BY INNA VARENYTSIA
Associated Press

AVDIIVKA, Ukraine — U.S.-made medical equipment, night-vision devices and countermortar radar make a difference for Ukrainian troops fighting Kremlin-backed separatists on the front line of the standoff between Russia and the West. Sometimes, it’s the difference between life and death.

So when $400 million in U.S. military aid to Kyiv was held up this year, Ukrainians got nervous. Every bit of assistance helps in the World War I-style trenches of Avdiivka, where conscripts and volunteer soldiers use shovels to shore up mud walls, chop wood for makeshift stoves and cook their own food from local vegetables and canned supplies.

Rostyslav Pokotylo shows off the American flag inside the case for his night-vision gun scope, which he credits with saving his life in 2017. “I ended up in a combat zone ... If not for this, who knows what would have happened,” he says. “With its help, I could see the enemy. I saw the enemy first, and we opened fire.”

As impeachment hearings play out in Washington, Ukrainian troops at the front described to The Associated Press their hopes and fears in the five-year conflict that has taken 13,000 lives as sporadic gunfire punctuated the autumn calm.

Democrats in Congress say President Donald Trump pressured his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden, a Democratic rival, while withholding U.S. military aid to Kyiv. Trump says the aid was held up over corruption concerns.

The senior officer who drafted the steps to remove Gallagher from the SEALs, Rear Adm. Collin Green, oversees Naval Special Warfare Command. Green also sought to review whether three officers who oversaw Gallagher in Iraq also should be ejected from the SEALs. They are Lt. Cmdr. Robert Breisch, Lt. Jacob Portier and Lt. Thomas MacNeil.

Gallagher

Trump says Navy won’t strip SEAL of trident

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Thursday pushed back on the military’s plans to strip a service member accused of misconduct of his status as a Navy SEAL, days after the president intervened to roll back other disciplinary actions against him and two other service members accused of war crimes.

“The Navy will NOT be taking away Warfighter and Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher’s Trident Pin,” the president said in a tweet. “This case was handled very badly from the beginning. Get back to business!”

The message followed reports that senior Navy officials had set in motion steps to remove Gallagher from the SEALs, which would effectively end his status as a member of the secretive, elite force. Earlier this year, a military court acquitted Gallagher of the majority of a series of war crimes charges relating to the battle against Islamic State in Iraq, including charges of murdering a militant captive, but he was convicted of a lesser charge of posing for a photo with the man’s corpse.

The senior officer who drafted the steps to remove Gallagher from the SEALs, Rear Adm. Collin Green, oversees Naval Special Warfare Command. Green also sought to review whether three officers who oversaw Gallagher in Iraq also should be ejected from the SEALs. They are Lt. Cmdr. Robert Breisch, Lt. Jacob Portier and Lt. Thomas MacNeil.
Coast Guardsman charged with murder released from brig

By Andrew Dyer
The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — A Coast Guard seaman accused of murder was released from a San Diego brig Monday as the admiral overseeing his prosecution ordered a new hearing in the case.

Seaman Ethan W. Tucker, 21, was arrested Aug. 28 after a seven-month Coast Guard investigation into the January death of Seaman Ethan Kelch, 19, who served on the same ship as Tucker — the Douglas Island.

Tucker is charged with murder, involuntary manslaughter, aggravated assault, making false official statements, obstruction of justice and failure to obey orders. He has not entered a plea and won’t do so unless his case is referred to a court-martial.

Initially, the Coast Guard accused Tucker of causing blunt force trauma to Kelch the night of Jan. 26 and dragging him into the frigid water where he drowned. His body was found Jan. 27.

However, evidence presented by Tucker’s defense at a preliminary Article 32 hearing Oct. 16 cast the events of that night in a different light.

Snapshot videos posted by a witness who was there that night — Coast Guard Seaman Trevin Hunter — showed Tucker trying to keep Kelch out of the water, not placing him there, said Navy Cmdr. Justin Henderson, Tucker’s attorney at the hearing.

The videos were not shown in court.

According to testimony at the October hearing, Kelch often became belligerent and difficult to deal with when he drank. Henderson said that on the night Kelch died, Tucker fought with him when Kelch tried to “go for a swim” in waters off Amaknak Island.

Henderson said that night the three men had downed a bottle of R&R Reserve Whiskey. Tucker fought to keep Kelch out of the water for about half an hour, according to Henderson, before Tucker collapsed, exhausted and intoxicated.

Tucker was found unconscious 200 yards from where Kelch’s body was later found by first responders the next day.

Testimony by the Alaska medical examiner who performed Kelch’s autopsy also contradicted the government’s narrative. Dr. Cristin Rolf testified over the phone that none of Kelch’s head injuries were fatal and that he died by drowning.

That was enough for Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, the Coast Guard’s Pacific area commander, to send Tucker’s case back to prosecutors. A new Article 32 hearing is scheduled for Dec. 3 in Alameda, Calif.
US denies it’s considering troop reduction in South Korea

By Glen Carey and Jihye Lee
Bloomberg

The U.S. dismissed a report that it is considering a withdrawal of thousands of its troops to gain leverage with South Korea as the Trump administration seeks to have it pay five times more to host American service members.

The South Korea daily Chosun Ilbo reported Thursday the U.S. was considering withdrawing one of its brigades if ongoing defense cost talks with Seoul don’t go as it wants.

Jonathan Hoffman, chief Pentagon spokesman, later said in a statement that “there is absolutely no truth” to the report, which the paper attributed to a diplomatic source in Washington familiar with the talks.

Esper “rejected our ironclad commitment” to South Korea and its people during discussions in Seoul last week, Hoffman said.

Earlier Thursday, the defense chief had told reporters that the U.S. wasn’t using troop levels as a bargaining chip in funding talks with host countries.

“We aren’t threatening alliances over this. This is a negotiation,” he said.

Questions were raised about the stability of one of America’s most important military alliances when U.S. negotiators walked out of a meeting in Seoul on cost-sharing talks that ended at a Trump administration demand for a five-fold increase in funding.

The current cost-sharing agreement reached earlier this year expires at the end of 2019. South Korea’s Defense Minis-try said that despite the latest acrimony, the U.S. has vowed in its latest meeting that its forces would stay.

President Donald Trump has demanded South Korea contribute about $5 billion for hosting U.S. troops, well above the current one-year deal where Seoul pays $950 million.

The price tag originated with the White House, according to people familiar with the matter, and administration officials justify it by saying it reflects the costs South Korea would incur if it takes operational control of combined U.S.-South Korean forces in the case of a conflict.

The U.S. has about 28,500 service members in South Korea.

Trump has repeatedly expressed frustration with the open-ended troop deployment, saying after his first meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un last year that he would “like to bring the troops back home, but that’s not part of the equation right now.”

At the same time, he has accepted a long-standing Kim demand and suspended major joint military exercises that the U.S. and South Korea have relied on to maintain readiness.

Esper: No regret over postponing US-S. Korea drills

By Hyung-Jin Kim
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Thursday he does not regret postponing a U.S.-South Korean military exercise, even though the gesture was rejected by North Korea as not enough to restart nuclear diplomacy.

The prospects for a resumption of the nuclear diplomacy are unclear, with Pyongyang stepping up its pressures on Washington to make bigger concessions. On Wednesday, the North’s first vice foreign minister, Choe Son Hui, repeated it won’t return to a negotiating table unless the United States drops its hostile policy against the North.

Esper can brush the nuclear issue with the U.S. only when it withdraws all its hostile policies against North Korea, “In that sense, I think a one-on-one or leaders’ talks (between North Korea and the U.S.) isn’t an interesting issue for us.”

The U.S. and South Korea announced Sunday they indefinitely postponed the annual Vigilant Ace aerial training as part of efforts to rekindle the nuclear talks, as North Korea has called the training an invasion rehearsal.

In response to the North Korean official Kim Yong Chol said Tuesday the U.S. must scrap that military drill completely and abandon its hostility against his country if it wants to see the resumption of the nuclear negotiations.

North Korea wants the U.S. to lift major international sanctions on it and provide security assurances before it fully abandons its nuclear arsenal. But the U.S. has maintained sanctions would stay in place until North Korea takes serious steps toward denuclearization.

Before boarding his plane in Hanoi, Vietnam, for a flight to Washington, Esper described North Korea’s response to the drill’s postponement as being “not as positive as we would have liked.”

In Esper’s words: “I don’t regret taking the high road.”

Mark Esper
U.S. defense secretary

South Korean soldiers prepare a T-80U battle tank for an exercise at Rodriguez Live Fire Range in Pocheon, South Korea, on Tuesday.

GIs training in S. Korea get a look at Cold War-era tank

By Matthew Keeler
Stars and Stripes

POCHEON, South Korea — Soldiers of the U.S. 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, nearly five months into a nine-month rotation in South Korea, peered this week inside a Cold War relic, one they soon will encounter on the battlefield.

“At the Rodriguez Live Fire Range, troops of 3rd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Hood, Texas, inspected Russian T-80 battle tanks courtesy of their South Korean army hosts. South Korea still fields the T-80 as part of its arsenal.

“This is an opportunity for my soldiers to take a look at a T-80U tank,” Sgt. 1st Class Travis Husted, a platoon sergeant, told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday. “It gives the opportunity to crawl around, check out their capabilities, limited, a platoon sergeant, told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday. “It gives the opportunity to crawl around, check out their capabilities, limitations and understanding, due to the fact that it’s a type of tank that threat countries often use.

“It’s an opportunity for them to understand what they are going to be up against, possibly.”

South Korea’s own 3rd Armored Brigade brought the tanks to the complex. It acquired dozens of T-80s from Russia in the mid-1990s to satisfy debts left by the former Soviet Union.

South Korea also fields two newer battle tanks, the K1 Type-88 and the more recent K2 Black Panther. U.S. forces employ the M1 Abrams battle tank.

At the live fire range the tank crews from Fort Hood train as a single four-man team: tank commander, gunner, loader and driver.

Pvt. Christian Pelissier, a loader on an Abrams, said this was the first Korean tank he has seen since joining the brigade in July.

“You can tell the equipment is outdated, and it’s actually pretty cool they’re able to adapt to that and still use it in modern battlefields,” he said. “I was able to hop in the gunner seat and the driver’s seat and have a look around. I also didn’t even know that it was auto-loading.”

The two brigades held a battle drill involving two South Korean and four U.S. tanks and 16 soldiers on the range Tuesday, even after the U.S. and South Korea postponed a joint air drill over the weekend in the wake of complaints from North Korea. Another tank drill was scheduled Wednesday.

The North characterizes U.S.-South Korean military exercises as rehearsals for invasion. U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper postponed the air force drill as an “act of goodwill” meant to bring the North back to negotiations aimed at eliminating its nuclear arsenal. The North dismissed the gesture as insufficient.

For the U.S. tankers, working with an ally was a valuable experience, said Husted.

“One of the most delicate tasks that we have as an armored force is coordinating with adjacent units — that’s a task that we have a hard time mastering within our own army,” he said. “Having an opportunity to go outside to a friendly nation and coordinate with their tank units and master it here is pretty unique.”

By Matthew Keeler/Stars and Stripes

Stars and Stripes
NATO plans $1B upgrade to AWACS fleet

BY SLOBODAN LEKIC
Stars and Stripes

NATO wants to eventually replace its Cold War-era early warning aircraft but will in the meantime upgrade the jets at a cost of $1 billion.

The move to improve the planes, flown by U.S. Air Force and multinational pilots, reflected a need to modernize air reconnaissance assets. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said during a two-day meeting of alliance foreign ministers that opened Wednesday.

“I can confirm that we will sign a contract upgrading, modernizing the AWACS fleet, $1 billion,” Stoltenberg said, referring to the Aerial Early Warning and Control planes.

NATO operates 14 Boeing E-3A Sentry aircraft, the first of which were delivered by Boeing in 1982. They are registered in Luxemburg and are among the few military assets owned by the alliance rather than its 29 member states.

A NATO AWACS aircraft leaves formation after performing mid-air refueling training in May 2018. NATO has announced plans to upgrade its Cold War-era AWACS fleet.

The unit is based at Geilenkirchen, Germany, near the border with the Netherlands in the south. The E-3As are commanded on a rotational basis by either a U.S. Air Force or a German air force major general.

In recent years, the planes have palpated the Mediterranean Sea and supported NATO exercises over the Baltics, among other missions.

Stoltenberg did not say what specific upgrades NATO was looking at for the E-3As, which are identifiable by their prominent radar dishes and based on the frame of the four-engine Boeing 707 passenger airliner.

One likely upgrade would include changing Pratt & Whitney TF-33 jet engines — first flown 60 years ago — with a modernized, more efficient power plant.

The U.S. Air Force, which operates the largest fleet of E-3s, has also been incrementally modernizing its aircraft, especially the avionics suite and battle management systems.

“We are looking into how to replace the AWACS in the future, so after 2035,” Stoltenberg said.

Since the E-3 was introduced into service 40 years ago, a number of smaller and cheaper battle management reconnaissance aircraft have been developed, including the twin-jet Boeing E-7, which could be a contender to eventually replace the E-3As.

NATO Sentries were first used in combat during the 1999 Kosovo War, when they controlled air-to-air engagements against Serbian MiG-29s. Five MiGs were shot down by allied fighters during the 78-day bombing campaign.

NATO AWACS aircraft played an important role in other alliance operations, such as in the United States after 9/11 and in Libya and Afghanistan.

Stoltenberg also said that NATO would soon receive a new Japan-Korea-United States RQ-4 Global Hawk high-altitude surveillance drone, which will give commanders on the ground a better picture of combat situations.

NATO signed a contract in 2012 for five of the drones, to be based in Sigonella, Italy, in 2012.

Vietnam to receive a second US Coast Guard cutter

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said Wednesday that Vietnam will receive a second Coast Guard cutter from the United States sometime next year, bolstering that nation’s capability to push back against China’s maritime antagonism in the South China Sea.

“This ship represents another concrete symbol for our strengthening relationship,” Esper said during a speech to a group of students at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam in Hanoi. “Not only does this cooperation enhance the security of Vietnam and the broader region, but it also builds trust and mutual respect, which creates harmony between our people.”

The Vietnam Coast Guard received the first cutter in May 2017. The decommissioned U.S. Coast Guard Hamilton-class cutter Morgenthau was originally commissioned in 1969.

A statement from the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi in 2017 said the first cutter would be renamed CSB 8020 and be used to improve the Vietnam Coast Guard’s “maritime domain awareness.”

Esper’s speech Wednesday left no doubt that the transfer is in direct response to China’s assertions of sovereignty over most of the South China Sea, which is believed to hold a wealth of petroleum and minerals. It is also a major shipping route.

“The long period of peace, which enabled the economic rise of nearly every Asian nation, is yielding to a renewed style of Chinese conduct that infringes on the sovereign rights of other states,” Esper said.

During his past week of travel to South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines, Esper spoke with defense leaders and officials with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

“In just about every conversation I had, there was one theme that consistently emerged, one theme,” he said. “And that is the international rules-based order that has enabled the prosperity and security of the Indo-Pacific nations for decades is now under duress.”

“As a result, the sovereignty of proud and independent Indo-Pacific nations is being threatened.”

Vietnam and China vessels routinely clash in the sea, sometimes within Vietnam’s exclusive economic zone.

In July, China dispatched a ship into Vietnam’s exclusive economic zone to conduct a month of seismic surveying.

In a 2016 decision, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague invalidated China’s claim over most of the South China Sea in a case brought to the international tribunal by the Philippines.

“We are committed to expanding our strategic partnership [with Vietnam] by increasing cooperation in areas of common interest, such as maritime security, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief,” Esper said. “This includes providing Vietnam the capabilities it needs to protect its sovereignty and national resources so that it can continue to thrive.”

The U.S. has delivered 18 patrol boats to Vietnam since 2017, most recently with the transfer last spring of six patrol boats valued at $12 million.

Japan, Australia agree to hold regular air force training

BY SETTU ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Two of America’s most important Pacific allies have agreed to participate in annual air force exercises in each other’s territory starting in 2020.

The Japan Air Self-Defense Force will be a regular participant in the Pitch Black air drills, held every two years in Australia’s Northern Territory, the two country’s defense ministers announced Wednesday. The Royal Australian Air Force will also be a regular participant in Bushido Guardian, a bilateral fighter exercise held in Japan for the first time this year.

Japanese Defense Minister Taro Kono and his Australian counterpart, Linda Reynolds, announced the move along with other defense cooperation in a joint statement following Reynolds’ first official visit to Tokyo this week.

The pair “reaffirmed their intention to develop defense cooperation among Australia, Japan and the United States,” according to the joint statement.

The ministers said they will accelerate defense cooperation including in the fields of military exercises, personnel exchanges, space and cyber policy, defense science and technology, the joint statement said.

The pair also announced that an Australian Army liaison officer would work in the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force to enhance cooperation.

They’re also establishing an exchange program for defense scientists and engineers to deepen links between Japan’s Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency and Australia’s Defence Science and Technology Group, the pair said in their statement.
By Jennifer H. Svan
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — When Ramstein Air Base got $700,000 in prize money for being named the Pentagon’s best Air Force installation earlier this year, wing leaders turned to airmen and their families for ideas on how to spend the money and improve life on base.

They got a slew of suggestions. After weeding out the infeasible and unaffordable ones, they got to work. So far, about $50,000 of the tax-free prize money has gone to fixing what was “a resounding area of concern for folks” — enlarging the narrow parking spaces in the two main lots outside Ramstein’s shopping mall, said Chief Master Sgt. Ernesto Rendon, the 86th Airlift Wing command chief.

About $184,000 is going to installing Wi-Fi at facilities across base and in dormitories for airmen throughout the Kaiserslautern area, $263,000 is being used to pave an access road on base and reduce traffic in the commissary parking lot, and $50,000 will be spent installing 24/7 access at the South Side Fitness Center.

Other wish-list items the wing hopes to fund in the future include improving sports facilities, including the softball and youth fields, Rendon said.

Elsewhere, some of the prize money will be spent to renovate the chapel kitchen at Lajes Field in the Azores, which is aligned under the 86th Airlift Wing, and to upgrade the furnishings at the vehicle registration office at Kapaun Air Station in Kaiserslautern.

Ramstein was the Air Force selection for the annual Commander in Chief’s Annual Award for Installation Excellence in May. President Ronald Reagan established the award in 1985 to recognize installations that best support their mission with limited resources.

One of the suggestions Rendon said base officials wish they could have fulfilled was to build a vehicle bridge that would allow people to drive from the housing area on Vogelweh to the other side of the installation. The two sides are already connected by a pedestrian bridge but building a bridge for cars would require military construction funds, Rendon said.
Bill seeks better mammograms for Tricare users

BY NIKKI WENTLING Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Active-duty service members and other women who use Tricare for their medical treatment would benefit from the latest technology for breast cancer screening under new legislation expected to be introduced Thursday in the House and Senate.

The Better and Robust Screening Today Act, or BRST Act, would require Tricare to offer digital breast tomosynthesis as a primary and preventative health care service to military members, retirees and their families.

Digital breast tomosynthesis, referred to as DBT, builds a three-dimensional image of a breast to better detect and diagnose breast cancer, especially for women with dense breast tissue. The technology is already available to women who use Medicare or the Department of Veterans Affairs for their health care. Tricare, though, covers only mammograms with two-dimensional images, which some lawmakers say is a suboptimal standard of care.

“What we’re hoping is that in dropping this particular legislation, that we’re able to fix this gap,” said Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, D-Penn.

Houlahan is leading the bill in the House, and Sen. Martha MacSally, R-Ariz., is sponsoring the Senate’s version. Both women are veterans. McSally, a former combat pilot, retired from the Air Force after 22 years. Houlahan’s father was a career naval aviator, and she worked for several years as an Air Force engineer.

As a retiree, McSally is eligible for Tricare but primarily receives medical treatment from the VA, she said.

“I’m going to get a mammogram next week, but I’m going to the VA, so I’ll have better technology than those on Tricare,” McSally said. “And that’s ridiculous.”

Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer for women, with one in eight women developing the cancer in their lifetimes, according to the American Cancer Society. DBT has been found to help radiologists detect breast cancer and reduce the need for biopsies.

McSally and Houlahan sent letters in September to Tricare’s McCaffrey, the principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, urging him to expand Tricare coverage to include DBT screenings. Ten female senators signed onto the letter with McSally, and 50 House members signed Houlahan’s version.

McSally said Wednesday she was still waiting for McCaffrey’s response.

“When a problem comes to us, I ask, ‘Does this literally take an act of Congress to fix?’ Often times, we can, in our oversight role, shine a light on a problem and get the agency to fix what they’re doing and do the right thing,” McSally said. “In this case, they appear to not be budging. So, we’re dropping the legislation.”

The lawmakers view the legislation as necessary because a fix until language could be added next year to the National Defense Authorization Act.

Both women said their military service gives them a “unique lens” to address issues facing female veterans and servicemembers — including the lack of DBT screenings.

The 116th Congress has a record number of female veterans, with seven total in the House and Senate. Female veterans in the house doubled during the 2018 congressional elections, from two to four.

Earlier this year, the House created the Servicewomen and Women Veterans Congressional Caucus, which Houlahan chairs. Houlahan first heard about Tricare not providing DBT screenings when advocates brought the problem before the caucus.

“It is a unique perspective that I think people like us bring to Congress,” Houlahan said. “We have experienced the difficulties of serving and the issues when we become veterans.”

The House and Senate versions of the BRST Act will be introduced Thursday. Houlahan and McSally said they’re optimistic about the legislation making it through their respective chambers.

Bill introduced to build monument in DC to honor Medal of Honor recipients

BY ROSE L. THAYER Stars and Stripes

A Washington monument to honor Medal of Honor recipients was proposed Tuesday in legislation introduced by two Texas congressmen.

The National Medal of Honor Monument Act, filed by Reps. Marc Veasey, a Democrat, and Ron Wright, a Republican, tasks the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation with the creation of a monument in Washington to honor the more than 3,500 recipients of the nation’s highest award for military service. The bill also recognizes Arlington, Texas, as the new home of the National Medal of Honor Museum, also under the management of the foundation.

Last month, the north Texas city, located 20 miles west of downtown Dallas, was named as the permanent, interactive experience of the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation.

“We look forward to working with the bipartisan contingent of elected officials to make sure we are doing all that we can to do more than the more than 3,500 Medal of Honor recipients and get this great piece of legislation passed,” said Joe Daniels, CEO and president of the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation.

“We are extremely excited to partner with our friends in Texas to ensure the foundation not only has the right location for a monument, but the best location as quickly as possible, according to a spokesperson for the foundation. Information related to the rendering and cost of the monument is not yet available, but it will use private and public donations.

The measure has gained 18 co-sponsors, 12 of which are from Texas. After introduction, it was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources, according to her office’s website.

The full text of the bill is not yet available.

“I am honored to introduce this legislation that will honor these brave men and women for risking their lives to protect our democracy,” Veasey said in a statement.

“I am also proud to join my fellow North Texans, Congressman Wright, to ensure that the city of Arlington, Texas, will be the forever home of this new Medal of Honor Museum.”

Wright expressed similar sentiments in a statement. These service members’ contributions “deserve to be memorialized with a monument,” he said.

“These men and women went above and beyond in order to preserve our values and way of life,” Wright said.

The Arlington museum is scheduled to open to the public in 2024 and will be located near two professional sports stadiums also located in the city. It will feature permanent, interactive experiences and rotating exhibitions and an education center.

New nuclear control HQ dedicated

Associated Press

OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb. — The new $1.3 billion headquarters for the command unit that controls the nation’s nuclear-armed forces has been dedicated at an Air Force Base south of Omaha.

Officers and enlisted men joined civilian dignitaries for ceremonies Monday at Offutt Air Force Base.

The facility is named the Gen. Curtis E. LeMay Building. LeMay headed what was then known as the Air Force’s Strategic Air Command until 1957 when he left to take a Pentagon post. Strategic Air Command eventually became a multiservice unit under a new name — U.S. Strategic Command, or StratCom.

Work on the 916,000-square-foot command and control center began in October 2012. Contractors worked through several setbacks, including floods and persistent mold.

Around 2,000 of StratCom’s 3,200 employees have moved in.

USMC steel barrier in Hawaii raises concern

Associated Press

HONOLULU — A U.S. Marine Corps plan to install a steel barrier to protect part of a Honolulu training facility from beach erosion has raised concerns among neighbors and advocates.

The Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported Wednesday that residents near Ewa Beach are seeking further study of the environmental impact of a proposed 1,500-foot barrier.

The Marines say modifications are needed at the Puuola Range Training Facility to protect its training range shoreline from erosion.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz called on the Marines Tuesday to review the environmental impact of its plan to build the retaining wall.

A change.org petition signed by more than 1,100 people as of Tuesday seeks a thorough environmental impact statement analysis beyond the less robust environmental assessment already conducted.
Trident: Senior DOD officials advised Trump against reversing rank reduction

FROM FRONT PAGE
It was not immediately clear whether Trump's directive applies to them as well.

A spokesperson for Green could not immediately confirm the preliminary deal reached for comment Thursday morning.

An attorney for Gallagher, Tim Parlatore, said the last sentence of Trump's tweet indicates to him that the president wants Green to move on from serving in the military.

"This whole thing was a political show by a petulant child, and I think the president saw through that," Parlatore said of the admiral.

Gallagher's trial exposed the power of military justice and the limits of the president's authority.

The intervention was hailed by supporters of Gallagher as a major victory, but it also raised questions about the future of military justice and the ability of the armed forces to hold their highest-ranking officials accountable.

The defense department's response to the decision is under investigation.

The decision to reverse Gallagher's discharges for war crimes is under investigation.

The president's move was criticized by current and former military officials who cautioned it could diminish the deterrent power of military justice and damage discipline in the ranks.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper was among the senior officials who made the case to Trump for letting the military justice system decide Gallagher's fate.

The president's actions appear to have concurred with advocates for the men affected by last week's decision who argued that troops undertaking dangerous missions deserve the nation's understanding.

Report says US, allies' military success drove down terrorism deaths

By J.P. Lawrence
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Military successes by the U.S. and its allies against terrorist groups helped drive down global deaths from terrorism in 2018 for the fourth consecutive year, a report released this week said.

As ISIS buckled under military successes against it, U.S. launching peace talks with the Taliban, said the report issued by Australia’s Institute for Economics and Peace.

Terrorism fatalities soared by nearly 60% in the Middle East and North Africa for decades of war in the country.

But even as terrorism deaths declined in most countries, they soared in Afghanistan, where in 2018 they were in sub-Saharan Africa, the report said.

Sub-Saharan Africa recorded the most terror-related casualties blamed on the Islamic State group, the report said.

Military deaths in Afghanistan were in sub-Saharan Africa, the world’s deadliest region for terrorism.

No country was among the 20,000 international troops now in the country focused on training and advising Afghan security forces.

The U.S. military deaths Wednesday are the first reported in Afghanistan since Sept. 16, when Army Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Griffin, 41, was killed by small-arms fire during combat in central Wardak province.

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2 Army aviators killed in Afghanistan crash ID’d

By John Vandiver
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon identified two Fort Hood-based soldiers, Chief Warrant Officer 2 David C. Knadle and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Kirk T. Fuchigami Jr., as the service members killed in a Wednesday helicopter crash in Afghanistan.

Both soldiers were Apache helicopter pilots assigned to 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division out of Fort Hood, Texas.

Fuchigami’s wife, McKenzie, called her spouse “a strong, courageous soldier and loyal husband.”

“Eight months of marriage will end with the best months of my life. He taught me so much about love and respect,” she wrote in a Facebook post. “I’m blessed to have been loved by him so fiercely.”

Linda Knadle Rodante, who identified herself as Knadle’s aunt, said in a Facebook post Wednesday that the soldier was married with two children.

“Our heartfelt condolences go to both families and their friends during this difficult time,” said Lt. Col. Adam Camaan, the soldiers’ battalion commander, who added in a statement that Fuchigami and Knadle “will always be remembered as a part of the heroic legacy of the 1st Cavalry Division.”

The Taliban claimed to have shot down the helicopter in a statement Thursday. However, Fawad Aman, Afghan Defense Ministry deputy spokesman, denied the claim and said the crash occurred due to a technical problem with the aircraft.

The crash destroyed the helicopter, which was participating in a night raid, said Deedar Lawang, a Logar province spokesman.

There have been 19 U.S. combat deaths in Afghanistan in 2019, the deadliest year for American troops in the country since international combat operations ended in late 2014.

Most of the 20,000 international troops now in the country are focused on training and advising Afghan security forces, with a smaller contingent taking part in a counterterrorism mission.

The U.S. military deaths Wednesday are the first reported in Afghanistan since Sept. 16, when Army Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Griffin, 41, was killed by small-arms fire during combat in central Wardak province.

By Corey Dickstein
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two airmen were killed Thursday morning in a crash of jet trainers at Vance Air Force Base in Oklahoma, according to service officials.

The officials said the airmen died in a mishap that occurred during a routine training mission involving two T-38C Talon aircraft.

They said two airmen were in each aircraft when the incident occurred just after 9 a.m. local time. Officials did not provide the status of the two airmen who survived or indicate the nature of the crash.

“Vance emergency response personnel are on scene to treat casualties and assist in recovery efforts,” according to a statement from the base. It added an Air Force team would launch an investigation into the incident.

Vance AFB is about 90 miles north of Oklahoma City and is home to an undergraduate pilot training program.

Student pilots training to fly fighter jets or bombers typically fly the T-38Cs during the third and final stage of their undergraduate training program, according to the Air Force. The T-38C is a Northrup Grumman-built twin-engine, supersonic-jet training aircraft that has been used by the Air Force since 2001, and it is scheduled to be replaced by a new jet trainer in the coming years.

Versions of the T-38 have been used as the Air Force’s primary jet training aircraft since the 1960s, and the service claims more than 70,000 pilots have trained using the plane.

In 2018, Boeing was awarded a $9.2 billion contract to build T-X aircraft to replace the Air Force’s T-38Cs. That contract calls for 350 of the new trainer jets to be ready for full operational deployment by 2034.

Five T-38Cs crashed between November 2017 and November 2018, including one from Vance AFB in August 2018. Two of those crashes during that time were fatal.

Air Force Capt. Paul J. Barbo was killed when his jet experienced total hydraulic failure in November 2017 at Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas, according to an investigation into the wreck.

Another Laughlin-based T-38C crashed in November 2018, killing Air Force Capt. John Graham. That crash was blamed on a compressor stall, the Air Force reported in June following an investigation.

2 die in T-38 crash at Oklahoma base

A spokesperson for Green could not immediately confirm the preliminary deal reached for comment Thursday morning.

An attorney for Gallagher, Tim Parlatore, said the last sentence of Trump's tweet indicates to him that the president wants Green to move on from serving in the military.

"This whole thing was a political show by a petulant child, and I think the president saw through that," Parlatore said of the admiral.

Gallagher’s trial exposed the power of military justice and the limits of the president's authority.

The intervention was hailed by supporters of Gallagher as a major victory, but it also raised questions about the future of military justice and the ability of the armed forces to hold their highest-ranking officials accountable.

The defense department's response to the decision is under investigation.

The decision to reverse Gallagher’s discharges for war crimes is under investigation.

The president's move was criticized by current and former military officials who cautioned it could diminish the deterrent power of military justice and damage discipline in the ranks.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper was among the senior officials who made the case to Trump for letting the military justice system decide Gallagher’s fate.

The president’s actions appear to have concurred with advocates for the men affected by last week’s decision who argued that troops undertaking dangerous missions deserve the nation's understanding.

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Trident: Senior DOD officials advised Trump against reversing rank reduction

FROM FRONT PAGE
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Giuliani efforts focused on Bidens, key witnesses say

BY LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK AND ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Key impeachment witnesses said Thursday it was clear that Donald Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani was pursuing political investigations of Ukraine. Their testimony undercut the president’s argument he only wanted to root out Ukrainian corruption.

State Department official David Holmes said he understood that Giuliani’s push to investigate “Burisma,” the Ukraine gas company where Joe Biden’s son Hunter served on the board, was code for the former vice president and his family. Former White House adviser Fiona Hill warned that Giuliani had been making “explosive” and “incendiary” claims.

“He was clearly pushing forward issues and ideas that you know, probably come back to haunt us and in fact,” Hill testified, “I think that’s where we are today.”

Testimony from Hill and Holmes capped an intense week in the historic inquiry. The House probe focuses on allegations that Trump sought investigations of Joe Biden and his son — and the discredited idea that Ukraine rather than Russia interfered in the 2016 election — in return for U.S. military aid that Ukraine needed to fend off Russian aggression, and for a White House visit to the new Ukrainian president.

Democrats wanted that would demonstrate his backing from the West.

Hill, a former White House Russia analyst, sternly warned Republican lawmakers — and implicitly Trump — that there was no evidence to support Giuliani’s push for a “fictional” Ukraine-inference narrative as they defend Trump in the impeachment investigation.

“Those events potentially bear on the question of whether the president did, in fact, have knowledge that those senior officials were using the levers of our diplomatic power to push Ukraine to investigate his rivals,” Hill testified.

As Holmes was delivering opening remarks, explaining how the ambassador “wined” holding the cellphone away from his ear, because the president was talking so loudly, Trump tried to undercut the career diplomat’s account of overhearing the conversation.

“The president tweeted that while his own hearing is “great” he’s never been able to understand another person’s conversation that wasn’t on speaker. “Try it,” he suggested.

Holmes also testified about his growing concern as Giuliani, the president’s personal lawyer, orchestrated Ukraine policy outside official diplomatic channels.

It was a concern shared by others.

“My recollection is that Ambassador Sondland stated, ‘Every time Rudy gets involved he goes and f---s everything up.’”

David Holmes
State Department official

David Holmes, a U.S. diplomat in Ukraine, told the members of the House Intelligence Committee on Thursday that he came forward after overhearing President Donald Trump ask about “investigations” during a phone call with Ambassador Gordon Sondland in Kyiv.

Congressional Republicans acknowledged they would be watching for the results of fresh polls and focus groups and monitoring the attention the inquiry receives back home.

For now, they said, there seems to be little shifting of people’s views and a sense that Democrats’ case against Trump is complicated and unwieldy for people to digest.

“I think this is a pretty boring reality show. It’s not going to get a second season,” said Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla.

Polling has shown that while public opinion has shifted recently toward slightly backing Trump’s impeachment, Democrats strongly support the effort while Republicans vehemently oppose it. Independents have been divided.

“The question is, is this information enough to disrupt the equilibrium or not?” David Win- ston, a pollster who works with congressional Republicans, said of Sondland’s testimony. Winston said it “takes a lot” for people who have strong opinions on a subject to change them.

In her testimony before the committee, former White House national security aide Fiona Hill appealed to the GOP to stop peddling an alternative theory of the 2016 U.S. election and warned that Russia is gearing up to intervene again in the 2020 election.

“We need to be clear about where we are,” she said. “We are in a unique moment in the history of the United States.”

Russia meddled in the U.S. election “beyond dispute.”

She said, “I refuse to be part of an effort to legitimize an alternative narrative that the Ukrainian government is a U.S. adversary, and that Ukraine — not Russia — attacked us in 2016,” she said.

Hill said she was an aide to former State Department official Fiona Hill during a phone call with Ambassador Gordon Sondland and that she was thinking about the current investigation.

“Those events potentially bear on the question of whether the president did, in fact, have knowledge that those senior officials were using the levers of our diplomatic power to push Ukraine to investigate his rivals,” Hill testified.

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A Ukrainian soldier passes a destroyed Butovka coal mine as he approaches his front line position in the town of Avdiivka in the Donetsk region, Ukraine, on Tuesday.

**Line: US equipment key on front lines in Ukraine**

**FROM FRONT PAGE**

The holdup in aid wasn’t something palpable that immediately affected the Ukrainian troops in action; it had more of a psychological impact, raising fears here that the U.S. was turning its back on Ukraine. The aid was later released, but the scandal has effectively frozen U.S.-Ukrainian relations and thrown long-term U.S. backing into doubt.

“We need support, and without support of our allies we won’t win this war,” Poltorya said.

Avdiivka feels a world away from Washington. A soldier works his trench with a pickax. Another hangs wet laundry in the damp chill. Another cleans his Kalashnikov rifle with a piece of old rag.

While the U.S. aid helped fill some of the gaps in Ukraine’s military capability, with counter-mortar radars being one highly welcome addition, its army continues to rely on aging Soviet-era weapons and often lacks essential supplies.

On the other side of the front line, separatists work from a similar, Soviet-made arsenal.

After large-scale battles involving tanks and long-range artillery early in the conflict, fighting has devolved into an oddity primary standoff, with both sides stuck in trenches and occasionally exchanging artillery salvos and gunfire. Ukraine used warplanes and helicopter gunships early on, but it grounded them after heavy losses from anti-aircraft fire.

Strategically located near the airport of regional capital Donetsk and home to Ukraine’s main coke and chemical plant, Avdiivka was seized by separatists at the start of the 2014 uprising, then recaptured by Ukrainian forces a few months later.

Heavy fighting erupted again in 2017, and Avdiivka remains a key spot on the front. About 10 days ago, two Ukrainian soldiers were killed by light artillery fire as they unloaded firewood from their vehicle.

“Sometimes it’s scary. Sometimes it’s so dark that you can’t see yourself, can’t see your hand in front of you. You might get scared when you walk down the trenches at night. The trenches are long,” said Kryvko, a 21-year-old soldier who spoke on condition that his last name not be used for security reasons.

“My family is in danger. My loved ones,” said Kryvko, who says he’s fighting to protect his wife and 10-month-old daughter.

“I want all my comrades to survive,” he said, his eyes welling up.

“My wife,” he said.

“National symbolism is ubiquitous around the trenches — a Ukrainian trident hanging on a wooden pillar; a Ukrainian flag spread on a table. The day-to-day rituals are tedious, and the ambience is subdued but tense, as gunfire can erupt at any moment.

The war began in 2014, after Ukraine’s former Moscow-friendly president was driven from office by massive protests on Kyiv’s Maidan square. In retaliation and in fear of Western encroachment on what it sees as its geopolitical backyard, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula and helped foment an insurgency in eastern Ukraine. Many in the separatist-held areas see Russia as their more natural trading partner and backer than the United States, while many elsewhere in Ukraine lean firmly toward the West.

The centerpiece of the lethal U.S. military aid provided by the Trump administration are Javelin anti-tank missiles. They’re not being used in the field, soldiers say, but serve as a deterrent, a symbol of U.S. power and support — and a confidence-booster for Ukrainian troops.

Soldiers say U.S. helmets saved lives early in the war, and U.S. medical equipment is especially prized.

In Avdiivka, soldier Yevhen Khushko carefully guards his U.S. first-aid kit, with its decompression needle and compact tourniquet.

“The quality of emergency medical treatment depends on what’s in the first-aid kit,” he said.

Shiny green U.S.-made tents serve as a triage point for a hospital in Chasiv Yar, farther north along the front, where radiologist Oleh Kryvyiak X-rays a soldier’s chest, and a colleague uses an American ultrasound machine to monitor a patient’s heart.

“The American equipment is higher quality than ours. Of course, we’d like to have help (from the U.S.), friendly relations,” Kryvyiak said.

Ukrainians at the front have another worry: That the U.S. impeachment drama has weakened Zelenskiy so much that he’ll cede too much to Russian President Vladimir Putin in peace talks in Paris next month.

“Our guys died in droves — what was that for?” asked Dmytro, a soldier whose hometown of Popasna was captured by separatists for several months in 2014.

“For Ukraine, victory at the end of the war is if we get the territory back.”

**Official: Ukraine asked about aid on day of Trump call**

**BY ANDREW TAYLOR**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a blow to GOP defenses of President Donald Trump, a Defense Department official said Wednesday the Ukrainian government asked “what was going on” with U.S. military aid as early as July 25 — the very day that Trump asked Ukraine’s president to investigate Democrats.

Testifying in an evening hearing, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Laura Cooper told lawmakers her staff recently showed her emails that she had not yet seen when she testified behind closed doors last month in the impeachment probe looking into Trump’s dealings with Ukraine.

Cooper said her staff received an email on July 25 from a Ukrainian embassy contact asking “what was going on with Ukraine’s security assistance.” She said she “cannot say for certain” that Ukraine was aware the aid was being withheld, but said “it’s the recollection of my staff that they likely knew.”

Republicans have argued there couldn’t be a “quid pro quo” — investigations into Democrats for military aid — if Ukrainians weren’t aware of a hold on the aid.

“Your testimony today destroys two of the pillars of the president’s defense,” said Rep. Eric Swalwell, D-Calif. “The first pillar: No harm no foul. The Ukrainians didn’t know that the hold was in place, so it didn’t really hurt them. The second pillar: This president was a real champion of anti-corruption.”

Trump’s July 25 call with Ukrainian President Zelenskiy occurred in the morning in Washington. After Zelenskiy pressed for the military aid, Trump suggested Ukraine “look into” Joe Biden and his son Hunter, who was on the board of a huge Ukrainian natural gas company.

In addition to the email from the Ukrainian Embassy, Cooper testified that her staff also received two emails from the State Department that afternoon of July 25.

One said “that the Ukrainian Embassy and House Foreign Affairs Committee are asking about security assistance.” A second email said “the Hill knows about the (military aid) situation to an extent and so does the Ukrainian Embassy.”
Dems spar over health care, beating Trump

By Bill Barrow, Will Weissert and Jill Colvin
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Democratic presidential candidates clashed in a debate over the future of health care in America, race and inequality and their ability to build a winning coalition to take on President Donald Trump next year.

The Wednesday night faceoff came after hours of testimony in the impeachment inquiry of Trump and at a critical juncture in the Democratic race to stop him in 2020. With less than three months before the first voting contests, big questions hang over the front-runners, time is running out for lower tier candidates to make their move and new Democrats are launching improbable last-minute bids for the nomination.

But amid the turbulence, the White House hopefuls often found themselves fighting on well-trodden terrain, particularly over whether the party should embrace a sweeping “Medicare for All” program or make more modest changes to the current health care system.

Sens. Elizabeth Warren, of Massachusetts, and Bernie Sanders, of Vermont, the party’s two most progressive voices, staunchly defended Medicare for All, which would eliminate private insurance coverage in favor of a government-run system.

“The American people understand that the current health care system is not only cruel, it is dysfunctional,” Sanders said.

Former Vice President Joe Biden countered that many people are happy with private insurance through their jobs, while Mayor Pete Buttigieg, of South Bend, Ind., complained about other candidates seeking to take “the divisive step” of ordering people onto universal health care “whether they like it or not.”

Democrats successfully campaigned on health care in 2018, winning control of the House on a message that Republicans were slashing existing benefits. But moderates worry that Medicare for All is more complicated and may not pay the same political dividend. That’s especially true after Democrats won elections earlier this month in Kentucky and Virginia without embracing the program.

“We must get our fired-up Democratic base with us,” said Sen. Amy Klobuchar, of Minnesota. “But let’s also get those independents and moderate Republicans who cannot stomach [Trump] anymore.”

The fifth Democratic debate unfolded in Atlanta, a city that played a central role in the civil rights movement, and the party’s diversity, including two black candidates, was on display. But there was disagreement on how best to appeal to minority voters, who are vital to winning the Democratic nomination and will be crucial in the general election.

Sens. Kamala Harris, of California, and Cory Booker, of New Jersey, said the party has sometimes come up short in its outreach to black Americans.

“For too long, I think, candidates have taken for granted constituencies that have been a backbone of the Democratic Party,” Harris said. “You show up in a black church and want to get the vote but just haven’t been there before.”

Booker declared, “Black voters are pissed off, and they’re worried.”

In the moderators’ chairs were four women, including Rachel Maddow, MSNBC’s liberal darling, and Ashley Parker, a White House reporter for The Washington Post. It was only the third time a primary debate has been hosted by an all-female panel.

Buttigieg — who was a natural target given his recent rise among people of color and other marginalized communities. “We’ve got to start empowering people of color,” Sanders said.

Businessman Andrew Yang was asked what he would say to Russian President Vladimir Putin if he got the chance — and joked about that leader’scordial relationship with Trump.

“First of all, I’d say, ‘I’m sorry I beat your guy,’” Yang said with a grin, drawing howls of laughter from the audience.

Senate passes spending bill to avoid government shutdown

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Senate passed a short-term spending bill Thursday to keep the government open through late December, sending the legislation to President Donald Trump hours ahead of a midnight shutdown deadline.

The vote was 74-20. Trump was expected to sign the bill, which would keep the government funded through Dec. 20, setting up a fight over money for Trump’s border wall that could happen around the very same time the House is voting on articles of impeachment against the president.

It is the second stop-gap spending bill Congress has been forced to pass to keep the lights on in government for the 2020 budget year that began Oct. 1.

Congress is supposed to pass 12 annual spending bills to fund the military and federal agencies, but lawmakers have yet to agree on a single one of them for 2020. Instead, the spending process has again sunk into dysfunction, even though Congress and the White House passed a broad budget deal over the summer that extended the debt limit past the 2020 election and set top-line spending levels for the military and domestic agencies.

That deal was supposed to make it easier for Congress’ spending committees to write their bills. But negotiations quickly descended into partisan bickering over the terms of the deal.

Looming over it all is Trump’s demand for billions for his border wall, the same issue that caused a record-long 35-day government shutdown last winter.

Aides have studied the possibility of diverting the money from existing funds if Congress does not approve more.

Trump and Senate Republicans want $5 billion for the wall, but House Democrats included no money at all for the wall in the spending bills they passed. It remains unclear where a compromise might lie.

By extending funding through Dec. 20, lawmakers hope to give themselves time to come up with a deal on that issue and others that would keep the government funded through late December.

Harris scrapped with another low polling candidate, Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, who has criticized prominent Democrats, including 2016 nominee Hillary Clinton.

“I think that it’s unfortunate that we have someone on the stage who is attempting to be the Dem- ocratic nominee for the president of the United States who during the Obama administration spent four years full time on Fox News as the President (Barack) Obama,” Harris said.

“I’m not going to put party interest first,” Gabbard responded.

But the discussion kept finding its way back to Medicare for All, which has dominated the primary — especially for Warren. She released plans to raise $20-plus trillion in new government revenue for universal health care. But she also said implementation of the program may take three years — drawing criticism both from more centrist Democrats and Buttigieg, who think she’s trying to distance herself from an unpopular idea, and Sanders supporters, who have accused Massachusetts senator’s commitment to Medicare for All wavering.

Sanders made a point of saying Warren has said that he’d send Medi- care for All legislation to Congress during the first week of his administration.

Booker faced especially intense pressure Wednesday since he was the Democratic National Committee’s polling requirements for the December debate in California. He spent several minutes arguing with Warren about the need to more appropriately tax the wealthy, but also called for “building wealth” among people of color and other marginalized communities.

“We’ve got to start empowering people of color,” he said.

Businessman Andrew Yang was asked what he would say to Russian President Vladimir Putin if he got the chance — and joked about that leader’s cordial relationship with Trump.

“First of all, I’d say, ‘I’m sorry I beat your guy,’” Yang said with a grin, drawing howls of laughter from the audience.
Fewer customers hit by the latest blackout in Calif.

BY JANNIE HAR
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Pacific Gas & Electric turned off electricity Wednesday to rekindle fears among some people in Northern California to prevent power lines from sparking wildfires during a new bout of windy, warm weather.

However, favorable weather allowed the nation's largest utility to drastically reduce the number of customers it originally had planned to black out — about 375,000 — and even to begin re-igniting electricity in some areas.

Higher-than-expected humidity, cloud cover and even some rain showers in the Sierra Nevada helped reduce the risk, said Scott Strenfel, PG&E's principal meteorologist.

"All of these factors kind of broke in all of our favor," he said.

virtually all those who lost power were expected to get it back Thursday once a weather all-clear is declared and ground crews and helicopters check power lines to make sure any damage is repaired, officials said.

PG&E had prepared for it to be dry and windy Wednesday, with gusts up to 55 mph, which could felling tree branches or other debris into lines and cause sparks that have the potential to set catastrophic fires, PG&E officials said. A virtually rainless fall has left brush bone dry.

The blackout is the latest in a series of massive outages by PG&E, including one last month that plunged nearly 2.5 million people into darkness and outraged officials and customers as well.

Officials accused the company of using the blackouts as a blunt tool after years of failing to update its infrastructure to withstand fire weather. PG&E equipment has caused some of California's most destructive wildfires in recent years.

PG&E CEO Andy Vesey acknowledged the outages have been "terribly disruptive" and said the company is taking steps to avoid them in the future but that for now, "we won't roll the dice on public safety.

Meanwhile, California regulators are demanding answers from wireless, internet and landline providers whose equipment failed during the earlier outages, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without a way to get emergency alerts or make 911 calls.

About 3% of cell towers statewide failed at one point in late October, but the numbers were much higher in northern counties, such as Marin, which had 57% of its towers out, and Sonoma, with 27% out.

Exasperated members of the California Public Utilities Commission reminded representatives of Sprint, AT&T, Verizon and other companies that customers pay for reliable service.

"Next fire season cannot, cannot look like this one," commissioned President Marybel Batjer said.

Consumer advocates have urged the commission to establish backup power requirements and make the companies provide detailed information about outage locations.

State Sen. Steve Glazer and Assemblywoman Rebecca Bauer-Kahan proposed legislation Wednesday that would require cellphone companies to provide at least 72 hours of backup power at cell towers.

Police: Mo. mother took adult daughter from care facility, killed her

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — An elderly woman who feared she was developing dementia removed her mentally disabled adult daughter from a care facility, killed her and police declined to comment.

"From what I understand, the note I haven't seen said she was doing this as a favor to her sons so we didn't have to carry the burden of a handicapped sister and declining mother," he said.

"I don't approve of that at all but that's apparently what the note said.

Scott Theleman didn't say how he knew the contents of the note and police declined to comment.

Court records show that Marjorie Theleman was appointed in 1989 as a guardian for her then-21-year-old daughter, who was described as an "incapacitated person." A report filed in 2014 in the guardianship case described Sharon Theleman as mentally disabled and visually impaired.

The report also said she needed a walker or wheelchair and "can't take care of herself." Thomas Zotos, the attorney for Marjorie Theleman in the guardianship case, said he had no recent contact with the mother or daughter and couldn't comment.

Ariz. border activist is acquitted

BY ASTRID GALVAN
Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. — An activist was quickly acquitted Wednesday on charges he illegally harbored two Central American immigrants at a southern Arizona camp operated by a humanitarian group.

The verdict by a jury in U.S. District Court came after jurors deliberated for several days. Prosecutor Nathaniel Walters said the men didn't need legal aid because they "were not facing a crime, the way the government wanted it to be." Walters, 37, testified that neutrality guides his work near the border and denied he has ever helped migrants hide or instructed them how to avoid authorities.

Walters was arrested in January 2018 by U.S. agents who were staking out a humanitarian aid station in Arizona known as "The Barn," where two Central American men had been staying for several days. Prosecutor Nathaniel Walters said the men didn't need medical attention and questioned the authenticity of Warren's claim that he was "orienting" them before they left the camp.

The camp is run by a group that tries to prevent immigrants from dying in the desert.

"What they needed was a place to hide, and that's what the defendant gave them, and that is an intent to violate the law," Walters said.

Warren, a member of the group No More Deaths, said the group's training and protocol prohibit assisting migrants on how to elude authorities. He said his interest is in saving lives.

Michael Bailey, the U.S. attorney for Arizona, promised to continue prosecuting people who harbor and smuggle immigrants and those who sneak across the border.
Data to weigh education wages, debt expanded

By Collin Binkley
Associated Press

For the first time, the U.S. Education Department has published data allowing students to compare salary and debt levels for specific college programs rather than for entire institutions only.

The information was made public Wednesday on the agency's updated College Scorecard website, which was created under the Obama administration to help students evaluate which colleges provide the best value. The update is seen as a milestone in the department's efforts to shine a light on programs that leave students with heavy debt and low incomes.

Previously, students could use the online tool to compare salary and debt averages for entire schools, benchmarks that the Education Department now says are "fairly meaningless." Students today can sort through specific majors within a school and see how they stack up against one another, or against programs at other schools, and see which ones lead to the highest salaries or the lowest debt.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said the new tool provides "real information students need to make informed, personalized decisions about their education." By providing the same statistics for all institutions, she said, students can compare any programs they are considering "without regard to the type of school."

The website allows students to search for a specific school or to browse by field of study or degree type.

It offers information on schools from Ivy League universities to vocational schools and certificate programs.

There are some drawbacks. The earnings data are available for only 20% of the 200,000 programs listed in the department's database, while others are hidden for privacy reasons because they had few students.

The earnings figures were measured a year after graduation and reflect students who received federal loans or Pell grants only. They do not count students with no earnings.

Still, the effort was applauded by advocacy groups and scholars who have long awaited better data on college outcomes. Chiefs for Change, a nonprofit that represents city and state education leaders, said the sites give students important input when deciding what to do after high school.

"With information about average debt and earnings, students will have a better sense of the potential return on their investment in higher education," Mike Magee, the organization's CEO, said in a statement.

DeVos promised to expand the College Scorecard in August 2018 as she repealed an Obama-era rule requiring the department to publish earnings and debt data on career training programs that were primarily housed at for-profit colleges. That rule aimed to cut federal money for programs that repeatedly left students strapped with heavy debt and low incomes.

But DeVos said the rule unfairly targeted the for-profit sector and used flawed data. Instead, she said students should get equal information about all types of schools and make decisions about where to attend on their own.

Researchers are beginning to dig into the new data on the site, and many expect discussions about which types of schools are helping students and which aren't.

One early finding is that pays to be a dentist. Nine of the 10 highest median salaries a year after graduation were for dentistry programs, topped by Ohio State University at $231,290. Those programs also carried heavy debt, with an average of about $200,000 in the top 10 programs.

There were also more than 100 programs in which the median debt was more than four times greater than the median salary, including some film, drama and visual arts programs at prestigious schools such as Columbia University and New York University.

Hundreds of protesters rally against Berkeley speech by Ann Coulter

By Jaclyn Cosgrove and Shelby Grad
Los Angeles Times

Hundreds of protesters converged on UC Berkeley on Wednesday night as conservative commentator Ann Coulter delivered a speech on campus.

UC Berkeley police said on Twitter that "multiple masked protesters" were arrested at the event but did not provide details about why they were taken into custody.

Videos and photos show large groups of protesters outside the venue where Coulter was speaking, with some signs calling her a fascist and saying she should go home.

The Berkeley College Republicans invited Coulter for a talk entitled, "Adios, America!" Advertising said the writer would discuss the "current United States immigration system and the dangers of mass immigration."

Protesters said she had no place at the university.

"The university is rolling (out) the red carpet for these fascist speakers to come and spew their hate," demonstrator Alex Hernandez told NBC Bay Area.

Coulter had intended to speak on the campus in 2017, but her event was canceled due to security concerns.

Earlier that year, the College Republicans hosted 500 right-wing provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos, but the event was canceled when hundreds of demonstrators swarmed the venue — including some in masks who tore down barricades and smashed windows.

Police officers guard attendees leaving a speech by conservative commentator Ann Coulter on Wednesday in Berkeley, Calif.

Utah woman fights sex offender charge after her stepkids see her topless

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — A Utah woman charged with a crime after her stepchildren saw her topless in her own home is fighting the case that could force her to register as a sex offender, citing a court ruling that overturned a topless ban in Colorado.

Attorneys for Tilli Buchanan argued that the law is unfair because it treats men and women differently for baring their chests. They are asking a judge to overturn her misdemeanor lewdness charges and declare that part of the law unconstitutional.

Prosecutors counter that nudity is commonly understood to include women’s breasts in American society and that courts have upheld laws based on morality.

Judge Kara Pettit heard the case Tuesday but said it was "too important of an issue" to rule immediately. She plans to rule in the coming months.

Buchanan said she and her husband had taken off their shirts to keep their clothes from getting dusty while they worked in their garden in late July or early August.

When the children, ages 9 through 13, walked in, she "explained she considers herself a feminist and wanted to make a point that everybody should be fine with walking around their house or elsewhere with skin showing," her lawyers said in court documents.

Buchanan was charged with three counts of misdemeanor lewdness involving a child in February. It came after child welfare officials began an investigation involving the kids that was tied to Buchanan, and the children’s mother reported the incident to authorities because she was "alarmed." Buchanan’s husband was not charged.

“It was in the privacy of my own home. My husband was right next to me in the exact manner that I was, and he’s not being prosecuted,” she said after the court hearing.

If convicted, Buchanan could be required to register as a sex offender for 10 years.
Farmers explore unfamiliar terrain of legalized hemp

BY DAVID EGGERT
Associated Press

CLAYTON TOWNSHIP, Mich. — Dave Crabill and two business partners started small for their first foray into farming hemp, growing two strains of the newfound legal cousin of marijuana on an acre along a dirt road outside the industrial city of Flint.

The endeavor was not easy. Flooding from record rain stunted some plants. Crabill and others had to carefully walk the field and uproot 1,000 undesirable males, a third of the plants, to protect more valuable females. Some plants were stolen. And it’s still not clear whether they will make money from the effort, which Crabill likened to “hakuna matata” — skills and hoping to harvest $50.

“So that’s why we did the one acre,” said Crabill, who runs a small marketing company and is among more than 500 people who registered this year as hemp growers in Michigan, many hoping for the legalization of the growing demand for the extract CBD.

“Something manageable. We can manage our risk and it won’t kill us. We’re all going to be smarter next year.”

The legalization of industrial hemp in the U.S. less than a year ago has sparked interest from both traditional farmers and newcomers alike. The early stages are proving tricky, but up for grabs is a lucrative market, one that could grow more than fivefold globally by 2025 — driven by demand for CBD. The compound, which doesn’t cause a high like that of marijuana, is hailed as a high-quality protein, treat pain and promote sleep.

“Growing hemp, especially for CBD extraction, is labor-intensive. Obtaining high-quality hemp seeds can be difficult and expensive. Weed control is an issue. It’s little or nothing about safely or legally using pesticides.

Before a crop is harvested, it’s tested for THC, the chemical in marijuana, and a margin of safety. If the level is “hot,” above 0.3%, the plants must be destroyed.

“It’s incredibly complicated,” Hagen said, pointing to “countless minefields” facing farmers, many of whom “will probably lose their shirt, for lack of a better term.”

Vote Hemp says more than 30 states issued 17,800 licenses to farmers and researchers in the wake of hemp’s legalization, more than quintuple the 2018 figure. Of the half a million acres covered, though, an estimated 295,000 weren’t planted because of limited access to seedlings and clones, a lack of financing and a “huge number” of inexperienced growers, according to the nonprofit advocacy group. It estimates that about 50% to 60% of the planted acres, or 120,000 to 144,000, will be harvested, once crop failures, noncompliant plants and other factors are factored in.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s newly issued interim rules to facilitate hemp production will provide much-needed guidance on testing, background checks and other issues.

The industry also is closely tracking the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Though products containing CBD are already in stores and sold online, the agency says CBD-infused foods, drinks and dietary supplements are illegal. It’s exploring ways that the compound might officially be allowed.

“The selling of human remains is a loophole that most people don’t know about,” said O’Connor, argued that the plain- tiffs signed consent agreements that said bodies could be “disar- ticulated,” and stressed that dismembering a body “doesn’t mean it hasn’t been treated with dignity and respect,” the Arizona Republic

Firm that sold cadavers for tests without consent must pay $58M

BY MEAGAN FLYNN
The Washington Post

The body broker arrived to pick up Jim Stauffer’s mother within 45 minutes of her death.

Stauffer wanted to donate his mom’s body to science, hoping the Biological Resource Center in Phoenix, Ariz., could turn his mother’s brain over for Alzheimer’s research. He filled out the paperwork and, just 10 days later, received her ashes in a wooden box.

But at the time, in 2013, Stauffer didn’t know that the ashes he received were from his mother’s hand only. He didn’t know, as others would later discover, that the rest of her body had been shipped to the Army for a Penta-
The Endangered Species Act “is the safety net of last resort,” said Gary Frazer, assistant director of ecological services at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which administers the law. “We list species after all other vehicles of protection have failed.”

The 1973 law, passed unanimously in the Senate, was designed to prevent species from going extinct and to protect their habitat. Under the law, it is unlawful to “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect” endangered animals and plants, and it also forbids the elimination of their habitats.

Another species found at Fort Bragg — the red-cockaded woodpecker — is a case of success but at a cost of $408 million over 19 years. The woodpecker needs Fish and Wildlife Service officials allowed landowners to make some changes as long as they generally didn’t hurt the bird. The Army set fires to regularly burn scrub. The result? When Fort Bragg Endangered Species Branch Chief Jackie Britcher started in 1983, there were fewer than 300 woodpecker families on Fort Bragg. Now she counts 453 families.

Ideal conditions
From 1998 to 2016, the federal government tallied $20.5 billion in spending on individual species on the endangered list. That’s based on an annual per-species spending report that the Fish and Wildlife Service sends to Congress, but that tally is not comprehensive.

By the 1980s, the red cockaded woodpecker population was below 10,000 nationwide. Now, they’re well past 15,000 just on military bases.

After failed efforts, biologists and bureaucrats changed their approach. Instead of prohibiting work on land the woodpecker needs, Fish and Wildlife Service officials allowed landowners to make some changes as long as they generally didn’t hurt the bird. The Army set fires to regularly burn scrub.

The result? When Fort Bragg Endangered Species Branch Chief Jackie Britcher started, in 1983, there were fewer than 300 woodpecker families on Fort Bragg. Now she counts 453 families.

"Something is going right," she said.

The Army has better land to maneuver with, and they watch the butterfly population grow.

The woodpeckers live only in longleaf pines, which have been disappearing across the Southeast for more than a century due to development and to suppression of fires.

In the 1980s and 1990s, efforts to save the woodpecker and their trees set off a backlash among landowners who worried about interference on their private property. Wildlife officials were even shot at.

"We couldn’t maneuver. We couldn’t shoot because they were afraid the bird was going to blink out and go into extinction," said former top Fort Bragg planning official Mike Lynch.

A St. Francis’ satyr butterfly rests on a leaf in a swamp at Fort Bragg.

Endangered Species Act in action at Fort Bragg

Research assistants David Pavlik, left, and Emily Price roll out an inflatable rubber dam in an effort to create habitat suitable for the rare St. Francis’ satyr butterfly at Fort Bragg in North Carolina in July.

Noah Greenwald, endangered species director of the Center for Biological Diversity, agrees. "That’s where the Endangered Species Act had an impact."
Protests may affect Hong Kong vote

BY EILEEN NG AND ANDI JATMIKO
Associated Press

HONG KONG — More than 20 protesters inside a Hong Kong university campus surrendered to police on Thursday as the city’s largest pro-Beijing political party urged voters to “kick out the black force” in upcoming elections seen as a key gauge of public support for anti-government demonstrations. At least 23 people left Hong Kong Polytechnic University, which has been ringed by riot police for days, as the campus siege edged closer to an end.

Ten protesters walked out together and were escorted to a police post outside the campus, while three were carried out on stretchers and four taken in wheelchairs. Five other students, believed to be minors, came out with their parents and were allowed to leave after police took their details.

The city’s largest political party slammed the flareup in violence in the past week and urged some 4.1 million voters to use the ballot box this Sunday to reject the “black force” that had thrown the semi-autonomous Chinese territory into unprecedented turmoil since June.

“The black force say they want to fight for freedom but now people cannot even express their views freely,” said Starr Lee, who has helped the Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong. “We have even been stripped of our right to go to school and work.”

Lee and some candidates kicked black footballs at a campaign event amid a spike in vandalism during the clash between police and black-clad protesters.

“If everyone comes out to vote, Hong Kong can be restored and violence can be stopped,” she said.

The party is contesting 181 of the 452 district council seats, a low-level neighborhood election held every four years and dominated by the pro-democracy camp. For the first time, all the seats will be contested.

Public anger against the government and police could give a victory to the pro-democracy bloc that would bolster the legitimacy of the protest movement.

“We cannot give even a single vote to the pro-establishment camp,” said an angry mother, who with her young son joined hundreds of people at a sit-in protest at a mall against an attack by thugs on protesters four months ago.

A live video of the protest was broadcast by Apple Daily newspaper.

Protesters, who believe mainland China is increasing its control over the territory, are demanding fully democratic elections and an independent probe into alleged police brutality against demonstrators. The government rejected the demands and has warned the polls could be delayed if violence persists and transport links are disrupted.

A Hong Kong restaurant owner was deported from Singapore for organizing an illegal gathering last month to discuss the protests, Singapore media reported. Alex Yeung, who founded the Wah Kee restaurant chain and is a staunch pro-Beijing supporter, will also be barred from entering Singapore without prior approval.

In a video posted online from Singapore’s Changi Airport, Yeung said he has been warned to refrain from any criminal conduct. He didn’t say where he was heading but urged Hong Kong residents to cast their vote on Sunday to reject violence and support peace.

More than 5,000 people have been arrested since the protests started in June over a now-abandoned extradition bill that would have allowed criminal suspects to be sent to mainland China for trial. The protests have since swelled into an anti-China movement as many fear a loss of freedoms guaranteed to the former British colony when it returned to Chinese control in 1997.

A 12-year-old became the youngest protester to be convicted Thursday after pleading guilty to spraying graffiti outside a police station and subway exit last month, the South China Morning Post reported. A lawyer for the student reportedly said he was remorseful and acted on impulse. The court will sentence him on Dec. 19.

Pressure ratcheted up on Hong Kong as the U.S. Congress approved legislation late Wednesday to sanction officials who carry out human rights abuses and to require an annual review of the favorable trade status that Washington grants Hong Kong. Another bill bans export of tear gas and other nonlethal tools to Hong Kong. President Donald Trump is expected to sign the bills into law, which is sure to anger China and jeopardize trade talks between the two economic giants.

“If the U.S. continues to make the wrong moves, China will be taking strong countermeasures for sure,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said.

The Hong Kong government warned the U.S. legislation would send an “erroneous signal to the violent protesters” and hurt the interests of more than 1,000 American businesses in Asia’s top financial hub.

Netanyahu accused of corruption

JERUSALEM — Israel’s attorney general on Thursday formally charged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a series of corruption cases, throwing the country’s paralyzed political system into further disarray and threatening the long-time leader’s grip on power.

Capping a three-year investigation, Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit charged Netanyahu with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three different scandals.

According to the indictment, Netanyahu accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars of champagne and cigars from billionaire friends, offered to trade favors with a newspaper publisher and used his influence to help a wealthy telecom magnate in exchange for favorable coverage on a popular news site.

The indictment does not require Netanyahu to resign but is expected to raise pressure on him to step down.

Mandelblit was set to issue a statement later Thursday, as was Netanyahu, who has called the allegations part of a witch hunt, lashing out against the media, police, prosecutors and the justice system.

The most serious charges were connected to so-called “Case 4000,” in which Netanyahu is accused of passing regulations that gave his friend, telecom magnate Shaul Elovitch, benefits worth more than $250 million to his company, Bezeq. In return, Bezeq’s news site, Walla, published favorable articles about Netanyahu and his family.

The relationship, it was said, was “based on a mutual understanding that each of them had significant interests that the other side had the ability to advance.”

Netanyahu was also accused of concealing the relationship by providing “partial and misleading information” about his connections with Elovitch.

ISIS claims responsibility for troop massacre; gaining ground in Mali

The Washington Post

DAKAR, Senegal — Islamic State has claimed responsibility for an attack that killed 30 soldiers this week in the West African nation of Mali, where extremists are spreading in their bloody pursuit to seize territory.

In a statement late Wednesday, the group’s West Africa arm said it wounded another 30 soldiers.

“Mali, which is twice the size of Texas, is a particularly troubling hot spot,” the rapidly spreading instability in the Sahel threatens U.S. national security and undermines our diplomatic goals,” Whitney Baird, deputy assistant secretary of state for West Africa and security affairs, said at a congressional hearing earlier this month.

“It enables the spread of terrorism, stifles economic growth and thwarts democratic institutions,” she said.

More than 100 soldiers have died in Mali since October in near-weekly clashes as the resource-strapped country tries to shake off a scourge that took root after the Libyan government collapsed in 2011.

Mercenaries once employed by Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi streamed back to their native Mali with automatic weapons, triggering a chain reaction of violence that regional security forces and international partners, including France, have since struggled to quash.

On Wednesday evening, the Malian army’s Twitter account posted photos of the country’s red, yellow and green flag draped over 30 wooden coffins.

“Emotions were high,” the tweet said.

Thirty Malian soldiers killed in an attack by extremists near the border of Niger were honored by the Mali Defense Ministry at a funeral Wednesday in Gao, Mali.
UK’s Labour vows radical change if it wins election

By Jill Lawless
Associated Press

LONDON — Britain’s main opposition Labour Party was launching its detailed platform for Britain’s Dec. 12 election on Thursday as it tried to close an opinion poll gap with the governing Conservatives.

The left-of-center party is pledging higher public spending and a greater role for the state in housing, transport and the provision of utilities.

Labour, which has been in opposition since 2010, has shifted sharply to the left under leader Jeremy Corbyn after the centrist “New Labour” years of former prime ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

The party says Thursday’s election manifesto will include pledges to build 150,000 new homes a year for social rent and to create hundreds of thousands of “green jobs” to combat climate change by expanding renewable energy and cutting carbon emissions.

The party has also promised to partly privatize telecom provider BT and bring free broadband internet access to every home and business in Britain.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s Conservatives accuse Labour of reckless spending and outdated socialist ideas. But, in a major change of policy after years of public spending cuts, the Conservatives are also promising more money for infrastructure, health care and public services if they win the election.

Corbyn said his policies would be popular with the public, and compared himself to U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose “New Deal” helped tackle the Great Depression.

Corbyn said Roosevelt “had to take on the rich and powerful in America to do it.”

“Over the next three weeks, the most powerful people in Britain and their supporters are going to tell you that everything in this manifesto is impossible,” Corbyn said before the launch.

“That it’s too much for you. Because they don’t want real change. Why would they? The system is working just fine for them. It’s rigged in their favor.”

Johnson pushed for the Dec. 12 election — taking place more than two years early — in the hope of breaking Britain’s political impasse over Brexit.

All 650 seats in the House of Commons are up for grabs. While Johnson’s Conservatives have a lead in most opinion polls, analysts say the election is unpredictable because Brexit cuts across traditional party loyalties.

Victims’ lawyer: Prince Andrew must talk to US prosecutors

By Jill Lawless and Gregory Katz
Associated Press

LONDON — Lawyers for the victims of sex offender Jeffrey Epstein say Prince Andrew should speak to investigators immediately after the senior British royal withdrew from public duties over what he called his “ill-judged association” with the convicted pedophile.

U.S. attorney Gloria Allred said Andrew should contact American authorities “without conditions and without delay.”

Andrew announced Wednesday that he was pulling out of public duties “for the foreseeable future” amid a firestorm of criticism over his friendship with Epstein.

In a statement, he said he was “willing to help any appropriate law enforcement agency with their investigations, if required.”

Allred said the 59-year-old prince needed to be clearer.

“Is he insisting that he be served with a subpoena to testify, or is he willing to speak to law enforcement without being legally required to do so?” she asked on the BBC.

It is not clear if U.S. authorities are investigating Andrew for any possible wrongdoing.

Many of the court papers related to the Epstein case are still sealed and unavailable to the public.

Lisa Bloom, Allred’s daughter and another lawyer for Epstein’s victims, tweeted that Andrew “and his staff must cooperate with all investigations, show up for civil depositions and trials, and produce all documents.”

Businesses, charities and educational institutions affiliated with Andrew’s charitable work quickly began distancing themselves from him this week after he gave an ill-judged interview with the BBC on Saturday night justifying his long friendship with Epstein.

Survey: Anti-Semitic beliefs increase among Europeans

By David Rising
Associated Press

BERLIN — About 1 in 4 Europeans hold anti-Semitic beliefs, with such attitudes on the rise in eastern countries and mostly steady in the west, according to a survey released Thursday.

The poll of 14 European countries, done for the New York-based Anti-Defamation League, found anti-Semitic attitudes most prevalent in Poland, where such sentiment rose to 48% of the population from 37% in 2015, and Ukraine, where the rise was even greater — to 46% from 32% in 2016. Anti-Semitic views in Hungary were little changed but remained high, increasing from 40% to 42%.

The governments of all three countries have been criticized by Jewish groups recently, though all deny being anti-Semitic.

For example, Ukraine’s decision last year to honor a nationalist leader whose movement sided with the Nazis during World War II drew sharp remarks from Israel’s ambassador, and in Hungary, the nationalist government of Viktor Orban has been widely criticized for its campaign against Jewish financier George Soros.

In Western Europe, the study found that anti-Semitic views were either stable or down, with decreases in Britain, Spain, Netherlands, Italy, Germany and Austria.

Denmark saw an increase from 8% with anti-Semitic views to 10% and Belgium from 21% to 24%, while France was unchanged at 17% and Sweden had the lowest rate, at 4%.
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**HONOLULU** — A Honolulu police officer is expected to plead guilty to depriving a homeless man of his civil rights by forcing him to lick a public urinal.

John Rabago’s attorney, Megan Kau, said Tuesday he plans to plead guilty to an indictment because he wants to accept responsibility.

A former officer also charged with Rabago pleaded guilty in September to failing to report that Rabago forced the homeless man to lick the urinal. Reginald Ramones, who left the department in August, pleaded guilty to a lesser charge that he knew a fellow officer committed a civil rights violation and didn’t inform authorities.

**Virtual reality for pod people**

Attendees sample one of the many virtual reality rides during the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions convention Tuesday in Orlando, Fla.

The number of years of works by female cartoon artists that will be honored at a museum exhibit. The exhibit, at Ohio State University’s Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum in Columbus, Ohio, honors the contribution of female comic strip and cartoon artists. The exhibit runs until May 2020 and includes works from early suffragette cartoonists and top comic strip page and mainstream comic book artists and art from graphic novels and anthologies.

**7 cars damaged in parking garage fire**

**American Roundup**

**Officer to plead guilty in urinal licking case**

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**Naked woman crashes car, killing girl, 6**

**CA**

**SANTA CLARITA** — Authorities said a naked woman was behind the wheel of a car that crashed north of Los Angeles, killing a 6-year-old girl and injuring a 2-year-old.

The California Highway Patrol said the woman got into two crashes Monday morning in Stevenson Ranch, an unincorporated area near Santa Clarita.

KABC-TV said the two girls were in the back seat. Officials said Good Samaritans freed them from the wreckage as the car caught fire.

KABC-TV said the woman and the 2-year-old girl were hospitalized in stable condition.

Authorities said they believe the woman is the mother of the two girls but that hasn’t been confirmed.

**30 bison escape onto highway; 2 are killed**

**MT**

**STEVENSVILLE** — About 30 bison escaped a western Montana ranch and ended up on the highway near Stevensville, where two suffered fatal injuries after being struck by a pickup.

Bitterroot Bison owner Troy Westre told the Hamilton, Mont., Ravalli Republic someone apparently opened a gate on the north end of the ranch property Monday evening.

The Montana Highway Patrol received a report of bison on the Eastside Highway at 8:50 p.m.

Patrol Sgt. Scott Bennett said one bison was killed by the collision with the pickup and another had a broken leg and was euthanized. The pickup was totaled.

Family, friends and neighbors helped Westre round up the rest of the herd and they were back at the ranch by midnight.

**Runaway police dog bites 14-year-old boy**

**KS**

**WICHITA** — Authorities said a runaway police dog bit a teenager on the face and chest.

The Sedgwick County Sheriff’s Office said in a Facebook post that the German Shepherd, named Bocephus, went missing Monday night.

Someone found the dog, put him on a leash and walked around the neighborhood in an unsuccessful search for his owner. The person then returned home, and Bocephus was placed in the bedroom of a 14-year-old boy. The teen took the dog for a walk the next morning and was bitten while moving the leash.

The post said the boy was treated at a clinic for minor injuries.

**Police kill fox after it attacks 5 people**

**NJ**

**EAST ORANGE** — Police killed a fox that they said attacked five people in a community northern New Jersey community and also tried to attack an officer.

Glen Ridge police said the first attack was reported around 9:15 a.m. on Nov. 15. As officers from that department and the Bloomfield Animal Control agency searched for the fox, authorities learned two other people had been bitten.

The three people were treated at hospitals for bite wounds.

Officers found the fox about two hours later near the New Jersey Transit railroad tracks. Authorities said the fox was killed after it attempted to attack one of the officers.

The two other people attacked by the fox apparently were not injured.

**Police said Good Samaritans freed them from the wreckage as the car caught fire.**

**Man accused in scam to obtain visas**

**MN**

**MINNEAPOLIS** — A woman swindled money from four people in a scam aimed at getting visas for crime victims, according to criminal charges filed against her.

Yuridia Hernandez Linares, 36, of Eden Prairie, used a sharp object to cut the four, who then filed false police reports claiming they were injured during armed robberies, according to prosecutors.

The four told police they paid Hernandez Linares a total of $5,000 and worked with her to file the false report in order to get an so-called U visa, which are given to victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and have been helpful to law enforcement, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported.

Hernandez Linares was charged in Hennepin County District Court with one count of felony theft by swindle. She was jailed in Hennepin County.

**Coast Guard responds to spill after boat crash**

**NC**

**NAGS HEAD** — The Coast Guard said it responded to a diesel spill after a tugboat collided with an old bridge on the Outer Banks.

The Coast Guard said in a news release Monday that the fuel was coming from the semi-submerged tug. It had struck the Old Bonner Bridge in Oregon Inlet. The replacement for the aging Bonner Bridge opened earlier this year.

The Coast Guard said about 3,000 gallons of fuel were onboard.

**Man uninjured after firing gun in pocket**

**SD**

**SIoux falls** — Police said an intoxicated man escaped injury when he accidentally fired his gun inside his pants pocket.

The 24-year-old Sioux Falls man was arrested Monday for reckless discharge of a weapon and possession of a gun while intoxicated.

Police said officers heard a gunshot and responded to a parking ramp about 2:30 a.m.

The Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported officers found the man had a blood alcohol content of 0.25, which is more than three times the legal limit to drive.

**State wildlife officials will test the animal to see if it had rabies.**

**Woman accused in scam to obtain visas**

The number of years of works by female cartoon artists that will be honored at a museum exhibit. The exhibit, at Ohio State University’s Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum in Columbus, Ohio, honors the contribution of female comic strip and cartoon artists. The exhibit runs until May 2020 and includes works from early suffragette cartoonists and top comic strip page and mainstream comic book artists and art from graphic novels and anthologies.

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Amnesty International calls Facebook, Google rights abusers

By Frank Bajak
Associated Press

Amnesty International issued a scathing indictment of the world's dominant internet corporations, arguing in a new report that Google and Facebook should be forced to abandon what it calls "surveillance-based" and noted the company's business model is "predicated on human rights abuse."

The global rights group said in the 60-page report published Thursday that the business model of what it calls the "Surveillance Giants" is "inherently incompatible with the right to privacy." Google and Facebook likewise threaten a range of other rights, including freedom expression and privacy and non-discrimination, the group said.

The report said the company's practice of vacuuming up personal data in order to feed advertising businesses represents an unprecedented assault on privacy rights. It says the companies force people to make a "Faustian bargain" to share their data in order to access Google and Facebook services that have grown to dominate the global public square.

Amnesty called on governments to legally guarantee people's right not to be tracked by advertisers or other third parties. It called current regulations — and the companies' own privacy-shielding measures — inadequate.

In a written five-page response published with the report, Facebook disagreed with its conclusion that the company's business practices "are inconsistent with human rights principles."

Steve Satterfield, Facebook's public policy director, also disputed that the social media behemoth's business model is "surveillance-based" and noted that users sign up voluntarily for the service, which is nominally free although data collected is used to sell ads.

Google did not offer an on-the-record response to the report but disputed its findings.

Amnesty International calls Facebook, Google rights abusers

## EUROPE GAS PRICES

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Beautiful day for a neighbor

Tom Hanks had passed on the role of beloved children’s TV host Fred Rogers, but fate intervened in the form of a friendship with director Marielle Heller. The result is ‘A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood,’ a film for all ages and a salve for cynical times

Profile on Page 24
Review on Page 25
Control failure

Workarounds for Apple app mere child’s play

By Reed Albergotti

The Washington Post

Helen Glaze didn’t think of-thing of it when her two sons told her they were looking for ways to get around Screen Time, Apple’s built-in tool that gives parents control of their kids’ phones. Then she discovered her 9- and 12-year-olds watching Minecraft videos at 2 a.m. during their annual trip to Chautauqua, N.Y., this past August.

“I was horrified and really felt betrayed,” she said. And she realized she can’t count on Screen Time to keep her kids off their phones. “It really doesn’t work, and that’s really frustrating.”

Kids are outsmarting an army of engineers from Cupertino, Calif., Apple’s headquarter in Silicon Valley. And Apple, which introduced Screen Time a year ago in response to pressure to address phone overseen by kids, has been slow to make fixes to its software that would close these loopholes and prevent them from sneaking out of the house while their parents are sleeping.

And parents started reporting their kids were circumventing the newly added Screen Time restrictions. A widely publicized Reddit post, “My kid managed to pass Screen Time limit,” accumulated more than 400 comments. On that post, parents reported their kids deleting and reinstalling apps and changing the clock to avoid time restrictions, and using the iMessage app to watch prohibited YouTube videos. And on Apple’s own discussion board, there were titles such as “Child ‘hacked’ screen time limits on iOS12. Will Apple fix?”

But more than six months later, some parents were still reporting their kids using the same bug.

“I understand that there are ways, such as enforcing consequences, to manage my children’s usage without software,” a dedicated commenter wrote. “However I am not seeking parenting advice, but more information on the provision of the software which claims to perform a function that it does not.”

Nine months later, Apple launched Screen Time as part of iOS 12. It gave parents the ability to lock down their kids’ iPhones and iPads, limiting the amount of time and apps and changing the clock to avoid time restrictions, and using the built-in speaker and using your smartphone’s playlist as your backup battery compartment to automatically adjust for daylight saving time. A coin battery is also included to keep the time in the event of a loss of power.

The alarm clock gets an upgrade

By Gregg Ellman

Tribune News Service

Besides clock radios are critical for time displays and alarms to get you going in the morning. These days they are also needed for so much more, and the new AC powered iHome iBTW281 dual alarm clock speaker system does it all; it even cleaned up my nightstand mess of cables.

Along with an endless number of up-to-date features incorporating today’s technology, the clock features of time and dual alarms are there. The time, date and alarm settings are on a front-facing display with adjustable brightness levels. For users, the snooze duration can be adjusted. A quick start guide runs you through the basic setup, which includes a switch inside the thousands software of features and dual alarms are there. The time, date and alarm settings are on a front-facing display with adjustable brightness levels. For users, the snooze duration can be adjusted. A quick start guide runs you through the basic setup, which includes a switch inside the thousands software of features and dual alarms are there. The time, date and alarm settings are on a front-facing display with adjustable brightness levels. For users, the snooze duration can be adjusted.

An in-app feature is available to adjust the time in the event of a loss of power.

The fun features are pairing your device with Bluetooth, enabling the sound system to play whatever tunes you choose through the built-in speaker and using your smartphone’s playlist as your wake-up alarm source.

Once paired, you’ll also have a speakerphone with echo noise cancellation. The voice control allows access to Siri and Google Assistant.

I have a newer smartphone with Qi wireless charging, and charging couldn’t be easier. Just lay any compatible wireless charging phone on top where wireless fast charging is built-in, and charging starts, even with a case on.

If you don’t have a wireless charging smartphone (you need to get one; it makes life easy), there’s a USB charging port on the back. For power users, there’s also a USB charging port on the back.

All this adds up to cleaning up a nightstand mess of cables.

Before using this iHome device, my nightstand held an older standard clock radio with an AC power cord, a Qi charging pad with an AC power cord and an AC plug/cord for USB charging cords, all plugged into a power strip. Now, with the iHome iBTW281 alarm clock, I have one AC power cord and I connect a USB cable to the backside port to charge my iPad.

Both sides of the iBTW281 have color-changing ambient lights with a choice of presets, including a night mode. The ambient light display also has an off option. If you’re playing music, one of these choices will have the lights play and pulse to the beat of your music. They are purely cosmetic but will give a room a nice look with the vibrant color lights.

Online: ihomenaudio.com; $79.95

V-Moda has launched M-200, the award-winning company’s first-ever reference studio headphone, which they refer to as the world’s finest high-fidelity audio device.

The over-the-head studio headphones are designed to produce a clean, refined and spacious sound with transparent clarity, resulting in the perfect sound for producers, engineers and other sound professionals.

They feature a combination of meticulous Japanese engineering and classic V-Moda shapes and materials. Inside the headphones are 50 mm drivers with neodymium magnets and CCAW voice coils, which reproduce a wide range of frequencies up to 40 kHz.

As with every pair of V-Moda headphones I’ve tried over the years, comfort and design are as good as it gets. These have larger, flatter ear-cup housings compared to the Crossfade series. The closed-back M-200 features exceptional amplifying room for spacious sound with superior noise isolation.

The design includes a durable, adjustable and flexible headband, with even-weight distribution to wear in silent comfort. The exterior is made with premium, sweat-resistant PU leather and detachable magnetic memory foam cushions.

The M-200 is available for pre-order for $350, with delivery expected in late November.

Online: V-Moda.com
Disney's 2013 animated "Frozen," inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen," wasn't just a hit. It was a cultural tidal wave, a ubiquitous phenomenon thanks to Robert Lopez and Kristen Anderson-Lopez's soaring songs, particularly the inescapable, Oscar-winning "Let It Go," belted by Broadway powerhouse Idina Menzel. Six years later, the Elsa Halloween costumes have yet to grow cold. So when it comes to a sequel, the only mandate is: "Don't muck it up."

The good news is they haven't. The bad news? That's about it. "Frozen II" doesn't represent some giant leap forward for the "Frozen" universe, it merely keeps the franchise on track. For many, that'll be fine: more adventures of Elsa (Menzel), Anna (Kristen Bell), Olaf (Josh Gad) and Kristoff (Jonathan Groff). But the movie has all the staving power of a snowflake: It evaporates almost on contact.

Once again helmed by Jennifer Lee and Chris Buck, "Frozen II" merely drifts pleasantly in and out of our consciousness, a diverting way to spend an hour and 43 minutes with some great tunes and lovely snowy landscapes to ogle. It will of course be seared into the brains of parents and kids after their millionth viewing. And it's enjoyable and funny enough to be tolerated that many times, which seems to be what it's designed for.

What made "Frozen" rather revolutionary was its sisterhood story that resonated with so many people who were sick of seeing the same old princess-saved-by-a-prince tale. A princess saved by a princess? Now there's an idea. The snowy story about sisters powered by power ballades is infectious, and Disney hasn't messed too much with the formula.

Elsa is now queen of Arendelle, playing charades with her sister, Kristoff and Olaf, enjoying a bit of domestic bliss. Like almost every animated hero, Disney and otherwise, there's a bit of singing about how great things are where they are—right now, which is (of course) foiled by an existential threat. Elsa's plagued by a mysterious voice from the forest, coupled with some inclement weather: Recalling a folk song her mother (Evan Rachel Wood) used to sing about memories in an ancient river, she decides to dive into her ancestral history to discover the source of the voice, save Arendelle and free the forest from a persistent fog. She does so with her sister, her sister's boyfriend, their snowman and a reindeer in tow. Isolationist Menzel believes "Frozen II" has the capacity to empower all those young girls in the audience dressed up as Elsa.

Instead, Menzel said she often walked away from those performances feeling just as inspired. "I feel an extreme sense of pride about it," said Menzel, the Tony Award-winning performer who voices Elsa, a fiercely independent queen with the magical ability to manipulate ice and snow. The song especially resonated with her because at the time she was juggling several performances feeling just as inspired.

"But you see a little girl in a blue dress in the second row. That's when you realize the song and movie represent them. It's giving them permission to take ownership of who they are, and everything that makes them unique and different. But it's a reciprocity. It's coming back to me exponentially because I need to hear it too."

Menzel believes "Frozen II" has the capacity to empower young girls, boys and others of all ages in the same way. The new film comes six years after the original broke box office records for an animated film, amassing $1.2 billion in worldwide ticket sales. It was bolstered by "Let It Go," which won a Grammy and two Oscars.

Menzel is unsure if the sequel can generate the same astronomical numbers as the original. But she is hopeful the story and music will resonate with viewers and further the themes of the original, including showing that female characters don't necessarily need their male counterpart to rescue them from distress.

"I think it'll move people," she said. "I think the film is powerful. I don't know what the success of the music will be outside the film. But I know how I felt when I heard the (songs). I know how much I loved recording them and getting inside of them. I think people will learn from Elsa who is always overcoming her fear to take the next step and risk."

In "Frozen II," Elsa finally embraces her powers, but she finds herself haunted by an unsettling mysterious voice from afar that no one else can hear. She ends up going on a dangerous journey to seek answers with her sister, Anna, played by Kristen Bell. Also joining them are Anna's boyfriend Kristoff (Jonathan Groff), his reindeer friend Sven and the bubbly snowman Olaf, voiced by Josh Gad.

Co-director Chris Buck said the sequel has moments of being "fun and humorous," but the story also delves deep into Elsa and Anna's emotions. He said the main characters are trying to find meaning. The film expands on challenges facing Elsa's kingdom of Arendelle, with Sterling K. Brown and Evan Rachel Wood joining the cast. The first film was more like Act 1 of a musical where you're setting up the characters' wants and who they are," Buck said. "In this one, we can do Act 2. Usually, those songs go deeper and they're more emotional. You find out more. The struggles are harder. We had that sort of template. That helped us shape it."

Several deadlines were "blown people creating the storyline that had at least 50 versions of re-writes, the directors said. Bell applauded the creative team for sticking their time. "They didn't just try to come up with the follow-up for whatever mon- etary or marketing sake," the actress said. "You can see a follow-up from anything and you know in your soul, in your gut whether or not you connect to it. Like 'Oh those are the same character's loved but didn't connect to them.' They wanted to find something that people would connect to."

"Frozen II" is rated PG for action/p peril and some thematic elements. Running time: 103 minutes.
Miracle worker

By Jake Coyle
Associated Press

Tom Hanks has never played a superhero. But when the actor recently donned a very simple cardigan sweater, and the slacks to go with it, he felt like one.

“I felt like Batman. It felt like I was wearing the cape and the cowl of the Dark Knight detective,” Hanks says. “There’s only one person you can be when you put those things on, and that’s Fred Rogers.”

Since it was first announced, Hanks’ casting as the beloved children’s television host in “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” has had the feeling of kismet. Here was an actor nearly synonymous with affability, with “niceness,” playing one of the friendliest faces to ever flicker across a TV screen. Hanks might as well have been answering a Bat-Signal in the sky.

But as inevitable as Hanks playing Mr. Rogers may have seemed, it never would have happened without Marielle Heller, the filmmaker of the literary forger drama “Can You Ever Forgive Me?” and the ’70s coming-of-age tale “The Diary of a Teenage Girl.” The film’s script, by Noah Harpster and Micah Fitzerman-Blue, had been floating around for years before Heller got attached. Hanks had already passed on it, more than once.

“I didn’t pass on you,” Hanks said in an interview alongside Heller. “I just passed on a thing.”

It would probably please Mister Rogers that the first big-screen fiction film about him was based, from the start, on a newfound friendship. Hanks and Heller met at a backyard birthday party for Hanks’ son Colin. Hanks had just read a New York Times article about female filmmakers and mentioned it to Heller after learning she was a director.

“And she said, ‘I’m in it,’” recalls Hanks. “And I said, ‘Well, of course you are and I have to remove my shoe from my mouth.’”

Hanks, newly resolved to work more with female directors, promised to watch “Diary of a Teenage Girl.”

“I thought, ‘Sure, Tom Hanks! I’m sure you’ll run right out and watch my movie,’” says Heller. “And you did!”

Within days, Hanks called to set up a meeting, and that led to “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood.”

Getting close to Rogers altered Hanks and Heller. The production had the blessing of Joanne Rogers, Fred’s widow, and much of it was shot on location in Pittsburgh. Hanks wore Rogers’ old ties. He swam the same laps in a local pool. They collectively tried to live the kindness preached by Rogers, an ordained Presbyterian minister.

The movie impresses the point that Rogers wasn’t a saint; he had to work at being good.

“At one point early on, Tom said to me, ‘I get the feeling none of us are going to be the same after making this movie,’” Heller says.

That meant trying to slow down not just the tempo of the scenes but the entire workings of a movie set. Heller’s son, 2 years old when they started, was often on set, and occasionally in the director’s chair. Heller shortened the day-to-day schedule so that everyone, including herself, could be home by their children’s bedtime on most nights.

“For me, as a mom of a little kid, that’s the difference between being able to keep making movies or not being able to keep making movies,” says Heller. “How do we think about our humanity while making movies? Would Fred Rogers have wanted us to make a movie about him where we all abandoned our kids in order to make the movie? I don’t think so.”

Both were relatively new disciples of Rogers. As a kid, the 40-year-old Marin County, Calif.-raised Heller dismissed him as too schmaltzy. But now a parent, she found herself gravitating toward Mr. Rogers as a guide to explaining the world to her son. Hanks, 63, hadn’t raised his four now-grown children watching “Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood,” so the dozens of hours he spent watching it to prepare for the role was eye-opening.

“I almost feel silly talking about it,” says Hanks. “This movie has actually made me think a lot about myself as a man and a father. When I saw Mari, I said, ‘Hey, thanks for putting me in this movie, because you kind of changed my life, boss.’”

The movie called on Hanks to learn how to earnestly — not out of habit — ask questions like “How are you?”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25
A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Tom Hanks anchors a lovely Mister Rogers tale for adults

BY LINDSEY Bahr
Associated Press

D irector Marielle Heller frames “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” as if it were an episode of “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” with miniature sets of cars and bridges to illustrate New York and Pittsburgh. Mr. Rogers, played with clear-eyed purpose by Tom Hanks, introduces the audience to the film’s protagonist, journalist Lloyd Vogel (Matthew Rhys), using his “picture window” in that all-too-familiar living room where he’s just changed into his sneakers and sweater. It’s even rated PG.

But “A Beautiful Day” is not really a children’s story at all. It’s a story about a man who suffers from the doubly impossible combination of being an adult and an investigative journalist. In other words, he’s the person least likely to be charmed by the straightforward sincerity of someone like Fred Rogers.

The film is loosely based on Tom Junod’s article “Can You Say... Hero?”, which appeared in Esquire magazine in November of 1998. Junod has said that spending time with the then-70-year-old changed him. Cynical at first, the two formed a bond — Junod’s first ever with a subject — that lasted until Rogers died in 2003.

The similarities stop there and the film veers off in its own direction, adding drama and elements that are not part of Junod’s life at all (like getting into a fistfight with his father at his sister’s wedding, neither of which happened). But as Junod writes in The Atlantic this month, the film “seems like a culmination of the gifts that Fred Rogers gave me and all of us, gifts that fit the definition of grace because they feel, at least in my case, undeserved.”

Essentially, Fred Rogers’ lessons can apply to adults too. And “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” spins its magic to show (not just tell) us how, no matter if it’s mostly a fiction from the minds of screenwriter Micah Fitzerman-Blue and Noah Harpster.

The film introduces Lloyd at a particularly unstable moment. He’s got a newborn son with his wife, Andrea (an understated and excellent Susan Kelechi Watson), and his long-strangled father (Chris Cooper) has suddenly started trying to come back into his life. It’s under these high-pressure circumstances that his editor (Christine Lahti) assigns him to write a “small piece” about Fred Rogers for the magazine’s “heroes issue.”

Lloyd scoffs at what he considers a demeaning assignment. He’s there to be an investigative journalist and the host of a cheesy children’s show is, he thinks, below him. Andrea even asks her husband, knowing what kind of writer he is, to please not ruin her childhood.

He remains skeptical even upon meeting Fred and goes back to his editor to ask for more time, saying that he “just doesn’t think he’s for real.” Sure, part of you is probably thinking Lloyd a monster. But consider Lloyd’s point of view too: Fred uses puppets during his interview and deflects quite a bit on the more pressing questions, often diverting and asking about his interviewer instead of answering.

And yet, his goodness starts to transmute all of that. Lloyd does a marvelous job illustrating the effect Fred has on those around him. Even the production staff, whom he infuritates with his tendency to veer off schedule by spending too long with visitors, falls in line when he starts to work his singular magic in front of the cameras. They know they’re making something special.

Fred’s so often an obvious choice to play someone as beloved as Fred Rogers that his performance is something that could be in danger of being taken for granted or overlooked. He just makes it all look so easy — the almost uncomfortably slow way that he speaks. But it’s a testament to Hanks that you can’t “see” the work. But much like Fred Rogers, you don’t have to understand it to be moved.

“A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” is rated PG for some strong thematic material, a brief fight and some mild language. Running time: 108 minutes.

FROM PAGE 24

Heller would tell Hanks to thank his costar Matthew Rhys, “but this time mean it.”

“Tom’s like the authenticity police,” says Heller. “I’m there to make sure what we’re capturing is true. So much of my job is to be the one on set going, ‘Did I feel that? Did it feel true?’”

In Hanks’ Mister Rogers, Heller wasn’t interested in an impression. A wig and some eyebrows were OK, but that was it. And, of course, the cardigan. The first time Hanks stepped onto set at WQED’s Fred Rogers Studio in character, sweater-to-sneakers, Heller says, “the room gasped.”

“It was like coming in as Elvis into Graceland,” says Hanks, a little sheepishly. “I had no sense of self. I really felt like I was having an out-of-body experience of watching this other guy be Fred Rogers.”

Having recently explained death to her now 5-year-old son, Heller was concerned he’d be confused. She didn’t have to worry.

“He said, ‘Mom, I know that’s Tom Hanks,’” says Heller, laughing. Hanks smiles. “Hip kid, man.”

Predictability mars police manhunt flick ‘21 Bridges’

BY MICHAEL O’SULLIVAN
The Washington Post

The movie “21 Bridges” opens with a bang. Not literally — it’s just a close-up of a 13-year-old boy’s tear-streaked face, as he listens to the off-camera sermon delivered at his father’s funeral. We learn that Dad, a New York City cop, has been killed in the line of duty, but not before he “punished” three of the four criminals he was pursuing.

It’s an artful — and telling — moment, not only for the image’s simplicity, emotional power and good casting. Playing Andre, the young actor, Christian Isaiah, really looks like he could grow up to be Chadwick Boseman, who later portrays NYPD detective Andre “Dre” Davis as a grown man. It also sets the stage for the rest of the overly schematic but reasonably watchable film, with the erroneous assumption that it’s the role of the police to not just enforce the law but mete out harsh justice for those who break it.

Dre, of course, who is the film’s hero, doesn’t really believe that, but people think he does. The second scene in the film shows him in front of an Internal Affairs panel that is investigating his propensity for discharging his firearm on the job. And when eight cops and a civilian are killed in the robbery of a wine store with a freezer full of 300 kilos of cocaine — only 50 of which are actually taken — Dre’s presumptive trigger-happiness is what gets him assigned to the case by the captain of the precinct whose officers were gunned down (J.K. Simmons).

Dre, it is assumed, will find the perps and, you know, save us all from the second coming of the Joker. Or, more interesting if he were, save us all the headache and heartache of endless appeals and plea bargains with a strategic bullet or two. He is assisted in the hunt by a DEA agent (Sienna Miller, with whom Boseman has an unfortunate lack of chemistry). Ah, but chemistry — or, for that matter, character development — is not what “21 Bridges” is about. It is a generic hard-nosed-cop story as Dre quickly convinces the police brass and the FBI, who convince the mayor, to shut down Manhattan: every bridge, tunnel, train track and river into and out of the city, for a window of a few short hours while he uses his almost superhuman deductive skills to tighten the noose around the perps. (Taylor Kitsch plays the cop killer, and Stephan James is his more reluctant — and less bloodthirsty — partner.)

It’s a pretty artificial, not to mention absurd, scenario, as Dre goes after his quarry with speed and success that is surprising even for someone with his Sherlock Holmes-like forensic powers. Soon enough, it becomes apparent to him — and to us — that there is a setup going on, as he observes very early in the film.

It isn’t hard to figure out who’s behind it, if you’ve seen a million of these things.

And there have been a lot of them. “21 Bridges” will win no prizes for originality or twists. But it’s made well enough. Brothers Joe and Anthony Russo (“Avengers: Endgame”) are the producers, and Irish director Brian Kirk (“Games of Thrones”) knows how to keep an old jalopy like this well-oiled to get us across the finish line.

In other words, “21 Bridges” gets the job done. So does Boseman’s performance, who is satisfying to watch, even when he has little to do except the right thing. Dre isn’t tarnished or tainted in any way. He’s not guilt-ridden, seeking redemption or complicated. “21 Bridges” might be a teeny bit more interesting if he were.

“21 Bridges” is rated R for violence and coarse language throughout. Running time: 99 minutes.
Blazing a postapocalyptic trail

Death Stranding is the Oregon Trail of today’s gaming

By Gieson Cacho
The Mercury News

Look up the word “enigma” in the dictionary and you’ll find a picture of Death Stranding. Since it was revealed in 2016, the game raised more questions than answers. The project seemed like an amalgamation of random ideas with gameplay that was equally as mysterious. If you strip away creator Hideo Kojima’s convoluted and confusing narrative, Death Stranding at its core is a reimagining of Oregon Trail. The concepts behind both titles are the same. Players have to go across the country with logistic constraints of weight and terrain.

Unlike the classic PC game, Death Stranding offers a granular approach to the adventure. Kojima Productions splits the process into four parts. The first teaches players the mechanics. As protagonist Sam Bridges, played by Norman Reedus, players have to traverse a postapocalyptic America that has turned into a desolate wilderness.

A phenomena called Death Stranding killed billions as the line between the dead and living disappeared. Invisible monsters called BTs roam the land and people live in bunkers, afraid to travel. Sam accepts a mission to connect communities to the Chiral Network, a super internet that lets users across the nation share information and fabricate equipment.

Sam runs away from MULEs, people who have gone insane over packages. (This is a Kojima game so it asks players to accept a lot.)

This quarter of the game introduces players to the basics and advances them to the Midwest, where the bulk of Death Stranding takes place. The team throws more tools at players as they try to recon-nect different parts of America. At first, it’s tough sledding because the players will meander through their destinations blind. They’ll have to fend off violent MULEs and they’ll have to battle BTs using Sam’s blood, which has unique properties to banish the creatures.

Like Oregon Trail, Death Stranding is a game about pioneering. Players blaze trails through lonely landscapes. They have to watch out for a number of dangers and find the optimal path to their destination. What’s notable, though, is that players don’t go it alone. As they travel, they see the tracks of other players that came before them. In addition, gamers can share infrastructure they built and vehicles they fabricated. It’s a way of making the journey easier for each other.

It’s an asynchronous form of multiplayer and comparable to what Dark Souls did with the idea of leaving notes and hints through a dungeon. Death Stranding does this with a complex open world. Part of the joy in the campaign is finding a new route and nudging others to take it. Players will get feedback in the form of “likes” from fellow adventurers who appreciate a helpful structure such as a bridge, zip line or generator.

This second part also gives players the option to work on a road that winds its way through different communities. It requires a lot of resources, but players are supposed to pool the materials together to make travel easier. As that happens, old routes become obsolete and more people use the roads to haul cargo from one end of the map to another.

Death Stranding becomes a game about efficiently moving packages like a postapocalyptic UPS man. Along the way, Sam will gain new abilities and equipment that makes venturing into the unknown easier.

The last effective part of the Death Stranding journey has Sam trudging through the mountains. This is where roads won’t help players and they’ll have to deal with snow and harsh conditions. This section forces players to build their own infrastructure through the peaks and ridges. It tests players’ mastery of managing weight, energy consumption and route building. It’s also the most enjoyable part of the campaign, when players feel like pioneers.

Those expecting this to be like Metal Gear Solid will be disappointed. Death Stranding isn’t that type of game. Combat is often incidental and players are encouraged to defeat terrorists and MULEs non-lethally. Players will encounter gunfights at isolated chapters and the occasional boss fight, but at its heart, the game is about adventuring in its purest form. The conflict is about man against nature rather than an army of commandos or a multinational corporation.

Woven through this Oregon Trail-style adventure is a complex narrative and the last quarter of Death Stranding focuses on this. Here is when Kojima tries to tie up the unruly plot threads that emerge throughout the campaign. Players will encounter subterfuge and conspiracy theories and they’ll have to sift for truth through the lies and misdirection. Although much of it is a mess, his team manages to answer nearly all the lingering questions, though the ending will test players’ patience.

The finale drags on as Kojima explains every minor detail of his world. Essentially, Death Stranding is Kojima unfiltered, without an editor or someone to tell him no. The result of this is a project that’s bizarre, hokey and at times brilliant. Fans can gripe about the obtuseness of the narrative, but players can’t say that this is generic. It’s an adventure full of original ideas that forges a path of its own, but that takes players, for better or worse, through the eccentric imagination of one of video game’s true auteurs.

Platform: PlayStation 4
Online: kojimaproductions.jp/en/death_stranding.html

More game reviews at stripes.com/games
Germany’s hip, modern capital is as well known for its all-night parties as it is for historical symbols like the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin Wall and Checkpoint Charlie. But unknown to many, the city is also home to one of the greatest natural history museums in the world, the Museum fuer Naturkunde.

If you’re like me, you’ll end up spending an embarrassingly long time in this museum, discovering collections that include a gallery of animals preserved in jars and an exhibit featuring the largest mounted dinosaur skeleton in the world.

The dinosaurs are the highlight of the museum, if you ask me. Three enormous dino skeletons stand tall in their exhibit area in the heart of the sprawling museum complex. In the center of the trio is the skeleton of a 45-foot-tall Giraffatitan, once thought to be a second species of the Brachiosaurus genus. The Giraffatitan is massive on every dimension. Even its forelegs look bigger than my first car. The museum made a replica of the dinosaur’s skull and put it at ground level so you can see what it looks like, because you can’t see the details so high up.

The museum is also home to one of the most complete Tyrannosaurus rex skeletons in the world. After you finish ogling the dinosaurs, head to the hall of mineral specimens, which includes fancy crystals and gnarly colored rocks. The coolest is probably the moon rock brought back from the last manned trip there.

Another room, filled with jars of dead animals, is as fascinating as it is gross. Look for the snake that choked on a lizard among the animals floating in jars. It’s sick.

Dozens of meteorites and models of planets and stars feature in several exhibits about space, while man’s impact on the environment is the focus of another exhibit. The museum’s displays about climate change, pollution and modern farming are a lot less fun than the dinosaur ones, but you should probably see them anyway.

egnash.martin@stripes.com
Twitter: @Marty_Stripes

Jarring display
Array of animal specimens awaits at Berlin museum

BY MARTIN EGNAH
Stars and Stripes

Germany’s hip, modern capital is as well known for its all-night parties as it is for historical symbols like the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin Wall and Checkpoint Charlie. But unknown to many, the city is also home to one of the greatest natural history museums in the world, the Museum fuer Naturkunde. If you’re like me, you’ll end up spending an embarrassingly long time in this museum, discovering collections that include a gallery of animals preserved in jars and an exhibit featuring the largest mounted dinosaur skeleton in the world.

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Among the preserved animals on display in another room is Germany’s much-loved Knut the polar bear, who was reared by zookeepers at Berlin’s zoo after his mother abandoned him. Knut died in 2011 at the age of 4 to the sorrow of fans around the world.

From top: The museum houses Germany’s much-loved Knut the polar bear, who was reared by zookeepers at Berlin’s zoo after his mother abandoned him. Knut died in 2011 at the age of 4 to the sorrow of fans around the world. A moon rock, thought to be about 3.75 billion years old, is one of many mineral specimens displayed. Among the other skeletons is a Giraffatitan, one of the largest dinosaurs to walk the earth.
TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Documentary film festival in Netherlands

In a season suited to indoor pursuits, film festivals can make for a welcome diversion. The world’s largest festival for documentaries runs through Dec. 1 in Amsterdam.

Over its 12-day run, the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, or IDFA, screens some 300 films from around the world, the works of both established filmmakers and promising newcomers. The social themes touched on reflect the spirit of the times. This year’s crop takes viewers from a juvenile detention center in Iran to a gritty nightclub in Mexico City and behind the scenes at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland.

Competitive sections of the festival are based on film length, as well as for best debut and student shorts. The works shown are best viewed in groups, and second-screening is encouraged. IDFA includes best films on the theme of human rights and best films chosen by the audience. Debates, forums and workshops round out the program.

As an international festival, IDFA’s official language is English, and films shown in languages other than English have subtitles. Screenings take place in cinemas throughout town.

Harry Potter fans have a holiday treat with Hogwarts in the Snow at the Warner Brothers Studio Tour London through Jan. 26.

Viewers can purchase tickets to individual screenings or get a discount pass for five films; another option is to buy a day pass for a full day of thematic programming. Online: idfa.nl/en

Christine Steves

Christmas markets open in Germany

Although the majority of Germany’s biggest and best-attended Christmas markets open only during the last week of November, those just who can’t wait those extra few days for their holiday fix can attend a handful of early openers. Bear in mind that many will not be open on Nov. 24, which is Totensonntag, a day for remembering loved ones who have passed.

Here are just a few that are already up and running:


Bavaria: Auer: Christkindlmarkt, Nov. 23-Dec. 15.
Bad Toelz: Christkindlmarkt, Nov. 22-Dec. 24.
Garmisch-Partenkirchen: Nov. 23-Dec. 23.
Lindau: Harbor Christmas market, Nov. 21-Dec. 15, Thursdays through Sundays only.
North Rhine-Westphalia: Aachen: Nov. 22-Dec. 23, open daily (open 6 p.m.-9 p.m. only on Nov. 24).
Rhineland-Palatinate: Bad Kreuznach: Nikolaus- markt by the Nikolaus Kirche And Eiermarkt, open daily Nov. 23-Dec. 22 (closed Nov. 24).
Ludwigshafen: Berliner Platz, open daily through Dec. 23 (closed Nov. 24).
Vorburg: Obermarkt, open daily through Dec. 23 (closed Nov. 24).

Holiday destinations for the younger set

While authentic, centuries-old monuments might make the ideal setting for grown-ups’ holiday visions, the worlds of Harry Potter and Disney are likely to make more of an impression on younger travelers. Either of these holiday-themed outings is apt to earn their approval.

Hogwarts in the Snow: the Warner Brothers Studio Tour London’s holiday edition allows visitors to experience the wizarding world over the festive season. The Great Hall is decked out as it was for the Yule Ball (in “Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire”), other sets glisten with holiday touches, and the special effects used to create flames and snow are revealed. The tour is offered through Jan. 26; tickets go for 46 pounds for adults ($59.50) and 38 pounds for ages 5-15. Online: wbstudiotour.co.uk/hogwarts-in- the-snow

Disneyland Paris: the park puts on its festivest with a giant sparkling tree, a Christmas parade featuring characters from Minnie to Buzz Lightyear atop festival floats, seasonal sing-alongs, a Broadway-inspired tap dancing show, a fairy-tale voyage featuring Disney’s best-loved couples and more through Jan. 5. Weekend entry costs approximately $105 for adults and $97 for ages 3-11; Online: tinyurl.com/soesd92

Rick Steves’s Europe

Portugal’s Tomar a break from tourist tumult

With a rich culture, friendly people and affordable prices and a salty setting on the edge of Europe, Portugal understand-ably makes a rewarding destination for travelers. Baskling in Lisbon’s sun on the sunny Algarve coast are well known to tourists (for good reason), but quieter places also offer tantalizing tastes of Portuguese flavor.

About 90 miles northeast of Lisbon, just east of the pilgrimage town of Fatima, is lushly green Tomar — a quaint town of about 20,000 residents set under a historic fortress. It’s a place with lots of local ambiance yet remotely untouristed — and well worth a stop.

While there was a settlement here in Roman times, Tomar’s importance started in the 12th century with the construction of a hill-topping castle, the Convento de Cristo. Gualdim Pais, a Grand Master of the Knights Templar religious order, put Tomar on the map by building the castle with Middle Eastern architectural techniques picked up during Crusades to the Holy Land.

To get the lay of the land, I strode Tomar’s riverside. The tiny Nabao River, running north-south through the middle of town, is all Tomar’s — it starts nearby and flows just a foot deep emptying into the Tagus River outside of town. Mid- river, a peaceful island with a pleasant park and a rebuilt medieval watermill shows off what must have been impressive technology in its day. At the old bridge, Ponte Velha, I headed right through the old town to the main square, Praca da Republica. The town’s easy-to-navigate grid is a reminder that Tomar was a garrison town built to defend the castle. Praca da Republica is a tempting spot to slow down and nurse a drink at a cafe, enjoying the relaxed tempo of local life.

Children on bikes test their training wheels, pigeons strut as if they own the place, old-timers shake their heads at today’s fashions, and tuk-tuk drivers hustle business (negotiating short town tours on motorized Rickshaws). The neighboring neighborhood offers plenty of inviting spots to grab a bite or a drink, such as the classic Cafe Paraíso, a time-warped eatery retaining the humdrum vibe of mid-century days.

Since Tomar is inland, pork and beef are staples on any menu here. All over town I noticed loaves of bread stacked into a very tall “crown,” decorated with flowers. Women carry these on their heads in a festival every four years, incorporating pagan and harvest rituals into the Catholic celebration during the Festa dos Tabuleiros (Festival of the Trays) in late June or early July. Thanks to this tradition, expect fantastic bread with any meal here. Sip a glass of local Tejo wine or try a Portuguese craft beer as well.

Towering above Tomar is its castle, with an Oz-like oratory built 800 years ago. This circular chapel is where knights would go to be blessed before battle as they defended Portugal against the Moors, protected pilgrims heading for the Holy Land, or championed Portugal in the Age of Discovery. The Knights Templar was a rich organization — both as a popular Christian charity and as originator of Europe’s first great banking system. Pilgrims from western Europe would deposit their money with the Templars before leaving home, were given a “check” (safer than cash to travel with), and could make withdrawals along their pilgrimage as they ventured east. You could call the Templars the first multinational corporation. When pilgrims died on their journey, which was all too common, the Templars kept their estate. (When banking, always read the fine print!)

The Convento de Cristo’s interior gives a glimpse of the mystical wonder of the Knights Templar. The original castle and oratory were built when such impressive architecture was new in Europe. The oratory was designed so horses (important in the Templars’ success on the battlefield) could be ridden in and blessed. Later, under Portuguese King Manuel I, a big conventional church was added. The oratory’s wall was cut open to connect the church and the oratory with a grand, triumphal arch. The church’s nave is decorated in the incredibly intricate Manueline style — motifs that pay tribute to the sea trade that made Portugal rich. Ornamental shields and coats of arms are decorated with castles, crosses, lions, flags and crowns. There are even designs that duplicate ropes used on ships during Portugal’s Age of Discovery.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.
Fortunately, Burger Zone is a distinctly charged into this saturated burger joint market. As JFK unknowingly prophesied decades prior, there’s a lot of competition on the Kaiserslautern burger scene.

Burger Zone, located between Vogelweh and Ramstein bases in Kaiserslautern, Germany, is a worthy addition to the growing number of burger restaurants in the area.

Location: Kaiserstrasse 77, Kaiserslautern. Hours: Open Tuesday-Friday from 4 p.m.-10 p.m. and weekends and holidays from 12 p.m.-10 p.m. Prices: A basic hamburger costs 8 euros ($8.81); deluxe burgers and extra toppings can bring that total over 10 euros. Fries range from 2 euros for an individual-sized order of basic fries to 6 euros for an extra-large sharable plate of sweet potato fries, truffle fries or dirty fries with cheese and bacon.

Menu: Mostly a wide variety of burgers and fries, supplemented by hot dogs, salads and grilled entrees. Drink selections include lemonades, soft drinks, coffees and an extensive bar.

Information: Online: km.burger-zone.de or on Facebook: @burgerzonekm.

— Gregory Broome

Photos by Jacqueline Broome
Mikael Vinka stands on top of a traditional goathie home at his Sami Ecolodge near Ammarnas, Sweden.

Photos by Mark Johnson, Chicago Tribune/TNS

Tracing ancestry

Following the DNA trail through Sweden

BY MARK JOHANSON
Chicago Tribune

Smoke billowed out of a hole at the center of a grass-covered tepee as I passed plates of cured moose sausage, flat bread, cheese and cloudberry jam to the seven other strangers gathered in this traditional Sami home in Sweden's northernmost Lapland region.

This was a complete digital detox: no electricity, cell signal or running water. Outside the conical dwelling (called a goathie in the indigenous Sami language), the air threatened to dip below freezing. Yet, with my toes curled into a reindeer pelt and the central fire invoking another round of storytelling, none of the modern sacrifices seemed to matter.

Owner Mikael Vinka regaled us with stories of herding his reindeer across the snow-dusted forests that blanket Sweden's Arctic frontier — a region the Sami call Sapmi. Over the next three days, he led us hiking into the birch-topped Vindel Mountains.

We dared our bodies to enter a frigid lake before defrosting them in a fire-heated sauna. At night, we chased the faint chartreuse glow of the northern lights across the countryside just outside Ammarnas, followed by a 45-minute boat ride into the vast wilderness of Vindelfjallen Nature Reserve, one of the largest protected areas in Europe.

I came all this way not only to purge myself from the trappings of cellphones, social media, work and city noise, but also to embark on a spiritual journey to try to discover who I am at my core.

Like an increasing number of Americans, I've become curious about my heritage. How (if at all) has it molded me into the person I've become? Results from one of those ubiquitous DNA kits suggest the highest percentage of my genetic code is from Sweden, so it felt like a good place as any to begin.

I split my journey into three parts, each with a distinct objective. First I'd explore the geography — Sweden's famous wildlands — with those who maintain the deepest connection to them in the 21st century: the Sami. Then I'd head south to uncover the history of my great-grandfather's journey to America in the seaport of Gothenburg.

Finally, I'd connect with the people — specifically a few distant relatives — to see what of the national character I could find lingering in myself.

My stay in the far north taught me that woodlands and rivers and overgrown ravines are not just feral spots on an ever-busier map; they're our link to sanity, a global necessity and a Swedish birthright given to those lucky enough to live in a nation where 69% of the land is forested. For the next stage of my journey — the history leg — I had to leave the musky dew of Lapland behind for the salty air of southern Gothenburg. It was from this industrial seaport along the rocky Bohuslän Coast that most of the 1.3 million Swedes who departed for a new life in America between 1850 and 1930 took their final steps on Swedish soil. After checking in at New York's Castle Garden (from 1855) or Ellis Island (from 1892), the majority settled in Chicago, Minneapolis and the greater Midwest, where the landscape and climate resembled home.

Swedes make up a tiny fabric of the American quilt, but this mass exodus of nearly 25% of the population left a big mark on Sweden. To learn more, I visited the House of Emigrants, a small museum in the city's old Customs House (now a casino), from which nearly all Swedish emigrants passed.

The museum looks at the reasons Swedes emigrated to America, the ship lines that took them there and what they left behind. In my great-grandfather Carl Johansson's case, it was a shot at a better life, the White Star Line (1911), and everything he knew and loved — along with the extra "s" in his surname, discarded for simplicity's sake in his adopted homeland.

So important was this mass emigration to Sweden's history that one of its most popular reality TV shows, "The Great Swedish Adventure" ("Allt för Sverige"), invites Americans with Swedish ancestry to come back and discover their roots. Like any good show, however, there's a catch. Along the way, cast members are kicked off for losing cultural and physical challenges. Only the winner meets their Swedish relatives for a family reunion.

I saved myself the humiliation of losing a Swedish reality show by contacting the descendants of Carl's sister, Gerda, directly.

Gerda's great-granddaughter, Camilla Sandell, lives in a lovingly restored falu red cottage in the countryside just outside Gothenburg. When she heard I'd be in town, she bought loads of crustaceans from a local fisherman, set a table with white wine and nutty Vasterbotten cheese, and invited the extended family for a crayfish party — a feast typical of Sweden's West Coast, where the critters run wild.

It's a strange thing to meet a family who shares some of your bloodlines but grew up in another land, speaks a different language and has its own customs. Yet it's equally bizarre how little that seems to matter to me. It's as if I've been transported back and discover their roots.

Camilla said, I would not only find my Swedish relatives, but also Swedish friends and family. It's a strange thing to meet a family who shares some of your bloodlines but grew up in another land, speaks a different language and has its own customs.

But to visit? Perhaps it wasn't exotic enough. I've always been fascinated by everything wholly foreign, so it was quite a surprise to find myself spending two weeks in Sweden that something startlingly familiar, something in my DNA, could shock my senses even more.

When all the crayfish were decapitated and wine bottles emptied, Camilla reached into her closet for a box. Inside was a black top hat, the kind you might see in period movies, from another shared relative named Axel Johansson. The newspapers protecting it were from the 1940s. Despite my protests, she wanted me to have it. There's an old Swedish fable about a hat that takes on a new life with each person who wears it. If I brought my long dead relative's hat back home with me, Camilla said, I would not only have something to remember them by, but the hat could have a new story.

Sweden's second largest city, Gothenburg, was the main port of departure for emigrants who flocked to America from 1850-1930.
Overtourism threatens more cities

By Hannah Sampson
The Washington Post

Amsterdam, Venice, Barcelona, Paris — the poster children for overtourism are well-known. Now, 20 more cities are on alert lest they turn into the future face of the problem, according to a new report from the World Travel & Tourism Council and commercial real estate firm JLL.

The report, called “Destination 2030,” examines the tourism “readiness” of 50 destinations around the world. The “emerging performers” category includes destinations where infrastructure and tourism momentum are growing along with the pressures associated with more tourists. Those cities were Bangkok; Cape Town, South Africa; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Jakarta; India; Indonesia; Istanbul; Mexico City; and New Delhi.

The study adds a fresh layer to the ongoing conversation over how much tourism is too much, and how both iconic and emerging destinations can cope with the world’s apparently insatiable appetite for travel.

“Over the past few years ... several destinations, and cities in particular, have been criticized in the media for the under-management of travel tourism and the stresses that visitor numbers have put on urban systems and residents,” the report said.

Lauro Ferroni, JLL’s global head of hotels and hospitality research, said the cities that are already the busiest — the Amsterdams and the Madrads — have to think about tourism through a different lens.

“Those cities are the ones that are going to start focusing less on attracting a whole lot of new visitors,” he says. Instead, they have to shift their focus to dispersing crowds throughout their city and encouraging visitors to come at off-peak times.

The new research comes as policy groups and travel industry watchers try to define overtourism, quantify its toll and address ways for destinations to combat it. The World Tourism Organization, an agency of the United Nations, said that last year, there were 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals around the world. That total represented a 6 percent increase over the previous year, and the agency said arrivals were expected to grow another 3 to 4 percent this year.

Last year, a European Union report identified 105 destinations in some state of overtourism. And Responsible Travel, a UK-based travel company, put together an overtourism map that includes 98 destinations across 63 countries.

Justin Francis, CEO and co-founder of Responsible Travel, says the overtourism issue has only recently become a front-and-center issue as travel numbers continue to rise.

“Very few destinations even have tourism planning, let alone have figured out how to solve the problem,” he says. “I think it’s a crisis.”
Powder perfect
Ideal snow conditions are practically guaranteed on Hokkaido ski vacation

BY DINA MISHEV
Special to The Washington Post

My whoops of glee come often and involuntarily, and each results in a mouthful of snow. Skiers bang several feet of fresh, untracked powder in Daisetsuzan National Park on Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan’s main islands, I feel like I’m bouncing around inside a cumulus cloud.

Skiers call this “getting face shots.” For those able to ski powder, face shots are the holy grail. If you spend three weeks skiing in the Rockies, you might get them once every several runs. Here powder is less significant, fluffy snowfall and untracked slopes. The former isn’t that rare — on average, ski resorts in the Western United States get about 400 inches of snow a year — but the frenzy that usually accompanies fresh snow ensures that the latter disappear within hours.

Skiing in Hokkaido for a week in January, my legs give out long before the face shots do, which was exactly what I had hoped for.

Planning a powder ski vacation any more than a few days in advance is like trying to predict the stock market — unless you’re going to Hokkaido in January. On average, more than one-third of the island’s annual 600 inches of snow arrives during the first month of the year. During an average January week, it snows six to seven days. January in Hokkaido isn’t “January” but “Japowuary.”

Hokkaido is more than skiing and pow-mageddon, though. The island has even more onsens, or geothermal hot springs, than it does ski resorts. (And it has about 100 ski resorts.) Onsens are a thing all over Japan — there are about 3,500 in the country, and archaeological finds hint that some of them have been used since 3000 B.C. — but they seem particularly well paired with skiing.

After being taken to an onsen at the end of my first ski day, I visit a different one on each of the next six evenings. For a spring to be an onsen, a 1948 law states it must contain at least one of 19 specified minerals and be no colder than 77 degrees Fahrenheit. In Hokkaido, I soak in sulfide pools, chloride pools and “simple springs” that have minerals, but in low concentrations; I do not soak in any pool that is less than 96 degrees.

By the end of my vacation, I was convinced it was only because of my daily soaks that I was able to ski hip-deep snow — and ski up through hip-deep snow — for seven straight days.

Most powder skiers who come to Hokkaido are perfectly satisfied skiing the island’s resorts. Even the busiest resort here — Niseko United which is actually a collection of four resorts — gets only a fraction of the skiers that big U.S. resorts do. While all the runs at my home hill, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort in Wyoming, are tracked out by noon the day after a big storm, friends tell me they’ve skied untracked powder at Niseko United as late as four days after a storm.

I prefer backcountry skiing, also called ski touring, to resort skiing, though. Backcountry skiers eschew ski resorts and lifts in favor of remote mountains, climbing skins and specialized skis, bindings and boots. Skiing uphill is called “skinning” because the original climbing skins, which are affixed to skis’ bases and allow skis to glide forward but not backward, were made from sealskin. (Today’s climbing skins are most often made from mohair or nylon.) It’s like hiking on skis, except you don’t have to kill your knees by walking downhill. When ready to descend, backcountry skiers remove their climbing skins, transition their bindings and boots, and then ski down as if on regular Alpine skiing gear.

Specialized gear isn’t the only requirement of backcountry skiing; though. Because it is done without the aid of lifts, it is essential for backcountry skiers to understand how to travel in avalanche terrain and have knowledge of the local snowpack. I have experience with the former but am ignorant about Hokkaido’s snowpack.

To overcome this deficiency, I have signed up to be one of eight clients on a seven-day backcountry trip led by ski guides from the Leaveonven, Wash.-based Northwest Mountain School. The guides are American but have been studying Hokkaido’s weather and snow since the start of the season.

Despite the extra education and physical effort backcountry skiing requires, I think it’s worth it. I find skinning meditative, and there’s no beating when you and your ski partners have an entire slope — or even an entire mountain — to yourselves. Backcountry skiing also allows for the exploration of areas not otherwise accessible. On Hokkaido, this includes the majority of Daisetsuzan National Park and all of Mount Yotei.

Daisetsuzan is the largest of Japan’s 34 national parks and is home to dozens of skiable mountains, including some active volcanoes. Yotei is a 6,227-foot-tall volcano near Niseko that, because its symmetrical shape resembles that of Mount Fuji, Japan’s most famous mountain, is often called the “Mount Fuji of Hokkaido.” The island’s indigenous people, the Ainu, believe Yotei was the first place created on earth and the spot from which the entire landmass of Hokkaido formed.

I’d love to climb and ski Mount Yotei, but after meeting in Sapporo, Hokkaido’s most populous city, our group heads for the pastoral center of the island and Daisetsuzan. Skiing Yotei requires visibility, which requires it to stop snowing. Snow is forecast for the next three days.

As poor as Japowuary is for skiing Yotei, it is perfect for Daisetsuzan. You don’t want to ski Yotei in a snowstorm because so much of it is higher than the elevation above which trees can grow. Without trees for reference, it’s easy to get lost; vertigo is also possible. Daisetsuzan National Park is as thick with trees as it is with mountains. Hokkaido is home to 22 percent of Japan’s forests, many of which are in Daisetsuzan.

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Chinese food perfection
Best authentic cuisine awaits at Ryu’s Dining

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and stripes

Chinese food back home in Massachusetts always consisted of greasy, over-battered chicken fingers; tough-as-leather strips of teriyaki beef, Rangeons devoid of any crab, and fried rice that tasted like it was already a day old. Japan provided a dramatic improvement. Yet I realize now, having never traveled to China myself, that I’ve never had authentic Chinese food in my life. That is, until I dined at Ryu’s Dining in Kitanakagusuku, Okinawa.

Ryu’s Dining serves authentic, traditional Chinese cuisine made from recipes going back more than a half-century. Some of the dishes boast a flavor profile made up of 20 unique Chinese spices regularly procured in Shanghai and brought back to Okinawa. The proprietor of the establishment, known affectionately to patrons as “Drag-on,” was a high-end chef in Shanghai, then Tokyo, before opening the first iteration of Ryu’s Dining in Chatan. Dragon quickly built a loyal following.

About a year ago, he moved to Kitanakagusuku. It wasn’t long before Dragon’s reputation caught up with the new digs, which became the place to dine in Okinawa city. Now, reservations are encouraged to ensure a seat at the table.

Dragon, with slicked-back hair and a warm, affable demeanor, is downright passionate about food and traditional Chinese cuisine. He refuses to change the recipes to make them more friendly to foreign palates. He doesn’t allow his food to be taken to go because it would degrade the product.

Instead of buying pre-ground spice mixtures in Shanghai, he brings them back whole and grinds them himself shortly before serving to ensure freshness and flavor.

He often makes recommendations to first-timers on what to order. Overflowing with personality, he is like the world’s best car salesman offering a ride on a true culinary journey.

Ryu’s Dining offers small plates ranging from $4.12 to $7.24. Its specialties include cashew chicken — an absolute must — for $6.32.

The chicken was transcendent, crispy on the outside, juicy on the inside, with hints of smoke, sweet and tang. The spiciest version leaves you sweating without burning your mouth or sacrificing any of the flavor.

The “Shanghai double rich tasty stir-fried egg rice,” or fried rice, at $7.24 was light and fluffy, simple, with a unique flavor I couldn’t identify. Again, arguably the best I have ever had.

“Ryu’s special dim sum” ($5.50) is two large dumplings that come with a dipping sauce that boasts a wide array of Chinese spices. The dumplings were robust and hearty, the meat and vegetable filling inside was light and clean, and the sauce was like nothing I have ever tasted before.

Other standouts include the crispy, creamy shrimp for $7.24 and the special pickled cucumber for $4.12.

Ryu’s Dining also offers a wide array of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, from classic cocktails to Chinese beer, fruit juices, soda and Chinese tea. There is a $1.10 service charge, according to the menu.

Ryu’s Dining has the best Chinese food I have ever had. It might even be the best food I’ve ever had. That’s a bold statement, but one would be hard-pressed to convince me otherwise. Better Chinese food exists anywhere else, including in the People’s Republic.

burke.matt@stripes.com
Twitter: @MatthewMBurke1

FROM PAGE 32
The park’s name, fittingly, translates to “great snowy mountains.” The snow banks along the road into the park are twice as tall as our van. In the 20 minutes it takes the group to gear up at the trailhead, half an inch of snow falls. I know this because I accidentally drop a glove when I exit the van, and when I find it just before we start skinning, it is buried. I pick it up and the flakes fall off like strands of eiderdown. Hokkaido’s snow is about as dry as the driest powder found in the United States (generally in Utah). From the parking lot, we walk down to a braided river and, carrying our skis, carefully rock-hop across its thin channels. On the far bank, we click the toes of our skins, and switch our bindings and boots from tour mode to ski mode. It’s difficult to tell how deep the powder we ski here is, but it’s deep enough that I can’t feel bottom. Bouncing down the slope, each of us weaving our own path between gnarled birch trees, we not only get face shots but send snow clouds billowing up and over our heads with every turn. I’m not the only one whooping with glee.

In Hokkaido, trees, especially conifers, can become so entombed in snow and ice that they’re swolled to three or four times their normal size and are no longer identifiable as trees. They instead look like T. rexes, or Godzilla or Jabba the Hutt. They are transformed, these trees are buried. I pick it up and the flakes fall off like strands of eiderdown.
Above: Spotting bighorn sheep by the river was a highlight of the trip.

Below: The emerald pool and vivid rocks and green ferns made Elves Chasm a special spot.

Only the brave — or the overheated — volunteered to sit in the front of the raft during the big rapids.

At mile 187, the rafting group was whisked away by a helicopter, below, to a nearby ranch.

BY DOUG HANSEN
The San Diego Union-Tribune

August 15, 1869: The red sandstone cliffs rose more than 2,000 feet on either side, casting off the sun for most of the day, while before us the mighty river, lashed to a foam, rushed on with indescribable power.

— John Wesley Powell, first person to explore the full length of the Grand Canyon's Colorado River

Exactly 150 years after Powell wrote that entry in his journal, I find myself fulfilling a lifelong dream as I float down the Colorado River on a large inflatable raft with 13 other adventurers and two guides. The air is hot, but cool breezes intermittently rise from the cold river water to deflect the heat. Beneath us, the olive-green water rushes through the greatest geologic chasm in the world, the iconic Grand Canyon. All of us are silent as we absorb the majesty of this natural spectacle.

To travel through the Grand Canyon is to time-travel through the geological history of the Earth for the past 2 billion years. Vividly tinted rock formations display an artist’s palette of red, gray, yellow, tan, black and white hues. There are layers folded like pretzels by forces we cannot imagine. Atoning some cliffs are formations that resemble medieval fortresses. But the most difficult geological lesson for me to grasp lies in the rock strata — a mind-bending story of radically changing landscapes alternatively covered in oceans, swamps, deserts and grassy plains.

I am on a six-day rafting trip with Western River Expeditions, during which we will travel down what Powell called “the grandest canyon in the world.”

Our journey begins with a predawn meeting in Las Vegas; an hourlong flight over a barren, broken landscape; and a final chance to purchase beer and wine at the only store at Marble Canyon, near Lee’s Ferry, our launching point. There are 28 people embarking on this journey, comprised mainly of two groups of longtime friends from Washington and Vermont. At first, I feel slightly out of place as a solo traveler, but that doesn’t last long as the warmhearted Washington folks welcome me to their group.

After piles of supplies and our duffel bags are unloaded from large trailers, our guides advise us to select the gear for our large dry bag, which will be inaccessible until the end of the day, while storing day-use essentials in a smaller dry bag. We put on life jackets, which are mandatory aboard the raft. Suddenly a shout arises from our leaders: “Form a fire line. We need to load everything onto the rafts!” We pass bags and boxes from one person to the next, a simple act that gives me an encouraging affirmation of human capability through teamwork. At last we shoved off on the great adventure that we arranged nearly 18 months ago, a delay caused by the high demand and limited supply of these Grand Canyon rafting trips. Our fearless leader, R.D. Tucker, pauses our rafts midriver and, as he will do repeatedly over the next six days, he mixes humor and 20 years of experience to explain what we need to do to stay safe and enjoy the journey.

“Most rapids in the world have a difficulty scale of one to five,” he tells us. “Here in the Grand Canyon, the scale is one to 10. We will run 60 rapids along 187 miles over the next six days. Most are just fun, splashy rapids, but a few are challenging and technically difficult.”

This introduction to the river’s might does little to assuage our apprehension about the infamous rapids that await us. They have names like Roaring 20’s, Hermit, Serpentine and Stockdolager (an old slang term for a knock-out punch), but the two “Mighty Tens” — Crystal and Lava Rapids — cause the most concern. It doesn’t help to hear that ABC stands for “Alive Below Crystal.”

Our first level 3 or 4 rapids set our hearts racing, but we learn that our enormous J-Rig raft can handle rapids like Mike Tyson can handle punches. These rapids prove almost impossible to capsize, so gradually our confidence builds. I find myself shouting as a wave smacks me in the face, “Give me your best shot! Is that all you got?” Before we enter especially violent rapids, Tucker carefully explains what to expect and reminds us repeatedly, “Those in front need to hold onto the ropes tightly.”

Our payoff is not only pride for surviving the rapids but also the mixed blessing of having 48-degree water pouring us and cooling us off in the 105-degree heat.

While some sit perched safely above the fray on large storage boxes, or in the middle of the raft on pads, the bravest, or most foolish, of us take turns holding onto ropes for dear life at the front as we crash through seething rapids. Our payoff is not only pride for surviving the rapids but also the mixed blessing of having 48-degree water pounding us and cooling us off in the 105-degree heat.

Campsites are chosen by Tucker after five or six hours on the river, with instructions for us to find a camp spot then return for a fire line to unload supplies. The private and open-air toilets (nicknamed “room with a view”) are set up a short distance away from camp. “If you’re brushing, bathing or peeing and don’t hit water, you’re doing it wrong,” said Tucker, who strictly enforces the Park Service’s rules for keeping the natural environment pristine.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35
Where’s my luggage?

Airlines seek to reduce their biggest headache

BY HUGO MARTIN

Los Angeles Times

A September vacation to celebrate their wedding anniversary, Marcie and Eric Rose landed in Greece on an American Airlines flight and were notified by the airline’s smartphone app that their luggage was waiting for them at the baggage carousel. The app was wrong.

The luggage made the first leg of the trip, from Los Angeles International Airport to Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport, but had not been loaded into the plane to Greece, despite what the app said. The mishap forced the Simi Valley, Calif., couple to buy clothes and toiletries until the bags were found and sent to Athens — soaking wet — 2½ days later.

“It was beyond frustrating,” said Marcie Rose, a business manager. “I didn’t have any clothes to wear. There was nothing we could do.”

The nation’s largest airlines have invested millions of dollars in technology over the past eight years to give passengers the ability to track their bags in hopes of addressing the biggest headache of flying: losing luggage. More than three-quarters of airlines worldwide plan to offer their passengers tracking technology by 2020.

But the Roses’ mishap — and social media complaining — shows that luggage tracking technology is far from 100% accurate.

The weak link? People.

When it involves humans, you will always get errors,” said Peter Drummond, portfolio director for baggage at SITA, an international airline technology company.

A SITA study released in March found that 26% of airline passengers worldwide used a mobile device last year to keep track of their luggage, up from 14% in 2017. An earlier SITA study said 77% of airlines plan to offer passengers real-time baggage tracking information by sometime next year.

“The baggage-tracking technology varies by airline but all carriers rely on workers, at some point in the loading and unloading of baggage, to manually scan the luggage tags,” said SITA’s European managing director for baggage tracking technology.

The accuracy of the system can be degraded, experts say, if air travelers forget to scan a bag or if the luggage tag falls off. The overall rate of misluggage by all carriers has plummeted in the past decade thanks to airline investments in new luggage and tracking technology.

Industry experts say the rate is likely to continue to drop as long as the tracking systems become more automated and less reliant on humans.

“The fewer points of contact with humans, the more accurate the system will be,” said Madhu Unnikrishnan, editor of Airline Weekly.

American, United and Delta, three of the world’s largest carriers, offer passengers free luggage tracking services that let them monitor the status of their suitcases at several points along each flight, through a smartphone app, text messages or email alerts.

American Airlines plans to offer a tracking app by the end of the year.

Southwest Airlines completed installation of 3,400 scanners to improve its baggage tracking system this month. But the Dallas-based carrier isn’t working on an app so that passengers can track their own luggage.

“There are no immediate plans to offer an external baggage-tracking app as this is currently an effort to enhance our internal tracking systems,” said Southwest spokesman Brian Parrish.

Once the luggage is scanned and the information is uploaded to the airline’s tracking system, it is relayed to airline passengers’ smartphones or email accounts. Experts say an older tracking system that relies on luggage tags printed with bar codes — like those on grocery store items — is not as accurate as newer technology involving radio frequency identification devices (RFID) that emit a signal read by sensors.

American and United use luggage tags with a bar code to track the bags. A human with a scanning device must scan each bar code when the luggage is loaded or unloaded on a plane.

American Airlines says it is considering switching to a new technology for its luggage tracking system but declined to disclose any details about that switch.

“We’re currently developing new technology that will support our baggage loading process,” American Airlines spokesman Curtis Blessing said. “The improvements will allow our guests to view scans of their luggage through our app and should be ready in 2020.”

Delta Air Lines became the first major carrier to offer a luggage tracking app in 2011, initially using a luggage tag with bar code that corresponds to a passenger’s travel itinerary. But in 2016, Delta began the switch to tags embedded with RFID chips. The carrier or the signal is picked up by dozens of stationary sensors on belt loaders and elsewhere in the loading process. When Delta scanners detect a chip or the signal is picked up by a scanner, the new technology as having “a 99.9% success rate.”

Delta representatives say the RFID technology is more accurate than using bar-coded tags because most of the tracking with RFID tags is done by stationary sensors. Luggage tags with bar codes must be scanned manually.

Delta noted, however, that it partners with international airline technology companies and not all of them use tracking systems that can communicate with Delta’s luggage tracking app.

The International Air Transport Association, which represents the world’s largest carriers, passed a resolution in June 2018 calling on all airlines to install baggage tracking technology and recommended that they rely on RFID-embedded tags to track bags.

“RFID is a more cost-efficient method to achieve the industry’s target of 100% bag tracking than using existing bar code technology,” the IATA said in a statement.

The luggage debacle endured by Marcie Rose in Greece was not an isolated case.

David Razowsky, an improvisation teacher from Los Angeles, said he flies more than 200,000 miles a year for his job, and the American Airlines tracking app is often wrong about which baggage carousel his luggage will support our
day’s flight. He noted, however, that he had chosen the specific tags to be flown on Delta.

In response to a request to discuss the accuracy of its luggage tracking technology, United Airlines issued a statement, saying: “As with all technology, we continue to innovate, work on advancements, including improvements in our monthly app that will help our guests view scans of their luggage through

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Our luggage system is currently developing new technology that will support our baggage loading process,” American Airlines spokesman Curtis Blessing said. “The improvements will allow our guests to view scans of their luggage through
Old and new come together

Former frontman releases first solo effort, celebrates 25 years of R.E.M.

By DAVID BAUER
Associated Press

A
ter Michael Stipe opens a gate to the abandoned Manhattan storefront that serves as his studio, you find a man easily traversing his past, present and future creative lives.

He’s promoting a 25th anniversary package of the R.E.M. album “Monster” while excited by the response to the first single he’s released since the band’s 2011 retirement. Surrounding him are examples of the photography and visual art that has occupied much of his time since then.

He made the single “Your Capricious Soul” available first on his website last month with proceeds going to the environmental group Extinction Rebellion. He held it back from streaming services for a month, a quiet protest against monopolistic behavior, but it’s there now.

The song’s throbbing electronic pulse and percussion mark a clean musical break from the guitar-based rock of R.E.M.

Stipe would generally write lyrics to R.E.M. songs with music composed by bandmates Peter Buck, Mike Mills and, until he left the band in 1997, Bill Berry.

With “Your Capricious Soul,” it was all on him.

“It’s terrifying,” he said. “That’s why I’m doing it.”

Pleased by the reaction, Stipe said he expects more new music soon. He has no record company, so he’s free to release it whenever and however he wants.

“It sounds great,” said Rita Houston, program director at WFUV-FM in New York. “It sounds fantastic to hear Michael’s voice on the radio in this new incarnation. The song sounds nothing like an R.E.M. song, but it sounds completely like Michael Stipe. It’s very 2019.”

Now 59, Stipe easily rewinds the clock to 1994 when R.E.M. was at the height of its popularity. After two relatively quiet and commercial records, “Out of Time” and “Automatic for the People,” R.E.M. wanted to crank the volume with songs that would contrast on a concert stage to hits like “Man on the Moon.” They were touring for the first time in five years, with millions of new fans.

On “Monster,” they embraced glam rock, influenced by forebears like T. Rex and the New York Dolls, as well as contemporaries like “Achtung Baby”-era U2. The signature track was “What’s the Frequency, Kenneth?”, its title inspired by an odd phrase someone once shouted at newsman Dan Rather.

“I can’t believe looking back ... that we had the audacity and the courage to jump off a cliff together, not literally but figuratively, to create something sounding so different from the records before,” he said.

The new “Monster” has the requisite outtakes that illustrate how the songs took shape in the studio. Stipe recognizes that fans like hearing the progression, but he finds it excruciating. He listened to the outtakes once.

“To pull the curtain back that far is a bit humiliating, frankly,” he said. “I want people to think of me as this perfect genius who emerged completely into the world. Of course, that’s not the case.”

Stipe exhibits a vulnerability, a sensitive side that he takes pride in. In R.E.M.’s early years, he’d often sing from the shadows, his back to the audience. His shyness never left, but he developed into a confident rock frontman.

He came out as gay at the time of the album’s release, feeling some pressure because rumors spread that he was HIV-positive when the band didn’t tour for two albums and he didn’t give interviews for a lengthy period.

“I was never closeted,” he said. “That’s the thing that’s beautiful about it and I’m so proud of. You can never find a single picture of me pretending to have a girlfriend or being somebody that I’m not. I was never that guy. Any longstanding R.E.M. fan who had not figured out I was queer before that point wasn’t looking very hard.”

R.E.M.’s retirement in 2011 was a model. There was no farewell tour, and they released a valedictory song — “We All Go Back to Where We Belong” — that is among the most beautiful in the band’s catalog. Stipe, Buck and Mills haven’t regretted the decision, and Stipe suggests it salvaged their friendship.

Buck and Mills both remain active musically as Stipe, until recently, stuck to visual art. The business of R.E.M. has forged on as the band has methodically marked key points in their career with new projects.

“Encapsulating the creative work of the band by disbanding allowed us, and I think the rest of the world, to take a step back and look at it for what it was,” Stipe said. “We were not the guys who were going to always be there, and I think that did us a huge favor, honestly.”
**WHAT'S NEW**

**Celine Dion**
*Courage (Columbia Records)*

The search is officially over: If you've been wondering what the saddest song of 2019 is, we've found it. It's on Celine Dion's new album, "Courage."

Track No. 11, "For the Lover That I Lost," will have you weeping for two good reasons—one of the songwriters is Sam Smith, that master of grief, while the singer herself is still mourning twin deaths.

"I laid a dozen roses for the lover that I lost / I stand where you stood / I've had enough cries," she sings on the gospel-tinged "I Will Be Strong," adding: "I don't feel like giving up just because you climbed off."

There are even stars shooting up new love—the '60s throwback "How Did You Get Here" and the gospel ballad written by Skylar Grey called "Falling in Love Again." The cover of the album shows Dion walking in the rain with a dress sullied, a woman bowed but not broken.

After the deaths, and this time only two days apart in 2016. Dion is like a sonic chameleon that changes colors depending on who is nearby and this time Sia is around for two very Sia songs ("Baby" and "Lying Down" with David Guetta), but there are also offerings from such longtime collaborators as Lin Rodrigues and Jorgen Elofsson.

The standard edition album ends with the spacey, dark and melancholy "Perfect Goodbye"—and Dion even slips in the rare curse word. She's angry. "Don't need to understand if God's got a plan / It's out of our hands anyway," she sings. We're just glad her heart will go on.

—Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

**Bonnie 'Prince' Billy**
*I Made a Place* (Drag City)

Will Oldham, appearing here under his Bonnie "Prince" Billy alter ego, has made too much music in the past decade to list here, but "I Made A Place" is his first album of new, original songs since 2011's "Wolfoo Goes to Town," and it's another peak in a career with few valleys.

Oldham says the record was inspired by Hawaii and its music—his mother was born in Pearl Harbor—but also carrying the imprint of his wife's pregnancy. Its shades of folk and country were achieved with assistance from, among others, Joan Shelley on vocals, guitarist Nathan Salsburg and multi-instrumentalist Jacob Duncan.

"New Memory Box" is a merrily opening track enlivened by horns and winds as it recommends taking a step back: "A quiet life might lead me on the way through it all." It's followed by "Dream Awhile," a kind of hollies that guide the echoing outlook—"When I have a problem / I know just what to do / I go to bed and dream awhile / Something will come to you."

Its title inspired by a Hawaiian custom, Oldham makes "Look Back on Yesterday, Look Forward to Your Past!" a tale about the consequences of our actions and inactions and our time in this mortal coil—"This particular assemblage of molecules and memories / Some day may soon just run out of gas."

Oldham goes sweetly romantic on "You Know the One," which describes strengthening what you've found your significant other. It makes an uplifting pair with "I Made a Place" as a raft, paddleboat or sailboat. Which ever provides more time to reach your horizon.

— Pablo Gordoni
Associated Press

**Simply Red**
*Blue Eyed Soul* (BMG)

"Blue Eyed Soul," Simply Red's 12th album, is not innovative, groundbreaking, cutting-edge, topical or essential. But it's a lot of fun, and its title is comfortingly accurate.

Mick Hucknall's band, together in its current incarnation for more than 15 years, has been closely identified with soul and R&B since its 1985 debut "Picture Book." This album can be considered a sequel characters as they go on the run following a traffic stop that ends in the shooting of a police officer.

"Queen & Slim" director Melina Matsoukas, with a perfect mix of pleasurably surprising old favorites—from Bilal to Mike Jones to Roy Ayers—and fresh new tops, has claimed victory.

There's the high-energy fun: Megan Thee Stallion's "Ride Or Die," a New Orleans bounce music track featuring Vickee "Cedes Benz" and the dance-able "My Money, My Baby" from Nigerian artist Burna Boy. Add to that mix a feel-good crop of mellow music: Syd's extra sexy "Getting Late," Moses Sumney's haunting "Doomed" and the sweet "Yo Love" from Vince Staples, Black and Mereda.

Perhaps the crown jewel is a rare appearance from Ms. Lauryn Hill, whose new song "Gates of Heaven" is enough to bring a tear to her dearest fans' eyes. "Everybody, everybody / wants to know / Where you going to / Cuz they wanna come, or so they think... until they find the cost of it," Hill testifies in her husky alto. "I'll tell you out, find out what you lost for it / And I'd do it all 'cuz I found love."

— Melanie J. Sims
Associated Press

**Various Artists**
*Queen & Slim: The Soundtrack* (Motown)

The trailer for upcoming film "Queen & Slim" packs a ton—intensity and beauty, flashes of lightheartedness and the strain of love and loss. In similar fashion, "Queen & Slim: The Soundtrack" comes bearing plenty of the same, with 16 songs expertly capturing the journey of the film's lead characters as they go on the run following a traffic stop that ends in the shooting of a police officer.

"Queen & Slim" director Melina Matsoukas, with a perfect mix of pleasurably surprising old favorites—from Bilal to Mike Jones to Roy Ayers—and fresh new tops, has claimed victory.

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— Jake O'Connell
Associated Press

**DJ Shadow**
*Our Pathetic Age* (Mass Appeal)

In the companion art piece to DJ Shadow's "Our Pathetic Age," a poem expresses not wanting to be permeated by the ubiquity of "tech paraíso." This sentiment hovers over the album's 23 tracks.

Split into two sides, an instrumental and vocal suite, Shadow addresses the contradiction of modernity, examining a lack of tangible connection in an age where everything seems connected.

"Nature Always Wins" exemplifies this quandary. Belying its title, swaths of incandescent digital debris stream down like drying fireworks. The machines have claimed victory.

The electro excursions continue with "Slingblade," as wordless calls for aid and electronic flares signal peril. The thrashing machinations of "Intersectionality" play like a hybrid of the soundtrack work from Oneohtrix Point Never and Zone. "Juggernaut" mutates into an aural, electronic explosion. The morass of menacing synths and wallowing dubstep signified the music's impressive power. Exhbiting deft turntablism, Shadow deploys sinister spoken samples as directives to steer the mahot: "Sometimes you are so charmed by the music it could be saying death, and you would never know."

The comparative visceral realism as the rappers show up is palpable. Heavy hitters line the guest list, taking tales of the grind from the periphery of human contact. Inspectah Deck is coming with that "White Walker style." Raekwon looks galoshes, and his bodyguard is "a black Kevin Costner." The taut Dave East spot stands out, and Pusha T's "flows are being copied at Kinko's." Pharoahe Monch's smartphone is listening to him.

A dystopian air does pervade the record, but an undercurrent of light often seeps through. Shadow's visionary production acts as the catalyst, crafting a record of defiance and respect for the emcees, but the soundscapes overshadow. Inspectah Deck's "Ar'N Ni Robot" and social media message "C.O.N.F.O.R.M." clearly spell out the message. "Our Pathetic Age" aims to mirror the times and make sense of our present predicament.

— Jake O'Connell
Associated Press
Behind the music

In recent memoirs, musicians reveal glamorous tantrums, plenty of drug use and the double-edged sword of fame.

By Allison Stewart
Special to The Washington Post

The first time Elton John tried cocaine, he threw up. Looking back, he thinks, this should have been a sign. “It’s hard to see how I could have been given a clearer warning unless it had started ruining my stamina and I’d been visited by a plague of boils,” writes John in his unspiring, extravagantly funny new memoir, “Me.” Nevertheless, he kept at it, eventually losing 16 years of his life to addiction. Because cocaine aggravated his existing anger issues, John spends a lot of “Me” yelling at people: He throws a glamorous tantrum on a private plane in front of Stevie Wonder. He screams at people because he doesn’t like the weather. He is forever storming out of places, only to storm back in. Even in his worst moments, John seems merely like a charming malcontent, thanks in no small part to journalist Alexis Palmidris, whose work shaping the memoir’s narrative voice is uncredited. Not since Keith Richards’ memoir, “Life,” has any rock legend seemed such good company.

“Me” traces John’s pre-fame childhood in suburban London, his distant father and terrifying mother, and his early interest in rock ‘n’ roll, but doesn’t linger. It’s not long until he touches down in California, a 23-year-old virgin who will soon become the biggest pop star in the world.

John discovers he’s gay, to no one’s surprise but his own, and after ending an abusive relationship, embarks on a series of fast-burning love affairs that soon curdle into resentment and boredom. He marries a woman (“What if I’d only spent the last fourteen years sleeping with men because I hadn’t found the right woman yet?”), unsuccessfully. As in most rock star memoirs, the fame years are the best years. John is an energetic collector of celebrity friends, and “Me” doesn’t stint on detail. John is a beloved friend and drug buddy. Queen Elizabeth slaps a viscount. Sylvester Stallone and Richard Gere come to blows over the affections of Princess Diana. Freddie Mercury and Michael Jackson replace each other over a llama. He is benevolent toward almost everyone, except for his mother, who is glowing and unkind, and Tina Turner, an imperious she-devil who tells him he looks fat in Versace, which is possibly the worst thing you can say to Elton John. John eventually meets young AIDS patient Ryan White, who inspires his advocacy work and pierces his veil of self-pity and privilege. He gets sober, survives prostate cancer and meets and marries David Furnish; the couple has two sons. “Me” feels bravely honest, which it must. Because readers bond to their memoirists like hostages to their captors, trust is essential.
NEW ON DVD

"Angel Has Fallen": Gerald Butler returns as the "Has Fallen" franchise's Secret Service agent Mike Banning, the action hero with a penchant for stabbing people. In this installment, Mike is forced to go rogue on isolated waters. Gary Oldman and Emily Mortimer star.

"Mixed-ish": Mike Banning is our fantasy for those very real moments in this outsize take on the 'The Fugitive' hit a real nerve, such as a shootout in an office building where young bearded white men in tactical gear pump thousands of rounds into drywall and office furniture. Banning our fantasy for those very real scenarios: a strong, resourceful, yet exceedingly normal man of action.

"Official Secrets": A new whistleblower may be dominating the headlines, but the story of Katharine Gun, less known in the U.S. than in Britain, is a must-see. In 2003, Gun, a British intelligence agency translator, leaked a classified memo from the American government announcing an illegal operation to blackmail UN diplomats to support invading Iraq. The film follows Gun (Keira Knightley) and her life with her husband, Yasar (Adam Bakri), a Kurdish Turk attempting to get British citizenship, her whistleblowing and the ensuing trial.

"Part of the conversation": I want to be able to have the stuff that I work on or write be a part of the conversation. I think it's important to have people walk away from something and think about the world, or at least I hope to have challenged the way they think or have a conversation with somebody else about it. That's what was so amazing about "Star" for me, because it had the elements of these amazing women searching for their dream. I had all of that stuff, but then it had the ability to say something and challenge things and not be preachy about it and just put a lens on another experience. That is really important. I think for people now to turn on the TV and see not just their color, but their experience, on TV.

By YVONNE VILLAREAL

Los Angeles Times

"Mixed-ish," which premiered this fall, is the second series spun off from ABC's popular sitcom "black-ish" — joining Freeform's coming-of-age comedy "growing-ish." And if "mixed-ish" showrunner Karin Gist has her way, the show will provoke conversation.

The '80s-set prequel follows a teenage Rainbow Johnson — the character popularized by Tracee Ellis Ross in "black-ish," played here by Arica Himmel — and the experiences of her mixed-race family when they transition from a commune to mainstream living. The show, like its predecessor, has delved into some complex material involving racial identity — the handling of which has garnered both praise and criticism.

"We are, very, very clear that there is no version of making everyone happy, nor is that our intent," Gist said on a recent afternoon. "We just want to make it feel right and honest for the show, and for our characters, and reflect the world as best we can." The新鲜的喜剧，which was recently granted a full-season order, is the second series Gist has guided as showrunner. She previously headed Fox's short-lived girl-group melodrama "Star." Gist, a former family law attorney, was eventually fired in Season 5 and would go on to work on such shows as "One Tree Hill," "House of Lies" and "Grey's Anatomy." Gist started acting on the terrace of her Los Feliz, Calif., home, Gist talked about tackling "Star" for me, because it had the elements of these amazing women searching for their dream. "Star" had all of that stuff, but then it had the ability to say something and challenge things and not be preachy about it and just put a lens on another experience. That is really important. I think for people now to turn on the TV and see not just their color, but their experience, on TV.

"The tone of 'Angel' is far more somber than the wise-cracking 'Olympus' or the frothing, jingoistic 'London,'" Walsh wrote. "The weight makes the film strangely dull at times. (How can a scene of Butler crashing a big rig into a tree be so flat?) But some
Advice on how to stay healthy as you travel during the holiday season

BY NATALIE B. COMPTON
The Washington Post

It’s cold and flu season. You know that because it seems like just about everyone is sick. Your office is cut in half. The receptionist at your dentist’s office is sick. Your mom just called, and she’s sick, too. While the entirety of the planet seems to be battling nasal drip, there’s another problem. The holiday travel season is upon us, meaning all of that sneezing, coughing and aching will be boarding a plane with you.

Here’s what medical professionals advise to dodge your seatmates’ illness.

Wash your hands. Often.
The secret to staying healthy during the holidays is no secret at all: Wash your hands. It’s the most important thing you can do while traveling, and it’s good form year-round, but particularly important in the winter.

“Our hands are the interface between ourselves and the rest of the world,” says Gina Suh, a specialist in infectious diseases at the Mayo Clinic. “In other words, our hands touch all these surfaces that are full of germs, and then we touch our own face and mucosal surfaces — such as our mouth, nose, eyes — way more than you would ever notice. Most people touch their face many times in any given minute, and that can transmit illness.”

Suh recommends using good old-fashioned soap and water from a sink to properly wash, scrubbing for a full 20 seconds. Wash before and after you eat, after using the restroom, and maybe even right now. It’s that helpful.

“I can’t stress the importance of hand hygiene enough,” Suh says. It’s “probably the biggest thing you can do to help prevent illness.”

Don’t have access to a sink or soap and water? Keep hand sanitizer with you as backup. (But more on this below.)

Manage your stress
It’s a stressful time of year, whether the source of anxiety is holiday-related or otherwise. To add insult to injury, that stress can be a detriment to your health. Suh says stress is one of the main reasons people get sick this time of year. Sometimes it may not be the stress itself that’s a problem, but how it affects the rest of your life. For example, facing stress can lead to eating indulgent — at the expense of a healthy diet.

“People may be less apt to eating fresh fruits and vegetables during the holidays and may be eating more fatty foods, meats, carbohydrates, sweets and other foods,” she says.

As you gear up for holiday travel, keep self-care in mind.

“Anytime that there’s changes in your schedule for the holiday season, your own self-care can suffer,” says Christa Schmitz, a nurse practitioner and director of nurse education for Passport Health travel clinics. “Anytime that you start neglecting your own self-care, whether it’s with sleep, diet or exercise, then you’re potentially not your best self. And so you could become more susceptible” to illness.

Schmitz recommends sticking to the schedule you’re used to through the busy-ness of the season and even deliberately carving out more time for yourself. The better shape you’re in before you get on a plane, the better your chances are for avoiding a bug.

Get your shots
Flu season is at its peak over the holidays, so don’t get on the plane without being up to date on all of your essential vaccines.

“We’re right in the midst of flu season. When you’re traveling... with other people on planes who have coughs and flu-like symptoms, you risk having an exposure,” Schmitz says.

Then there are the measles, which you absolutely do not want to get or spread.

“Right now, measles have been an issue both globally and nationally throughout the United States,” she says. “So it’s a good idea that people are up to date on their childhood vaccines, which would include the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, along with the annual flu vaccine.”

Consider a travel clinic
Not up to date on immunizations? Traveling to another country? You might want to go to a travel clinic before your trip.

“If you’re planning on traveling internationally, there may be country-specific or region-specific precautions to help you with in a travel clinic setting,” Suh says. “There, you can have a tailored discussion, according to your itinerary, about what specific things to look for and what specific vaccinations or medications may be recommended.”

Schmitz notes that certain illnesses are seasonal and perhaps not on the timeline you’re used to. Consulting with a travel health practitioner can prepare you better.

Drink lots of water
Suh says people are more dehydrated over the holidays. Couple that with an airplane’s dehydrating conditions and you’re looking at a parched body. You don’t necessarily need to chug gallons of water, but you should be more mindful of your intake.

“I don’t think you should overdo it, because then that could be problematic,” Suh says. “I think that the problem is people fall behind in their hydration. They forget about it. So try to maintain normal or slightly above-normal levels of hydration.”

Instead of relying on the flight attendant’s beverage distribution schedule on the plane, pack a reusable water bottle and fill it up before you board to give yourself the control.

Be well rested for your flight
Sleeping enough isn’t only helpful for waking up in time for your flight or being in a better mood at the airport. Should your holiday travel plans include early call times, plan to get adequate sleep beforehand for your health, too. It might sound like common sense, but it becomes even more necessary when you’re hoping to ward off that cold everyone seems to have.

“Get adequate sleep. It’s so important to your overall health and immune system,” says Schmitz, the nurse practitioner.

Sanitizing can’t hurt
Although celebrities may go viral for taking in-flight sanitation to the extreme, Suh says antibacterial wipes and face masks offer only marginal benefits. She wouldn’t recommend wiping down common areas or your seat as a more potent solution than washing your hands. The same goes for wearing a face mask as a barrier against germs.

“You’re not getting the same levels of protection as simple hand-washing,” she says. “I don’t think you should overdo it. I can’t imagine it being very comfortable for the person who’s wearing the mask. But I’m unclear about how exactly how much benefit there would be.”

Traveling over the holidays can feel like a necessary evil, particularly when you’re surrounded by chaos, and that chaos seems to have a cold. Among it all, keep calm and wash your hands.
Meeting the parents

What to do when family, friends don’t like your partner

**By Alison Bowen**
Chicago Tribune

When Shirley Baldwin Owens prepared to meet her future in-laws for the first time, she knew they did not like her. She had been divorced three times. She was living with their son. She knew she wasn’t a conservative match. She knew they did not like her.

This situation can be tricky for everyone involved. Experts shared the following advice on creating communication and family cohesion when possible.

**First, find out the issue**

All kinds of reasons might be behind why family or friends do not initially like or get along with a significant other.

Perhaps the beginning of the relationship was rocky, and that’s what people remember.

“They’re not really tracking the way the relationship improved,” said Elizabeth Sloan, a marriage and family therapist in Maryland.

“First impressions can actually follow the fiasco around, and that can be really hard to correct, especially when there isn’t a lot of time to get to know the fiasco.”

When families live in different areas, fewer encounters can make it difficult for all parties to get to know each other.

"First impressions do matter because they set the stage for the future. They say what you are," said Elizabeth Sloan, a marriage and family therapist in Maryland.

"It’s not infrequent that a couple enters the therapy because their family isn’t accepting of their fiancé, maybe because of racial differences, culture differences, ethnicity, faith, socioeconomic status and even educational attainment," Howard said.

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When families live in different areas, fewer encounters can make it difficult for all parties to get to know each other.

Sometimes, resistance might have nothing to do with your partner in the first place. Perhaps people bonded with an ex or had something different in mind.

“The fiancé may be perfectly fine, but the other friends and family aren’t ready for a new person,” Sloan said. “Maybe they have their hearts set on a different mate.”

The therapists do caution that some concerns warrant a conversation, for example, issues like alcohol abuse or disrespect toward women.

In these cases, Sloan said, “I think it is a good idea for someone to say to their friend, ‘Have you thought about what would happen if this got worse?’ Or, ‘Have you ever been bothered by it?’ And not sort of rendering your own judgment, just holding your own judgment, but asking your friend gently.”

**Ask each other to help**

What can each partner do to be helpful in this situation? Marriage is about being a united front. These issues will only become more complicated as couples eventually navigate holiday plans and, potentially, children.


“Soften it and really think about what you want from the conversation and what’s going to really help them to be more empathetic and to understand what it’s like to you.”

Are there specific topics that cause friction, like different political leanings? If so, Sloan suggests asking a partner, “If the topic comes up, can you diplomatically and tactfully just change the subject or make a joke?”

And a fiancé needs to feel like his partner is standing up for him, Sloan said.

In Owens’ case, she wanted to feel like her future husband was not focusing on the negative — defending herself against issues his family might have — but instead explaining why he loved her.

**Be firm with friends, family**

Kate Rose, author of “You Only Fall in Love Three Times: The Secret Search for Our Twin Flame,” said this situation requires navigating a family who loves you but might be wrestling with different expectations. Consider that you might need to stop seeking their approval.

“It’s not that we want to alienate our family,” she said. “It’s all about boundaries.”

Tell relatives or friends, “My relationship with you has nothing to do with my relationship with the person that I’m with.” Be clear that you love this person, who will be part of your life. “And then that’s it,” Rose added. “Eventually they will either deal with it, or there will be a new normal.”

**Don’t isolate yourself, and don’t give up**

Continue to create situations where all parties can spend time together. Steer conversations toward topics that will build bridges. Praise your partner in front of the others.

Eventually, her mother-in-law, Joanna Owens, grew to appreciate the steadiness her future daughter-in-law showed. But, she noticed her son’s happiness.

“Is that a priceless thing for a mama to see,” Joanna Owens said.

She is glad, she said, that she finally gave her daughter-in-law a chance. Her advice for others in a similar situation? “Go in with an open heart, and let people be who they are.”

**A military spouse’s Thanksgiving prayer**

**Lisa Smith Molinari**

Now I lay me down to pray, that I’ll survive Thanksgiving Day.

That the special dinner I agreed to host, won’t make me a laughingstock on post.

That I will keep hold of my sanity, and have no outbursts of profanity.

That our turkey will completely thaw, so that stuffing her won’t require a hacksaw.

That the kids will happily play a game, and won’t belligerently that the Macy’s Parade is “lame.”

That hubby will assist when the moment is opportune, and not go off with buddies to drink beer before noon.

That if guys must play football so they feel athletic, no one will get tackled and require a paramedic.

That the turkey will fry to a nice golden brown, without a conflagration that burns the base down.

That the beans will steam, the potatoes will boil, and the gravy won’t resemble a patch of crude oil.

That our friends won’t mind if cranberries are canned, and if the smoke detector goes off, they’ll understand.

That everyone will gather at our table without haste, before the mashed potatoes become wallpaper paste.

That the children will remember to put napkins on laps, chew with mouths closed, and not feed the dog scraps.

That no one will wiggle when we say the blessing, and also won’t grimace at the neighbor’s vegan dressing.

That while carving the turkey, a wisely chosen we’ll find, not the sack of giblets that got left behind.

That dinner conversation will be without drama, and no one will bring up Trump or Obama.

That around our table, stories will be told, about experiences we’ve both young and old.

About patriotism, honor, joy and strife; about the laughter, wisdom and strength in military life.

That sharing our stories will help us to see, that our sacrifices make America the home of the free.

And before we get too sentimental with tears in our eyes, someone will remind us that we haven’t yet had pie.

That dessert won’t send me on a guilt trip, even storebought pie tastes good with enough Cool Whip.

That after dinner everyone will help clear the grub, so I’m not left with a sinkful of dishes to scrub.

That while watching football, my husband will squelch his manly urges to itch, scratch and belch.

And if the quarterback fumbles, he’ll turn a blind eye, rather than throw the remote and let expletives fly.

That our friends won’t linger because they’ve had too much booze, or lie on our couch and take a long snooze.

Gathering with military friends was surely long overdue, and not any symptoms of anxiety and loneliness.

That we’ll have a quiet moment to let tryptophan digest,

That our friends won’t linger because they’ve had too much booze, or lie on our couch and take a long snooze.

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NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

DOUBLE SIXES

BY PETER GORDON / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

ACROSS
1 "Hooked on Classics" company
5 Christmas of "Monte"
10 Skirt, so to speak
15 Silent
18 Last Supper item
20 Case study in many business ethics classes
21 Call on
22 "The Simpsons" character who holds a Ph.D. in computer science
23 Low singers, short on money, draw icy
26 Place for a beer pump
27 Beaches in a climate
28 High-class person
29 Served in a certain cream sauce
31 Fleet runner: Abb.
32 Boston’s Liberty Tree, e.g.
33 Tennis player with a record 177 cumulative weeks ranked No. 1
36 January
37 Works as an accountant for a Swedish aerospace company
41 "Pearly Shell" singer
45 Like a lasso
46 Put a stop to
49 Able, almost the
50 Tangie
51 Airy area of hotels
52 Urban intersection: Abb.
53 People who share an apartment with a Javanese royal
58 Rival of Havolna
61 Pec pie, say
62 1980s auto imports based on the Fiat
63 Turkish coin
64 Speed skater who won five golds at the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics
66 Not-dof
69 Politico Liz
71 Unusual
72 Pushcart's husband John
73 $50,000,000 clear-channel radio station in Iowa for which Ronald Reagan was once a prize-taker
74 Sends to the canvas, for short
75 Designer Mizrahi shouts like a cowboy in a sing-song way
82 Citi Field player
83 Listens attentively
84 Man's name that becomes another man's name when a "C" is put in front
85 Life ___ (unmeaning trick)
89 Events for special customers
91 Smooth and frosty
93 Asian metropolis of 28+ million
94 Headline after an adolescent at a golf competition is made fun of
97 Emperor of India known as "the Great"
99 Nephew of Cain
100 Feminine ride
101 Bit
102 Meteorological phenomenon
105 Mourning person, perhaps
109 Like triangles governed by the Pythagorean Theorem
111 "Stu"
112 Matriculated students appear to be tardy
116 Couldn't stand?
117 John who invented a steel plow
119 Police, e.g.
120 What's up?
121 More logical
122 Brownish gray
123 Fit together like matryoshka dolls

DOWN
1 Yuri Andropov headed it for 15 years in Brazil
2 Opening in the theater, maybe
3 Legal grant to cross over someone else's land
4 Geneva, author of "Silk Alice"
5 Rapper MC
6 Travel-guide listings
7 One of the 11 official languages of Canada's Northwest Territories
8 Either brother who co-wrote "O Brother, Where Art Thou?"
9 Plants that yield a blue dye
10 Annihilator who composed "Carnival Overture"
11 "Host of the Olympics" where gold returned after a 112-year hiatus
12 National School Lunch Program org
13 Popoca dispenser
14 Cinematographic innovation of the 1970s
15 Raising Cain
16 Overturn
17 Unusually humid
19 Thus
20 Mailboxe s "Monsier," per example
23 Socially awkward
29 "Hearless" film character
30 "Mister" character
31 "It's more attractive the closer you are to it"
35 Aden
38 N.B.A. nickname until 2011
39 Somewhere white rice lacks
40 Hay there!
41 Where the Nobel Peace Prize winner is announced
42 Money for a grand tour
43 Stiffly formal
47 Like binural audio
48 Paths of college applications
50 Bean on the silver screen
51 Ship of mythology
54 Pac-12 player
55 City of dismay
56 Bem-vindo
57 Hoppy drink
58 Food item often prepared with lemon and garlic
59 Pivots
60 Snack-food brand that sounds like buried treasure
61 It may be a deal breaker: Abb.
62 Gander
63 Some pipe joints
64 New York Titans' org. of old
65 Jackie of "Rush Hour"
67 Question that isn't a "who"-question
72 Ned who composed "Ain't Misbehavin'"
73 Sound heard at Churchill Downs
74 Alternatives to telephone jars
76 "That is what you should do"
79 Jean
80 "Playwright's" father
81 Land on the Celtic Sea
83 Run up
84 Company that's had its moments
85 Draft classification
86 Small sloop
88 Composer Bartok
90 Equine -- Home -- Cyanite -- ___
91 Pub perch
92 "That's what you should do"
93 "Company"
94 "Under the Greenwood Tree"
95 "Arms and the Man"
96 "Company"
97 "Run on"
98 "Company"

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.
The first time Tanya Tucker was nominated for a Grammy Award, it was 1972, it was for her breakout country hit, “Delta Dawn,” and she was just a teen. Now, 50 years later, she’s back in the mix.

Tucker finds herself nominated for four Grammys, including song of the year for “Bring My Flowers in Today,” along with most of the country. In 2016 through an article in The New York Times Magazine. A cold call from a West Virginia farmer in 1998 who believed his creek was being contaminated and his animals poisoned by DuPont runoffs began the investigation that ended in 2017 when DuPont and Chemours Co. agreed to pay more than $600 million in a class-action lawsuit on behalf of thousands.

Ruffalo was captured and immediately set out to acquire the rights to make Nathaniel Roth’s “The Lawyer Who Became DuPont’s Worst Nightmare” into a legal thriller in which he’d play Bilott.

It’s a horror story that has to be told,” Ruffalo said. “It’s a story for our time.”

The result is “Dark Waters,” directed by Todd Haynes and co-starring an impressive ensemble including Anne Hathaway, Tim Robbins, Bill Camp, William Jackson Harper and Bill Pullman. The film opened Thursday in theaters. Bilott also authored a book about the ordeal, “Exposure,” which hit shelves in October.

The tune has Tucker reflecting and best country song for “Bring My Flowers in Today.”

The Associated Press

**Grandma steals the show in Musgraves’ Christmas special**

Grammy winner Kacey Musgraves knows who the real star is in her family — her grandmother. That’s why the singer put the woman who calls Nana in her upcoming holiday special, “The Kacey Musgraves Christmas Show.”

“Basically, this is just Nana’s world. We’re just all livin’ in it. That’s Nana’s Christmas special … I’m just in it,” said Musgraves on Tuesday at a screening in New York.

Musgraves initially worried how her grandmother would handle being on camera, but those fears quickly subsided.

“I was like, ‘OK, this is my 80-something-year-old grandmother. Is she gonna come in like, forget the lines?’ Like, you know. She’s not used to this,” Musgraves said.

“She came in, she gave us ad-libs, she was, like, giving us different inflections like she knew what to do. It was really cute.”

“The Kacey Musgraves Christmas Show” debuts Nov. 29 on Amazon Prime Video. The special features a number of characters, including Holly Hunter, Camila Cabello, James Corden and Kendall Jenner.

Musgraves got the idea for the special a year ago. Filming took place over the summer in Cincinnati.

“It was, like, 90 degrees in L.A. in this airplane hangar that we shot it in; it didn’t have air conditioning. After the first day of filming, Grandma clothing, on my feet for like 16 hours a day, like, just tryin’ to move, just autograph happy. And I think we did,” Musgraves said.

**Apple cancels premire of ‘The Banker’**

Apple has canceled the premiere of “The Banker,” the day before it was to debut at Los Angeles’ AFI Film Festival.

In a statement Wednesday, Apple said that last week it learned of “some concerns” surrounding film “misrepresents things that happened years ago and our in-service spotlighted in “Dark Waters.”

Of “The Banker”

The based-on-a-true-story film stars Samuel L. Jackson and Anthony Mackie. Mackie plays Bernard Garrett who in the 1950s and 60s recruited a white man to pose as the face of his expansive real estate and banking business. In 1968, Garrett was convicted of misusing bank funds.

A theatrical release is scheduled for Dec. 6, after which it would be a part of the company’s new streaming service.

**Other news**

The “Fuller House” star Amy Jo Johnson will return to television in a new NBC comedy set in the world of local politics. The network said Wednesday that Hunter would star as mayor in the series “30 Rock” writer-producer Tina Fey’s new NBC sitcom.

An air date for the untitled series was not announced.

From The Associated Press
Who can speak for Ukraine like McCain?

By Patricia Murphy

CQ Roll Call

T here was ever a time and a place where the voice of John McCain was missing from Congress, this is it—at the intense moment of an impeachment, an election and a constitutional crisis.

The late Arizona Republican was one of the architects of the legislation that guaranteed his legacy willing to stand on a political island if he thought it was the right thing to do. So it's easy to imagine him waiting in the well of the Senate Chamber, his fist clenched, as the thumbs-down on the fate of President Donald Trump, with cable pundits everywhere holding their breath and a sense of foreboding.

But more importantly, McCain was also the foremost expert and advocate in Congress for his country that served as the backdrop for the events that have led Trump to the doorstep of his own impeachment. Why is that important? It's because there's no way that Rudy Giuliani could have marveled so freely in Ukraine or that Trump could have pulled the ambassador in whatever manner as they did without the senator from Arizona making it known to the world. Loudly.

To understand how important McCain was in Ukraine before he died, you only need to know that there are multiple roadblocks to the US providing Kyiv with the “Mighty Mo,” including one in Kyiv (voted by its City Council). Another is in Krymske, a small town on the front lines of the war against Russia. Lacking the resources for a new street sign, Nolan Peterson from the Daily Signal described a day in Krymske in May, where they found one holding up a printed-out sheet of paper with McCain’s picture on it to a power pole next to the road to make it official.

When McCain died in 2018, the editor of the Kyiv Post described him as beloved in a country in search of champions and heroes. The very story of him fighting and losing is a part of the darkest and most dangerous times, it was often not the voice of a Ukrainian politician, but the voice of John McCain. “It was the voice of U.S. Sen. John McCain.”

A fierce advocate, McCain’s commitment to Ukraine was equally well-known. When in 2014, he and other senators, pushed for funding and led congressional delegations to the country with more juice than any other non-U.S. politician, and made it clear that in the region. When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, McCain demanded sanctions to stop the aggression. He visited troops on the front lines. He led the push for money to strengthen its economy and eventually succeeded in authorizing funds to arm Ukrainian troops with lethal weapons to fight Vladimir Putin’s army.

“T made working for him in April of 2004, and he called me right away and said, ‘We’ve got to plan a trip, a CDEL, this summer.’ And he said we should go to Europe, we should go to Kyiv. And he said, ‘You’re going to be holding a news conference, and we need to have a little bit of a press conference masquerading as a country.’”

Fontaine described McCain’s commitment to the country as partially driven by the desire to help flooding democracies. Even more important, he viewed Russia as an existential threat to the Western world. “When we were shoring up, we were building up, and there was a certain kind of support offered by the VA’s comprehensive caregiver program. It’s time to act.”

“I think (he) would see it as a travesty that in the middle of a war where the government of Ukraine is trying to defend itself against a foreign-backed terrorist movement in its east and relies on military aid from the United States, that the United States is not able to get to the stem of the situation, because of some unknown reason, and at a maximum, for (a) really bad reason,” Fontaine said. There’s no way to know what McCain would have thought of the impeachment itself. But his career in the Senate was marked by moments when his voice, and only his voice, was heard. “When Ukraine faced the different kinds of attacks, that was the voice of John McCain.”

For decades, family caregivers have made all the difference for severely injured veterans from World War II and the Korean and Vietnam Wars, all the way up to the conflicts in the Middle East. It can be hard to find ways to work around those limitations on a temporary basis until upgrades are completed. Congress needs to step in and amend the caregiver expansion up to the discretion of the VA Secretary discretion.

Congress needs to step in and amend the caregiver law to establish a date at which time the VA must begin accepting and processing applications from pre-9/11 veterans and caregivers. If the VA is still unable to launch additional IT capability to manage care data, they should look at Congress’s ability to solve these issues. Perhaps they should consider expanding the implementation schedule of the exponentially larger Veterans Community Care Program in June, a law that would further millions of veterans. It’s clear that the VA can solve IT challenges when it is a priority. For decades, family caregivers have made all the difference for severely injured veterans. The VA and the Department of Defense are responsible for providing a level of benefits and assistance to caregivers. However, the VA has not made all the necessary investments to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers.

End the wait for pre-9/11 veterans and their caregivers.

By Randy Reese
Special to Stars and Stripes

F ifty years ago, 21-year-old Army infantryman Dennis Joyce was on patrol in Vietnam’s Mekong Delta when he stepped on a landmine, losing both of his legs and one arm, forever changing his life. With resilience and determination, Dennis was able to re-cover and build a meaningful life, with a loving family and a successful career, but he didn’t do it alone.

For the past 38 years, Dennis’ wife, Donna, has been by his side, supporting and caring for him, a role that has become a full-time job and a condition of her own. Today he relies on Donna more than ever, but it becomes increasingly difficult for both of them as they grow older. Donna worries whether she will be able to continue giving Dennis the care he needs without support. Dennis worries about how she will manage once he is gone, since Donna longue giving Dennis the care he needs without support. Dennis worries about how she will manage once he is gone, since Donna longue giving Dennis the care he needs without support.

Unfortunately, there was a catch. Due to budgetary concerns at the time the law was passed, for a 12-month period, Congress did not have to pay for any additional funds for veteran caregivers.

By July 2019, at which time the program would be extended to Vietnam, Korean and World War II veterans, the VA had not done what the law requires. The VA has occurred often in recent years, the VA failed to meet its deadline and is using it as an excuse to delay the expansion for thousands of aging veterans and their family caregivers until at least late next year, perhaps longer. This is simply unacceptable.

For Dennis and other severely injured veterans like him, there is deep disappointment, but their legislators are working legislatively to provide comprehensive caregiver support to seriously injured veterans and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers.

Recognizing the challenges family caregivers face, as well as the valuable service they provide to seriously disabled veterans, Congress passed legislation that authorizes the VA to establish a program to provide comprehensive caregiver support to seriously injured veterans and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to provide comprehensive support to caregivers and their caregivers. The law provided caregiver support is an important step forward, but it is not enough. Congress needs to understand that the VA has been unsucces
What newspapers are saying at home

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

Bait-and-switch on Trump plan to pull flavored e-cigarettes?

*Los Angeles Times*

Faced with a public backlash of a mysterious vaping-related illness and the skyrocketing use of electronic cigarettes across the nation, President Donald Trump announced in September that the Food and Drug Administration would pull flavored electronic cigarettes from the market, possibly within weeks.

“People are dying,” the president said during a televised news conference with officials from the Centers for Disease and Prevention and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. “We won’t hold our breath.”

Since then, four people have died and more than 2,000 people have been sickened.

Trump’s plan, reportedly urged by his wife, Melania Trump, was widely criticized. Never mind that it wasn’t a perfect answer to the current crisis. Even then, the vaping illness was suspected to be primarily caused by use of black market vaping devices modified for cannabis or THC and containing nicotine.

But a ban on flavored e-cigarettes is still good public health policy. Vaping among minors has grown precipitously in recent years — doubling in just the last two years to about a quarter of all high school seniors, studies show. The trend is primarily driven by an attraction to flavors like candy and fruit. Nearly 80% of teens who vape said they did so because of the flavors, according to the Surgeon General’s report. Nearly 80% of teens who vape said they did so because of the flavors, according to the Surgeon General’s report. The trend is primarily driven by an attraction to flavors like candy and fruit.

Unfortunately, though, the judge’s latest moment of notoriety is much different — a humiliation borne of his humanity. All of us make mistakes, although usually not in legal judgments against a consumer product. Goliath such as Johnson & Johnson. On Nov. 15, Balkman had to admit that his decimal place error had created a $107 million mistake in an opioid case verdict that had been big news from coast to coast.

Last summer Balkman heard the first case to go to trial among thousands of nation-wide federal opioid lawsuits. In August, he ordered Johnson & Johnson to pay $572 million for its role in an opioid crisis that, according to the injury compensation calculator, is estimated at $391 billion. Balkman’s verdict received extensive media coverage. It’s expected to dislodge drug companies from a position of control to seek new alliances.

Balkman’s error raised multiple questions. What caused the mistake? How will it impact future cases? What is the impact on the opioid crisis?

It’s not too late for Trump to sign the opioid bill. It’s not too late for Trump to sign the opioid bill. It’s not too late for Trump to sign the opioid bill...
**Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

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**ACROSS**

1. Challenges
6. Prissy violin
11. Nikon product
12. More gung-ho
14. Luxury stadium seating
15. New York player
16. Cauldron
17. Belgrade natives
19. Mormon church, for short
20. Slightly
22. Part of RSVP
23. Borsch base
24. Drew of fiction
26. Changes generally
28. Egos’ counterparts
30. Right angle
31. Hargitay of “Law & Order: SVU”
35. Elegance
39. Jai —
40. Orange veggie
42. Tizzy
43. Flushed
44. Santa —
46. Depot (Abbr.)
47. Singer Yearwood
48. Elevated road
51. Daze
52. Stopwatches
53. Noisy kiss
54. Luminaries

**DOWN**

1. Sioux people
2. “The Joy Luck Club” author
3. Civil War soldier
4. Love god
5. Jazz band section
6. Heavenly color
7. Afternoon affairs
8. Stymp’s pal
9. Short sock
10. One of the Ramones
11. Senate broadcaster
13. Takes five
18. Crater part
21. 603, in Roman numerals
23. Fancy dances
25. QB’s stats
27. Patient’s need, briefly
29. Small songbird
31. Shopping centers
32. Warnings
33. Cure’s find
34. Small battery
36. Retort
37. Indian instruments
38. Remains
41. Requirements
44. Ice-cream flavor, for short
45. “SNL” segment
48. Resort
50. Singer
56. Sumac

**Answer to Previous Puzzle**

```
VESTS  MAN  MCS
ANTIC  OBI  ELL
NEATO  JUPITER
NOUGAT  NEAR
AILLEN  AGENCY
PLEA  REARM
PLENUM  DIAPER
DISCO  BACK
PEARS  ABS  HOOG
ARTE  CREEPO
GALILEE  WELTS
ASA  ENT  EDENS
NEW  ITS  DIETS
```

**CRYPTOQUIP**

ACN - NEEH R V YHS PANBS
SYXVV YBKZ XVZ OHCSG
FXHONK ZVKHVUKO SBXKVZ
RNWPKZNO: “SYV SYHXS ZNUV K.”

Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: WHEN YOU VERIFY A NEW YORK HARBOR LANDMARK’S HEIGHT, HAVE YOU MEASURED THE STATUE OF LIBERTY?

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: C equals X
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ALMOST $200,000 AWARDED SINCE 2014!

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GRAND PRIZE
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ENTIRE BALANCE account credit
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2ND PRIZE
10 WINNERS
$1,000 MILITARY STAR account credit

3RD PRIZE
25 WINNERS
$500 MILITARY STAR account credit

*Valid anywhere MILITARY STAR is accepted as tender of payment. Every purchase you make with your MILITARY STAR card from November 1 – December 31, 2019 automatically counts as one entry. No purchase is necessary to enter or win. A purchase does not increase the chances of winning. Visit MyNEX.com/Customer/Ads/Page/Exchange for sweepstakes details.
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E-Mail: info@transglobal-logistics.de
WEB: www.transglobal-logistics.de

UNITED KINGDOM
Phone: +44-(0)1638-515714
E-Mail: enquiries@carshipuk.co.uk
WEB: www.carshipuk.co.uk

USA
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**Wednesday's transactions**

**BASEBALL**

**BOSTON** — Selected the 30-man roster of RF Kiké Hernández from Pawtucket (IL).

**CINCINNATI** — The contract of IF J.C. Clamon, Bobby Dalbec, C. J. Hahn, OF Ryan Hendrix and RHPs Marcus Wilson from Portland (EL), and LHPs Dan Butler, Brian Shaffer and Edgewood Lavigne from Pensacola (SL).

**CHICAGO WHITE SOX** — Selected the contract of OF Connor Kaiser from the Peoria Javelinas (NAHL).

**CINCINNATI** — Announced the signing of SS Nick Senzel from the Peoria Javelinas (NAHL).

**PHILADELPHIA** — Selected the contracts of RHPs Cristian Javier and INF Nicky Delmonico from the Peoria Javelinas (NAHL).

**SAN DIEGO PADRES** — Designated for assignment LF Brayan Aguilar from the El Paso Chihuahuas (IL).

**WASHINGTON NATIONALS** — Selected the contract of OF Ben Howard from the Harrisburg Senators (SL).

**BASKETBALL**

**AMERICAN FORCES**

**THURSDAY**

11 pm **NAVY** — Selected the contract of CSV Justin Robinson from College Park (NBAGL).

**PULLMAN GUARDIANS** — Selected the contract of G Robert Towles from College Park (NBAGL).

**SAN JOSE SHAKERS** — Selected the contract of SF Marcelin DeSouza from College Park (NBAGL).

**SAN DIEGO PACHUQUIS** — Selected the contract of G Angel Ferras from College Park (NBAGL).

**COLORADO ROCKIES** — Selected the contract of SFs Airam Diaz and Ronald Matarrita.

**NEW YORK YANKEES** — Selected the contract of OFs Miguel Andujar and Ronald Matarrita.

**MIAMI MARLINS** — Designated for assignment INF Andy Wilkins from the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp (IL) and LHPs Jeff Conine andManny Lopez from the Jupiter Hammerheads (IL).

**TAMPA BAY RAYS** — Selected the contract of INFs Buddy Reed and Curtis Washington from the Montgomery Biscuits (SL).

**TAMPA BAY BULLS** — Selected the contract of INFs Ryan Goins and Artemio Sax from the Montgomery Biscuits (SL).

**ATLANTA BRAVES** — Selected the contracts of RHPs Taylor Widener and Jordan Humphreys from St. Louis (SL) and INF Alex Gray from Savannah (SL).

**WASHINGTON NATIONALS** — Selected the contract of INFs J. T. Chisholm, Bobby Dalbec, C. J. Hahn, OF Ryan Hendrix and RHPs Marcus Wilson from Portland (EL), and LHPs Dan Butler, Brian Shaffer and Edgewood Lavigne from Pensacola (SL).

**PHILADELPHIA** — Selected the contracts of RHPs Cristian Javier and INF Nicky Delmonico from the Peoria Javelinas (NAHL).
**Volleyball:** Grace Bryant, Zama

**By Dave Ornauer**
Stars and Stripes

Talent and desire were never issues with the Zama volleyball program, coaches and players say; they have had plenty of both over the years. It was finishing, team leader Grace Bryant said, that always seemed to hang up the Trojans when it counted.

No longer. Zama captured its first Far East Division II crown and ended a 22-year drought, winning its first Far East title of any kind since 1997.

Bryant, named the tournament’s best hitter and All-Tournament Most Valuable Player, earned D-II MVP honors on second-place Zama last year, but the Trojans lost in five sets to Christian Academy Japan.

Through this year’s championship, Bryant said she and the returners from 2018 reminded the newer players of what came before and what needed to happen then.

“We told them our stories about last year and how we couldn’t finish as we wanted to,” said Bryant, a junior outside hitter. “This season … there were a lot of situations we had to go through and each other’s backs. We would stay humble, never getting too cocky. One point at a time.

Every player on the Trojans played a crucial role in getting them to the championship, coach Veronica Jones said. Bryant, on the other hand, was vital in every sense.

“Grace never leaves the court,” Jones said of her hitting, receiving, serving and “especially leadership. We cannot win without her physical presence or leadership on the court.”

Now that the banner has been settled in, Bryant says she’ll start tacking on the wall of Trojans and will look forward to the new season beginning in March.

“I am not going to let it go just yet,” Bryant said. “The way I feel.”

**Football:** Dean Owen, Kadena

**By Dave Ornauer**
Stars and Stripes

KADENA AIR BASE, Okinawa — Where the most recent of Kadena’s Pacific-record seven Far East Division I football championships is concerned, defense led the way.

En route to a 7-0 record, including a 14-12 win in the Nov. 9 D-I final over Humphreys, the Panthers led Pacific high school football in scoring defense, allowing 5.57 points per game, recorded two shutouts and gave up just 130.6 yards per game.

Leading the way was Dean Owen, a senior lineman/linebacker who recorded six sacks and averaged 8.1 tackles per game. But it was more than numbers, Panthers coach Sergio Mendoza said, that made Owen the player he was.

“He was the heart of the defense, and it was because of that defense that we were successful,” said Mendoza, who just completed his 15th season as Kadens’s coach.

“I have never coached somebody who willed himself to this position” from his freshman year, Mendoza said. “His aggression, his vision inside the tackle box was amazing. And he was a good leader. He lifted his teammates when they were down, and he led by example.”

For all of his achievements, Owen has been named Stars and Stripes Pacific high school football Athlete of the Year.

Owen nosed out a field of nominees that included quarterback Tim Mateiski and running back Brenden Jackson of Division II champion Zama, running backs Matthew Torrecillas and Marshall China of D-II runner-up M.C. Perry, and seniors Junior Gregory and David Key of D-I runner-up Humphreys.

Whether it was Owen making a routine stop on an opening play, to a critical extra-point block in the D-I championship, to the goal-line stand on which the Panthers halted Humphreys quarterback Deontaye Gregory to end the final, Owen said it didn’t matter who got credit for a huge play.

“It doesn’t matter who makes a play as long as the play is made,” Owen said. “We’re all working as a unit, to reach a higher goal, to achieve greatness.”

Owen and the Panthers also won the D-I title in 2017, but he said this one was more memorable because of the “stronger bond” the team shared. “I’m very proud of the work we did to get where we are now,” he said.

Owen not only served as a key player on defense; he also played guard and was the Panthers’ long-snapper.

“He was theynchpin of the interior,” Mendoza said.

Owen said he experienced mixed feelings as time ran out on the D-I final and Kadena’s football season – his last one.

“It was my last game in high school,” he said. “I wanted to go out with a bang.”

**By Teresa M. Walker**
Associated Press

The James Wiseman saga finally has a resolution.

After months of back-and-forth between Memphis and the NCAA, the sports governing body has cleared the heralded freshman to return to the basketball court on Jan. 12.

Wiseman will sit out a total of 12 games under a decision announced by the NCAA.

The sports governing body also announced Wednesday that Wiseman will not be allowed to play in any upcoming games, which means he has played his last game for Memphis.

Wiseman is expected to be cleared for practice and spring games.

“Based on case precedent, the circumstances of this case and other mitigating factors, the University will immediately appeal this decision,” Memphis said. “We expect a more fair and equitable resolution, and we will exhaust all avenues on James’ behalf.”

Wiseman and his family have maintained that the NCAA has made a mistake.

“Every decision I have ever made was to put myself in a position to help our team win,” Wiseman said. “I have never left a court. Never. That is who I am.”

Wiseman has filed a lawsuit to continue playing after the NCAA ruled him “likely ineligible” for the games.

Wiseman’s attorney for the games, David Safdie, who was not the Memphis coach at the time, said his client would not play against the Tigers.

Wiseman withdrew the lawsuit against the NCAA on Nov. 14 after Memphis played him in the Tigers’ first three games of the season. The 10th-ranked Tigers were 2-1 with the 7-foot-1 center on the court.

When Wiseman withdrew his lawsuit, Memphis held him out of a win over Alcorn State while working to resolve his eligibility status with the NCAA. His first game back will be when the Tigers visit South Florida.

The NCAA had ruled Wiseman was “likely ineligible” due to $11,500 Hardaway gave the center’s family for moving expenses from Nashville to Memphis in the summer of 2017.

Wiseman will sit out 12 games

**By Dave Ornauer**
Stars and Stripes
Stamkos hits another milestone

Tampa captain gets 400th goal in 763rd game

BY FRED GOODALL
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Steven Stamkos celebrated another milestone in a storied career with grace and humility.

The longtime captain of the Tampa Bay Lightning has scored his 400th goal last weekend, joining an elite group that includes eight other active players — Alex Ovechkin, Patrick Marleau, Marian Hossa, Sidney Crosby, Ilya Kovalchuk, Eric Staal, Joe Thornton and Marian Gaborik.

“I am sure this will be one of those moments you reflect on after the fact, but in saying that it’s still pretty surreal,” he said. “It’s time All-Star, who’s played his entire career with Tampa Bay, said after accomplishing the feat during a loss at home to the Winnipeg Jets.

“You never envision scoring that many goals in the NHL, and hopefully a lot more to come,” Stamkos added. “It’s a great honor and privilege to play in this league for a long time, and to do it with one organization is pretty special.”

At 29, Stamkos is in his 12th season and no longer the most dynamic scorer on a deep, talented roster featuring reigning league MVP and scoring champion Nikita Kucherov and rising star Nick Suzuki.

But Stamkos is a natural goal scorer, and the Lightning always expect him to score, which is why he’s an All-Star, said Pat Maroon, the team’s associate head coach.

Maroon, in his first season with Tampa Bay, signed with the Lightning as a free agent after helping the Blues win their first Stanley Cup.

“Every single night he proves he’s a natural goal scorer, and that’s why teams lock on him all the time,” he said. “He’s dangerous at all parts of the ice, especially in the O-zone,” Maroon said. “I’m really happy for him... Now he gets to chase 500.”

A more immediate goal is to help the Lightning get back to the playoffs, where Tampa Bay was swept in the first round after matching the league record for regular-season victories with 62.

The team is off to a slower-than-anticipated start — 9-7-2 after Tuesday night’s 3-1 loss at St. Louis — however coach Jon Cooper and his players say there’s no cause for alarm.

Thursday night’s game at Chicago concludes a season-opening stretch in which the Lightning play 12 of 19 games on the road, including an extended trip to Sweden for the NHL Global series, where they won two games against Buffalo and felt they began to come together as a team.

This weekend starts a five-week stretch in which they will play 14 of 18 at home.

“We’ve got to build on what happened in Sweden. It will be nice to come off of November (and) December to get a little rhythm at home, and hopefully we can get a little traction,” Cooper said.

“Obviously, being away for two weeks is tough, but I’d say we made the most of it as a group,” Stamkos said. “We got two big wins. It doesn’t stay over there, though. It’s about coming together now. We’ve had a really difficult season. We see the record that we have with two straight weeks on the road and the majority of our games being played on the road. I think we’re pretty happy with the results... I think we took a step forward (in Sweden).”

One potential benefit to playing so many early road games is the schedule has allowed for additional practice time, where the Lightning have focused on several areas that were problematic during the team’s first-round postseason loss to Columbus last spring.

Defensive miscues in front of Washington Capitals goaltender Braden Holtby have made his numbers this season look less than stellar. But the 2016 Vezina Trophy winner has been better than the stats indicate and specifically 10-1-1 with a 2.40 goals-against average and .926 save percentage since a brief “reset” in mid-October.

“I said from that day there’s no goaltending controversy and there isn’t,” coach Todd Reirden said. “He’s a winner. He’s a competitor. He battles. He’s not coming up short until he figures out a way to improve. It’s such a credit to him as a person.”

Flyers on track

The typically slow-starting Philadelphia Flyers have points in 14 of their first 20 games, and much of the credit for their start can go to Alex Vigneault. Philadelphia’s new coach put in video teaching that gets players to see their mistakes and learn from them, and an onus on accountability is working.

“What we’re trying to do here is tell our players what they need to do on the ice, what they need to do as far as team preparation,” Vigneault said. “Accountability, I think a lot of it has to do with understanding the game. When you can understand the game and evaluate your performance the way you’re supposed to, it helps you work on certain things and it helps you improve your game.”

Game of the week

Edmonton at Arizona on Sunday: The Pacific Division-leading Oilers hold a narrow lead over the surprising Coyotes. Arizona had shootout wins last week over division leaders Washington and St. Louis, and posted identical 3-1-0 records over wins over Calgary and Los Angeles in its last two games.

AP hockey writer Stephen Whyno in...
Spurs, Popovich dealing with rare losing streak

By Howard Fendrich

WASHINGTON — Forgive Gregg Popovich for not being in much of a mood to discuss the current state of the San Antonio Spurs.

Fact is, he’s just not used to losing like this.

Here’s how long it’s been since the Spurs dropped seven games in a row, a way they now have after DeMar DeRozan, LaMarcus Aldridge and the rest of the team were beaten by the lowly Washington Wizards 138-132 on Wednesday night. You have to go all the way back to the 1996-97 season to find such a rust for Pop and Co.

This was before Tim Duncan had even played a game for them — and that guy was in the arena Wednesday, sitting on the sideline as an assistant to Popovich. Before Popovich led the franchise to five NBA championships and 22 consecutive playoff appearances.

Before folks such as Tony Parker, Tim Duncan and Co.

As an assistant to Popovich. Being an assistant to Popovich.

Many of those championships were a long time ago, as much of a mood to discuss the current state of the San Antonio Spurs.

James, LAL

DeRozan, SAN

Doncic, DAL

San Antonio finished 20-62, much of a mood to discuss the current state of the San Antonio Spurs.

Coach Gregg Popovich and the San Antonio Spurs are mired in a seven-game losing streak, the team’s longest since Popovich’s first season as coach, more than 20 years ago.

Days since the last time the San Antonio Spurs had lost seven consecutive games, the period from March 5, 1997 to Nov. 20, 2019.

The Spurs’ record in their past 10 games after a 4-1 start to the season.

Points allowed per game this season by San Antonio, the eighth-worst average in the league.

Source: NBA.com

The Spurs lead the NBA in free throw attempts over the last three games, with 132 attempts and 119 points, a 88.0% free throw shooting rate.

In three consecutive games, Popovich spoke to reporters only briefly.

“All in all, if you score 132 points, you should probably have a pretty good chance to win a game,” he said. “If you give up 132, you are not going to win.”

He said he would leave it to the commissioner “to get to the bottom of it” and said he hadn’t heard anything recently.

Asked if it was frustrating considering a seven-game ALCS loss to the Astros two years ago, he responded, “I have to see what the results of the investigation are before we make any comment.”

Regarding this year’s ALCS, Houston players were suspect of whistling in the dugout to communicate pitch selection to batters.

Crane’s appearance at the owners’ meetings was his first near the hotel adjacent to the new Texas Rangers ballpark that will open next season.

Oakland pitcher Mike Fiers told The Athletic in a story last week that he saw what the results of theinusral draft picks.

The team issued and then retracted a story. "No, that’s not true," Taubman said when asked if he had been fired.

Art Cashman, general manager of the New York Yankees, said he had been fired.

Hill and moved from the front of the hotel to the lobby then stepped into the hotel and escorted the Astros owner to the sideline.

The World Series champion Houston Astros will be punished for direct, by the numbers

The more the managers and owners wrap up their meetings at the hotel adjacent to the new Texas Rangers ballpark that will open next season.

Fact is, he’s just not used to losing like this.

San Antonio finished 20-62, much of a mood to discuss the current state of the San Antonio Spurs.
It was midway through the third quarter last Saturday, and Missouri had just cut Florida’s lead to 13-6, when Gators quarterback Kyle Trask dropped back and saw Kyle Pitts down the right sideline.

Trask heaved the ball and Pitts, the big and rangy tight end, grabbed it along with Tigers safety Khalil Oliver. They still had control of it when they hit the ground. Pitts unwilling to let it out of his enormous paws, and it took a video review to decide who had possession.

Pitts wound up with a 25-yard catch. And three players later, Trask threw a 15-yard touchdown pass to Lamical Perine that effectively sealed the Gators’ 23-6 victory.

It was just another example of why Pitts is a legitimate candidate for postseason honors, including the AP All-America team.

“Especially for the short throws over the middle, he has great body awareness to position guys up,” Trask said. “If nothing else is there, you’ve got a big athlete that is going to make plays.”

Pitts has been crucial to the Gators’ continued success after losing quarterback Feleipe Franks to a season-ending knee injury. He has the second-most catches and fifth-most yards receiving among tight ends nationally, averaging 4.2 catches per game and hauling in five touchdown catches.

He’ll be playing with a chip on his shoulder going forward, too.

The voting panel for the Mackey Award, given to the nation’s best tight end, revealed a list of eight semifinalists Monday. The biggest absence from the list: Pitts.

Evidently, Barry Odom wasn’t among the voters. The Tigers’ coach called Pitts a “matchup problem,” and that his defensive coaches were constantly tracking where he was all game.

“I’ll hear that in my sleep tonight: ‘Where’s 84 lined up?’” Odom said.

There was a Mackey Award semifinalist on the field Saturday: Missouri’s Albert Okwuegbunam, who has caught six TDs this season yet showed in one drive against the Gators why he’s been a maddening opponent, holding three of their last four without a touchdown. Anae, a senior edge rusher, has three sacks in his last two games and six in his last four.

Who’s hot

Bradlee Anae, DE, Utah
The Utes have been smothering opponents, holding three of their last four without a touchdown. Anae, a senior edge rusher, has three sacks in his last two games and six in his last four.

Who’s hot

Yutur Gross-Matos, DE, Penn State
Gross-Matos was a second-team preseason AP All-American and is a possible first-round draft pick. But he hasn’t been the force coming off the edge that the Nittany Lions need him to be in recent weeks. He has one sack over his last five games, and the last two weeks Penn State has been burned for more than 300 yards passing by No. 11 Minnesota and Indiana.

On the line

(SEC Network analyst Cole Cubelic, a former guard at Auburn, breaks down an offensive lineman playing at an All-America level).

Jackson Carman, OT, Clemson
The sophomore has helped pave the way for a dominant Clemson running game.

“His hands have been a big reason this offensive line is being discussed as the best Clemson has had under coach Dabo Swinney,” Cubelic said.

All-America matchup

Justin Madubuike, DT, Texas A&M vs. Solomon Kindley, OG, Georgia
The Aggies’ first trip to Athens since joining the Southeastern Conference features a monster matchup along the interior. Madubuike is one of the more overlooked players in the SEC, if not the country.

The 309-pound junior is a disruptive force against the run and rushing the passer, with 3.5 sacks and 9.5 tackles for loss.

He will probably draw attention from all three of Georgia’s massive inside linemen. Kindley is the best of the bunch at left guard, maybe the best guard in the country.
## TOP 25 SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saturday’s games</th>
<th>No. 1 LSU vs. Arkansas</th>
<th>No. 2 Ohio State vs. No. 7 Penn State</th>
<th>No. 4 Georgia vs. No. 24 Texas A&amp;M</th>
<th>No. 6 Alabama vs. North Carolina</th>
<th>No. 9 Penn State vs. No. 16 Auburn</th>
<th>No. 10 South Carolina vs. Texas A&amp;M</th>
<th>No. 13 Baylor vs. West Virginia</th>
<th>No. 16 Colorado vs. UCLA</th>
<th>No. 19 Iowa vs. Indiana</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last week's games</td>
<td>vs. SMU (9-1), Saturday</td>
<td>at Hawaii (7-4), Dec. 1</td>
<td>vs. Notre Dame (9-3), Boston College</td>
<td>vs. Boston College (8-4)</td>
<td>vs. North Carolina (9-2), East Carolina</td>
<td>vs. Arkansas (5-6), Little Rock</td>
<td>vs. Virginia (9-3), Virginia</td>
<td>vs. SMU (9-1), Saturday</td>
<td>vs. Iowa (7-5), Oklahoma State</td>
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| No. 19 Iowa vs. Illinois | No. 20 Boise State vs Utah State | No. 21 Sam's vs Navy | No. 23 Oklahoma at West Virginia | No. 25 Appalachian St vs. Texas | No. 25 Virginia Tech vs. Pittsburgh |

## SERVICE ACADEMIES

### Air Force (8-2)

- at New Mexico (2-8), Saturday
- Last week: Won 38-21 at Colorado St.

### Army (5-6)

- at Hawaii (7-4), Dec. 1
- Last week: Won 47-6 vs. Vanderbilt

### Navy (7-2)

- vs. SMU (9-1), Saturday
- Last week: Lost 52-20 at Notre Dame

## POWER FIVE STANDINGS

### ACC

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### Pac-12 North

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<th>Pac-12 North</th>
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## KEY POWER FIVE MATCHUPS

### Texas (6-4) at No. 13 Baylor (9-1)

- **Series record:** Texas leads 78-26-4.
- **What’s at stake?** — Offcoming its first loss after blowing an early 25-point lead at home against Oklahoma, Baylor has another chance at home to clinch a spot in the Big 12 championship game. Bears coach Matt Rhule said he hasn’t talked to his players about “what about they can clinch and all that. ... I’m sure they know that.” Baylor last played Texas and Oklahoma in consecutive games in 2002, two lopsided losses long before the Bears were Big 12 contenders. Texas has to win its last two games, and get some help, to get back into the Big 12 title game for the second year in a row. The Longhorns are coming off a 23-21 loss to Iowa State, which kicked a field goal on the game’s final play. The last two wins by Texas have come on game-ending field goals by Cameron Dicker.

### No. 9 Penn State (9-1) at No. 2 Ohio State (10-0)

- **Series record:** Ohio State leads 19-14.
- **What’s at stake?** — The Big Ten’s East Division race comes down to this game. Ohio State gains a spot in the conference championship game Dec. 7 with a win. Penn State would also likely be in the conference championship if it wins as it will only have Rutgers to beat to reach the title game for the first time since 2016. Ohio State, of course, needs a win to ensure a spot in the College Football Playoff. The Buckeyes won the last meeting with the Nittany Lions, 27-26 in 2018.

### No. 24 Texas A&M (7-3) at No. 4 Georgia (9-1)

- **Series record:** Georgia leads 21-7-1.
- **What’s at stake?** — Georgia has clinched a berth in the SEC championship game and is seeking to keep its playoff hopes alive. The Bulldogs can’t afford a letdown as they face a second straight ranked opponent after an emotional 21-14 victory last week at No. 16 Auburn, which was ranked 13th at the time. Texas A&M is seeking its fifth straight victory but hasn’t beaten anyone that currently owns a winning record. This marks the first time these two programs have faced off as SEC opponents. Georgia won the 2009 Independence Bowl 44-20 — the last time they played.

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### Players to watch — Georgia:

- QB Jake Fromm has completed 283 of 470 passes for 3,196 yards and 20 touchdowns, and has thrown only four interceptions.
- RB D'Andre Swift has rushed for 1,027 yards and 14 touchdowns to go with three interceptions. Running back J.K. Dobbins keeps the team with 83 tackles.
- Washington State's leading rusher with 133 carries for 796 yards and 10 touchdowns.
- LB Joseph Ossai has 69 tackles, two sacks and two fumbles.
- Wide receiver Devante Duvernay has 87 catches for 1,017 yards and seven touchdowns. LB Joseph Ossai has 69 tackles, two sacks and two fumbles.
- Defensive tackle James Lynch has 8.5 sacks.
- Head coach Kirby Smart has led Georgia to a third straight victory over Ole Miss, 44-20 — the last time they faced each other.

### Players to watch — Texas A&M:

- Wide receiver Jhamon Ausbon has been the Aggies’ top pass-catching option with 54 catches for 654 yards and six touchdowns.
- CB DeMarvin Leal leads the team with 83 tackles.
- QB Alley Bandy has completed 113 of 230 passes for 1,510 yards and 14 touchdowns, and has thrown only four interceptions.
- RB Journey Brown has run for 1,250 yards and 17 touchdowns. Running back D’Andre Swift has rushed for 1,027 yards on 164 carries for seven touchdowns.
- Linebacker Monty Rice leads the team with 66 tackles.
- Texas A&M: Running back Isaiah Spiller is the leading rusher with 133 carries for 796 yards and eight touchdowns.
- Wide receiver D.J. Moore has been the Aggies’ top pass-catching option with 54 catches for 744 yards and three touchdowns.
- Linebacker Bucky Baker Johnson leads the team with 64 tackles.

### Facts & figures — Georgia leads 21-7-1.

- Georgia has clinched a berth in the SEC championship game and is seeking to keep its playoff hopes alive. The Bulldogs can’t afford a letdown as they face a second straight ranked opponent after an emotional 21-14 victory last week at No. 16 Auburn, which was ranked 13th at the time. Texas A&M is seeking its fifth straight victory but hasn’t beaten anyone that currently owns a winning record. This marks the first time these two programs have faced off as SEC opponents. Georgia won the 2009 Independence Bowl 44-20 — the last time they played.

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Time running out for ACC teams to earn bids

Only eight schools have secured bowl eligibility – fewest since expansion in '13

**COLLEGE FOOTBALL**

By Tim Reynolds
Associated Press

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — For the Atlantic Coast Conference, eight may not be enough.

Only eight ACC teams have secured bowl eligibility, and unless some teams find a way to rally that will mean the league will be sending fewer teams to the postseason than it has in every year since expanding to 14 schools in 2013.

Clemson, Louisville, Florida State, Wake Forest, Pittsburgh, Virginia, Pitt and Miami are all bowl-bound. Georgia Tech is the only ACC school that is eliminated from the bowl mix.

The good news for the league is five teams — Boston College, North Carolina State, Syracuse, North Carolina and Duke — still have a chance of getting to that six-win prerequisite. The bad news is that, with the exception of Boston College, those schools have no room for error. Boston College is 5-5, and the Wolfpack, Orange, Tar Heels and Blue Devils all carry 4-6 records into this penultimate weekend of the regular season.

“It’s not easy for anybody in our football world,” Duke coach David Cutcliffe said. “I mean everybody, everybody is suffering in some manner. ... I don’t really have anything to complain about in any manner. This season is not over.

“Of the five still-hoping ACC teams, the end is perilsously close. And for the Wolfpack and Tar Heels, one will likely have the chance to end the other’s bowl hopes.

Boston College needs a win against either Notre Dame or Pitt to secure eligibility. Duke loses of four straight by a combined score of 135-44 — needs wins over Georgia Tech and North Carolina to keep its hopes alive. Syracuse needs to win both games on the road at Boston College and Louisville. North Carolina plays Mercer this weekend, then N.C. State in the finale.

If North Carolina misses bowl eligibility, that’ll be a third consecutive postseason absence for the Tar Heels. But a win over Mercer would give the Tar Heels five wins in 2019 — matching the total for the last two seasons combined, and in the mind of coach Mack Brown, that means relevance.

“It’s like a playoff game for us,” Brown said of Saturday’s home finale against PCS school Mercer. “We’ve got two wins to get to a bowl game. It’s out there for us.

“It’s no guarantee that the ACC gets past nine teams to the bowl sites. The bad news is that, with the exception of expansion in ’13 and ’14, the ACC has averaged fewer teams to the postseason than it has.

Only eight schools have secured bowl eligibility — fewest since expansion in ’13.

The conference pools bowl revenue and shares it among ACC members, and fewer bowls was obviously something thatACC teams would want to avoid. The ACC had 11 bowl teams last season, 10 in each of the two years preceding that, nine in 2015, and 11 apiece in 2013 and 2014. The last time the ACC had fewer than eight bowl teams was 2012 — when it was just a 12-team league as opposed to the current 14-team one, and that was also a year where Miami and North Carolina had enough wins and would have played in bowls but neither school was eligible for the postseason.

The bowl chase remains the race for the ACC’s Coastal title — and the right to face Clemson for the conference crown — is still undecided. Virginia is atop the Coastal, but if the Cavaliers win the division it will cap a seven-year, seven-different-winners run on that side of the league. And in the mind of ACC commissioner John Swofford, only eight teams within the Coastal is just one of the reasons why it’s tough for teams to hit big win totals.

“Anytime you’ve got teams that are going to be playing a play-for-play basis, what are the games going to be to play? They’re going to be competitive,” Diaz said. “There’s going to be great defensive coaches in this division, and I think that’s why it’s always a different road to get through.”

**Scoreboard**

**Wednesday’s scores**

**EAST**

Buffalo 49, Toledo 17

Miami (Ohio) 20, Akron 17

**MIDWEST**

Clemson 53, Georgia Tech 7

Merrimack 72, Sacred Heart 28

**SOUTH**

Miami (Ohio) 20, Akron 17

UT Martin (7-4) at Kentucky (5-5)

Campbell (6-4) at Charleston Southern (5-6)

**FAR WEST**

Marshall (7-3) at Charlotte (5-5)

BYU (6-4) at Mass (1-10)

Mercer (5-7) at Fordham (3-5)

**Saturday’s games**

CCSU (10-1) at Duquesne (6-5)

Georgia Tech (10-1) at Boston College (4-6)

Miami (Ohio) 20, Akron 17

Michigan (6-6) at Missouri (8-2)

Northwestern (5-6) at Indiana (7-3)

Boston College (5-5) at Notre Dame (8-2)

No. 4 Georgia (9-0) at Kentucky (5-5)

Miami (Ohio) 20, Akron 17

Texas A&M-Commerce—Tarleton State winner at Valdosta (Ga.) (10-0)

Indianapolis (9-1) at Ferris State (10-0)

Lindenwood (Mo.)—Ouachita Baptist winner

Miami (Ohio) 20, Akron 17

Eastern Kentucky (6-5) at Jacksonville St. (6-5)

Marshall (7-3) at Charlotte (5-5)

Mercer (4-7) at North Carolina (4-6)

Texas Southern (9-0) at Ark.-Pine Bluff (5-6)

Georgia Southern (4-9) at Arkansas State (6-6)

Who’s in?

**NCAA Division II playoffs**

**First Round**

South Carolina St. (11-0) vs. West Alabama (9-1)

S.E. Louisiana (6-5) vs. Amherst (5-5)

West Virginia St. (5-6) vs. Kutztown (6-5)

**Second Round**

New Mexico St. (5-6) vs. West Va. St. (5-6)

Ohio St. (7-4) vs. Hardin-Simmons (10-0)

Delaware St. (5-6) vs. Wingate (10-0)

Who’s in?

**NCAA Division III playoffs**

**First Round**

Saturday, Nov. 23

Huntingdon (7-3) at Berry (9-1)

Wright St. (9-3) at Hope (9-2)

Manchester (N.H.) (9-1) at Amherst (10-0)

**Second Round**

Saturday, Nov. 30

Huntingdon (7-3) vs. Berry (9-1)

Wright St. (9-3) vs. Hope (9-2)

Manchester (N.H.) (9-1) vs. Amherst (10-0)

Who’s in?
Texas A&M running back Cordarrian Richardson runs for a 75-yard touchdown as South Carolina defensive back Israel Mukuamu chases him during last week’s game in College Station, Texas. The 24th-ranked Aggies can still wreck the plans of No. 4 Georgia and No. 3 LSU.

BY KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — Texas A&M has yet to become a power in the Southeastern Conference in its eighth season in the league. With trips to No. 4 Georgia and top-ranked LSU to end the regular season, the Aggies could thrust their way into the spotlight by playing spoiler.

The 24th-ranked Aggies aren’t yet among the SEC’s elite in coach Jimbo Fisher’s second year, but they’re still a formidable foe. They’ve won four in a row and their three losses have come against No. 3 Clemson, No. 16 Auburn and No. 5 Alabama. The Tigers were ranked No. 1 at the time of their game.

“This team will probably be one of the most talented teams we’ve played against,” Georgia coach Kirby Smart said. “We all know who their three losses are against. I feel like the three losses are against Top 10 teams that are really, really good football teams. And they have an immense amount of talent.”

Fisher, who won a national title in 2013 at Florida State, said he is much more worried about improving his team than spoiling anyone’s season.

“We want to affect the outcome of our own program and how we play and what we do and what we get out of that... we’ve played well this last month, and we can keep November rolling and play well, play good football,” he said. “It’s important for our program. The playoffs are wonderful, but I’m worried about what’s going on at the moment.”

Playing the spoiler

Aggies still have games with Georgia, LSU

BY ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

Oregon has locked up the Pac-12 North, but much remains uncertain for the conference—even for the sixth-ranked Ducks.

Coach Mario Cristobal’s team has a shot at a College Football Playoff berth, but it will need help from inside and outside the league. Oregon’s best hope is to face No. 7 Utah in the conference championship game.

Only the Pac-12 South hasn’t been decided just yet.

A season-opening loss to Auburn dealt a major blow to the Ducks’ playoff aspirations. They responded with a string of victories in a conference known for cannibalizing its contenders.

“The best part about our guys, and it sounds like a broken record every time I come here and see you guys after a game, our guys feel like we still played our best football,” Cristobal said.

The Ducks (9-4, 7-0) have two more regular-season games—first at Arizona State (5-5, 2-5) on Saturday, and the Civil War rivalry game at home against Oregon State on Thanksgiving weekend.

Following Oregon’s 34-6 win over Arizona on Saturday, quarterback Justin Herbert looked back to his freshman year, when the Ducks went 4-8 under Mark Helfrich. Then there was Willie Taggart’s lone season before Cristobal steadied the ship. Now there’s a chance to do something special.

“It’s a sign of all the hard work that we’ve put in, and it’s a great opportunity for us,” Herbert said.

Further down the North division standings, a few teams are challenging for bowl eligibility. Surprisingly, Oregon State (5-5, 4-3) is currently second, with Washington (6-4, 3-4) and Stanford (4-6, 3-5) still in play as runners-up to the Ducks. California (5-5, 2-5) and Washington State (5-5, 2-5) are at the bottom.

Huskies coach Chris Petersen said the tough part about this season was losing games the team felt it should have won.

“I know it’s just sports and there’s a lot more things in life that are more important than that, winning and losing football games. We all get that. But in terms of the energy and the importance, and the effort that everybody puts into it, it is hard to reload and stay focused. And keep scratching and keep clawing, keep supporting each other,” Petersen said. “That’s hard. I think there’s a lot of good people that can come out that. Not just for these kids football-wise but other things down the road.”

The South

This is where it gets complicated. Utah looked simply dominant in its 49-3 victory over UCLA this past weekend. The Utes (9-4, 6-1) were picked in the preseason to win the conference title.

But first Utah needs to lock up the South. The team faces Arizona (4-6, 2-5) on the road Saturday and Colorado (4-6, 2-5) at the end of the season.

Meanwhile, USC (7-4, 6-2) is still lurking. While the Trojans have fewer overall victories than Utah, they have that all-important victory over the Utes at the Coliseum earlier this season.

Utah is likely the South’s most straight forward as they escape that loss and now the Utes are trying to stay focused while taking in more national attention.

“It certainly gets louder and there is more of it, but you still have to take the same approach and the same M.O. of just not listening to it and keeping your vision and focus with what the immediate task at hand is,” coach Kyle Whittingham said. “Our guys to this point have done a great job of that and here we are with the last two games of the regular season and hopefully we don’t deviate from that now.”

Bowl eligibility

Just four teams — Oregon, Washington, USC and Utah — have the prerequisite six wins for bowl eligibility in the league at this point. That’s all the important passed a rule requiring teams to have six, so no five-win teams will likely make it.

The winner of this week’s game between Washington State and Oregon State in Pullman will become bowl eligible. Technically, 11 Pac-12 teams can earn a spot in the postseason. It’s unlikely, but possible.

The conference could also wind up with only five bowl-bound teams.

“There is parity,” Petersen said. “It is hard to win. Look at the scores and all those types of things. I know as the season goes on things shake out but I look at what is going on this weekend and I’m like ‘you know everybody has a good chance to win.’ And there are no gimmees. You better play good or you’re going to get beat.”

David J. Phillip/AP

Running back Brian Herrien and No. 4 Georgia are in position to make the College Football Playoff, but those hopes would be dashed with a loss to A&M.

A&M."

A&M was in a similar situation in 2017 when the team beat No. 2 Georgia and No. 1 Alabama late in the season to rise from No. 16 in the polls to fourth and reach the SEC title game for the first time since 2013. Auburn’s late push ended a streak of three straight SEC titles for the Crimson Tide. The Tigers ended up losing to Georgia in the rematch for the conference championship.

The Bulldogs know people would love to ruin their title hopes. But they’re confident that they can finish the season strong after bouncing back from a double-overtime loss to South Carolina with four straight victories to win the East and land in the top four of the College Football Playoff rankings.

“We always knew we controlled our own destiny. We always knew we could be back in this position and just continue to work and do what we have to do to get back,” linebacker Azeez Ojulari said. Smart is aware that he can’t shield his players from talk of the playoff, so he doesn’t try to tell them to ignore it. Instead, he just implores them to focus on paying attention to details on the field.

“What you try to emphasize is the facts,” he said. “Here are the facts... if we block and tackle people, if we do simple better, we’re pretty good. If we don’t and we turn the ball over and we don’t play well on special teams and we give up big, explosive plays, we’re not very good.”

LSU, meanwhile, is looking to reach the SEC title game for the first time since 2013, though the Tigers also have national championship hopes.

In last year’s meeting in College Station, Texas A&M snapped a seven-game skid in the LSU series with an epic 72-70 win in seven overtimes.

LSU coach Ed Orgeron is pleased with how his team has grown in his third full season in charge in Baton Rouge after taking over for Les Miles after four games in 2016.

“It seems like this year it’s come all together,” he said. “It has taken us three years. Yes, it is a process. Maybe that’s too long. Maybe that’s a short time. I don’t know... but I always knew at LSU you have to win. I know the expectations at LSU (are) you have to win. My goal has always been to win at LSU.”

Chris Peterson/AP

Quarterback Justin Herbert and No. 6 Oregon have already clinched the Pac-12 North.
Cowboys offense humming despite Zeke’s struggles

BY SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas — Ezekiel Elliott lost interest in talking about another 40-yard outing because the star Dallas running back said he felt awkward discussing his struggles in a game the Cowboys won.

Center Travis Frederick started ed his assessment of the run game with a reminder that there might be a reason Dak Prescott had the most yards passing in a three-game stretch in team history.

This season is shaping up as Elliott’s first full year without a rushing title, and it’s already not able as the first with consecutive games of fewer than 50 yards rushing. It could also be the first time Dallas has the NFL’s No. 1 offense, its current ranking, in more than 40 years.

“I’m going to be a lot more worried when he gets bottled up and we can’t pass the ball,” Frederick said of Elliott, the two-time rushing champion who is eighth this year and more than 200 yards behind leader Christian McCaffrey of Carolina with six games to go.

“At some point we’re going to have to make a decision that is doing a certain thing to make it work on both sides and then at that point we have to hopefully fully have the back-ground to be able to step around that, find a workaround for that.”

And that very well could be Sunday when the Cowboys (6-4) visit New England (9-1) and the league’s No. 1 defense, the only one allowing fewer than 100 yards rushing and 200 yards passing per game.

While Elliott is tied for the NFL lead with McCaffrey and Dalvin Cook of Minnesota with five 100-yard games apiece, his highest total in the other five games is 62 yards, with a per-carry average of 3.1 yards.

The Vikings made sure Elliott didn’t beat them two weeks ago, holding him to 47 yards on 20 carries and escaping with a 28-24 win forcing a turnover on downs inside their 15 when the Cowboys went to Elliott on three straight plays.

Detroit had the same idea last weekend, but Elliott managed touchdowns on a 1-yard plunge and a 17-yard screen while being held to 45 yards on 16 carries in his second straight game without a carry of at least 10 yards.

Oh, and Prescott had 444 yards passing with three TDs in Dallas’ 35-27 victory.

“As long as the offense is rolling, it’s good,” said Elliott, who has 833 yards rushing and seven touchdowns along with 220 yards receiving and one score. “I think if you have a problem keeping your spirits up when you win a football game ... when you win a football game, you are excited, you are happy. All the other stuff will handle itself.”

Part of the discussion is moot. The Cowboys just gave Elliott a $90 million, six-year extension to end a preseason-long holdout. Even with Prescott in the top five in yards passing, touchdowns and completions, the team’s identity isn’t changing that fast.

“We love giving him the ball,” coach Jason Garrett said. “Even a game like (Detroit), when the running game is a little bit more challenging, you look at all those really good 3-, 4-, 5-, 6-yard runs that he made throughout the game. We think a lot of him.”

Dallas Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott scores on a 1-yard touchdown run during Sunday’s 35-27 win over the Lions in Detroit.

By the numbers

Sacks by the Falcons defense the past two weeks after totaling just seven in their first eight games.

SOURCE: Associated Press

In the two games since Falcons head coach Dan Quinn, pictured, moved receivers coach Raheem Morris and linebackers coach Jeff Ulbrich, the Falcons have allowed just nine points.

The biggest change was a shake-up of the coaching staff, with Raheem Morris moving over to work with the secondary after serving as receivers coach. Also, while Quinn remains the defensive coordinator, he has largely turned over the responsibility for play-calling plays to Morris and linebackers coach Jeff Ulbrich.

The results have been striking. The Falcons did not allow a touchdown in the last two games, a streak that actually stretches back 10 quarters to their Week 8 loss to Seattle. They’re suddenly getting pressure on opposing quarterbacks, registering 11 sacks against the Saints and Panthers after managing just seven over their first eight games. They had four interceptions against Carolina, further fueling the turnaround.

Safety Ricardo Allen was all smiles after practicing Wednesday. “We’re finally proving to ourselves that if we put in the work during the week, if we go hard enough during the week, if we keep our head down and silence the noise on our side, the sky’s the limit,” he said.

Some players are still toying with the idea of making the play-offs, though that seems highly unlikely.

The best the Falcons can finish is 9-7, which means the Saints (8-2) only have to win two more games to ensure they can’t be caught by Atlanta in the division race. The wild-card picture is the same, with Seattle (8-2) and Minnesota (8-3) both comfortably ahead of the Falcons.

“As a player, as an athlete, as a competitor, absolutely, you’re trying to look at every way,” running back Kenjon Barner said. “OK, if they lose and we win ... yeah, we’ve had those conversations.”

In their quieter moments, the coaches and players are surely frustrated that it took so long to find a winning formula.

They’re doing their best not to look back.
WEEK 12 TELEVISION GAMES

MARQUEE MATCHUP

Green Bay Packers (8-2) at San Francisco 49ers (9-1)

AFN-Sports, 2:20 a.m. Monday CET, 10:20 a.m. Monday JKT

SERIES RECORD: Packers lead 32-27-1.
PACKERS OFFENSE: OVERALL (17), RUSH (18), PASS (11).
49ERS OFFENSE: OVERALL (28), RUSH (25), PASS (23).

949ERS OVERALL (5), RUSH (20), PASS (15).

STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES: Packers have won past two meetings. ... 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo passed for a career-high 424 yards and four TDs last week in 36-26 victory over Cardinals. ... Running back Tevin Coleman has four TDs in his last four games. ... Fullback Kyle Juszczyk has a career-high seven receptions last week. ... Rookie wide receiver Deebo Samuel led team with eight receptions for 169 yards. ... Tight end Jimmy Graham had 10 receptions for 132 yards and two TDs in the last meeting. ... Tight end Jimmy Graham had 104 receiving yards in the last meeting. ... 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo passed for a career-high 424 yards and four TDs last week in 36-26 victory over Cardinals. ... Running back Tevin Coleman has first two career receiving TDs in Week 11. ... Defensive lineman Nick Bosa ranks second in the NFL with 13 tackles for losses.

93 yards and three TDs in Week 10 (Packers had a bye last week). He became the first Packers player since Hall of Famer Jim Taylor (1962) with two or more games of three or more rushing touchdowns in a single season. ... Running back Jamaal Williams has five TDs in his past five games. ... Wide receiver Devante Adams had seven catches for 118 yards in Week 10, his 14th career game with 100 more receiving yards. He had 10 receptions for 132 yards and two TDs in the last meeting. ... Tight end Jimmy Graham had 104 receiving yards in the last meeting. ... 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo passed for a career-high 424 yards and four TDs last week in 36-26 victory over Cardinals. ... Running back Tevin Coleman has five TDs in four home games. ... Fullback Kyle Juszczyk had a career-high seven receptions last week. ... Rookie wide receiver Deebo Samuel led team with eight receptions for 169 yards. ... Tight end Jimmy Graham had 10 receptions for 132 yards and two TDs in the last meeting. ... Tight end Ross Dwelley had first two career receiving TDs in Week 11. ... Defensive lineman Nick Bosa ranks second in the NFL with 13 tackles for losses.

Seattle Seahawks (8-2) at Philadelphia Eagles (5-5)

AFN-Sports
7 p.m. Sunday CET
3 a.m. Monday JKT
Series: Seahawks lead 9-7.
Notes: Seahawks have won past four meetings. ... Seahawks coach Pete Carroll is 4-1 against the Eagles over his career. ... Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson rushed for 53 yards and a TD in 27-26 victory over 49ers in Week 10 (had bye last week). ... Running back Chris Carson had 101 scrimmage yards (89 rushing, 12 receiving) and a rushing TD in the last meeting. ... Eagles quarterback Carson Wentz had a TD catch in the last meeting. ... Eagles quarterback Carson Wentz passed for 214 yards and a TD last week in 17-10 victory over the Lions. ... Running back Eno Selleck had two rushing TDs last week, his fourth career game with both rushing and receiving TDs. ... Wide receiver Michael Thomas had three TD catches for 462 yards and three TDs in last meeting. ... Tight end Jimmy Graham had three TD catches for 191 scrimmage yards (121 receiving, 70 rushing) and 10 tackles last week. ... Wide receiver Alshon Jeffery had 61 receiving yards last week. ... Running back Jamal Williams has five TDs in four home games. ... Fullback Kyle Juszczyk had a career-high seven receptions last week. ... Rookie wide receiver Deebo Samuel led team with eight receptions for 169 yards. ... Tight end Jimmy Graham had 10 receptions for 132 yards and two TDs in the last meeting. ... Tight end Ross Dwelley had first two career receiving TDs in Week 11. ... Defensive lineman Nick Bosa ranks second in the NFL with 13 tackles for losses.

Baltimore Ravens (8-2) at Los Angeles Rams (6-4)

AFN-Sports
2:15 a.m. Tuesday CET
10:15 a.m. Tuesday JKT
Series: Ravens lead 4-2.
Last meeting: Ravens beat Rams 16-13, Nov. 22, 2015.
Notes: Ravens have won past three meetings. ... Ravens lead NFL in rushing yards and are first team since the 1978 Patriots with 2,000 rushing yards in a season. ... Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson had 86 rushing yards last week in 41-7 victory over Texans. ... He had 1,133 scrimmage yards (97 rushing, 36 receiving) and rushing TD last week in 17-7 victory over the Eagles. ... Running back Gus Edwards had a 63-yard TD run and a season-high 112 rushing yards last week. ... Rams running back Todd Gurley had 133 scrimmage yards (97 rushing, 36 receiving) and rushing TD last week in 17-7 victory over the Bears. ... He has 64 career TDs, the second-most by a player under age 26 in NFL history. ... Defensive tackle Aaron Donald had two sacks last week. He has 12 games with two or more sacks since 2016, the most in the NFL. He had a sack in the last meeting.

Other ON AFN

Oakland Raiders (6-4) at New York Jets (5-5), 10 p.m. Sunday CET; 6:25 a.m. Monday JKT
Jacksonville Jaguars (4-6) at Tennessee Titans (5-5), AFN-Sports2, 10 p.m. Sunday CET; 6 a.m. Monday JKT

REST OF THE SCHEDULE

Tampa Bay Buccaneers (3-7) at Atlanta Falcons (3-7), AFN-Sports
Miami Dolphins (2-8) at Cleveland Browns (4-6), 10:25 p.m. Sunday CET; 6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

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Competitive imbalance
Closing weeks could finally bring challenge for ‘Blowout Buckeyes’

BY MITCH STACY
Associated Press

Ohio State coach Ryan Day has been saying all season how he wants to see how his team plays when a game is tight, nasty and intense in the fourth quarter.

That hasn’t happened yet. Through 10 games, Day has had the luxury of the Buckeyes running away from other teams by halftime or shortly thereafter and watching the backups mop up. Consider that his second-string running back, Master Teague III, has piled up 744 rushing yards on 114 carries, all in relief of J.K. Dobbins.

Day may get his wish soon.

The second-ranked Buckeyes begin the most rigorous two-game stretch of the season that will see them host No. 9 Penn State on Saturday and finish the regular season the following week in Ann Arbor against No. 12 Michigan, their archrival. If Ohio State wins out, the Buckeyes will be in the Big Ten championship on Dec. 7, likely against Minnesota or Wisconsin, and of course they have national title hopes, too.

“I think our team knows what’s at stake,” Day said Tuesday. “We’ve talked about that, but now it’s just time to focus on Penn State.”

The closest thing to on-field adversity the Buckeyes have experienced this season was leading by just three points early in the third quarter against then-No. 13 Wisconsin before reeling off 28 points on the way to a 38-7 win.

“We just have to be mature enough to understand how important every series, every play is, and it might just be one play that changes the game,” Day said. “I can’t really say that we’ve been in a game where that’s the case this year. Understanding that as coaches, understanding that as players, is going to be huge.”

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Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields carries the ball during the Buckeyes’ 56-21 win over Rutgers last week in Piscataway, N.J.

KYLE ROBERTSON, THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH/21B