor audiences greeted it kindly: It carries a 13% on Rotten Tomatoes and has a C-CinemaScore. Associated Press music writer Maria Sherman wrote that it’s “an exciting vanity project with surrealist imagination but stiff writing, no stakes, limited emotional weight and an unclear narrative.”

ROUNDUP

Bellinger powers Yankees over Mets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Cody Bellinger hit a grand slam that capped a six-run eighth inning and tied his career high with six RBIs on Sunday night, sending the New York Yankees to an 8-2 victory over the New York Mets.

A throwing error by Mets first baseman Pete Alonso allowed Jasson Domínguez to score the tiebreaking run in the eighth. Paul Goldschmidt added an RBI single off Ryne Stanek (1-4) and Bellinger connected against left-hander Génesis Cabrera for his ninth career slam.

“I thought it was very fun,” Bellinger said after the finale of his first Subway Series. “I really enjoyed it.”

In a matchup of first-place teams, Max Fried pitched six effective innings as the Yankees took two of three at home in the first Subway Series this season. The crosstown rivals meet again July 4-6 at Citi Field in Queens.

Juan Soto was booed all weekend and went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts Sunday to the vocal delight of Yankees fans. Soto finished 1-for-10 with four walks during his first series back in the Bronx since leaving the Yankees for a record \$765 million, 15-year deal with the Mets.

“It was good to see him,” Yankees star Aaron Judge said, “but happy we were kind of — either walk him or not let him do any damage, especially in this series.”

Phillies 1, Pirates 0: Mick Abel outdueling Paul Skenes to win his major league debut, striking out nine over six innings to lead host Philadelphia over Pittsburgh for a three-game sweep and the Phillies’ 15th win in 20 games.

Abel (1-0), a 23-year-old right-hander selected 15th overall by Philadelphia in the 2020 draft, allowed five hits and walked none. The nine strikeouts tied a Phillies high for a debut, set by Curt Simmons against the New York Giants on Sept. 28, 1947.

Brandon Marsh grounded into a run-scoring forceout in the fifth against Skenes (3-5), who pitched a three-hitter with nine strikeouts and one walk in his first complete game in 33 big league starts.

Angels 6, Dodgers 4: Travis d’Arnaud broke an eighth-inning tie with his first home run of the season, and the visiting Angels beat the Dodgers for their first three-game Free-way Series sweep since 2010.

Angels left-hander Yusei Kikuchi gave up one run and three hits and struck out seven in 5½ innings before hurting his right ankle in a collision at first base with Tommy Edman.

Astros 4, Rangers 3: Isaac Paredes hit a go-ahead, three-run homer off reliever Robert Garcia (1-2) in the eighth inning after Texas rookie Jack Leiter lost a no-hit bid in the seventh, and visiting Houston rallied for a victory .

Leiter gave up Yainer Diaz’s solo homer with two outs in the seventh as the Astros trimmed their deficit to 3-1. The 25-year-old right-hander was replaced after consecutive soft singles from Jake Meyers and Cam Smith to start the eighth.

Nationals 10, Orioles 4: CJ Abrams went deep on the first two pitches he saw from Zach Eflin, and visiting Washington hit five homers in a victory over free-falling Baltimore for a three-game sweep.

Luis Garcia Jr. and Dylan Crews also connected against Eflin (3-2) during a six-run second inning that helped the Nationals complete their first sweep of the season.

Braves 10, Red Sox 4: Marcell Ozuna homered for the second straight day, former Bos-



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

The Yankees’ Cody Bellinger celebrates as he runs the bases after hitting a grand slam home run during the eighth inning against the Mets on Sunday in New York. The Yankees won 8-2.

ton outfielder Alex Verdugo had three hits and visiting Atlanta beat the Red Sox to win the three-game series.

Austin Riley also had three hits for the Braves (24-23), who moved a game above .500 for the second time after opening 0-7. Every starter except leadoff hitter Verdugo had at least one RBI.

Tigers 3, Blue Jays 2: Spencer Torkelson drove in the tiebreaking run with a two-out single in the seventh inning and visiting Detroit beat Toronto, improving its MLB-best record to 31-16.

Jackson Jobe (4-0) allowed two runs and six hits in six innings, becoming the first pitcher in Tigers history to have the team win the first eight starts of his career. Detroit won the first seven starts right-hander Howie Koplitz made in 1961 and 1962.

Marlins 5, Rays 1: Otto Lopez hit a three-run homer in his first game off the injured list and Liam Hicks added a two-run shot to back a strong start by Cal Quantrill, powering host Miami to a victory over Tampa Bay.

Quantrill (3-4) allowed one run and two hits in five innings with six strikeouts for the Marlins, who improved to 12-13 at home with their first series victory since April 21-23.

Brewers 5, Twins 2: Jackson Chourio robbed Royce Lewis of a potential tying homer in the eighth inning, and host Milwaukee ended Minnesota’s 13-game winning streak with a victory.

Isaac Collins and Sal Frelick each drove in two runs to help the Brewers end the second-longest win streak in Twins history. Minnesota won 15 straight in 1991, a season that ended with a World Series title.

Reds 3, Guardians 1: Will Benson had hit first two-homer game, going deep for the fourth straight day to lead host Cincinnati to a victory and its first three-game sweep of Cleveland since 2012.

Benson followed Tyler Stephenson’s fourth-inning single with a 399-foot drive to right off

L.L. Ortiz (2-5) then added a sixth-inning shot off Hunter Gaddis for his fifth home run this season. The Reds won their fourth straight and got back to .500 at 24-24.

Cubs 6, White Sox 2: Pete Crow-Armstrong tripled, doubled and scored two runs, and the Chicago Cubs completed a three-game sweep with a victory over the crosstown Chicago White Sox at Wrigley Field.

Nico Hoerner doubled twice and had an RBI as the Cubs extended their franchise-record winning streak against the South Siders to eight games. Seiya Suzuki drove in two runs, and Michael Busch and Vidal Brujan each had two hits and an RBI.

Diamondbacks 1, Rockies 0: Merrill Kelly struck out a season-high 11 while giving up one hit over seven innings, Ketel Marte homered and host Arizona edged Colorado.

The Diamondbacks took two of three games over the weekend, denying the Rockies their first series win this season. Colorado fell to 8-38, the worst start for a big league team through 46 games since 1901.

Mariners 6, Padres 1: Randy Arozarena homered off Michael King in a three-run fourth inning and AL West-leading Seattle beat host San Diego for the sweep.

Bryan Woo (5-1) settled down after giving up a leadoff homer on an 0-2 count to Fernando Tatis Jr., his 12th. Only one Padres player reached scoring position against Woo, who allowed one run and five hits in seven innings. He struck out five, walked none and retired his final 11 batters and 16 of his last 17.

Royals 2, Cardinals 1: Drew Waters led off the seventh inning with a pinch-hit triple, Mai-kel Garcia drove Waters in with a single and host Kansas City snapped a four-game skid and avoided a series sweep with a victory over St. Louis.

Giants 3, Athletics 2: Heliot Ramos hit a leadoff homer in the first inning and had a go-ahead single in the eighth, lifting host San Francisco over the Athletics for a series sweep.

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	27	19	.587	—
Boston	23	25	.479	5
Toronto	22	24	.478	5
Tampa Bay	21	25	.457	6
Baltimore	15	30	.333	11½

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	31	16	.660	—
Minnesota	26	21	.553	5
Cleveland	25	21	.543	5½
Kansas City	26	22	.542	5½
Chicago	14	33	.298	17

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	26	19	.578	—
Houston	24	22	.522	2½
Texas	25	23	.521	2½
Athletics	22	25	.468	5
Los Angeles	20	25	.444	6

National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	29	18	.617	—
Philadelphia	28	18	.609	½
Atlanta	24	23	.511	5
Washington	21	27	.438	8½
Miami	18	27	.400	10

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	28	19	.596	—
St. Louis	26	21	.553	2
Cincinnati	24	24	.500	4½
Milwaukee	22	25	.468	6
Pittsburgh	15	32	.319	13

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	29	18	.617	—
San Diego	27	18	.600	1
San Francisco	28	19	.596	1
Arizona	25	22	.532	4
Colorado	8	38	.174	20½

Sunday’s games
N.Y. Yankees 8, N.Y. Mets 2
Philadelphia 1, Pittsburgh 0
L.A. Angels 6, L.A. Dodgers 4
Houston 4, Texas 3
Washington 10, Baltimore 4
Atlanta 10, Boston 4
Detroit 3, Toronto 2
Miami 5, Tampa Bay 1
Milwaukee 5, Minnesota 2
Cincinnati 3, Cleveland 1
Chicago Cubs 6, Chicago White Sox 2
Arizona 1, Colorado 0
Seattle 6, San Diego 1
Kansas City 2, St. Louis 1
San Francisco 3, Athletics 2

Monday’s games
Chicago Cubs at Miami
Cincinnati at Pittsburgh
N.Y. Mets at Boston
Houston at Tampa Bay
Baltimore at Milwaukee
Cleveland at Minnesota
Seattle at Chicago White Sox
Detroit at St. Louis
Philadelphia at Colorado
Kansas City at San Francisco
L.A. Angels at Athletics
Arizona at L.A. Dodgers

Tuesday’s games
Chicago Cubs (Taillon 2-3) at Miami (Weathers 1-0)
Cincinnati (Martinez 2-4) at Pittsburgh (Falter 2-3)
N.Y. Mets (Holmes 5-2) at Boston (Buehler 4-1)
Atlanta (TBD) at Washington (Parker 3-3)
Houston (Brown 6-2) at Tampa Bay (Littell 3-5)
Texas (Corbin 3-2) at N.Y. Yankees (Warren 2-2)
San Diego (Cease 1-2) at Toronto (Bassitt 3-2)
Baltimore (Sugano 4-3) at Milwaukee (Henderson 2-0)
Cleveland (Williams 3-2) at Minnesota (Paddock 2-3)
Seattle (TBD) at Chicago White Sox (Wilson 0-2)
Detroit (Skubal 4-2) at St. Louis (Fedde 3-3)
Philadelphia (Luzardo 4-0) at Colorado (Senzatela 1-7)
Kansas City (Lorenzen 3-4) at San Francisco (Birdsong 1-0)
L.A. Angels (Hendricks 1-5) at Athletics (Hoglund 1-1)
Arizona (Nelson 1-1) at L.A. Dodgers (Yamamoto 5-3)

AUTO RACING



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Rookie driver Robert Shwartzman celebrates after winning the pole position during qualifications for the Indianapolis 500 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway on Sunday.

Shwartzman first Indy 500 rookie since '83 to win pole

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — A rookie driver for a brand new team won the pole for the Indianapolis 500 on a strange day at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where Team Penske was disqualified before the final two rounds of qualifying. Robert Shwartzman, a 25-year-old with dual nationality in Israel and Russia, became the first Indy 500 rookie to qualify on the pole since 1983 when he did it for Prema Racing. The last rookie to qualify on the Indy 500 pole was Teo Fabi. Coincidentally, he was an Italian — just like Prema, which also was founded in '83. Prema is established in Europe and races in the Formula 2 series. It made its IndyCar debut this season. Shwartzman initially raced under the Russian flag until the start of the war with Ukraine. He now races under the Israeli flag, which makes the Tel Aviv native the first driver from Israel to make “The Greatest Spectacle in Racing.” Prema is the first team making its debut in the Indy 500 to land on the pole since Mayer Motor Racing put Tom Sneva there in 1984. Shwartzman, who has never before raced on an oval, was mobbed by a sea of red-clad team members as soon as his pole-winning

run became official. “Honestly it feels like I’m dreaming. I just had it in my dreams when I was going how would it feel to do such a good job in quali,” Shwartzman said. “It’s the Indy 500. It’s the main race of the year. Honestly it feels unbelievable.” Shwartzman had been pursuing a career in Formula 1 and was part of the Ferrari development program as well as its reserve driver from 2021 until the end of last season — when Prema nabbed him for its two-car team. Shwartzman was the fourth of six drivers to make their qualifying attempt and took the pole from Takuma Sato of Rahal Letterman Lanigan. But Shwartzman still had to wait for Pato O’Ward of McLaren and Felix Rosenqvist of Meyer Shank Racing to make their runs, and Shwartzman nervously watched from pit lane. O’Ward went first and landed in the third spot and Rosenqvist dropped to fifth, sandwiched in the second row between Chip Ganassi Racing teammates Scott Dixon and Alex Palou. It was a strange finishing order as the Ganassi cars were expected to battle each other for the top starting spot in next Sunday’s race. “Rookie on pole with Shwartzman — how wild does that get?

New team. I didn’t see that coming at all,” said 2008 winner Dixon. The pole was wide open for the taking first when Team Penske was disqualified from qualifying for an illegal modification on the cars of two-time defending Indy 500 winner Josef Newgarden and Will Power, and Scott McLaughlin destroyed his car in a Sunday morning crash during practice. The three Penske drivers all started on the front row last year, but will be 10th, 11th and 12th in the fourth row together next weekend. That put the odds in Ganassi’s favor, but they had a surprising drop in speed from Saturday to Sunday. So then Sato, in his first race in nearly a year, sat atop the scoring pylon until Shwartzman’s shocking run. “I don’t even know what to say. The car felt amazing,” he said, “Coming here for my first oval race, I couldn’t even expect to be in this position. Big thanks to everyone. Big thanks to the fans cheering for me. It’s unbelievable.” Shwartzman’s engineer is Eric Leichtle, who spent a season with Team Penske as the engineer for Newgarden in 2022. Leichtle left motorsports and spent the past two years working for SpaceX as a senior structures engineer.

Bell defeats Logano in NASCAR All-Star Race

By NATE RYAN
Associated Press

Christopher Bell loves North Wilkesboro Speedway, and Joey Logano hates the “Promoter’s Caution.” Those were the main takeaways from the top two finishers in an action-packed NASCAR All-Star Race at the 0.625-mile oval in North Wilkesboro, N.C. In a slam-bang affair that set a record for lead changes, Bell beat Logano by 0.829 seconds to earn his first All-Star Race victory. Bell, who won three consecutive Cup Series races earlier this season but had a previous best All-Star finish of 10th, delivered the third All-Star Race win for Joe Gibbs Racing. “That right there is absolutely incredible,” Bell said. “North Wilkesboro, best short track on the schedule.” He is also a fan of Marcus Smith, the president and CEO of Speedway Motorsports that owns North Wilkesboro Speedway. In a new All-Star Race wrinkle, Smith was allowed to choose when to throw a “Promoter’s Caution” that would bunch the field for a late restart. Smith sent two-time Daytona 500 winner and Fox Sports personality Michael Waltrip to the flag stand to display the random yellow flag on Lap 217 with Logano leading by about a half-second over Bell. Logano, who was trying to win his second consecutive All-Star Race, elected to stay on track rather than pit during the caution, and the decision proved costly. Bell pitted for two fresh tires, restarted in sixth and needed only five laps to catch Logano. After a battle for first that lasted a dozen laps, Bell took the lead for good on Lap 241 of 250. “I’m pissed off right now,” said Logano, who led a race-high 139 laps. “Just dang it, we had the fastest car. I’m trying to choose my words correctly on the caution situation. Obviously, I got bit by it, so I am the one frustrated.” It was a stark turnaround for the defending Cup Series champion, who recently said he supported the “Promoter’s Caution” because “the All-Star Race presents the opportunity to try things outside of the box.” But he was questioning

its validity after Sunday’s race. “Yeah, I’m all about no gimmicks with the caution,” Logano said. “I am all about that. Me and Marcus Smith aren’t seeing eye to eye right now, okay? I’ve got to have a word with him.” Ross Chastain finished third, followed by Alex Bowman and Chase Elliott. The “Promoter’s Caution” was introduced to guarantee an exciting finish, but the All-Star Race hardly needed much help this year. After lackluster showings in the first two outings, the All-Star Race delivered much more action in its third year at North Wilkesboro Speedway. There were 18 lead changes, breaking the mark of 13 (set in 2016) for the most in the event’s 41-year history. Pole-sitter Brad Keselowski and Logano traded the lead twice in the first 10 laps and often ran side by side for the lead. There were six leaders and 10 lead changes in the first half of the race, which topped the total number of leaders (four) and lead changes (five) in the past two All-Star Races combined. After leading 62 laps, Keselowski’s bid for his first All-Star Race victory ended with a crash on Lap 177. Capitalizing on pit strategy, Carson Hocevar led the final 46 laps to win the All-Star Open earlier Sunday and advanced into the NASCAR All-Star Race. Runner-up John Hunter Nemechek also advanced to the main event by finishing second in the 100-lap warmup race. Noah Gragson won an online fan vote to earn the final transfer spot to the All-Star Race. Pole-sitter Shane van Gisbergen finished 13th after leading the first 54 laps on the 0.625-mile oval. The New Zealand native, who is in his first full Cup Series season after winning three Supercar championships in Australia, fell from first to sixth on a four-tire pit stop during the halfway caution. “I don’t know whether to smile or cry,” said van Gisbergen, who is ranked 35th in the points standings with one top 10 this season. “It’s been a dismal year for us, but I feel like we’re getting better every week. This shows it.”



SCOTT KINSER/AP

Christopher Bell drives during the NASCAR All-Star Race Sunday.

NBA PLAYOFFS/NHL PLAYOFFS

After slow start, Thunder, SGA roll into West finals

By Cliff Brunt
Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Oklahoma City Thunder grew up on Sunday.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 35 points, Jalen Williams added 24 and Oklahoma City rolled into the Western Conference finals, beating the Denver Nuggets 125-93 in Game 7.

The top-seeded Thunder will host the sixth-seeded Minnesota Timberwolves starting Tuesday. It's OKC's first trip to the conference finals since 2016.

The Thunder went a league-best 68-14 in the regular season, becoming the youngest team to win at least 60 games. To back up their status as the best team in the league, Oklahoma City had to get past three-time MVP Nikola Jokic and a Denver squad that won the NBA title in 2023 and beat the Los Angeles Clippers in seven games in the first round this year.

Coach Mark Daigneault said his players handled the pressure well.

"There's not many games, you wake up in the morning and you know that you're going to remember the game for the rest of your life, and Game 7 is one of them," Daigneault said. "To be able to focus through that and perform the way these guys did

NBA scoreboard

Second Round	
Eastern Conference	
Indiana 4, Cleveland 1	
Indiana 121, Cleveland 112	
Indiana 120, Cleveland 119	
Cleveland 126, Indiana 104	
Indiana 129, Cleveland 109	
Indiana 114, Cleveland 105	
New York 4, Boston 2	
New York 108, Boston 105, OT	
New York 91, Boston 90	
Boston 115, New York 93	
New York 121, Boston 113	
Boston 127, New York 102	
New York 119, Boston 81	
Western Conference	
Oklahoma City 4, Denver 3	
Denver 121, Oklahoma City 119	
Oklahoma City 149, Denver 106	
Denver 113, Oklahoma City 104, OT	
Oklahoma City 92, Denver 87	
Oklahoma City 112, Denver 105	
Denver 119, Oklahoma City 107	
Sunday: Oklahoma City 125, Denver 93	
Minnesota 4, Golden State 1	
Golden State 99, Minnesota 88	
Minnesota 117, Golden State 93	
Minnesota 102, Golden State 97	
Minnesota 117, Golden State 110	
Minnesota 121, Golden State 110	
Conference Finals	
Best-of-7; x-if necessary	
Eastern Conference	
New York vs. Indiana	
Wednesday: at New York, AFN-Sports, 2 a.m. Thursday CET, 10 a.m. Thursday JKT	
Friday: at New York	
Sunday, May 25: at Indiana	
Tuesday, May 27: at Indiana	
x-Thursday, May 29: at New York	
x-Saturday, May 31: at Indiana	
x-Monday, June 2: at New York	
Western Conference	
Oklahoma City vs. Minnesota	
Tuesday: at Oklahoma City, AFN-Sports, 2:40 a.m. Wednesday CET, 10:40 a.m. Wednesday JKT	
Thursday: at Oklahoma City	
Saturday: at Minnesota	
Monday, May 26: at Minnesota	
x-Wednesday, May 28: at Oklahoma City	
x-Friday, May 30: at Minnesota	
x-Sunday, June 1: at Oklahoma City	

today was very impressive."

Jokic had 20 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for the Nuggets. Aaron Gordon, a key player for Denver throughout the playoffs who hit the winner in Game 1 against the Thunder, started despite a strained left hamstring. Gordon had eight points and 11 rebounds in 24 minutes.

"What he played with today, I don't know many people that would even attempt to go out there and run up and down," Nuggets interim coach David Adelman said. "And he did it in Game 7 against Oklahoma City on the road. That that was one of most incredible things I've ever seen. He was extremely close to not playing. I was surprised."

The Thunder fell behind by 11 in the first quarter, but took the lead early in the second. OKC outscored Denver 39-20 in the period to take a 60-46 lead at the break.

Gordon was called for a flagrant-1 foul for elbowing Gilgeous-Alexander in the face early in the third quarter. Gilgeous-Alexander made both free throws, and then Williams hit a short jumper to give the Thunder a 66-46 lead.

Cason Wallace got loose on a fast break and dunked on Jokic to put Oklahoma City up 78-57,



The Thunder's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, left, and Alex Caruso celebrate late in Game 7 of the Western Conference semifinals on Sunday.

sparking delirious roars from the crowd.

The Thunder cruised from there and now hopes to make another leap.

"We're better now than we were at the beginning of the series, and it's because of them," Daigneault said. "They pushed us to the limit."

Panthers rout Maple Leafs in Game 7

NHL scoreboard

Associated Press

TORONTO — Sergei Bobrovsky made 19 saves, Florida scored three times in a 6:24 span in the second period and the Panthers routed the Toronto Maple Leafs 6-1 in Game 7 on Sunday night to advance to the Eastern Conference final.

Defending Stanley Cup champion Florida will play the Carolina Hurricanes in the conference final, opening on the road Tuesday night.

Seth Jones, Anton Lundell and Jonah Gadjovich scored in the second-period burst and Eetu Luostarinen, Sam Reinhart and Brad Marchand — into an empty net — added goals in the third. Marchand, Luostarinen and Aleksander Barkov each had two assists.

"We were very quick at closing when pucks were coming around the wall," said Marchand, a Toronto killer in his Boston Bruins days who played in a Game 7 for the 13th time in his career and is 5-0 against the Maple Leafs. "They weren't able to get a whole lot going."

Max Domi scored for Toronto.



Panthers center Eetu Luostarinen scores against Maple Leafs goalie Joseph Woll during the third period of Game 7 on Sunday in Toronto.

Joseph Woll stopped 28 shots.

"I just don't think we had our best stuff in the most important game of the season," Leafs defenseman Morgan Rielly said. "That's unacceptable. That's the

result you get when that's the case."

Jones opened the scoring at 3:15 of the second, beating Woll to the far post with a shot from the right side. Lundell struck at 7:18, put-

ting in a rebound. Gadjovich followed at 9:39 off another rebound.

Domi cut it to 3-1 at 2:07 of the third, beating Bobrovsky between the legs. Luostarinen countered 47 seconds later for the Panthers, and Reinhart scored at 9:24.

Toronto led the Atlantic Division matchup 2-0 on the back of consecutive home victories before Florida won three straight to go up 3-2, the last a 6-1 romp in Game 5 that looked a lot like Sunday. The Maple Leafs staved off elimination with a 2-0 road victory Friday.

"The games were so tight," said Panthers coach Paul Maurice, who led his team past Toronto in five games in 2023 and is 6-0 in Game 7s. "This is a much better team than we played two years ago."

The Leafs have won just two series in 11 tries across the Auston Matthews-Mitch Marner era, with Marner set to become an unrestricted free agent July 1.

"Just weren't on the same page," Matthews said. "It's very, very frustrating."

Added Marner: "Sadness, obviously, depression."

Second Round	
EASTERN CONFERENCE	
Carolina 4, Washington 1	
Carolina 2, Washington 1, OT	
Washington 3, Carolina 1	
Carolina 4, Washington 0	
Carolina 5, Washington 2	
Carolina 3, Washington 1	
Florida 4, Toronto 3	
Toronto 5, Florida 4	
Toronto 4, Florida 3	
Florida 5, Toronto 4, OT	
Florida 2, Toronto 0	
Florida 6, Toronto 1	
Toronto 2, Florida 0	
Florida 6, Toronto 1	
WESTERN CONFERENCE	
Edmonton 4, Vegas 1	
Edmonton 4, Vegas 2	
Edmonton 5, Vegas 4, OT	
Vegas 4, Edmonton 3	
Edmonton 3, Vegas 0	
Edmonton 1, Vegas 0, OT	
Dallas 4, Winnipeg 2	
Dallas 3, Winnipeg 2	
Winnipeg 4, Dallas 0	
Dallas 5, Winnipeg 2	
Dallas 3, Winnipeg 1	
Winnipeg 4, Dallas 0	
Dallas 2, Winnipeg 1, OT	
Conference Finals	
Best-of-7; x-if necessary	
EASTERN CONFERENCE	
Carolina vs. Florida	
Tuesday: at Carolina	
Thursday: at Carolina	
Saturday: at Florida	
Monday, May 26: at Florida	
x-Wednesday, May 28: at Carolina	
x-Friday, May 30: at Florida	
x-Sunday, June 1: at Carolina	
WESTERN CONFERENCE	
Dallas vs. Edmonton	
Wednesday: at Dallas, AFN-Sports2, 2 a.m. Thursday CET, 10 a.m. Thursday JKT	
Friday: at Dallas	
Sunday, May 25: at Edmonton	
Tuesday, May 27: at Edmonton	
x-Thursday, May 29: at Dallas	
x-Saturday, May 31: at Edmonton	
x-Monday, June 2: at Dallas	

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

Scoreboard

PGA Championship		
Sunday		
At Quail Hollow Club		
Charlotte, N.C.		
Yardage: 7,626; Par: 71		
Final Round		
Scottie Scheffler, \$3,420,000	69-68-65-71	-273 -11
Harris English, \$1,418,667	72-70-71-65	-278 -6
Davis Riley, \$1,418,667	71-68-67-72	-278 -6
B. DeChambeau, \$1,418,667	71-68-69-70	-278 -6
Taylor Pendrith, \$694,700	69-70-72-68	-279 -5
J.T. Poston, \$694,700	68-70-68-73	-279 -5
Jhonattan Vegas, \$694,700	64-70-73-72	-279 -5
Keegan Bradley, \$454,781	68-72-68-72	-280 -4
Matt Fitzpatrick, \$454,781	68-68-72-72	-280 -4
Ryan Gerard, \$454,781	66-72-72-70	-280 -4
Ben Griffin, \$454,781	70-69-72-69	-280 -4
Joe Highsmith, \$454,781	73-67-69-71	-280 -4
Si Woo Kim, \$454,781	72-64-71-73	-280 -4
Denny McCarthy, \$454,781	70-68-72-70	-280 -4
Joaquin Niemann, \$454,781	74-67-71-68	-280 -4
Jon Rahm, \$454,781	70-70-67-73	-280 -4
Alex Noren, \$290,925	68-71-66-76	-281 -3
Matt Wallace, \$290,925	71-70-68-72	-281 -3
Sam Burns, \$193,442	73-70-72-67	-282 -2
Corey Connors, \$193,442	73-68-74-67	-282 -2
Cameron Davis, \$193,442	66-74-70-72	-282 -2
Tony Finau, \$193,442	70-69-69-74	-282 -2
Harry Hall, \$193,442	69-72-71-70	-282 -2
Beau Hossler, \$193,442	71-70-73-68	-282 -2
Taylor Moore, \$193,442	73-69-70-70	-282 -2
Aaron Rai, \$193,442	67-72-74-69	-282 -2
Adam Scott, \$193,442	69-71-69-73	-282 -2
Ryan Fox, \$115,820	67-71-72-73	-283 -1
Viktor Hovland, \$115,820	69-71-72-71	-283 -1
Xander Schauffele, \$115,820	72-71-72-68	-283 -1
Alex Smalley, \$115,820	67-71-73-72	-283 -1
Marco Penge, \$115,820	69-71-74-69	-283 -1
Sam Burns, \$193,442	73-70-72-67	-282 -2
Corey Connors, \$193,442	73-68-74-67	-282 -2
Cameron Davis, \$193,442	66-74-70-72	-282 -2
Tony Finau, \$193,442	70-69-69-74	-282 -2
Daniel Berger, \$89,193	71-71-74-68	-284 E
Max Greyserman, \$89,193	71-72-67-74	-284 E
Maverick McNealy, \$89,193	70-72-69-73	-284 E
Thorbjorn Olesen, \$89,193	71-71-72-70	-284 E
Lucas Glover, \$75,423	71-70-69-75	-285 +1
Ryo Hisatsune, \$75,423	68-71-72-74	-285 +1
J.J. Spaun, \$75,423	71-68-72-74	-285 +1
Richard Bland, \$75,423	70-69-76-70	-285 +1
Eric Cole, \$60,677	70-70-73-73	-286 +2
Nicolas Echavarria, \$60,677	68-74-71-73	-286 +2
Tommy Fleetwood, \$60,677	70-70-76-70	-286 +2
Nicolai Hojgaard, \$60,677	72-69-77-68	-286 +2
Matthieu Pavon, \$60,677	71-65-72-78	-286 +2
M. Thorbjornsen, \$60,677	68-70-74-74	-286 +2
Robert Macintyre, \$49,190	68-70-73-76	-287 +3
Rory McIlroy, \$49,190	74-69-72-72	-287 +3
Cameron Young, \$49,190	73-69-71-74	-287 +3
C. Bezuidenhout, \$40,674	70-68-77-73	-288 +4
Wyndham Clark, \$40,674	72-69-73-74	-288 +4
Tom McKibbin, \$40,674	70-71-74-73	-288 +4
Collin Morikawa, \$40,674	70-72-74-72	-288 +4
Kevin Yu, \$40,674	73-70-74-71	-288 +4

DeChambeau, English, Riley tie for 2nd

BY STEVE REED
Associated Press
CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Bryson DeChambeau had one word to describe his runner-up finish at the PGA Championship. calling it “baffling.”

The power hitter also seemed thrilled to get out of Charlotte and as far away from Quail Hollow’s closing three holes known as the Green Mile as he could.

“The Green Mile did it to me yesterday and kind of did it to me again today — and that’s golf, man,” DeChambeau said. “I’ve got to be more precise and fix what I can fix to make myself more consistent and get up there, the likes of what Scottie (Scheffler) is doing right now.”

DeChambeau played the final three holes at Quail Hollow in 4-over-par for the weekend, and tied for second with Harris English and Davis Riley at 6-under 278, five shots behind Scheffler.

DeChambeau called the closing stretch at Quail Hollow one of the toughest he’s played.

On both Saturday and Sunday, DeChambeau birdied the difficult par-4 15th hole and entered the Green Mile looking to apply pressure to Scheffler.

He never did.

Instead DeChambeau was forced to take some consolation with his third top-5 finish in the last four major championships, including last summer’s win at the U.S. Open. He has seven top-10 finishes in his last 11 majors.

“Always proud to top five in a major,” DeChambeau said. “I feel like I’m playing good when I’m doing that but I mean, it’s disappointing not to get the job done because that’s what I came here to do.”

Now DeChambeau will set his



MATT YORK/AP
Bryson DeChambeau misses a putt on the 16th hole in the final round of the PGA Championship at the Quail Hollow Club on Sunday in Charlotte, N.C. DeChambeau finished five shots behind winner Scottie Scheffler.

sights on winning a third U.S. Open next month at Oakmont.

“I’m going to work my butt to have make that happen,” DeChambeau said.

Riley will be there with him.

After shooting 68 and 67 on Friday and Saturday, Riley closed with a disappointing 72 but hung on for a tie for second place, by far his best finish at a major. It moved him to 53rd in the world ranking, setting him up for a spot in the U.S. Open field.

The top four finishers at the PGA Championship also earned an automatic spot in the 2026 Masters.

“Hopefully, it will springboard me and I can kind of get in conten-

tion more on some of these majors,” Riley said.

English had the low round of the day, shooting a 65 after playing the final 12 holes in 6 under. That included making a birdie on No. 18, one of just six on the day from the field.

“I feel like I’m a more well rounded player now, and it’s just about matching up everything,” English said referring to a string of missed cuts at the majors earlier in his career. “Got to get my short game a little tighter, got to get my putting a little more consistent, but I’m really happy with the way I’m hitting the ball right now.”

English said it also gives some

confidence with team selection for September’s Ryder Cup fast approaching.

“It’s a big thought in my mind,” said English, who helped the U.S. team win in 2021 at Whistling Straights, but did not make the team in 2023. “Playing at Whistling, once you make one of those teams, you never want to miss out.

“It’s just the pinnacle of our sport. It’s definitely the forefront of my mind. Yeah, I’m here to try to compete in a major championship, and however well it does with me and the Ryder Cup, I’m all for it. I know this will go a long way, but I know there’s a lot of golf to play and keep getting better and keep having good finishes.”

Great: Scheffler rebounds from Rahm’s resurgence to win by 5

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a shaky swing that led to two bogeys, and with Rahm making three birdies in a four-hole stretch around the turn, they were tied when Scheffler got to the 10th tee.

It looked like a duel to the finish, with Bryson DeChambeau doing all he could to get in the mix. Under the most pressure he felt all day, Scheffler didn’t miss a shot off the tee or from the fairway until his lead was back to four shots.

Rahm wound up seven shots behind, but the two-time major champion was the only serious threat. After bogey on the 16th hole, he had to take on a dangerous pin at the par-3 17th. It rebounded over the sunbaked green into the water for double bogey. And his last tee shot went left off the grassy bank and into the stream for another double bogey.

All that work to make up a five-shot deficit at the start of the day and Rahm closed with a 73 to tie for eighth.

“Yeah, the last three holes, it’s a tough pill to swallow right now,” Rahm said.

“I’ll get over it. I’ll move on,” Rahm said. “Again, there’s a lot more positive than negative to think about this week. I’m really happy I put myself in position and hopefully learn from this and give it another go in the U.S. Open.”

DeChambeau birdied the 14th and 15th to get within two shots, but he never had another good look at birdie and bogeyed the 18th for a 70. He tied for second with Harris English (65) and Davis Riley, who overcame a triple bogey on No. 7 to play bogey-free the rest of the way and salvaged a 72.

“I’m baffled right now. Just felt like things just didn’t go my way this week,” DeChambeau said. “I drove it as good as I can. ... I gave myself a good chance. I just felt like a couple breaks went a different way.”

J.T. Poston, the North Carolina native who also flirted with an outside chance, bogeyed the last two holes for a 73 to tie for fifth.

English finished his Sunday-best score as Scheffler was making his way down the third hole. English had a flight to catch that afternoon. He was also the clubhouse leader. But he looked at Scheffler’s name atop the leaderboard and said with a smile, “I don’t see him slipping a whole lot. I see myself catching my flight.”

But then Scheffler was unable to find his swing. He hit only two fairway on the front nine. He

failed to convert birdies on the par-5 seventh and the reachable par-4 eighth. On eight of his nine holes, his miss was to the left. And he was tied with the red-hot Rahm.

But part of Scheffler’s greatness is his ability to wear down a field, which he did at the Masters both times he won.

“I hit the important shots well this week, and that’s why I’m walking away with the trophy,” Scheffler said.

Scheffler finished at 11-under 273 and picked up his 15th victory in just his sixth year on the PGA Tour. Dating to 1950, he is the third-fastest player to go from one to 15 tour wins, behind only Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus, and even then by a matter of months.

His victory comes a month after Rory McIlroy captured the Mas-

ters to complete the career Grand Slam. The PGA Championship was always going to be a tough act to follow and it didn’t come close in terms of drama. But it served as a reminder why Scheffler has been No. 1 for two straight years, and why it will take a lot to replace him.

McIlroy made the cut on the number, shot 72-72 on the weekend and tied for 47th. It was his lowest 72-hole finish in four years in the majors. He declined all four days to speak to the media.

Scheffler came into the PGA Championship off an eight-shot victory in the CJ Cup Byron Nelson. And then he won a major by five. It was the first time since Woods in 2000 that a player won consecutive PGA Tour starts by five shots or more in the same season.

SPORTS



Growing up

Young Thunder rout Nuggets, advance to West finals » **NBA playoffs, Page 22**

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

Great Scottie!

Scheffler holds off Rahm, pulls away at Quail Hollow for third major title

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Scottie Scheffler had every reason to worry the PGA Championship was slipping away.

A five-shot lead on the front nine was gone in four holes. Every shot seemed to go left and Scheffler didn't know why. Jon Rahm was peeling off birdies and on the verge of tracking Scheffler down Sunday at Quail Hollow.

And that's when Scheffler showed why he has been golf's No. 1 player for two straight years, why he has compiled more PGA Tour titles quicker than anyone this side of Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus since 1950.

And why he now has the Wanamaker Trophy to go along with two Masters titles.

Scheffler turned a tense Sunday into another runaway by not missing a shot when the pressure was at its peak, giving himself another pleasant walk to the 18th green with another major title secure in the hands of golf's best.

"This back nine will be one that I remember for a long time," Scheffler said. "It was a grind out there. I think at one point on the front I maybe had a four- or five-shot lead, and making the turn, I think I was tied for the lead."

"So to step up when I needed to the most, I'll remember that for a while."

There was nothing fancy about it, just fairways and greens and holing the putts that eluded Rahm in his first time in serious contention at a major since he won the 2023 Masters and left at the end of the year for LIV Golf.

Rahm's hopes ended when he failed to convert birdie chances on the two easiest holes on the back nine at Quail Hollow, and then finished bogey-double bogey-double bogey. By then, the tournament

was effective over. It only cost him money.

The only comfort for Scheffler was looking across the lake on the par-5 15th to see Rahm in a bunker, leading to bogey on the 16th that gave Scheffler a three-shot cushion. He recalled thinking, "If I birdie here, it's going to go a long way."

Scheffler drilled 3-wood just over the back of the green, and from the same spot where Rahm earlier that hit putter 12 feet by the hole, Scheffler co-zied it up to a foot for birdie.

Scheffler closed with a bogey he could afford for an even-par 71, giving him a five-shot victory and his third major title. He became the

first player since Seve Ballesteros to win his first three majors by three shots or more.

The margin doesn't match up with the grind. That much was clear when Scheffler raised his arms on the 18th green and then ferociously slammed his cap to the turf, a brand of emotion rarely seen by the 28-year-old Texas star.

"Just a lot of happiness," he said. "Just maybe thankful as well. It was a long week. I felt like this was as hard as I battled for a tournament in my career."

It was a lot sweeter than last year, when Scheffler was arrested outside Valhalla Golf Club for charges later dropped that he wasn't following police instructions as they investigated a traffic fatality.

No chance of that happening at Quail Hollow. He stayed close enough to walk.

Inside the ropes, this was no walk in the park the final margin might suggest.

Scheffler had a five-shot lead standing on the sixth tee. But with

"This back nine will be one that I remember for a long time."

Scottie Scheffler
PGA Championship winner



GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

Scottie Scheffler holds up the Wanamaker Trophy after winning the PGA Championship at the Quail Hollow Club on Sunday in Charlotte, N.C. It was Scheffler's first PGA Championship win and third major victory.

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Defending champ Panthers take Game 7

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