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Ukraine, Russia swap prisoners

Mariupol defenders,
2 Americans, Putin
ally are in exchange

BY KARL RITTER
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine announced a high-profile prisoner swap early Thursday that was the culmination of months of efforts to free many of the Ukrainian fighters who defended a steel plant in Mariupol during a long Russian siege. In exchange, Ukraine gave up a prominent ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin and 55 other prisoners.

The exchange followed the release Wednesday of two U.S. military veterans who disappeared three months ago while fighting Russia with Ukrainian forces. They were among 10 prisoners, including five British nationals, released by Russian-backed separatists as part of a prisoner exchange mediated by Saudi Arabia, officials said Wednesday.

Alex Drueke, 40, and Andy Huynh, 27, went missing in the Kharkiv region of northeastern Ukraine near the Russian border June 9. They had traveled to Ukraine on their own and became friends because both are from



UKRAINIAN SECURITY SERVICE PRESS OFFICE/AP

Ukrainian soldiers, released in a prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine, are pictured near Chernihiv, Ukraine, late Wednesday. Ukraine announced a high-profile prisoner swap early Thursday.

SEE SWAP ON PAGE 8

Military to hire 2,000 civilians to aid sexual assault victims, train troops about prevention

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department and service branches are hiring 2,000 civilians to serve as training experts and special-victim advocates, replacing the previous standard of assigning service members to do the job, military leaders told lawmakers on Wednesday.

Reaction from members of the House Armed Services Committee subpanel on military personnel were split to this change, which is one of 82 recommendations the military is implementing after an independent review of its handling of sexual assault and harassment within the ranks.

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif.,

chairwoman of the subpanel, praised the move to hire professionals from outside the military.

But Rep. Mike Gallagher of Wisconsin, the ranking Republican on the subcommittee, said it was troubling to hire people without "a coherent plan for a new prevention program."

The hearing Wednesday fo-

cused on whether progress has been made by military leaders to implement the recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, which submitted its report in July 2021 to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. He established the commission shortly after becoming secretary and in Septem-

ber 2021, he laid out the plan for implementing the recommendations.

Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Gilbert Cisneros told the committee that defense officials hope to hire the 2,000 civilians by the end of fiscal 2027.

SEE ASSAULT ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

After 99 day drop, price for gasoline up a penny

Associated Press

After 99 consecutive days of declining gasoline prices, the cost for a gallon edged a penny higher Wednesday.

The national average price rose to about \$3.68 per gallon, according to the AAA, but prices have been in steady decline. Wednesday's average is lower than a

week-ago of \$3.70 and well below last month of \$3.90.

Prices declined for 14 consecutive weeks, the longest streak since 2015, according to analysts.

PACIFIC GAS PRICES									
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Japan	..	\$4.589	..	\$5.029	South Korea	\$3.729	..	\$4.599	\$5.039
Change in price	..	-3.0 cents	..	-7.0 cents	Change in price	-4.0 cents	..	-3.0 cents	-7.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.719	..	..	\$5.029	Guam	\$3.729	\$4.269	\$4.599	..
Change in price	-4.0 cents	..	..	-7.0 cents	Change in price	-4.0 cents	-2.0 cents	-3.0 cents	..

*DieselEFD **Midgrade

For the week of Sept. 23-29

EXCHANGE RATES		
Military rates		
Euro costs (Sept. 23)	\$0.96	
Dollar buys (Sept. 23)	0.9878	
British pound (Sept. 23)	\$1.10	
Japanese yen (Sept. 23)	140.00	
South Korean won (Sept. 23)	1373.00	
Commercial rates		
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770	
Britain (Pound)	1.1248	
Canada (Dollar)	1.3501	
China (Yuan)	7.0682	
Denmark (Krone)	7.5587	
Egypt (Pound)	19.4981	
Euro	1.0164	
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8495	
Hungary (Forint)	412.29	
Israel (Shekel)	3.4849	
Japan (Yen)	141.89	
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3097	
Norway (Krone)	10.4014	
Philippines (Peso)	58.46	
Poland (Zloty)	4.84	
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7631	
Singapore (Dollar)	1.4186	
South Korea (Won)	1406.47	
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9819	
Thailand (Baht)	37.35	
Turkey (NewLira)	18.3609	
(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)		
INTEREST RATES		
Prime rate	6.25	
Interest Rates Discount rate	3.75	
Federal funds market rate	2.32	
3-month bill	3.21	
30-year bond	3.52	

WEATHER OUTLOOK



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MILITARY

‘Fat Leonard’ captured in Venezuela

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A Malaysian defense contractor nicknamed “Fat Leonard” who orchestrated one of the largest bribery scandals in U.S. military history has been arrested in Venezuela after fleeing before his sentencing, authorities said Wednesday.

The international manhunt for Leonard Glenn Francis ended with his arrest by Venezuelan authorities Tuesday morning at the Caracas airport as he was about to board an airplane for another country, the U.S. Marshals Service said.



Francis

Interpol Venezuela Director General Carlos Garate Rondon said in a statement posted on Instagram that Francis came to Venezuela from Mexico.

Rondon said he was headed to Russia.

The arrest came on the eve of

his scheduled sentencing in a federal court in California for a bribery scheme that lasted more than a decade and involved dozens of U.S. Navy officers.

There was no immediate word on when he might be extradited to the United States.

Francis was under home arrest in San Diego when he cut off his GPS ankle bracelet and escaped on Sept. 4. Ten U.S. agencies searched for Francis and authorities issued a \$40,000 reward for his arrest.

U.S. authorities also issued a red notice, which asks law enforcement worldwide to provisionally arrest someone with the possibility of extradition. Malaysia and Singapore both have extradition agreements with the United States.

Francis pleaded guilty in 2015 to offering prostitution services, luxury hotels, cigars, gourmet meals and more than \$500,000 in bribes to Navy officials and others to help his Singapore-based ship servicing company, Glenn

Defense Marine Asia Ltd. or GDMA. Prosecutors said the company overcharged the Navy by at least \$35 million for servicing ships, many of which were routed to ports he controlled in the Pacific.

Francis had been allowed to remain in home confinement to receive medical care while he cooperated with the prosecution. With his help, prosecutors secured convictions of 33 of 34 defendants, including more than two dozen Navy officers.

Officials offer possible solutions to lagging recruitment

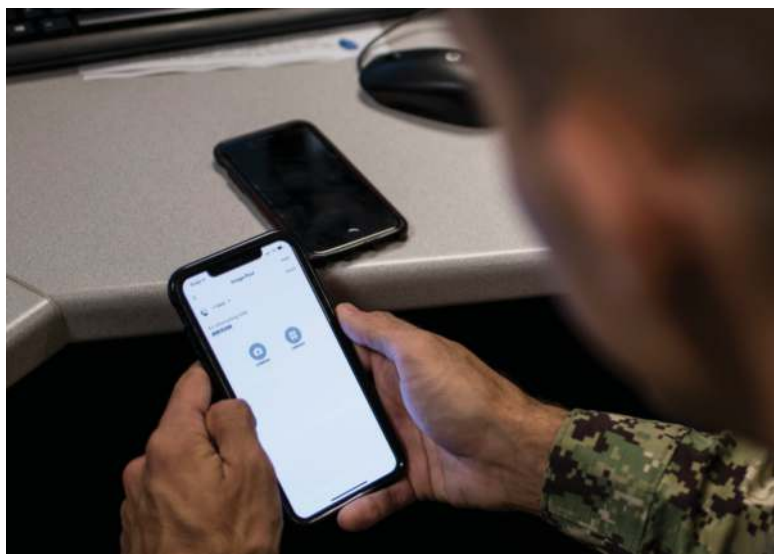
By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon should harness the power of social media and influencers to change young peoples’ perception of the military and entice them to enlist amid a challenging recruiting environment, defense officials told a Senate panel on Wednesday.

The officials partly blamed negative news coverage for hurting enlistment goals and said members of Generation Z must be galvanized to see the value of serving their country and the benefits of the military. Despite assessing more than 170,000 potential enlistees, the military anticipates collectively missing its recruiting goals when the fiscal year ends Sept. 30.

“The portrayal of the mission and what service looks like for military members and their families is often skewed in the media and in the minds of the current youth generation,” said Stephanie Miller, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military personnel and policy. “The next generation of Americans to serve should know that there has never been a better time for them.”

Miller and the personnel leaders of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps described an exceptionally tough recruitment year and told members of a Senate Armed Services Committee sub-



ZACHARY ESHLEMAN/U.S. Navy

Defense Department officials told a Senate panel on Wednesday that the Pentagon needs to use social media to change young peoples’ perception of the military to help entice them to enlist in military service.

panel that investment in more targeted advertising and marketing would help address the growing problem.

Current recruitment efforts rely too much on an outdated, “telephone book-era” method to recruit youth through high school directories rather than focusing on social media, said Michael Strobl, the acting deputy commander for manpower and reserve affairs for the Marine Corps.

“What we really want to be able to do here is to be able to provide

more personalized and tailored content,” Miller said.

The youth market is increasingly disconnected and unfamiliar with the military, with only 1 in 11 eligible individuals between the ages of 17 and 24 showing a propensity to serve, said Lt. Gen. Caroline Miller, the deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services for the Air Force. Only 23% of young people are fully qualified to enlist while the rest are disqualified for obesity, addiction, medical and behavioral

health conditions, and other issues.

“We anticipate the recruiting environment to be even more challenging in 2023 and beyond,” Lt. Gen. Miller said.

A historically low level of interest among young people as well as a strong labor market and intense competition with the private sector are all expected to continue contributing to recruitment woes, officials said.

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., said the public is misled by “disproportionately negative and often inaccurate portrayals” of military service and young people are particularly susceptible to “incorrect” narratives. Surveys of potential recruits show young people mainly pass on military service due to the possibility of becoming injured or dying or suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or other psychological issues, he said.

“While there are some jobs in the military that can be dangerous, most people serve without being exposed to any more danger than the average American does on a worksite,” Tillis said.

While recruitment lags, retention is at a record high across all the military branches, said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y. She attributed the paradox to the benefits of service: more education, a higher household income, greater

levels of civic engagement and a lower level of unemployment among veterans than the general population.

Defense officials told senators that they want to sell that narrative to young people and create a “national dialogue” on service through high-tech tools. Chief among them is targeted advertising for potential applicants that would allow the Marine Corps, for example, to track what users of its website click on.

Utilizing that technology requires action from Congress, which would need to expand the Pentagon’s current authorities for marketing and advertising to match the capabilities of the commercial advertising industry. The move would undoubtedly prompt discussions about data privacy, Tillis said.

Strobl said he welcomed working with the committee to figure out how to leverage modern technology while balancing privacy. Today’s youth are on social media “all the time” but the military lacks the ability to do effective outreach to them, he said.

“We must work together to change the narrative, to promote the value so that our nation’s youth do not miss out on the benefits of service and our country does not miss out on them,” Strobl said.

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Navy prosecutors say sailor hated life on San Diego warship

By ANDREW DYER

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — A 19-year-old San Diego sailor was so unhappy with his life as a deck seaman after failing to become a Navy SEAL that, in the summer of 2020, he snuck into a vehicle storage area on the amphibious assault ship Bonhomme Richard and ignited a spark, according to Navy prosecutors.

That spark turned into a blaze that, over the next four days, burned and destroyed the \$1.2 billion war-



Mays

Ryan Mays that kicked off this week.

Over the past two days, prosecutors have begun to lay the foundation of their case for arson — a charge that could send the sailor to

prison for life if found guilty.

Mays, now 21, is charged with aggravated arson and the willful hazarding of a vessel. He denies the charges and officially entered a plea of not guilty Monday morning at the start of the proceedings at Naval Base San Diego.

The sailor waived his right to a trial by military jury. Testimony is being heard by judge Navy Capt. Derek Butler.

O’Brien said Mays found himself working essentially as a janitor on

the Bonhomme Richard, a duty far beneath what the sailor envisioned for himself when he enlisted to become a SEAL.

Mays quit the Navy’s Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL school in Coronado on his second day. When sailors fail to complete BUD/S they are sent to the fleet Navy as “undesigned” sailors.

“(It) was not the glory he envisioned,” O’Brien said of Mays’ job on the warship.

“He absolutely hated his job.”

Navy Lt. Tayler Haggerty, one of Mays’ three active-duty military judge advocates, said Navy and federal investigators were quick to blame the fire on arson and hasty to zero-in on Mays as their prime suspect.

Haggerty said Mays was determined to get back into an elite program, and had not given up on the Navy.

Prosecutors said they expect to rest their case Friday. The trial is scheduled through Sept. 29.

MILITARY

Yokosuka honors fallen sailors in ceremony

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Dozens of white flowers were carefully placed at a memorial service here Thursday as guests recalled the sailors who lost their lives this year and in destroyer collisions in 2017.

Around 50 sailors and civilians, including three Gold Star families, gathered inside an auditorium on Command Hill at Yokosuka to take part in the memorial, part of the Navy Gold Star Program's Bells Across America for Fallen Service Members.

Following a prayer and remarks from base commander Capt. Les Sobol, sailors in dress whites read out the names of more than 180 sailors who died this year across the Navy.

At the end of the ceremony, the sailors and other guests were encouraged to place flowers in front of a list of the names and bow, mirroring a Japanese funerary practice called "kenko."

"I think in our day in and day out, it's easy to get lost in what's urgent versus what's important," Yokosuka's chaplain, Cmdr. David Kim, told Stars and Stripes after the ceremony. "It's times like this where we can pause and remember and just remind each other as a community that we're here for each other."

This year marks the seventh an-



A volunteer reads the names of sailors who died over the past year during a Bells Across America ceremony at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, on Thursday.

nual Bells Across America memorial worldwide, but just the second commemoration at Yokosuka, which started the practice last year.

The ceremony also remembered the 17 sailors who died aboard the USS Fitzgerald and the USS John S. McCain in 2017.

In June of that year, the Fitzgerald collided in Japanese waters with a Philippine-flagged container vessel, killing seven sailors. Just two months later, 10 sailors died aboard the McCain after the ship collided with a Liberian-flagged tanker near Singapore.

Riho Findley, the wife of Chief

Petty Officer Charles Findley, who died aboard the McCain, told Stars and Stripes that the years following the collisions were extremely difficult for her and the other families.

After the Fitzgerald and McCain shifted their homeports in the United States, it was even eas-

ier to feel forgotten, she said.

"But today, I felt that people were actually taking the opportunity to remind everybody that family members of the ships' sailors are still here," she said.

Sobol said service members and their families will never be forgotten.

"It's my sincere hope that this serves as a reminder that they're still part of our team and that we care for them deeply and we'll never forget the sacrifice of their family members," he told Stars and Stripes after the ceremony.

Makiko Walker, wife of Chief Petty Officer Demond Walker, and Kaori Thomas, wife of Petty Officer 2nd Class Adam Thomas, expressed thanks that their husbands' memories were also being honored.

Adam Thomas died last year following a motorcycle accident; Demond Walker died while on overnight duty in 2015.

"Today means a lot to me because my husband passed away seven years ago; in daily life, it sometimes feels like everyone else has moved on and I'm the only one remembering him," Walker said. "So, today, this is like we're remembering our fallen heroes and we're keeping their memories alive."

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Envoy touts Poland's acquisition of Apaches and other US materiel

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Poland's plans to acquire nearly a hundred "tank killer" Apache helicopters from the U.S. will be a difference-maker for NATO, a top American diplomat said this week in touting initiatives intended to bolster the alliance's crisis response plans.

"If Russian tanks threaten an inch of NATO territory, those Apache helicopters will stop them in their tracks," U.S. Ambassador to Poland Mark Brzezinski said in a speech highlighting Warsaw's role in defending NATO's eastern flank. "Apache helicopters are an armored vehicle's worst nightmare. They are tank killers."

Brzezinski's remarks come as

Poland is taking steps to boost its defenses and standing in NATO's military pecking order. Recent acquisition efforts involve billions of dollars in U.S. military hardware.

Items it intends to add to its arsenal include M1A1 Abrams tanks, Patriot missiles, HIMARS and F-35 fighter planes. And earlier this month, Poland said it will purchase 96 Apache helicopters from the U.S.

"These helicopters work well with Abrams tanks," Deputy Prime Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said in a statement after talks at Ramstein Air Base in Germany on Sept. 8. "Together they are a tremendous force."

Brzezinski echoed those comments, saying the equipment will ensure that American and Polish

soldiers can "work as one."

Given Poland's location bordering both Ukraine and Russia's military exclave of Kaliningrad, the country has become a center of gravity for the U.S.-led NATO alliance.

Since Russia's initial armed takeover of Ukrainian territory in 2014, U.S. troops have been a mainstay in Poland on a rotational basis. Now, the Army is putting down more permanent roots.

During NATO's June summit in Madrid, President Joe Biden said a base in Poznan would become the first permanent U.S. garrison in central and Eastern Europe. The location serves as the headquarters for the Army's V Corps, which oversees land force movements in Eu-



A U.S. Army AH-64 Apache helicopter flies in a NATO exercise in Spain. Poland plans to acquire 96 Apache helicopters from the U.S.

rope.

"This is permanent. It's a historic, tectonic shift," Brzezinski said of the Poznan base.

Meanwhile, more than 100 joint military infrastructure projects are underway that will support U.S.

troop rotations, provide additional training locations and allow NATO forces to flow into Poland in the event of a crisis, he said.

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More than two dozen al-Shabab insurgents killed in US strike in Somalia

Stars and Stripes

A U.S. airstrike killed 27 militants in Somalia, the military said this week.

The strike was launched over the weekend against al-Shabab terro-

rists who were attacking Somali troops near Buulobarde, in the central part of the country, U.S. Africa Command said in a statement Wednesday.

The strike Sunday came in sup-

port of the Somali army and an African Union force involved in an operation to regain the initiative against the militants in central Somalia.

AFRICOM said those troops are

taking part in the largest combined Somali and African Union offensive operation in five years.

For two decades, militants linked to al-Qaida have been waging a campaign against the Somali cen-

tral government. In recent years, AFRICOM has stepped up its military support in Somalia, where it routinely carries out airstrikes.

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MILITARY

Army's ruck walk adds weight to suicide prevention

By JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

CAMP ZAMA, Japan — Troops of the Army Aviation Battalion at the headquarters of U.S. Army Japan walked nearly 5 miles Thursday carrying weight on their backs to remember 174 soldiers throughout the Army who took their own lives in the past year.

The ruck walk by about 25 battalion soldiers, spouses and some energetic canines marked an opportunity to remember and reflect as Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month comes to a close.

The group gathered in the cool air at 6 a.m. on Kastner Army Airfield for a briefing before hoisting rucksacks holding a minimum of 35 pounds and set out on the course. Company commander and event organizer Capt. Savannah Baker went over the numbers before the walk.

The number of Army suicides over the past year nearly equaled the number of soldiers who have succumbed to COVID-19, Baker said.

The Army counted 176 confirmed or pending suicide deaths last year, according to a report re-

leased in April by the Defense Suicide Prevention Office. That's up from 174 suicides in 2020 and 145 in 2019.

The battalion commander encouraged the group as the event got underway.

"It's OK not to be OK," said Lt. Col. Courtney Kiluk. "We want you guys to thrive, we want your spouses to thrive, we want your kids to thrive, we are a safe space, we are here for you, and we know how to get the resources you need."

"It's OK Not to be OK" is a worldwide theme for suicide awareness month.

Baker added her own touch, adding a name that carried dual purpose for the event.

"I coined the 'Ruck for Resilience' name to incorporate an Army training event to continue to develop our basic warrior tasks and drills while also giving us an opportunity to reflect with family and friends," Baker told Stars and Stripes in an email Wednesday. "The reason we carry the weight is to simulate the heavy invisible weight people often carry when they are dealing with suicidal



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

A ruck walk by about 25 soldiers, spouses and some energetic canines marked an opportunity to remember and reflect during Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month at Camp Zama, Japan, on Thursday.

"The reason we carry the weight is to simulate the heavy invisible weight people often carry..."

Capt. Savannah Baker
U.S. Army

thoughts."

Members of the group walked at their own pace over hilly terrain on the perimeter of the installation.

ACE, which means to act, care and escort, is the Army's approved suicide prevention and

awareness training model.

Its purpose is to help soldiers and junior leaders become more aware of steps that they can take to prevent suicides and be confident in their ability to do so, she said.

A soldier from Seattle said he understood the importance of

team building events like this one.

"I think it's really good that we do events like this, just to show that we're not pretending it doesn't exist or we're aware that it's a problem throughout the Army," Sgt. Michael Karpstein, 31, told Stars and Stripes at the event Thursday. "You know everyone gets sick physically, people get sick mentally, as well, and it's important that we bring awareness to that so that people feel safe and feel comfortable to go get help when they need it."

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VA: New health records system needs major improvements

By SARA SAMORA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A multibillion-dollar electronic health records system launched less than two years ago by the Department of Veterans Affairs needs major improvements, agency officials told senators on Wednesday.

"We're into this damn near five years and we haven't done a damn thing," Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. "I mean, we've implemented, and it's been a train wreck in my opinion."

The VA originally signed a \$10 billion contract with the company Cerner in May 2018 to overhaul the agency's health records system and make it compatible with the Defense Department's system. However, the cost of the project later increased to about \$16 billion.

So far, the new records system has been launched at five of the VA's 166 health care facilities. In some cases, additional launches at some facilities have been postponed because of ongoing problems with the records system, along with delays caused by the

impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

At the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center in Spokane, Wash., where the system was first launched in October 2020, issues included unauthorized and inaccurate medication orders, patients' name and gender errors, issues in scheduling primary care appointments, misdirected links to video medical appointments and lost referrals.

The VA had originally scheduled to launch the new records system in July at the Boise VA Medical Center but moved it to 2023 after the VA inspector general released a report that revealed the system caused harm to 149 VA patients.

"Just one vet harmed is one vet too many and, right now, the bottom line is that the Cerner system is not delivering for veterans in the ways that it should," VA Deputy Secretary Donald Remy said the hearing. "It needs major improvements."

Shereef Elnahal, VA's undersecretary for health, said he visited the Columbus VA Medical Center in Ohio and saw firsthand the is-

sues clinicians and providers faced using the records system. Among the most concerning problems that he said he saw included putting in orders for lab work or tests.

"They were not confident in many cases, and in many clinical settings, that those orders were actually getting where they needed to go on behalf of their veterans," Elnahal said. "So, there was a lot of manual rework, recheck, that had to be done to meet those veterans' needs."

He also said employees told him the system was stressful to use. Leaders at the Columbus VA facility told Elnahal that some employees quit partly because of problems working within the system, Elnahal said.

In October, Paul Brubaker, acting principal deputy assistant secretary and deputy chief information officer at VA's Office of Information Technology, told House lawmakers that the agency contracted with the nonprofit Institute for Defense Analysis to calculate an estimate of costs of the Cerner electronic health record system.

A review issued in July by the institute estimated the implementation of the electronic health record system would cost nearly \$39 billion in 13 years. The estimate also included more than \$17 billion to sustain the system.

Mike Sicilia, executive vice president for industries at Oracle, which purchased Cerner in June, told the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee in July that he reviewed the system's issues. Oracle took over Cerner's electronic health record contract with the VA, Defense Department and the Coast Guard and established a command center led by Oracle's senior engineers.

Sicilia said Wednesday that Oracle hosted a summit with the VA, Defense Department, Federal Electronic Health Record Modernization Office, and Leidos Holdings Inc. to discuss the federal electronic health record system's performance and its issues. Sicilia said the meeting led to plans for the system and that Oracle sent a letter to the VA detailing the plans and a roadmap.

Sicilia also said Oracle is working with the VA to revamp training for employees to learn to use the electronic health records system.

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MILITARY

Anti-omicron booster delivered to Ramstein

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Booster shots specific to the omicron variant of the coronavirus are starting to arrive at U.S. military bases in Europe, and appointments are being offered to eligible people in the largest American military community abroad.

Ramstein Air Base, near Kaiserslautern, is one of the first installations on the Continent to begin providing authorized bivalent COVID-19 boosters, which offer protection against the BA.4 and BA.5 omicron subvariants.

The base received thousands of Pfizer booster vaccine doses Tuesday, base spokesman Ronald Jung said. The first appointments start next week, from 3-3:45 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday, according to the schedule.



A person receives a COVID-19 booster shot at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, in January 2022. The base has begun offering the bivalent COVID-19 booster for eligible people.

JARED LOVETT/U.S. Air Force

As of Thursday afternoon, a few appointments were still available. Slots can be booked at the Defense Health Agency online appointment portal, <https://informatics-stage.health.mil/COVAX/>.

The shots will be administered at Ramstein immunizations, on the first floor of Building 2114.

In addition, thousands of doses of Moderna's omicron booster are expected to arrive soon, Jung said Wednesday, adding that Ramstein does not expect any vaccine supply shortages.

Pfizer's updated booster is approved for people age 12 and older, and the new Moderna shot is for people 18 and older.

All eligible Defense Department personnel in the Kaiserslautern Military Community may get vaccinated at Ramstein, officials said.

Soon, however, eligible people living elsewhere in Europe will have more booster options.

The Army received its initial shipment of the shots, and its clin-

ics in Europe are finalizing vaccination plans and schedules, which should be announced within the next two weeks, said Kirk Frady, a spokesman for Regional Health Command Europe.

Some bases may offer both the COVID-19 booster and the influenza shot at upcoming vaccination events, since both can be administered at the same time, Frady said.

Defense Department health officials did not immediately respond to a query Thursday about when the booster is expected to be available at Navy bases in Europe. When available, the shots will be given by appointment, health officials said earlier this month.

The new shots target the original coronavirus strain as well as BA.4 and BA.5, the omicron subvariants that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration says people

stateside are catching the most.

The variants are prevalent in Europe, too, and are predicted to continue circulating this fall and winter.

People are eligible for the new booster two months after they've been fully vaccinated with either Johnson & Johnson's original one-shot regimen or the two-shot primary series from Pfizer or Moderna, or two months after receiving any booster shots related to those vaccines.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that the original Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are no longer authorized as booster doses for ages 12 and older.

Stars and Stripes reporter Alison Bath contributed to this story.
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Assault: Army will direct new hires to bases in Texas, Okla., Korea

FROM PAGE 1

"We've assigned people tasks as a collateral duty in order to do this," he said. "Our goal is to professionalize that workforce. It's going to be a civilian workforce. The prevention workforce is going to do the training, and it's not just on sexual assault and sexual harassment. They're going to cover child abuse. They're going to cover suicide prevention. They'll cover other subjects as well."

Defense officials said earlier this month that they were speeding up the hiring efforts of the 2,000 personnel after an annual report on the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment in the military showed a 13% increase in 2021. Speier called the report "catastrophic news."

"Sexual assault and harassment in our military is a readiness issue. It makes our force less lethal. It makes recruiting a challenge. It makes young men and women scared to serve," she said.

Speier cited a July memo from the Army on the reasons why young people are less likely to enlist that showed 28% fear sexual harassment and sexual assault.

"With the most recent report, I know we still have a long way to go. But I also know the depart-



Displayed giveaways at an event on April 1 at Fort Shafter in Hawaii. Members of the 402nd Army Field Support Brigade received prizes for correctly answering questions about the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program and ways individuals can prevent sexual harassment and sexual assault for occurring.

KATIE NELSON/U.S. Army

ment is working hard to implement new prevention strategies," she said. "I feel confident that if the Department of Defense keeps their foot on the pedal, and Congress doesn't turn a blind eye, this is the beginning of the end for those who wish to harm their brothers and sisters in arms."

The undersecretary from each

of the military services also testified at the hearing and said each branch is on track to meet the timelines established to implement the recommendations. The most impactful reform — the creation of a special prosecutor's office in each military service — is on track to be operational in each by December 2023, the deadline mandated by Congress. Each service already has at least a dozen attorneys certified as special victim counsel to work in these offices, the officials told lawmakers.

The Air Force will conduct a six-month pilot program to locate its new civilian workers in facilities with other victim services, said Undersecretary Gina Ortiz Jones. The service plans to have 223 prevention officers in place by the end of 2023.

"This pilot aims to improve the response to and outcomes for personnel who experienced harm and violence such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, stalking and cyber harassment," she said.

The Army will first direct its new hires, about 81, to five bases, Undersecretary Gabe Camarillo said. Those bases are Fort Hood in Texas, Fort Sill in Oklahoma, Schofield Barracks in Hawaii,

Camp Humphreys in Korea and Fort Riley in Kansas. They were chosen because of the risk factors identified at those bases, the variety of the units, and the different mission sets.

The Navy is in the process of hiring 82 new prevention personnel, Undersecretary Erik Raven said. The priority is Norfolk in Virginia, San Diego in California, and Hawaii.

Cisneros and the branch leaders stressed that passing a defense budget through Congress as soon as possible will help them meet their hiring goals.

Rep. Sylvia Garcia, D-Texas, told Cisneros that she fears the military isn't moving fast enough on any of the recommendations and pushed him to implement stricter deadlines.

"There was a minute there that I was encouraged," she said. "But I'm beginning to lose that encouragement because I keep hearing of more cases. I would strongly urge you to make sure that all the branches have the resources, the people power, the facilities, the training, the education and the skill set ... [to] get it done as quickly as possible."

Thayer.rose@stirpes.com

Senators urge Austin to protect bases from 'forever chemicals'

Dayton Daily News, Ohio

A group of senators are urging Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to treat PFAS chemicals on military installations with greater urgency.

Ohio's Sherrod Brown joined 41 other senators in a bipartisan petition, urging Austin to set aside higher funding for per- and poly-

fluoroalkyl substances testing and remediation, and to improve planning on dealing with the so-called "forever chemicals."

This has been a vexing issue in the Dayton area, with two cities — Dayton and Fairborn — involved in lawsuits against the government and against manufacturers, respectively, over PFAS

contamination.

PFAS is short for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, which were once used in nonstick frying pans, water-repellent sports gear, stain-resistant rugs, firefighting foam and elsewhere.

The substance was voluntarily phased out in the U.S., but it remains in some products and in

the environment.

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base environmental engineers have steadily probed the presence of PFAS and PFOA chemicals under and around the base.

Firefighting foam containing the chemicals has been used on the base in the past, but a base spokeswoman has said the Air

Force in recent years has replaced legacy firefighting foam in emergency vehicles and hangar fire prevention systems with a formula that meets EPA guidelines.

Last year, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine signed a bill into law prohibiting the use of PFAS-containing foam in firefighter training.

EUROPE

Putin's call-up brings reality of war to Russians

Bloomberg News

President Vladimir Putin's order to call up as many as 300,000 reservists to fight in Ukraine triggered alarm and demonstrations as Russians were forced to confront the reality of the deadly conflict.

Police detained about 1,400 people at protests against the order in 38 cities Wednesday night, according to the OVD-Info monitoring group. Some of the male detainees were handed draft notices at police stations, and protesters may face criminal charges under the harsh laws against criticism of the war the Kremlin has imposed since the Feb. 24 invasion. Some university students who joined the demonstrations were threatened with expulsion, which could annul draft exemptions.

For millions of Russians who've been largely shielded from the reality of the Kremlin's bloody seven-month war, Putin's speech early Wednesday announcing a "partial mobilization" came as a shock. The authorities provided few details of how the order, which is the first in Russia since World War II, will be implemented and who will get drafted.

Regional governments quickly began issuing orders for reserv-

ists — a huge category covering people who served as conscripts, contract soldiers, and part-time officers — to prepare to be summoned and banning them from leaving the area, according to Pavel Chikov, a lawyer who advises on conscription cases. Doctors in Moscow also received mobilization notices, he said on Telegram.

Videos posted on social media showed draftees in the Yakutia region in Siberia being taken away by bus, seen off by crowds of tearful relatives.

Authorities in some cases came in the middle of the night to round up conscripts in order to fill the regional quotas that the military sets.

"They took my 40-year-old son at night," said Antonina, a pensioner in the Far East who declined to give her last name. "Everyone who was taken in our village was over 40, not a single young one. They'll grab anyone. There's total panic and confusion."

The mobilization order will affect 300,000 people and apply only to those with military experience, according to Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. Students and people who haven't served in the army won't be called up, he said.

But the presidential decree



ALEXANDER ZEMLIANICHENKO/AP

Riot police detain a woman during a protest against mobilization in Moscow, Russia, on Wednesday. Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered a partial mobilization of reservists in Russia.

doesn't specify which categories of Russia's 2 million reservists will be called up and has a secret clause.

Legal restrictions on leaving the country for those subject to mobilization "haven't been implemented yet because it's a partial one," said Andrey Kartapolov, head of the Defense Committee in the lower house of parliament, according to RBC. "As for how things will go in the future, we'll see, as they say."

Many Russians didn't find comments like that reassuring.

Finland's border service reported a 50% surge in car traffic overnight and Georgian TV broadcast long lines on the Russian side of

the border. Google data showed a spike in search requests for "how to leave Russia" and even "how to break an arm." Social media were flooded with reports of soaring airline ticket prices.

A travel agent in Belgrade said tickets on Air Serbia, which offers the only flights from Russia to Europe, are sold out. "Until very recently, passengers looking to fly out of Moscow immediately had to wait for several days, maybe a week. Now there's nothing, not even with stopovers" until mid-October, said Viza Air Travel agent Verica, who declined to give her last name.

For many the prospect of fighting in the war prompted drastic

action. Kirill, the owner of an IT company, said he's urgently relocating his 100 Moscow-based staff to Dubai to prevent them from being called up.

Many borders remained closed to Russians. The leaders of the Baltic states said their countries won't offer asylum or humanitarian visas to men trying to flee mobilization.

"The war was OK for them when they saw it on TV, sitting on a sofa, but it is no longer OK when your government and your Shoigu calls you to join the army and offers to take part in the war with your own physical body," Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte said.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy lays out his case against Russia to UN

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Ukraine's president laid out a detailed case against Russia's invasion at the United Nations and demanded punishment from world leaders in a speech delivered just hours after Moscow made an extraordinary announcement that it would mobilize some reservists for the war effort.

Buoyed by a counteroffensive that has retaken swaths of territory that the Russians seized, Volodymyr Zelenskyy vowed in a video address Wednesday that his forces would not stop until they had reclaimed all of Ukraine.

"We can return the Ukrainian flag to our entire territory. We can do it with the force of arms," the president said in a speech delivered in English. "But we need time."

Video speeches by Zelenskyy in an olive green T-shirt have become almost commonplace. But this speech was one of the most keenly anticipated at the U.N.



JASON DE CROW/AP

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addresses the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly, at U.N. headquarters, on Wednesday.

General Assembly, where the war has dominated. The topic popped up in speeches by leaders from all over the world who deplored the invasion not least because they said it was not consistent with the cornerstone principles of the United Nations — including respect for sovereignty.

"It's an attack on this very insti-

tution where we find ourselves today," said Moldovan President Maia Sandu, whose country borders Ukraine.

President Joe Biden's address, too, focused heavily on the war in Ukraine.

"This war is about extinguishing Ukraine's right to exist as a state, plain and simple, and Ukraine's right to exist as a people. Whoever you are, wherever you live, whatever you believe, that should make your blood run cold," he said. "If nations can pursue their imperial ambitions without consequences, then we put at risk everything this very institution stands for. Everything."

The war will remain front and center at the gathering on Thursday, when the Security Council plans to take up the issue.

Russia hasn't yet had its turn to speak at the gathering.

Putin, who is not attending the General Assembly, has said he sent his armed forces into Ukraine because of risks to his country's

security from what he considers a hostile government in Kyiv; to liberate Russians living in Ukraine — especially its eastern region of the Donbas — from what he views as the Ukrainian government's oppression; and to restore what he considers to be Russia's historical territorial claims on the country.

Zelenskyy's speech was distinguished by its context. It took place after Moscow's extraordinary mobilization announcement. It was the first time Zelenskyy addressed the world's leaders gathered together since Russia invaded in February. And it wasn't delivered at the rostrum where other presidents, prime ministers and monarchs speak — but instead by video after Zelenskyy was granted special permission to not come in person.

Putin's decree Wednesday about the mobilization was sparse on details. Officials said as many as 300,000 reservists could be tapped. It was apparently an effort to seize momentum after the Uk-

rainian counteroffensive.

But the first such call-up in Russia since World War II also brought the fighting home in a new way for Russians and risked fanning domestic anxiety and antipathy toward the war. Shortly after Putin's announcement, flights out of the country rapidly filled up, and more than 1,000 people were arrested at rare antiwar demonstrations across the country.

Zelenskyy didn't discuss the developments in detail. But he suggested any Russian talk of negotiations was only a delaying tactic, and that Moscow's actions speak louder than its words.

"They talk about the talks but announce military mobilization. They talk about the talks but announce pseudo-referendums in the occupied territories of Ukraine," he said.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, meanwhile, contended that the mobilization was a sign Russia is "failing and flailing" in Ukraine.

EUROPE

Missile strikes continue despite prisoner swap

By HANNA ARHIROVA
Associated Press
ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine — Russian and Ukrainian forces exchanged missile and artillery barrages that killed at least seven people Thursday as both sides refused to concede any ground despite recent military setbacks for Moscow and the toll on the invaded country after almost seven months of war.

Russian missile strikes in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia left one person dead and five others wounded, Ukrainian officials said. Officials in the separatist-controlled city of Donetsk said Ukrainian shelling killed at least six people.

Demonstrating that neither side was ready to ease the fighting, the exchange of fire came hours after the two sides made a major prisoner swap and the day after Russian

President Vladimir Putin called up reserve troops to supplement his forces.

Kyrylo Tymoshenko, the deputy of the Ukrainian president's office, said a hotel in Zaporizhzhia was struck and rescuers were trying to free people trapped in the rubble.

The governor of the Zaporizhzhia region, Oleksandr Starukh, said Russian forces had targeted infrastructure facilities and also damaged nearby apartment buildings. The region is one of four where officials installed by Moscow plan to hold referendums starting Friday on becoming part of Russia, but the city itself is in Ukrainian hands.

Meanwhile, the mayor of the separatist-controlled city of Donetsk, Alexei Kulemzin, said at least five people were killed when Ukrainian shelling Thursday hit a



HANNA ARHIROVA/AP

Workers clean out the debris of a damaged hotel in the central park of Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, on Thursday.

covered market and a minibus. Overnight, one person was killed during Russian shelling in Nikolopol, across the river from the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, according to the Dnipropetrovsk regional governor.

The speed with which the Russian missile attack came after the swap suggested that the Kremlin

was seeking to dispel any notion of weakness or waning determination to achieve its wartime aims following recent battlefield losses and setbacks that gravely undercut the aura of Russian military might.

Those losses culminated Wednesday in Putin's order for a partial mobilization of reservists

to bolster his forces in Ukraine. The order sparked rare protests in dozens of Russian cities and was derided in the West as an act of weakness and desperation. Nearly 1,200 Russians were arrested in the anti-war demonstrations, according to the independent Russian human rights group OVD-Info.

Swap: 200 Ukrainians were exchanged for Russian ally

FROM PAGE 1

Alabama.

On Thursday, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his government had won freedom from Russian custody for 215 Ukrainian and foreign citizens, with the help of Turkish and Saudi mediation efforts. He said many were soldiers and officers who had faced the death penalty in Russian-occupied territory.

Russian officials didn't immediately confirm or otherwise comment on what appeared to be the biggest prisoner swap during the nearly seven-month war.

Of the total, 200 Ukrainians were exchanged for just one man — pro-Russian opposition leader Viktor Medvedchuk, who is Ukrainian. The 68-year-old oligarch escaped from house arrest in Ukraine several days before Russia's invasion Feb. 24 but was recaptured in April. He faced up to life in prison on charges of treason and aiding and abetting a terrorist organization for mediating coal purchases for the separatist, Russia-backed Donetsk republic in eastern Ukraine.

Medvedchuk came to know Putin while serving as chief of staff for former Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma. The Russian

leader is the godfather of Medvedchuk's daughter. His detention sparked a heated exchange between officials in Moscow and Kyiv.

Medvedchuk is the head of the political council of Ukraine's pro-Russian Opposition Platform-For Life party, the largest opposition group in Ukraine's parliament. The Ukrainian government has suspended the party's activity; Putin has repeatedly spoken about Medvedchuk as a victim of political repression.

"It is not a pity to give up Medvedchuk for real warriors," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video speech. "He has passed all the investigative actions provided by law. Ukraine has received from him everything necessary to establish the truth in the framework of criminal proceedings."

In another swap, Ukraine gained the release of five commanders who led Ukraine's defense of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol in exchange for 55 Russian prisoners it was holding, Zelenskyy said.

More than 2,000 defenders, many in the Azov Regiment, marched out of the Azovstal steel plant's twisted wreckage into Russian captivity in mid-May, ending a nearly three-month siege of the



UKRAINIAN SECURITY SERVICE PRESS OFFICE/AP

A Ukrainian soldier, who was released in a prisoner exchange, shows a V-sign close to Chernihiv, Ukraine, on Wednesday.

port city of Mariupol.

Zelenskyy said the five leaders, including Azov Regiment commanders Denys Prokopenko and Svyatoslav Palamar, are in Turkey, where they will remain as part of the deal "in complete safety" until the end of the war, under the protection of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the exchanges, calling them "no small feat," but adding that "much more remains to be done to ease the suffering caused by the war in Ukraine," his spokesman said. The U.N. chief reiterates the need to respect international law on the treatment of prisoners and will continue to support further prisoner exchanges, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Separatists release US veterans who fought for Ukraine

By JAY REEVES
Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Two U.S. military veterans who disappeared three months ago while fighting Russia with Ukrainian forces were among 10 prisoners, including five British nationals, released by Russian-backed separatists as part of a prisoner exchange mediated by Saudi Arabia, officials said Wednesday.

Alex Druke, 40, and Andy Huynh, 27, went missing in the Kharkiv region of northeastern Ukraine near the Russian border June 9. They had traveled to Ukraine on their own and became friends because both are from Alabama.

Their families announced their release in a joint statement from Dianna Shaw, an aunt of Druke.

"They are safely in the custody of the U.S. embassy in Saudi Arabia and after medical checks and debriefing they will return to the states," the statement said.

Shaw said both men have spoken with relatives and are in "pretty good shape," according to an official with the U.S. Embassy.

President Joe Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan

welcomed the releases and thanked the governments of Ukraine and Saudi Arabia for their work to secure the detainees' freedom. "We look forward to our citizens being reunited with their families," he said in a tweet.

In a later statement, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States "is appreciative of Ukraine including all prisoners of war, regardless of nationality, in its negotiations" and thanked Saudi government partners



Huynh

for securing the release of the 10 prisoners, including the two Americans.

The Saudi Embassy released a statement saying it helped secure the release of 10 prisoners from Morocco, the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Croatia.

NATION



WOMEN'S MED/AP

An abortion clinic in Indianapolis is empty on Sept. 15, the day the state's abortion ban went into effect.

Judge blocks Indiana abortion ban week after it took effect

By TOM DAVIES
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — An Indiana judge on Thursday blocked the state's abortion ban from being enforced, putting the new law on hold as abortion clinic operators argue that it violates the state constitution.

Owen County Judge Kelsey Hanlon issued a preliminary injunction against the ban that took effect one week ago. The injunction was sought by abortion clinic operators who argued in a lawsuit that the state constitution protects access to the medical procedure.

The ban was approved by the state's Republican-dominated Legislature on Aug. 5 and signed by GOP Gov. Eric Holcomb. That made Indiana the first state to enact tighter abortion restrictions since the U.S. Supreme Court

eliminated federal abortion protections by overturning *Roe v. Wade* in June.

The judge wrote "there is reasonable likelihood that this significant restriction of personal autonomy offends the liberty guarantees of the Indiana Constitution" and that the clinics will prevail in the lawsuit. The order prevents the state from enforcing the ban pending a trial on the merits of the lawsuit.

The state attorney general's office and top Republican legislative leaders didn't immediately comment on the order.

The ban, which includes limited exceptions, replaced Indiana laws that generally prohibited abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy and tightly restricted them after the 13th week.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana, which is repre-

senting the abortion clinics, filed the lawsuit Aug. 31 and argued the ban would "prohibit the overwhelming majority of abortions in Indiana and, as such, will have a devastating and irreparable impact on the plaintiffs and, more importantly, their patients and clients."

Ken Falk, the ACLU of Indiana's legal director, pointed to the state constitution's declaration of rights including "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" in arguing before the judge on Monday that it included a right to privacy and to make decisions on whether to have children.

The state attorney general's office said the court should uphold the ban, calling arguments against it based on a "novel, unwritten, historically unsupported right to abortion" in the state constitution.

More apply for unemployment aid last week

By MATT OTT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans filing for jobless benefits rose slightly last week with the Federal Reserve pushing hard to cool the economy and tamp down inflation.

Applications for unemployment benefits for the week ending Sept. 17 rose by 5,000 to 213,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

Last week's number was revised down by 5,000 to 208,000, the lowest figure since May. First-time applications generally reflect layoffs. The four-week average for claims, which evens out some of the weekly volatility, fell by 6,000 to 216,750.

On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve raised its benchmark short-term borrowing rate by another three-quarters of a point in an effort to bring down persistent, decades-high inflation.

Though gas prices have steadily retreated since summer, prices for food and other essentials remain elevated enough that the Fed has indicated it will keep raising its benchmark interest rate until prices come back down to normal levels.

Fed officials have pointed to the remarkably resilient U.S. labor market as added justification for raising rates five times this year, including three 75-basis point hikes in a row.

For now, businesses remain desperate to find workers, posting more than 11 million job openings in July, meaning there are almost two job vacancies for every unem-

There are almost two job vacancies for every unemployed American.

ployed American.

Earlier this month, the Labor Department reported that employers added still-strong 315,000 jobs in August, though less than the average 487,000 a month over the past year.

The unemployment rate ticked up to 3.7%, largely because hundreds of thousands of people returned to the job market. Some didn't find work right away, so the government's count of unemployed people rose.

The U.S. economy has been a mixed bag this year, with economic growth declining in the first half of 2022.

Investors and economists worry that the Fed's aggressive rate hikes could force companies to cut jobs and tip the economy into a recession.

Online real estate companies Redfin and Compass recently announced job cuts as rising interest rates have cooled the housing market. The National Association of Realtors reported Wednesday that sales of existing homes fell again in August, the seventh straight monthly decline.

Other high-profile layoffs announced in recent months include The Gap, Tesla, Netflix, Carvana and Coinbase.

Powell warns inflation fight may cause US recession

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve delivered its bluntest reckoning Wednesday of what it will take to finally tame painfully high inflation: Slower growth, higher unemployment and potentially a recession.

Speaking at a news conference, Chair Jerome Powell acknowledged what many economists have been saying for months: That the Fed's goal of engineering a "soft landing" — in which it would manage to slow growth enough to curb inflation but not so much as to cause a recession — looks increasingly unlikely.

"The chances of a soft landing,"

Powell said, "are likely to diminish" as the Fed steadily raises borrowing costs to slow the worst streak of inflation in four decades. "No one knows whether this process will lead to a recession or, if so, how significant that recession would be."

Before the Fed's policymakers would consider halting their rate hikes, he said, they would have to see continued slow growth, a "modest" increase in unemployment and "clear evidence" that inflation is moving back down to their 2% target.

"We have got to get inflation behind us," Powell said. "I wish there were a painless way to do that. There isn't."

Powell's remarks followed another substantial three-quarters of a point rate hike — its third straight — by the Fed's policy-making committee. Its latest action brought the Fed's key short-term rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, to a range of 3% to 3.25%. That's



Powell

its highest level since early 2008.

Falling gas prices have slightly lowered headline inflation, which was a still-painful 8.3% in August compared with a year earlier. Those declining prices at the gas

pump might have contributed to a recent rise in President Joe Biden's public approval ratings, which Democrats hope will boost their prospects in the November midterm elections.

On Wednesday, the Fed officials also forecast more jumbo-size hikes to come, raising their benchmark rate to roughly 4.4% by year's end — a full point higher than they had envisioned as recently as June. And they expect to raise the rate again next year, to about 4.6%. That would be the highest level since 2007.

By raising borrowing rates, the Fed makes it costlier to take out a mortgage or an auto or business loan. Consumers and businesses

then presumably borrow and spend less, cooling the economy and slowing inflation.

In their quarterly economic forecasts, the Fed's policymakers also projected that economic growth will stay weak for the next few years, with unemployment rising to 4.4% by the end of 2023, up from its current level of 3.7%. Historically, economists say, any time unemployment has risen by a half-point over several months, a recession has always followed.

"So the (Fed's) forecast is an implicit admission that a recession is likely, unless something extraordinary happens," said Roberto Perli, an economist at Piper Sandler, an investment bank.

NATION

Puerto Rico tries to reach areas cut off by Fiona

By DÁNICA COTO
Associated Press

CAGUAS, Puerto Rico — Hurricane Fiona left hundreds of people stranded across Puerto Rico after smashing roads and bridges, with authorities still struggling to reach them four days after the storm smacked the U.S. territory, causing historic flooding.

Government officials have been working with religious groups, nonprofits and others braving landslides, thick mud and broken asphalt by foot to provide food, water and medicine for people in need, but they are under pressure to clear a path so vehicles can enter isolated areas soon.

Nino Correa, commissioner for Puerto Rico’s emergency management agency, estimated that at least six municipalities across the island had areas that were cut off by Fiona, which struck as a Category 1 hurricane and was up to Category 4 power Thursday as it headed toward Bermuda.

Manuel Veguilla said he has been unable to leave his neighborhood in the north mountain town of Caguas since Fiona swept in on Sunday.

“We are all isolated,” he said, adding that he worries about el-

derly neighbors, including his older brother who does not have the strength for the long walk it takes to reach the closest community.

Veguilla heard that municipal officials might open a pathway Thursday, but he doubted that would happen because large rocks covered a nearby bridge and the 10-foot space beneath it.

Neighbors have shared food and water dropped off by non-profit groups, and the son of an elderly woman was able to bring back basic supplies by foot Wednesday, he said.

Veguilla said that in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, a Category 4 storm that struck five years ago and resulted in nearly 3,000 deaths, he and others used picks and shovels to clear the debris. But Fiona was different, unleashing huge landslides.

“I cannot throw those rocks over my shoulder,” he said.

Like hundreds of thousands of other Puerto Ricans after Fiona, Veguilla had no water or electricity service, but said there is a natural water source nearby.

Fiona sparked an islandwide blackout when it hit Puerto Rico’s southwest region, which already was still trying to recover from a series of strong earthquakes in



PHOTOS BY ALEJANDRO GRANADILLO/AP

A man points to a home that was collapsed by Hurricane Fiona at Villa Esperanza in Salinas, Puerto Rico, on Wednesday.



A National Guardsman delivers water to the residents of Punta Diamante in Ponce, Puerto Rico, after the area was hit by Fiona.

vice.

The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency has sent hundreds of additional personnel to help local officials as the federal government approved a major disaster declaration and announced a public health emergency on the island.

Neither local nor federal government officials had provided any overall damage estimates from the storm, which dropped up to 30 inches of rain in some areas. More than 470 people and 48 pets remained in shelters.

“Our hearts go out to the people of Puerto Rico who have endured so much suffering over the last couple of years,” said Brad Kiersman, vice president of operations and logistics at the Red Cross.

recent years. Some 62% of 1.47 million customers remained without power Thursday, four days after the storm, amid an ex-

treme heat alert issued by the National Weather Service. Some 36% of customers, or nearly half a million, did not have water ser-

More consumers buying organic, but US farmers still wary

By SCOTT MCFETRIDGE
Associated Press

CHURDAN, Iowa — In the 1970s when George Naylor said he wanted to grow organic crops, the idea didn’t go over well.

Back then organic crops were an oddity, destined for health food stores or maybe a few farmers markets.

“I told my dad I wanted to be an organic farmer and he goes, ‘Ha, ha, ha,’” Naylor said, noting it wasn’t until 2014 that he could embrace his dream and begin transitioning from standard to organic crops.

But over the decades, something unexpected happened — demand for organics started increasing so fast that it began outstripping the supply produced in the U.S.

Now a new challenge has emerged: It’s not getting consumers to pay the higher prices, it’s convincing enough farmers to get past their organic reluctance and start taking advantage of the revenue pouring in.

Instead of growing to meet the



CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/AP

George Naylor looks over organic apples grown on his farm, Sept. 13, near Churdan, Iowa.

demand, the number of farmers converting to organic is actually dropping. Last month, the U.S. Department of Agriculture committed up to \$300 million to recruit and help more farmers make the switch.

“It feels good,” said Chris Schreiner, executive director of the

organically and organically. Schreiner noted that one farmer told him that converting a conventional farmer was like asking “a foot doctor to become a heart surgeon.”

The key difference is the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides as well as genetically modified seeds. Most conventional farms rely on those practices but they are banned at organic farms. Instead, organic farmers must control weeds and pests with techniques such as rotating different crops and planting cover crops that squeeze out weeds and add nutrients to the soil.

Crops can only be deemed organic if they are grown on land that hasn’t been treated with synthetic substances for three years. During that period, farmers can grow crops, but they won’t get the extra premium that accompanies organic crops.

According to the USDA, the number of conventional farms newly transitioning to organic production dropped by about 70%

from 2008 to 2019. Organic comprises about 6% of overall food sales, but only 1% of the country’s farmland is in organic production, with foreign producers making up the gap.

In the U.S., “There are so many barriers to farmers making that leap to organic,” said Megan DeBates, vice president of government affairs for the Organic Trade Association.

While farmers seem hesitant, U.S. consumers aren’t. Annual sales of organic products have roughly doubled in the past decade and now top \$63 billion, according to the Organic Trade Association. Sales are projected to climb up to 5.5% this year.

The new USDA effort would include \$100 million toward helping farmers learn new techniques for growing organic crops; \$75 million for farmers who meet new conservation practice standards; \$25 million to expand crop insurance options and reduce costs; and \$100 million to aid organic supply chains and develop markets for organics.

NATION

Court lifts hold on Trump's Mar-a-Lago records in probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a stark repudiation of Donald Trump's legal arguments, a federal appeals court on Wednesday permitted the Justice Department to resume its use of classified records seized from the former president's Florida estate as part of its ongoing criminal investigation.

The ruling from a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit amounts to an overwhelming victory for the Justice Department, clearing the way for investigators to continue scrutinizing the documents as they consider whether to bring criminal charges over the storage of of top-secret records at Mar-a-Lago after Trump left the White House. In lifting a hold on a core aspect of the department's probe, the court removed an obstacle that could have delayed the investigation by weeks.

The appeals court also pointedly noted that Trump had presented no evidence that he had declassified the sensitive records, as he maintained as recently as Wednesday, and rejected the possibility that Trump could have an "individual interest in or need for" the roughly 100 documents with classification markings that were seized by the FBI in its Aug. 8 search of the Palm Beach property.

"If you're the president of the United States, you can declassify just by saying 'It's declassified.' Even by thinking about it...You're the president, you make that deci-

sion," Trump claimed in a Fox News Channel interview recorded Wednesday before the appeals court ruling.

The government had argued that its investigation had been impeded, and national security concerns swept aside, by an order from U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon that temporarily barred investigators from continuing to use the documents in its inquiry. Cannon, a Trump appointee, had said the hold would remain in place pending a separate review by an independent arbiter she had appointed at the Trump team's request to review the records.

The appeals panel agreed with the Justice Department's concerns.

"It is self-evident that the public has a strong interest in ensuring that the storage of the classified records did not result in 'exceptionally grave damage to the national security,'" they wrote. "Ascertaining that," they added, "necessarily involves reviewing the documents, determining who had access to them and when, and deciding which (if any) sources or methods are compromised."

An injunction that delayed or prevented the criminal investigation "from using classified materials risks imposing real and significant harm on the United States and the public," they wrote.

Two of the three judges who issued Wednesday's ruling — Britt Grant and Andrew Brasher — were nominated to the 11th Circuit by Trump. Judge Robin Rosen-

baum was nominated by former President Barack Obama.

Lawyers for Trump did not return an email seeking comment on whether they would appeal the ruling. The Justice Department did not have an immediate comment.

The FBI last month seized roughly 11,000 documents, including about 100 with classification markings, during a court-authorized search of the Palm Beach club. It has launched a criminal investigation into whether the records were mishandled or compromised, though it is not clear whether Trump or anyone else will be charged.

Cannon ruled on Sept. 5 that she would name an independent arbiter, or special master, to do an independent review of those records and segregate any that may be covered by claims of attorney-client privilege or executive privilege and to determine whether any of the materials should be returned to Trump.

Raymond Dearie, the former chief judge of the federal court based in Brooklyn, has been named to the role and held his first meeting on Tuesday with lawyers for both sides.

The appeals court ruling appears to substantially narrow the special master's job description, enabling the Justice Department to avoid providing him with classified documents to review. Instead, Dearie would review the much larger tranche of non-classified government documents.



TOM E. PUSKAR/AP

J.R. Majewski, Republican candidate for U.S. Representative for Ohio's 9th Congressional District, speaks at a campaign rally in Youngstown, Ohio, on Saturday.

Ohio GOP House candidate misrepresents military service

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Campaigning for a northwestern Ohio congressional seat, Republican J.R. Majewski presents himself as an Air Force combat veteran who deployed to Afghanistan after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, once describing "tough" conditions including a lack of running water that forced him to go more than 40 days without a shower.

Military documents obtained by The Associated Press through a public records request tell a different story.

They indicate Majewski never deployed to Afghanistan but instead completed a six-month stint helping load planes at an air base in Qatar, a longtime U.S. ally that is a safe distance from fighting.

Majewski's account of his time in the military is just one aspect of his biography that is suspect. His post-military career has been defined by exaggerations, conspiracy theories, talk of violent action against the U.S. government and occasional financial duress.

Still, thanks to an unflinching al-

legiance to former President Donald Trump — Majewski once painted a massive Trump mural on his lawn — he also stands a chance of defeating longtime Democratic Rep. Marcy Kaptur in a district recently redrawn to favor Republicans.

Majewski is among a cluster of GOP candidates whose unvarnished life stories and hard-right politics could diminish the chances of a Republican "red wave" on Election Day in November.

"It bothers me when people trade on their military service to get elected to office when what they are doing is misleading the people they want to vote for them," Don Christensen, a retired colonel and former chief prosecutor for the Air Force, said of Majewski. "Veterans have done so much for this country and when you claim to have done what your brothers and sisters in arms actually did to build up your reputation, it is a disservice."

Majewski's campaign declined to make him available for an interview.

GOP hits Kansas governor hard on trans athletes, her new ad

Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. — Kansas' Democratic governor launched a new television ad on Wednesday in which she says men don't belong in women's sports. It's a move seeking to blunt Republican attacks on her for vetoing two proposals to ban transgender athletes from girls' and women's school and college sports.

Gov. Laura Kelly doesn't go into details on her position in the 30-second ad, which is her first to address what Republicans see as a key education issue that hurts Kelly during a close reelection race. Her campaign later said Kelly believes decisions about transgender athletes should be made by schools, doctors, families and local officials and that the two bills she vetoed would have "created unnecessary new government mandates."

GOP challenger Derek Schmidt, the state's three-term attorney general, tweeted that Kelly is lying about her record, and the Republican Governors Association released a digital ad Wednesday highlighting Kelly's vetoes. Other Republicans said Kelly is trying to hide an unpopular, liberal stance.

But Democrats said the party's voters would understand the ad as saying that the issue doesn't in-

volve men playing women's sports because trans women are women.

"Men aren't playing girls' sports. This is the scare-tactic framing of the far right," said Tom Witt, executive director of Equality Kansas, the state's leading LGBTQ-rights group. "What we're talking about in this situation is schoolkids in competitive games with their peers at school, and our position is, trans girls are girls; trans boys are boys."

In the ad, Kelly looks into the camera and says: "Of course men should not play girls' sports. OK, we all agree there," before criticizing Schmidt on school funding issues.

Her campaign launched the ad after a Republican Governors Association ad featured a collegiate swimmer criticizing Kelly. That followed five other ads in which the RGA raised the issue, including one last week in which Schmidt says Kelly is aligned with groups pushing "the transgender agenda."

The swimmer featured in the last RGA ad, University of Kentucky graduate Riley Gaines, said in a phone interview that she was surprised by Kelly's ad because, "It's not aligning with anything she's said thus far."

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WORLD

Protests over death spread in Iran

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Clashes between Iranian security forces and protesters angry over the death of a 22-year-old woman in police custody have killed at least nine people since the violence erupted over the weekend, according to a tally Thursday by The Associated Press.

The scope of Iran's ongoing unrest, the worst in several years, still remains unclear as protesters in at least a dozen cities — venting anger over social repression and the country's mounting crises — continue to encounter security and paramilitary forces.

An anchor on Iran's state television suggested the death toll from the mass protests could be as high as 17 on Thursday, but did not elaborate or say how he reached that figure. "Unfortunately, 17 people and police officers present at the scene of these events lost their lives," the anchor said, adding official statistics would be released later.

Widespread outages of Instagram and WhatsApp, which protesters use to share information about the government's rolling crackdown on dissent, continued on Thursday. Authorities also appeared to disrupt internet access to the outside world, a tactic that rights activists say the government often employs in times of unrest.

In a country where radio and television stations already are



AP

People chant slogans during a protest Wednesday over the death of a woman who was detained by the morality police in Tehran, Iran.

state-controlled and journalists regularly face the threat of arrest, the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard urged the judiciary on Thursday to prosecute "anyone who spreads fake news and rumors" on social media about the unrest.

The demonstrations in Iran began as an emotional outpouring over the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman held by the country's morality police for allegedly violating its strictly enforced dress code. Her death has sparked sharp condemnation from the United States, the European Union and the United Nations.

The police say she died of a heart attack and was not mistreated, but her family has cast doubt

on that account. Independent experts affiliated with the U.N. said Thursday that reports suggested she was severely beaten by the morality police, without offering evidence. They called for an impartial investigation to hold perpetrators accountable.

The protests have grown in the last four days into an open challenge to the government, with women removing and burning their state-mandated headscarves in the streets and Iranians setting trash bins ablaze and calling for the downfall of the Islamic Republic itself.

"Death to the dictator!" has been a common cry in the protests.

Demonstrations have rocked

university campuses in Tehran and far flung western cities such as Kermanshah. Although widespread, the unrest appears distinct from earlier rounds of nationwide protests triggered by pocketbook issues as Iran's economy staggers under heavy U.S. sanctions.

The unrest that erupted in 2019 over the government's abrupt gasoline price hike mobilized working class masses in small towns. Hundreds were killed as security forces cracked down, according to human rights groups, the deadliest violence since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iran's state-run media this week reported demonstrations of hundreds of people in at least 13 cities, including the capital, Tehran. Videos online show security forces firing tear gas and water canons to disperse the protests. London-based Amnesty International reported that officers also fired birdshot and metal pellets and beat protesters with batons.

Footage on social media from the northern city of Tabriz shows a young man allegedly shot by security forces bleeding out in the street as protesters shouted for help.

At least nine people have died in the confrontations, according to an AP count based on statements from Iran's state-run and semi-official media. In a statement on Thursday, the Guard blamed the unrest on "Iran's enemies," saying their "sedition will fail."

Saudi Arabia program eyes female astronauts

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Saudi Arabia said Thursday it will launch a training program with the goal of sending its own astronauts, including a woman, into space next year.

The kingdom is actively promoting science and technology as part of its wide-ranging Vision 2030 plan to overhaul its economy and reduce its dependency on oil.

The plan, championed by Saudi Arabia's powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, also calls for greater integration of women into the workforce of the conservative Muslim country. Saudi Arabia lifted a long-standing ban on women driving in 2018.

"The Saudi Astronaut Program, which is an integral part of the Kingdom's ambitious Vision 2030, will send Saudi astronauts into space to help better serve humanity," the Saudi Space Commission said in a statement.

"One of the astronauts will be a Saudi woman, whose mission to space will represent a historical first for the Kingdom."

Turkey's central bank makes massive rate cut

ISTANBUL — Turkey's central bank delivered another massive interest rate cut Thursday despite eye-popping inflation above 80%, moving the opposite way from world economies that are raising rates to control prices as the lira sunk to record lows.

The Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey lowered the benchmark rate by 1 percentage point, to 12%. The lira was trading around 18.38 against the dollar, weakening further than the previous record low of 18.36 in December.

The depreciation of Turkey's currency is likely to intensify the financial worries of residents who have seen their purchasing power erode during a series of economic shocks in the country.

Turkey has followed President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's unorthodox belief that high interest rates cause high inflation, cutting borrowing costs despite consumer prices rising by 80.21% in August from a year earlier.

32 out of 230 stranded pilot whales are rescued

HOBART, Australia — Wildlife experts on Thursday rescued 32 of the 230 whales that were found stranded on the wild and remote west coast of Australia's island state of Tasmania a day earlier.

Half the pod of pilot whales found stranded in Macquarie Harbour were presumed to still be alive on Wednesday, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania said.

But only 35 had survived the pounding surf overnight, Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service manager Brendon Clark said.

Iran says it's ready for a new nuclear deal

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Iran's president insisted Wednesday that his country is serious about reviving a deal meant to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear bomb but questioned whether Tehran could trust America's commitment to any eventual accord.

The U.S. had already "trampled" on a previous deal, President Ebrahim Raisi told the U.N. General Assembly, referring to America's decision to pull out of the accord in 2018.

Ever since Iran's 1979 revolution that overthrew its Western-backed shah, Tehran has been at odds with the United States and has sought to project itself as a counterweight to American power.

Tehran's resolve to resist U.S. pressure has seen it build close ties with countries like Russia, develop a domestic ballistic missile program and attempt to export its narrow revolutionary ideals to countries across the Mideast through Shiite militias and proxies.

Its nuclear program, which Iran insists is for peaceful energy purposes, is seen as an extension of its defiance of an American-led world order.

After former U.S. President Donald Trump walked away from the deal brokered by the Obama administration, Tehran steadily abandoned every limitation the accord imposed on its nuclear enrichment.

But efforts to salvage the deal are now near-



MARY ALTAFFER/AP

President of Iran Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi holds up a photo of slain Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, as he addresses the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday at U.N. headquarters.

ing a take-it-or-leave-it inflection point. European Union officials have warned the window for securing a nuclear deal is about to close.

In exchange for agreeing to the terms of the new nuclear deal, Iran would receive relief on economic sanctions and be given greater access to global financial markets and the flow of U.S. dollars.

"There is a great and serious will to resolve all issues" in the nuclear talks, Raisi said, but he added: "Our wish is only one thing: observance of commitments."

"Can we truly trust without guarantees and assurances that they will this time live up to their commitment?" he asked of the U.S.

Swings in American foreign policy with successive administrations have concerned not only Iran, but also U.S. allies who have questioned America's reliability and its commitment to agreements, ranging from climate to security.

Even as he expressed a desire to reach a deal, Raisi criticized what he said was lopsided scrutiny of Iran's nuclear activities while other nations' atomic programs remain secret — a reference to Israel, which has never confirmed nor denied having such weapons. Israel, which is vehemently opposed to the nuclear deal, accuses Iran of concealing aspects of its nuclear program from U.N. inspectors.

"We will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon," President Joe Biden said in his own speech at the U.N., but he stressed the U.S. is ready to rejoin the accord if Iran steps up its commitments.

Wearing a traditional black turban identified with Shiite clerics, Raisi held up a photo of slain Gen. Qassem Soleimani, whom he described as a "freedom-seeking man." The Revolutionary Guard chief who oversaw Iranian militias and proxy armed groups in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and beyond was assassinated in a strike authorized by Trump in 2020 at the height of tensions with Iran.

From The Associated Press

WEEKEND



Maren Morris
keeps fighting
Music, Pages 28-29

Breakout hit, or big bust?



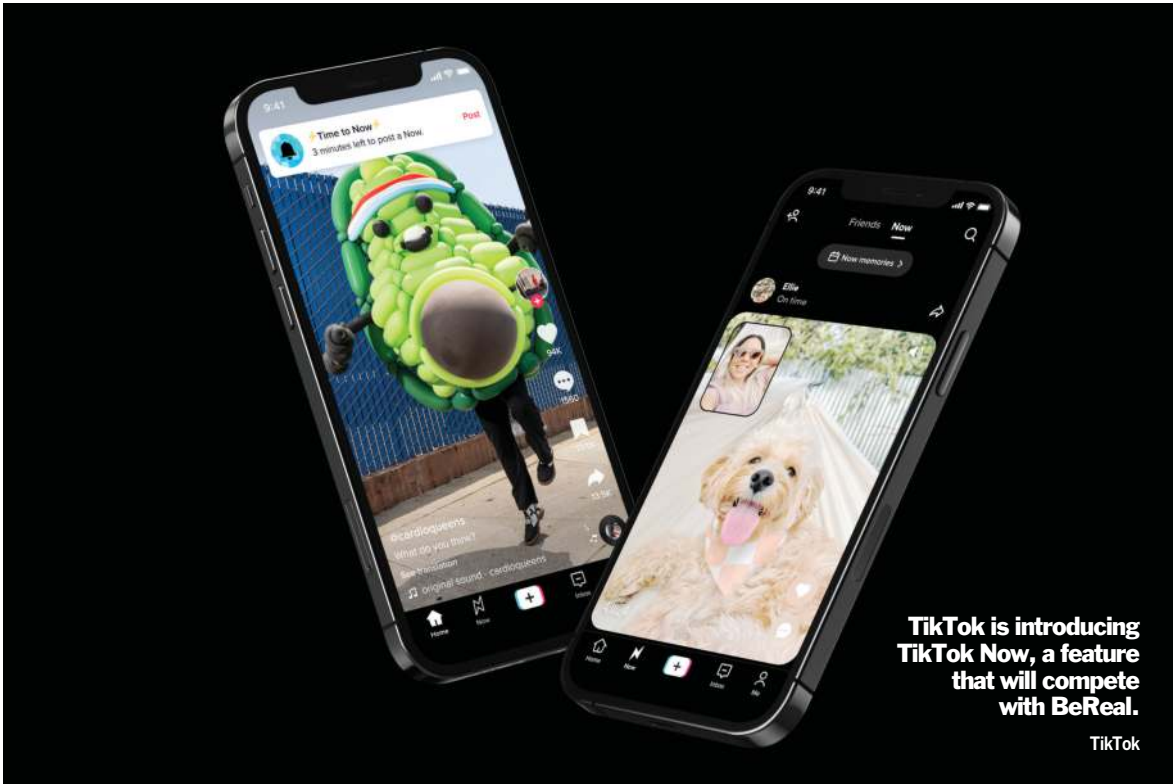
**Top: Florence Pugh
and Harry Styles star in
“Don’t Worry Darling.”**
Warner Bros. Pictures photos



Right: Director Olivia Wilde
EVAN AGOSTINI, INVISION/AP

After months of heated rumors, buzz and intrigue, director Olivia Wilde’s mysterious ‘Don’t Worry Darling’ finally in theaters
Movies, Pages 15-16

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



TikTok getting real

App imitating competitor BeReal’s impromptu photo feature

BY WILL OREMUS
The Washington Post

A two-year-old French photo-sharing app is earning the highest form of flattery from Big Tech’s social media titans: imitation. BeReal, which prompts users once per day to snap and share a quick photo from wherever they happen to be, is topping app charts with a social media experience that prioritizes spontaneous connections over image-conscious curation. The app uses your phone’s front and rear cameras simultaneously, resulting in a post that overlays a candid selfie on an image of whatever’s in front of you.

It’s also inspiring copycats. Last week, TikTok became the latest big platform to respond to BeReal’s surge, announcing a new feature called TikTok Now that will give users daily prompts to share impromptu photos or short videos using the phone’s front and rear cameras. The move comes as Instagram has confirmed it is working on a similar feature, called IG Candid Challenges, and weeks after Snapchat debuted its own dual-camera mode.

BeReal’s success reveals an appetite among social media users for more authentic, intimate forms of expression, and shows that Davids can still shake up a sector dominated by global Goliaths. At the same time, the scramble by those Goliaths to copy core features of an app that doesn’t even have a way to make money yet underscores the uphill battle that upstarts face just to survive.

“The fear of the incumbents is that this becomes the next TikTok,” said Mark Shmulik, an analyst who covers internet platforms. “So they’ve all scrambled to launch their own version” in hopes of heading off a competitor before it goes mainstream.

Buzzy new social apps are not uncommon; many don’t last. But the speed of BeReal’s ascent in recent months puts it in select company.

Launched in January 2020 by French founder Alexis Barreyat, a former GoPro employee, BeReal didn’t take off immediately, accruing just 2 million downloads in its first two years, mostly among French users, according to the analytics firm Apptopia, which uses statistical models to estimate apps’ popularity. This year, however, it has boomed to some 56 million downloads, with the United States becoming its top market. Its iOS app was downloaded an estimated 11 million times in August

alone, making it the most-downloaded nongaming app in the world for that month, by Apptopia’s reckoning.

That “hockey-stick” growth trajectory is on par with Snapchat in 2011 and Clubhouse in 2020, Apptopia Vice President Adam Blacker said.

Instagram famously copied Snapchat’s signature Stories feature after Snap refused to sell to parent company Facebook, but Snapchat kept innovating and growing. In contrast, Clubhouse, the social audio app that became a sensation during pandemic lockdowns, lost its momentum as coronavirus restrictions eased and larger rivals including Twitter rolled out similar features.

Like Snapchat before it, BeReal presents itself as a refreshing alternative to the big social media platforms, with their addictive feeds, polished content, and professional influencers.

Users receive a notification on their phones once each day, at an unpredictable time chosen by the app, informing them that it’s “Time to BeReal.” They then have just two minutes to snap a photo, which will show the view from both their phone’s front- and rear-facing cameras. Late posts and retakes are allowed but frowned upon; while the app doesn’t display popularity metrics such as friends or likes, it does show your friends how late your post was and how many times you retook the shot.

The photos that result are, compared to a typical Instagram feed, aggressively mundane. Many show unkempt users cooking, driving, working at their computers, or simply lying in bed looking at their phones. Critics have derided the app as “boring”; its defenders say that’s just the point.

“They’ve certainly caught lightning in a bottle with an idea,” Shmulik said of BeReal.

TikTok Now looks like nearly a clone of BeReal, copying both the dual-camera mode and the idea of prompting everyone to take a snap simultaneously each day. Instagram hasn’t launched Candid Challenges, but screenshots spotted by a developer suggest that it, too, will work very similarly to BeReal. Snapchat, meanwhile, adopted the dual-camera idea, but not the daily prompt.

On Sept. 15, the day TikTok announced TikTok Now, BeReal posted the “eyes” emoji on its Twitter account. TikTok and Instagram both declined to comment for this story.

Magnetic wireless speaker is innovative, travel-friendly

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Scosche’s BoomCan MS magnetic wireless speaker is a fun, creative and helpful speaker. The magnetic backing makes this hockey puck-sized speaker innovative, and you can attach it to the MagSafe back of an iPhone (iPhone 12 or later).

In addition to MagSafe, the BoomCan will attach to any metal surface.

The BoomCan has a 3-watt speaker behind a fabric front. It weighs 3 ounces and measures 1.21 inches tall and 2.38 inches in diameter, making it backpack- and travel-friendly. It has a five-hour battery life (USB-C charging cable is included) and is built with an IP67 waterproof and dust-proof rating.



The Scosche BoomCan MS speaker can go where you go.

speakers are mounted on each side of the front behind a black grill, which produces a crisp sound with excellent clarity.

Online: cyberacoustics.com

The back of the BoomCan has a rubber center, which prevents it from scratching an expensive iPhone when it’s magnetically attached. The speaker also effectively acts as a kickstand.

And remember, it’s Bluetooth 5.3, so even if there isn’t a metal surface close by, pairing is easy, and the small size makes the BoomCan portable to use almost anywhere.

Online: scosche.com; \$49.99, available in white or black

iHome Audio has released a pair of fun color-changing waterproof Bluetooth speakers with the **PlayGlow Plus** (\$52.99) and its baby brother, the **PlayGlow Mini** (\$31.99).

Both cylinder speakers provide a fun atmosphere with a color-changing 360-degree LED cylinder body with five color-changing modes (slow fade, color change, favorite color, pulse-to-music, preset pulse).

It’s a generic saying, but so true regarding Cyber Acoustics’ **Speaker Bar**: Big things come in small packages. And it comes with a small \$24.99 price tag.

The USB-powered speaker measures 2.75-by-8.25-by-1.25 inches and is designed and promoted to be mounted under a computer monitor for a clean and organized setup, but its usefulness goes further. It’s not intended to be the sound machine for a Saturday night party; instead, it’s a perfect office accessory, and helps maintain a clutter-free desktop.

Its integrated top-side clip mounting system connects to a Mac or PC with a single USB cable (a USB-A to USB-C adapter is included) and is plug-and-play. Volume and play/pause and mute controls are on the bottom.

Two single-watt 1.5-inch

The PlayGlow Plus measures 3.2 inches wide and 5.5 inches high and will play for about 32 hours before a USB charge is needed. The mini is a little smaller, 2.8 inches wide by 4 inches tall, and lasts up to 15 hours on a single charge.

Both speakers have IP67 certifications and will not sink with their floatable cabinets, making them great to have poolside or on the beach.

The sound from the PlayGlow Plus is solid, with a good amount of bass. Buttons to control include play, pause, volume and pairing, and the light modes are on the front and back of the Plus, with power on the bottom.

Control buttons on the mini are located on the front for play/pause, and the bottom has power, pairing, and light modes. Volume controls on the mini are controlled from the music source.

Online: ihomeaudio.com



The iHome PlayGlow Plus and PlayGlow Mini have five color modes.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Q&A

Wilde, provocative

Director discusses the ideas, influences and buzz behind psychological thriller ‘Don’t Worry Darling’

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

“Don’t Worry Darling” has been in the spotlight since the beginning. And this was long before Harry Styles got involved.

It was a film everyone wanted to make — some 18 studios and streaming services were courting Wilde for the chance to partner with her on her sophomore feature as a director: A mid-century psychological thriller about a housewife, Alice (Florence Pugh), who starts to question her picture-perfect life and the mysterious company that her husband Jack (Styles) works for.

But it hasn’t stopped making headlines in two years, from Shia LaBeouf’s abrupt departure (he was replaced by Styles) to the paparazzi-stoked intrigue around Wilde and Styles’ off-camera relationship. Then there was the bizarre moment earlier this year when Wilde was served custody papers, from ex Jason Sudeikis with whom she shares two children, in the middle of a presentation to thousands of exhibitors in Las Vegas.

Even last month, LaBeouf, who is heading to court next year on abuse allegations from his ex, FKA twigs, decided to contest the two-year-old narrative that he’d been fired. He gave the entertainment trade Variety emails and texts to prove his case that he quit. It’s resulted in buzz you can’t buy, but also incessant tabloid and TikTok gossip.

But now the conversation can go back to the film itself: “Don’t Worry Darling” had a glamorous debut at the Venice International Film Festival on Sept. 5 and opens this weekend in theaters nationwide. Besides, Wilde doesn’t care what gets people into the theater — as long as they go.

Wilde spoke to The Associated Press recently about her vision, her disagree-

ment with the ratings board and why Alice is the heroine we need right now. Remarks have been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: What were some of the big ideas you wanted to explore?

Wilde: I wanted to make what (screenwriter) Katie (Silberman) and I always describe as a Trojan horse movie: Something that on the outside is beautiful and entertaining but once you crawl inside, it is actually much more complex and potentially really interesting and challenging. I also just really understood that this would be an opportunity for an actress to really flex. It was a heroine I wanted to see on screen. I wanted to create a character with an actress that would represent the kind of woman that I feel like our society needs.

You had originally intended to play the part of Alice. Were you glad about that decision to step back and take a supporting role?

Oh yeah. There’s no part of me that would want it any other way. I think what Florence did with this role is singularly brilliant. This character is a heroine for the ages. And she, as an actress, is this rare combination of dramatically skillful, comedically brilliant and an action hero who can run like Tom Cruise. Like, what actress can do stunts and pull off these incredible emotional acrobatics and do it so effortlessly in an accent that’s not even theirs? Like, come on. It’s like juggling upside down on the wing of an airplane.

You’ve spoken about some of your stylistic influences, from the photography of Slim Aarons to the erotic thrillers of Adrian Lyne. What were some other touchstones?

I am a big fan of the iconography of the 1950s and a lot of the art, architecture, cars, music. This was an opportunity to just really play in that world. The architectural influence of (Richard) Neutra is all



EVAN AGOSTINI, INVISION/AP

“Don’t Worry Darling” director Olivia Wilde, shown Sept. 19, says she’s a big fan of the iconography of the 1950s, which she tapped for the look of the film.

over the film. (Cinematographer) Matty Libatique and I were really inspired by Alex Prager and her photography and the idea of creating anxiety through framing and this artificial world that would be incredibly alluring until you look closely.

And I always make endless playlists and watch lists and reading lists. It was a really funny assortment of material. People were like, what is this movie? You want me to watch “Requiem for a Dream” and “The Truman Show” and “Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,” and you want me to read “The Feminine Mystique,” but also Jordan Peterson?

“Booksmart” dealt with female sexuality in a very frank way, and “Don’t Worry Darling” is already provoking conversations around some of the sex acts shown in the trailer. Was that a fight to even include that?

Oh, yeah. There’s a lot that had to be taken out of the trailer. The MPA came down hard on me and the trailer at the last second and I had to cut some shots, which I was upset about because I thought they it took it up another notch. But of course we still live in a really puritanical society. I do think the lack of eroticism in American film is kind of new. Then when it comes to

female pleasure, it’s something that we just don’t see very often unless you’re talking about queer cinema. You know, it’s interesting because in a lot of queer films, the female characters are allowed to have more pleasure. Audiences aren’t as puritanical as corporations think they are. And yet people get upset. I mean, people are upset with me already over this. I think it’s a testament to the film. We want to be provocative. The idea is not to make you feel safe.

This is also a film that has had a spotlight on it from the beginning, resulting in both buzz and gossip. What has that been like for you as a filmmaker?

Every filmmaker longs for people to see their film. That’s all you want is for people to see it. If people are excited about a film, for whatever reason, what you hope is that it gets them in the door. Whether you are a 1950s car fanatic and that’s what’s going to get you into this movie, or if you are simply going because you’re a fan of our incredible cast, all I care about is that you have the chance to see it, and I hope that people then have the instinct to share it. What I really hope is that people see it again. I think that it’s a real second watch film. There’s a lot of Easter eggs in there.



Warner Bros. Entertainment

Wilde, left, says what star Florence Pugh, right, did with her role is “singularly brilliant.”

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS



Florence Pugh appears in a scene from “Don’t Worry Darling” as 1950s housewife Alice Chambers. WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT/AP

Through the looking glass

‘Don’t Worry Darling’ a forgettable film about a midcentury suburban California community not as perfect as it seems

By ANN HORNADAY
The Washington Post

The advance hype for “Don’t Worry Darling” has been so incessant — from director Olivia Wilde’s relationship with her leading man, Harry Styles, to a Kabuki-like feud with her lead actress, Florence Pugh, and something involving Chris Pine and Styles at the recent Venice Film Festival — that it’s easy to forget there’s an actual movie at the center of it all. A movie that’s not a disaster, but not particularly distinguished; a movie that, in the end, will wind up being as forgettable as its own bizarre publicity.

“Don’t Worry Darling” opens at a party in the sleekly appointed living room of a 1950s tract home, where Alice Chambers (Pugh) and her husband, Jack (Styles), are entertaining their neighbors with copious amounts of booze, cigarettes and slinky dancing set to Ray Charles’ “Night Time Is the Right Time.” The setting is the anonymous inland community of Victory, Calif., where Jack and his friends go to work each morning for a top-secret project developing “progressive materials.” Their boss, and the man behind the real estate development, is a charismatic alpha male named Frank (Pine), whose radio sermons Alice and the rest of the Victorious homemakers listen to while they cook, clean and make perfect ice-cold martinis to serve at the ready the minute their breadwinning better halves get home.

It’s all midcentury perfection, an idea Wilde drives home with zero subtlety, between the aggressive oldies soundtrack and a candy-colored production design that leans heavily into the era’s bright-and-shiny conformity. But all is not well in this unpleasantville, a self-contained bubble where Alice does errands on a trolley festooned with foreboding signage like “What you see here, what you do here, what you say here, let it stay here.” She’s being haunted by strange visions of a plane crashing and Busby Berkeley dancers forming circles

like the iris of an eye; at one of Frank’s parties, he delivers a motivational speech about progress, chaos and changing the world — one that’s less JFK than Jim Jones.

Just what kind of looking glass Alice is in forms the mystery of “Don’t Worry Darling,” which was written by Katie Silberman, Carey Van Dyke and Shane Van Dyke, who have taken obvious cues from such vintage classics as “The Stepford Wives” as well as borrowing a dash from “Seconds” here and “The Parallax View” there. More contemporary analogues include “Severance” and “Get Out,” both of which have recalled Rod Serling in being both surpassingly weird and on point.

“Don’t Worry Darling” teases provocative ideas about gender roles and expectations but never achieves Serling’s heights of suspense and social commentary. Meanwhile, Wilde’s direction manages to be simultaneously overheated and pedestrian, resorting to blunt-force literalism in moments that call for Hitchcockian finesse.

Wilde was going to cast herself as Alice; instead she plays Bunny, a liquored-up true believer with a feline gaze and glibly knowing streak. (Kate Berlant does her best to spike the proceedings with spontaneous humor as the very pregnant Peg.) Luckily, Wilde saw the horror movie “Midsommar” and decided to use Pugh for a role in which, by dint of natural charisma and vanity-free naturalism, she manages to turn a flawed and drably tedious movie into something remotely watchable. (For his part, Styles is unimpressive but inoffensive.)

There turns out to be a doozy of a twist in “Don’t Worry Darling” that feels both facile and like a wasted opportunity. There might have been some good ideas in here about ambition and ambivalence, desire and self-deception. But they turn out to be as fleeting as a tumbleweed blowing through suburbia by a Santa Ana wind.

“Don’t Worry Darling” is rated R for sexuality, violence and strong language. Running time: 122 minutes. Now playing at select AAFES theaters.

‘Sidney’ documentary a portrait of a striver

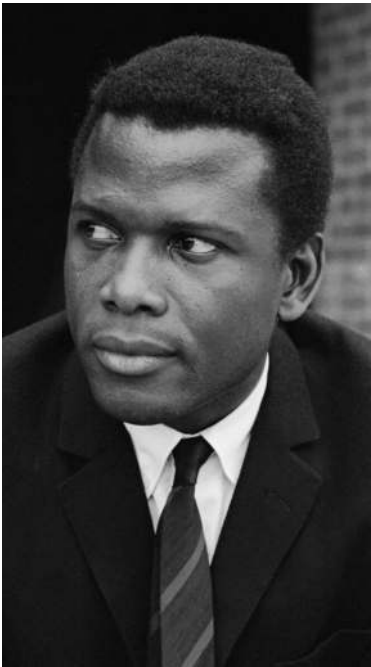
By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Sidney Poitier was not expected to live. He was born two months premature to uneducated tomato farmers in the Caribbean. His father planned to use a shoebox as a makeshift coffin.

Poitier’s rise from that humble origin to become an Oscar-winning box-office draw and civil rights figure who remade Hollywood seems almost scripted, almost too good to be true, but such was Poitier’s life.

The new documentary “Sidney” respectfully traces that life, delivering a portrait of a striver hoping to improve everything he did every day. “I truly, truly try to be better tomorrow than I was today,” he says to the camera.

Written by Jesse James Miller and directed by Reginald Hudlin, “Sidney” is executive produced by Oprah Winfrey — who lent several hours of her own interviews with Poitier — and members of his family. It glows with respect for a man who earned it.



Actor and civil rights figure Sidney Poitier in a scene from the documentary “Sidney.” Apple TV+

Poitier became the first Black actor to win an Academy Award for best lead performance and the first to be a top box-office draw. He died this year at 94.

For much of the film, a gray-haired Poitier addresses the camera in a gray suit jacket with a pocket square and a white open-necked button-down shirt — flawlessly elegant, as always. Sometimes old interviews are added from a younger Poitier, making it seem as if he is in conversation with himself.

Highlights include the devastating confrontation with racism as a teen in Miami, the fun story of his first encounter with a subway and how a classified ad looking for actors changed his life. “I can be many things here,” he thought. Tossed out of the American Negro Theater for being lousy, he took acting classes and lost his Caribbean accent by buying a radio for \$14 and learning to mimic a newsreader he admired.

The filmmakers have a charismatic change-maker as their focus, but credit to them for also exploring when he missed his high ethical standards, as when he had a long affair with Dihann Carroll, triggering a divorce that split the family.

Poitier’s moral compass was stronger than most. Early in his career, he turned down an exploitive part, an unheard-of decision at the time. And then after he had made his way to the top and opened the door for other unrepresented actors, he was criticized.

Some called him out for being too accommodating in “The De-

fiant Ones,” chained and helping a white Tony Curtis, or for loving a white woman in “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?” The pioneer became passe as Black militancy grew in strength. So Poitier pivoted to directing and producing, still helping others up the ladder.

The film benefits from the candid memories of Poitier’s children and ex-wife, as well as friends like Morgan Freeman, Harry Belafonte, Quincy Jones, Andrew Young, Spike Lee, Denzel Washington, Louis Gosset Jr. and Robert Redford.

For those unfamiliar with some of Poitier’s more famous moments, news of a pivotal slap will come as a surprise. Fifty-five years before Will Smith smacked Chris Rock at the Oscars, Poitier’s Detective Virgil Tibbs slapped an actor playing a white plantation owner on screen in the film “In the Heat of the Night.” It was electrifying, coming in 1967 as the civil rights movement was reaching its heights. Listening to how it profoundly affected future Black stars is powerful.

Another rich vein is revealed in the relationship between Poitier and Belafonte, which one of the former’s children likens to having the dynamic of an old married couple. They bonded, they fought, they reconciled, they once even outran the Ku Klux Klan. There seems almost to be another film here about these two charismatic men.

But let us first celebrate Poitier, a man of impossible dignity and ethics, a man who Lenny Kravitz in the film says “came to this Earth to move it.”

“Sidney,” in select theaters and streaming on Apple TV+, is rated PG-13 for adult themes and racial slurs. Running time: 112 minutes.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Q&A

Setting a high bar

Cameron discusses the upcoming 'Avatar' sequel, the rerelease of the 1st film

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Thirteen years after James Cameron plunged moviegoers into the cosmic world of "Avatar," the lush, distant moon of Pandora is finally orbiting back into view.

Cameron's "Avatar" industrial complex has been whirling in high gear for some time; production on the upcoming sequel, "Avatar: The Way of Water," began back in 2017. But after shuffling through half a decade's worth of release dates, Cameron's science-fiction epic is poised to again blanket movie screens and transport willing travelers back, in 3D, to the land of the Na'vi.

For even the visionary filmmaker of "Titanic" and "The Terminator," the relaunch of "Avatar" is, as Cameron said in a recent interview from Wellington, New Zealand, "a big bet." A third "Avatar" is already in post-production, and production has begun on a fourth. The record-breaking \$2.8 billion in box office that "Avatar" grossed made the coming "Avatar" armada a far-from-risky wager. But a lot has changed since the original's release, when Netflix was still renting DVDs by mail and Cameron was working for 20th Century Fox.

To whet moviegoers' appetites ahead of the Dec. 16 debut of the three-hour "Avatar: The Way of Water" — and remind them of a movie world they may have lost touch with — the Walt Disney Co. has rereleased "Avatar" in a remastered, 4K, HDR (high-dynamic range) version for a week in select theaters that Cameron says is "better than it's ever looked."

It's an opening salvo in Cameron's ambitious plan to sketch a yet-grander sci-fi saga, and to again conjure a cinematic experience, as he says, "that you simply cannot have in the home." Taking a break from all the "Avatar" juggling, Cameron talked re-watching the original, his expectation for "The Way of Water" and why he nearly quit the "Avatar" business.

Remarks have been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: Does "Avatar" seem like a long time ago to you?

Cameron: It feels like yesterday at times and then obviously it feels like more than a decade other times. The time has passed quickly. I've been doing all sorts of interesting things. Deep ocean research. Building submersibles. Writing four epic movies. Now finishing up "Avatar 2" and we're mid-process in post on "Avatar 3." So "Avatar" has never been far from my mind. I constantly go back to it, obviously in the remaster process mak-



20TH CENTURY FILMS/AP

Filmmaker James Cameron on the set of "Avatar" in 2009. Cameron's long-awaited three-hour "Avatar: The Way of Water" will be released Dec. 16. The first film was also rereleased in theaters this week in a remastered, 4K, high-dynamic range version.



Ronal, voiced by Kate Winslet, left, and Tonowari (Cliff Curtis) in "The Way of Water."

ing it better than it's ever looked before. I'm kind of just living on Pandora right now.

When you went back to watch "Avatar," how did it look to you?

I see a lot of good work by a lot of good people in terms of the production design, the visual effects, the groundbreaking strides that were made at that time in capturing the performances of the actors, and the great work of the actors. It was tough to live up to. We had set the bar very high for ourselves back then and we had to live up to that bar this time with the new films. I remind our VFX team all the time: "Look at the bugs in the forest in the first movie. We had better bugs!"

Over the years, some have argued that "Avatar," despite its stature as the highest grossing film of all time, hasn't stuck in the culture the way you'd expect. Do those arguments irk you?

I think it's true for a specific reason, which is that we didn't immediately follow it up with another film in two or three years, and another film in two or three years. We didn't play the Marvel game.

We're playing a longer game here. "Avatar" isn't going anywhere: It just didn't follow up with a continuous barrage to keep it in the public eye and the public consciousness, which is what you have to do. Taking a lesson from that, we basically architected four sequels so that if "Avatar 2" is successful, we can follow it up with a regular cadence — two years, maybe three years at the most between "3" and "4." It will be in the public consciousness more and more regularly, but only if people embrace "Avatar 2."

Your films have grossed more than \$6 billion. I imagine you're not a filmmaker who gets nervous before opening a movie.

You bet I do. Anyone who says they don't get nervous before a movie drops is a lying son of a (expletive).

And there is an awful lot riding on "The Way of Water."

Yeah, it's a big play. It's a big bet. And we won't know where we are until the second or third weekend. The success of the first film — we had a pretty good opening at \$75 million. But openings are

dwarfing that by factors of two or even three these days. Even if we have a stellar opening, we won't really know where we are for a couple weeks because it was the return visits on the first one. It was people wanting to go share. If we get that again, we'll probably be on solid ground.

I think the odds are in your favor.

Nobody knows. The market has changed. Twenty-five percent could be our entire margin. It's one thing to make a lot of money, it's another thing to actually make a profit. We're not going to keep making movies that lose money even though they look good and make a ton of money. This is a wait-and-see, let's-put-it-out-there-and-see-if-people-embrace-it kind of situation.

"Avatar" was especially rich in an ecological subtext. In the 13 years since, much has only gone worse for the climate and the health of the planet. How much was that on your mind making the sequels?

Very much so, even to the extent that I very strongly debated with myself and discussed with my wife whether I should stop filmmaking and work on the sustainability issues. But we managed to be able to do that in parallel with the filmmaking process. We're doing all of our sustainability efforts — I don't want to say as a side hustle, but in parallel. I put as much effort into that as I do the filmmaking.

That said, the new "Avatar" films aren't any more like a lecture on climate or environmentalism than the first one was. The first one was an adventure. It captured you at the level of character, at a level of storytelling. I think subtext is a useful way of looking at it. It's there, but it's not what's driving the story. And we kept that in mind with the new films. Yes, "Avatar: The Way of Water" is about the oceans and our relationship with the oceans and the animals that live in it. But it's driven by character.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Return to an era of adventure

Monkey Island sequel recalls a golden age of '90s gaming

By JONATHAN LEE
The Washington Post

Return to Monkey Island is the fulfillment of a promise made more than 30 years ago. Since the release of *The Secret of Monkey Island* in 1990, the series has been held up as a paragon of the adventure game genre. When enthusiasts are fondly reminiscing about the golden age of adventure games, Monkey Island is typically referenced as the go-to example that defined the '90s point-and-click zeitgeist, even when stacked against other powerhouse hits from the era such as *Full Throttle*, *Grim Fandango* and *Beneath a Steel Sky*. The swashbuckling franchise featuring Guybrush

Threepwood, self-proclaimed mighty pirate, has been widely beloved by fans and praised by game designers.

That nostalgic backstory is why *Return to Monkey Island* is such a big deal. It's a return not only of the series but also for its creator Ron Gilbert, who left the series after 1991's *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*. The game finally answers the question that

fans have speculated about for decades: what is the *Secret of Monkey Island*? Other designers after Gilbert have provided their own answers in sequels. *Return to Monkey Island* reveals the secret straight from the original creator himself and in definitive fashion.

Return to Monkey Island didn't quite live up to 30 years of pent-up fan theorizing, forum debates and hype from hardcore fans whose tastes are still locked inside a '90s adventure game time capsule, however. Not because it's a bad game (on the contrary, it's quite delightful) but because *Monkey Island* is a humble series that's been unfairly saddled with an unfeasibly epic expectation. The series, which has always been about a silly pirate going on zany adventures and *Return to Monkey Island*, is very self-aware about this position, and the game's most impressive achievement is how deftly it navigated that conundrum by tapping into the joyful energy of *Monkey Island*'s earliest games while tempering the nostalgic angst for a time that can't be recaptured.

For the uninitiated, *Return to Monkey Island* stars the series protagonist Threepwood, a quippy and remarkably likable pirate sailing the Caribbean during an anachronistic version of the Golden Age of Piracy. Guybrush's world is a Saturday morning cartoon version of piracy, where sword fights are determined by the 1700s equivalent of "yo momma" jokes, ship captains grumble about corporate red tape and zombies are vulnerable to root beer. Since the game is a sequel (to *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* in the series' timeline), you'll also need some background information before playing.

To that end, *Return to Monkey Island* has a digital scrapbook with Guybrush himself narrating through the major plot points of the previous titles to catch you up. Most of those plot points involve Guybrush's archnemesis, the undead buccaneer LeChuck. LeChuck is also seeking the *Secret of Monkey Island* and is also in love with Elaine Marley (Guybrush's wife).

Return to Monkey Island can be widely enjoyed by everyone, whether you are an adventure game veteran or



Nintendo photos

Wannabe “mighty pirate” Guybrush Threepwood is back in *Return to Monkey Island*.



The piracy depicted in *Return to Monkey Island* is relatively innocent, grounded in silly insults.

a total newbie. The game is designed as a classic point-and-click title crafted with a modern sensibility: simple UI, puzzles encouraging unconventional thinking and punchy dialogue coupled with a vibrant Cubist art style and highly adaptable difficulty settings. There's the Casual mode for players who want to enjoy the game's story with minimal puzzling and a Hard mode for those who want a more cerebral challenge.

My favorite feature was the Hint Book, an in-game inventory item that provides spoiler-free tips on how to solve a puzzle or progress a quest. Not only does the Hint Book save you from alt-tabbing to a browser for help, it's also scalable: you can rely on it as little or as much as you want. There's also a key (or button for controllers) for highlighting all the interactable items in an area.

But even with all these new dressings and increased accessibility, *Return to Monkey Island* is very much a title made for lifetime fans. It's rife with self-referential throwbacks, inside jokes and cameos from characters introduced in other *Monkey Island* games. The game's humor is dry, absurdist and often breaks the fourth wall.

Return to Monkey Island is everything that the developers purported it to be. It's a wonderful, heartfelt adventure game that made me laugh all the way through. The only wonky thing to note is the pacing. The game opens at a steady tempo and then hits a sudden and massive spike. I went from having a clear, focused mission for a specific area to suddenly being saddled with a dozen objectives that sent me frantically traveling back and forth between multiple islands.

Still, the payoff of the game's final act — and the entire journey that leads up to it — makes *Return to Monkey Island* a game well worth your time.

Monkey Island is a series that has been surprisingly



The game is designed as a classic point-and-click title and has adaptable difficulty settings.

resistant to the sequel escalation that affects other long-running video game franchises. Other than *Tales of Monkey Island*, which featured a zombie plague outbreak in the Caribbean, the series has consistently focused on the personal. *Monkey Island* isn't about saving the world. It's about the adventures of the kind and wide-eyed Guybrush Threepwood — his dream of becoming a renowned pirate, marrying the love of his life and finding the *Secret of Monkey Island*. His is the type of life that would be celebrated by raised mugs in a dockside tavern, not trumpeted in a cathedral with kings and queens in attendance. But over time, Guybrush and *Monkey Island* have become lionized by his fans into something they aren't.

In June, Gilbert announced he would stop talking about *Return to Monkey Island* and closed comments on his personal blog after angry posters wrote abusive comments in response to the game's art direction. Some of the commenters demanded that Gilbert rework or outright cancel *Return to Monkey Island* because it wasn't made in the pixel art style of the first two *Monkey Island* games. They defended the harassment by saying it comes from a place of passion, having been deeply shaped by the *Monkey Island* series since their youth.

Those people were yearning for a *Monkey Island* that can't possibly be re-created. After 30 years, the original developers behind *Monkey Island* have grown up, and Guybrush had to grow up alongside them.

By officially revealing the *Secret* and bringing the series full circle, *Return to Monkey Island* is deliberately closing a chapter in the franchise's life. It's not the end of Guybrush Threepwood or *Monkey Island*, but it's a swan song for the bygone era that birthed them.

Platforms: PC, Mac, Nintendo Switch
Online: returntomonkeyisland.com

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Old-fashioned Swiss bliss in Appenzell

Appenzell, in Switzerland's north-east corner, has none of the better-known or particularly high mountains, but it does have some of Europe's most bucolic landscapes, and the best cow culture in the Alps. Appenzell is Switzerland's most traditional region — and long the butt of jokes because of it. They say you should set your watch back 10 years when you cross the cantonal border. Entire villages meet in town squares to vote. Until 1990, the women of Inner Appenzell couldn't vote on local issues — and the canton remains stubbornly conservative.

The region's lush, gentle hills are dotted with wooden huts and happy cows, against a backdrop of a snowy ridge that culminates in a peak called Säntis. While farmers' daughters make hay, old ladies with scythes walk the steep roads, looking as if they'd just pushed the Grim Reaper down the hill. When locals are asked about Appenzell cheese, they clench their fists as they answer, "It's the best." (It is, without a doubt, Switzerland's smelliest.)

If you're here in late August or September, there's a chance you'll get in on (or at least have your road blocked by) the ceremonial procession of flower-bedecked cows and whistling herders in formal, traditional costumes. The festive march down from the high pastures is a spontaneous move by the herding families, and when they finally do burst into town, turning it into a slow-motion Swiss Pamplona,

locals young and old become children again, running joyously into the streets.

In Appenzell's towns kids play "barn" instead of "house," while Mom and Dad watch yodeling on TV. The dairy heritage is a point of local pride. Folk museums feature old-fashioned cheese-making

demonstrations, peasant houses, fascinating embroidering machinery, cow art and folk-craft demonstrations.



Rick Steves

Appenzell's highlight is that quaint and rustic old hut I'd overnighted in long ago, just below the ridge of the Ebenalp plateau. It's more accessible than it feels — just a short hike down from the top of the Wasserauen cable car (five miles south of Appenzell town).

From where the lift leaves you atop the Ebenalp, savor the 360-degree alpine view and then head downhill. The trail leads through a damp and dim prehistoric cave (hold the railing) and the 400-year-old Wildkirchli cave church — where hermit monks lived and worshipped for two centuries, until 1853 — to Berggasthaus Aescher, the guesthouse built precariously into the cliff (its back wall is the rock itself). Originally a hut housing farmers, goats and cows, in the mid-1800s Berggasthaus Aescher evolved into a guesthouse for pilgrims coming to the Wildkirchli's monks for spiritual guidance.



CAMERON HEWITT/Rick Steves' Europe

Travelers can stay in this cliffside guesthouse below Appenzell's plateau of Ebenalp.

From the Aescher's cliffside perch, you can almost hear the cows munching on the far side of the valley. In the distance, nestled below Säntis' peak, is the isolated lake called "Seealpsee" ("Lakealp Lake"). Sip your coffee on the deck, sheltered from cliff runoff by the gnarly overhang 100 feet above. The Berggasthaus Aescher is supplied only with rainwater (and no shower). Only the paragliders, like neon jellyfish,

tag your world as 21st century.

Those hermit monks may be long gone, but I can't think of a better place to commune with nature while immersed in traditional Swiss alpine culture than in a mountain hut clinging to a cliff in Appenzell.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European guidebooks, hosts travel shows on public TV and radio and organizes European tours. You can email Rick at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

These festivals give pop culture fans places to congregate

Many festivals and events staged throughout Europe have an almost folksy appeal and often allude to pivotal moments centuries ago. Worlds apart from these bastions of tradition, happenings anchored firmly in the present remind us of the global reach of popular culture. Plenty of chances to catch up with the latest screen and video stars, authors, artists, producers and other personalities are there for the taking if you know where to look for them.

Comic Cons and cosplay

On Sept. 24-25, fans of comics, games, films, TV series, cosplay, board games and other pop culture phenomena will be drawn to two festivals staged under the same roof in Brussels. The Heroes Comic Con is dedicated to American and European pop culture, whereas Made in Asia pays homage to the phenomenon's Asian counterpart.



Karen Bradbury

The Heroes Comic Con offers chances to buy themed merchandise, play games, take part in Q&A sessions, meet the authors and artists behind the comics, and cast eyes upon the screen idols of some of today's most popular series. For an extra fee, it's also possible to arrange photo ops with the stars present. Actors scheduled to appear this year include Caleb McLaughlin, Alysia Milano, Matt Smith, Emily Swallow, Dan Fogler, Sarah Rafferty and Andy Serkis.

Cosplay activities include on-stage competitions for groups and singles, and all have the chance to strut their stuff on the catwalk. Made in Asia's offerings include a Korean village with K-pop, cooking demos, tattooing, an origami workshop and introductions to games such as Mahjong and Go.

The convention takes place at the Brussels Expo at Place de Belgique. A number of ticket options are available. The cost of a single-day ticket begins at 18.50 euros for a Sunday visit when purchased online in advance.



iStock

Opportunities for cosplay on the Continent abound.

Tickets at the door will also be available, but expect them to cost considerably more. Online: heroescomiccon.be

Can't make it to Brussels? Other Comic Con events this autumn include the Vienna Comic Con (Vienna, Oct. 1-2); Zurich Pop Con and Game Show (Zurich, Switzerland, Oct. 1-2); Comic Con Scotland (Edinburgh, Scotland, Oct. 8-9); Birmingham Anime & Gaming Con (Birmingham, England, Oct. 22-23); MCM Comic Con Birmingham (Birmingham, England, Nov. 12-13) and the Dutch Comic Con (Utrecht, Netherlands, Nov. 19-20). Upcoming comic cons in Germany include German Vikings Con (Düsseldorf-Neuss, Nov. 5); Comic Con Stuttgart (Stuttgart, Nov. 26-27) and German Comic Con Winter Edition (Dortmund, Dec. 3-4).

Gaming

The EGX London is a major trade fair for the gaming industry and the place for lovers of all kinds of video games. In addition to trying out the newest titles, visitors can attend panel discussions, enjoy cosplay shows, play

on old machines in a retro area and experience augmented reality sports. Those in search of a career in the industry can find professional advice here.

The EGX takes place at ExCeL London through Sept. 25. Various ticket options are available, including a single-day ticket at a cost of 26 UK pounds. Online: egx.net

Gamers based in Italy might wish to make their way to the Milan Games Week & Cartoomics, Italy's largest fair dedicated to gaming, esports and pop culture in all its forms from comics, fantasy fiction, role-playing and board games to cinema, entertainment and cosplay. The event will take place Nov. 25-27 at the Fiera Milano Rho. Online: milangamesweek.it

Film festivals

The Raindance Film Festival, the UK's largest independent film festival, gives cinema fans the chance to be among the first to view what just might become the next cult classic. "Pulp Fiction," "What's Eating Gilbert Grape" and "The Blair Witch Project" are just some of the American films to have premiered here over the years.

The festival's 30th edition unfolds Oct. 26-Nov. 5 in cinemas across London's famous entertainment district, West End. The program includes not only full-length feature films but shorts, web series, music videos and other genres. Tickets are or will be made available through the following cinemas' box offices: Curzon Mayfair, Curzon Hoxton, Curzon Soho, Genesis Cinema, Regent Street Cinema and Bertha DocHouse. Online: raindance.org

Fans of the horror genre won't be left out in the cold this autumn either. For shivers down your spine, check out Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival of Catalonia (in Sitges, Spain, Oct. 6-16); Horror & Fantasy Film Festival (San Sebastian, Spain, Oct. 28-Nov. 4) or Aberystwyth, The International Horror Festival of Wales (Aberystwyth, Wales, Nov. 15-20 and Nov. 25-27).

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



Should you swap your seat on an airplane?

Etiquette expert, former flight attendant explain when it's appropriate to ask to switch and when it's not

BY HANNAH SAMPSON
The Washington Post

Béné J. Wilson isn't sure what makes her a magnet for seat-swapping requests.

"I don't know if I have that face that people think I will just do it," said the longtime aviation journalist and aisle seat aficionado. "But it's ridiculous. It's almost become comical."

Some people want to sit with a spouse or friend. Some are trying to stay close to children. Others just don't want a middle seat. As someone who uses her frequent flier status — or pays extra — to choose a seat near the front, Wilson is typically unmoved.

Unless it's a parent-and-child situation, "because I've been there and done that," Wilson said, her answer is a short and simple "no."

"I'm sure there are good reasons, but in the end that's not my problem," she said.

The scenario can become a problem, or at least a major annoyance. Social media posts and news accounts frequently provide examples of cheeky seat-swapping requests and rude responses — or completely reasonable requests and understandable responses, depending on whose side you take.

"It's a stressful situation for everyone involved in the actual switch and everyone seated around the people trying to make the switch and the crew," said Bobby Laurie, a former flight attendant and host of the syndicated travel talk show "The Jet Set."

An Irish model and TV personality made headlines in August after using profanity on her podcast to describe a man who initially didn't want to trade so her family could be together after she booked a wrong seat.

In response, Daily Mail columnist Jaci Stephen wrote that she always refuses to

give up her seat for families.

"Here's the simple fact: if you want to travel as a family or in a group, book your seats together beforehand," she wrote. "Your incompetency in failing to do so is no one else's responsibility and you should certainly not be making others feel uncomfortable when they want to stick to their probably well-organized plans."

At least three Reddit threads this year, most recently in early September, have explored the question of whether a passenger was in the wrong because they wouldn't change seats for families. (They were all validated.)

When it's appropriate to ask

Etiquette expert Jacqueline Whitmore, founder of the Protocol School of Palm Beach and a former flight attendant, said an acceptable reason to ask for a swap is if a traveler is separated from someone who depends on them for care.

"Unless you have a minor child or perhaps even an elderly parent or someone you're caring for that needs some special attention ... I really don't see where it's mandatory or where you should ask to be moved," she said.

And there are no guarantees, especially since many airlines charge to select certain seats.

"As a family, you have to accept that maybe you're not going to sit together because those people who have paid for those seats don't want to give them up," Whitmore said.

When someone does have a valid reason to request a new seat, Whitmore said they should ask the airline before boarding.

"You go to the gate, say, 'This is the situation; is there anything you can do to help us out?'" she said. "When you wait until you're on the plane, it puts everybody in a precarious position."

Laurie said if someone is sitting in a

bulkhead seat behind a divider, they may be asked to give that up for a passenger who is traveling with a service animal because the legroom is more generous.

Many fliers who responded to a Washington Post query on Twitter say they usually try to accommodate a family with kids — though some included the caveat that they would not move from the front to the back of the plane or switch to a middle seat. The U.S. Transportation Department issued a notice to airlines in July urging them "to do everything in their power to ensure that children who are age 13 or younger are seated next to an accompanying adult with no additional charge."

Despite her strict switching policy, Wilson said she was once moved to voluntarily give up her aisle seat when she noticed an extremely tall man board.

"I was like, 'Oh, my God, I cannot in good conscience allow this guy to be crammed into the middle seat for 3½ hours,'" she said.

Several optimistic travelers said they would happily abandon their economy seat for one in business class or first class. Some fliers said it would be no big deal to make an even trade — aisle for aisle, window for window — in the same section, as long as they were flying solo that day.

"I guess it's always OK to ask, but it's never OK to be mad if someone says no," Laurie said.

When it's just rude

No one should expect another passenger to give up their window or aisle for a dreaded middle seat; don't even think about asking.

Asking someone to leave the front of the plane for the back is another hard sell. A nearly impossible mission: swapping a free seat in the main cabin for any selection that required a surcharge — especially one with extra legroom or in a higher

fare category. And don't expect another passenger to leave their group so you can be with yours.

Laurie said no one should expect that the answer to their request will be "yes."

"If you go in with that assumption, you go in kind of with that attitude that you deserve it and that person needs to give it to you," he said. "That's not a polite way of asking someone to give up what they planned for or what they were expecting."

The worst approach, Whitmore said, is to preemptively sit in a seat that doesn't belong to you.

"People make mistakes all the time, but if you intentionally sit in someone else's seat, that's wrong — that's rude," she said. "Then the flight attendant has to get involved. Then the flight attendant has to make you go back to your original seat. It's causing delays."

She said people who don't plan their seat selection have to be prepared to either sit apart from each other, arrive early to talk to a gate agent or pay for an upgrade when they get to the airport.

Still, experts agree there may be circumstances when travelers are split up for reasons that don't amount to cheap behavior or careless planning. Maybe they booked last-minute because of an emergency, or perhaps they were rebooked on a plane with a different layout after a cancellation and lost the seats they chose. Sometimes passengers don't realize they booked the most restrictive fare that doesn't allow for seat selection or guarantee that all members of a party sit together.

"You don't know if they're going on vacation, you don't know if they're going to a funeral, you don't know if they're going to a wedding," Laurie said. "It's always best to just remember that we're all in this together; we should all treat everybody the way you want to be treated."

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Serving up the classics

Wiesbaden's Trattoria da Balbi a fine choice for Italian cuisine

BY DAVID EDGE
Stars and Stripes

I absolutely love food from all around the Mediterranean, whether it be Turkish, Italian, Greek or North African. The characteristic flavor of the dishes is a source of bliss for me.

So naturally, I was drawn to Trattoria da Balbi in central Wiesbaden. Despite the rain during a visit I made with a companion, the two of us decided to join other customers outside on the spacious patio.

Trattoria da Balbi's menu included varying takes on classic dishes. The pastas included the tagliatelle popular in the north of the country and ravioli with gorgonzola, as well some of the dishes like spaghetti bolognese — which they don't serve in Bologna — but which are on any Italian menu in Germany by popular demand. There also are vegan and vegetarian options.

Wines are featured on the decent-sized beverage list. We ordered the house wine, which I thought it was a little watery, but my companion loved it.

I decided to switch to Lam-



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Information: +49 611 840303;
info@da-balbi.de; Online: da-balbi.de

brusco, which isn't the most highbrow selection, but so what. I don't usually say this about wines, but it was delicious.

For an appetizer, we ordered the bruschetta, a toasted slice of baguette with diced tomato, onions, garlic and a drizzle of olive oil. It was well-seasoned and the portion was big enough for us to share.

Because our meal was a late one and I didn't want to wait for too long, I decided on pizza Calabrese for my main course. Topped with American pepperoni, olives and a spicy sauce, it was good but nothing to write home about.

My companion ordered the piccata alla Milanese, a pork cutlet with egg and parmesan breading served with root vege-



PHOTOS BY DAVID EDGE/Stars and Stripes

A meal of pork cutlet and pizza served at Trattoria da Balbi in Wiesbaden, Germany.



The bruschetta as served at Trattoria da Balbi.

tables, which I sampled.

The parmesan was muted but the meat was well-seasoned and came through nicely. The vegetables also proved enjoyable.



The tiramisu, served with macerated fruit and fresh whipped cream, was light, fluffy and flavorful.

For dessert, we had tiramisu, which was served with macerated fruit and fresh whipped cream. It was light and fluffy,

with the taste hitting all the right notes expected from this sweet treat. My one critique was with the espresso flavor, which I thought could have been stronger.

In summary, Trattoria da Balbi provided us with overall good food and attentive servers who spoke English and were very polite. The menu offered a good selection of dishes at reasonable prices.

Although the menu is in German, that was not a problem, as the waitstaff provided expert guidance that contributed to a terrific experience.

edge.david@stripes.com

Puff pastry, peeled garlic and other worthwhile kitchen shortcuts

BY BECKY KRYSTAL
The Washington Post

I recently wrote about store-bought shortcuts that I think aren't as good as what you can do at home — times when just a little extra effort and time can make a difference. Now I'm taking the flip side, sharing recommendations from me and my colleagues for items where store-bought is fine.

Sliced cheese. As I mentioned in my previous piece, store-bought shredded cheese is often coated with anti-caking ingredients that can prevent you from getting smooth and creamy results in certain dishes. That's not the case with sliced cheese, which often employs paper in between slices to prevent them from sticking to each other. You can buy sliced cheese, including cheddar, provolone, low-moisture mozzarella and Swiss, in



REY LOPEZ/For The Washington Post

Store-bought ingredients can be preferable to homemade.

packages or from the deli counter, where you can choose your desired thickness. I especially appreciate ultrathin slices, which I'd never achieve at home.

Puff pastry dough. Most of us don't have the time to make puff pastry from scratch, and not everyone is confident enough to do it either. So frozen puff pastry is one of the best shortcuts out there. If you can, go for a butter-

based product such as Dufour or Trader Joe's, though Serious Eats found that the version made with vegetable-based fat by Pepperidge Farm was pretty good, too. For an easier way to dinner, use puff pastry as the crust for a quiche or savory tart. It's also ideal for whipping up small dessert tarts or cinnamon rolls.

Pizza dough. Pizza night typically depends on a bit of advance planning to account for making the dough and letting it rise. Impulse pizza often involves pulling out a store-bought frozen pie or ordering in. Instead, aim for an in-between solution by picking up some dough at the grocery store or your local pizza shop. You should be able to keep it in the fridge for about five days. Just give yourself an hour or so to let it come to room temperature before shaping and baking.

Peeled garlic cloves. "I think I will never buy a head of garlic again," says our multiplatform editor Jim Webster. He first bought the peeled cloves after a few garlic-intense recipe tests and was converted to their convenience and essentially identical flavor to cloves from a head. Cook's Country says you don't want to keep them in the fridge beyond two weeks, so plan to freeze excess. Keep in mind that frozen cloves won't be quite as potent — you can always use more than a recipe calls for to compensate.

Peeled and chopped butternut squash. These winter squash are gnarly enough to break down even if you have a great knife. If you don't, or if you have mobility limitations that make cutting one up even more challenging, prepped butternut squash can be a game changer and timesaver.

Even better, you can find it fresh in the produce section or on the frozen foods aisle. Put to good use in soups, quiche, chili, risotto and more.

Concentrated broth bases. "I do not have the bandwidth/freezer space for homemade stock," says Voraciously staff writer Emily Heil. Instead, she turns to products such as Better Than Bouillon, which offers concentrated bases in a variety of flavors that you can dilute with hot or boiling water for broth on demand (or add to a recipe along with the appropriate amount of liquid).

The chicken and vegetable versions both earned high rankings in taste tests from America's Test Kitchen, above other carton options. The base has an extremely long shelf life — two years from the date of manufacture.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Beyond the old masters

Contemporary art museums in the Netherlands take a less conventional approach

BY DIANE DANIEL

Special to The Washington Post

When you think Dutch art, you probably picture Van Gogh, Rembrandt and other old masters whose work graces the walls of museums in Amsterdam and beyond. But the Netherlands also has a rich variety of bold and compelling contemporary art found in museums across its 12 provinces. I've chosen a few to whet your palette, so to speak, but this is only a small sampling of the possibilities.

I've started the list in Amsterdam, at the Stedelijk Museum. Although it is the country's best-known source of contemporary and cutting-edge art, it is still overshadowed by its super-famous neighbors. Then we move south to Rotterdam, an industrial-leaning city more known for its architecture than its art. The choice here, Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen, combines the two in groundbreaking, breathtaking ways. Moving toward The Hague, the newest destination on the list is Museum Voorlinden, a testament to how a private collector can create a public destination. Finally, we go down to Tilburg, about 90 minutes south of Amsterdam, in the province of North Brabant, where the Textiel-Museum lovingly honors its industrial past while looking far into the future at its TextielLab.

Stedelijk Museum

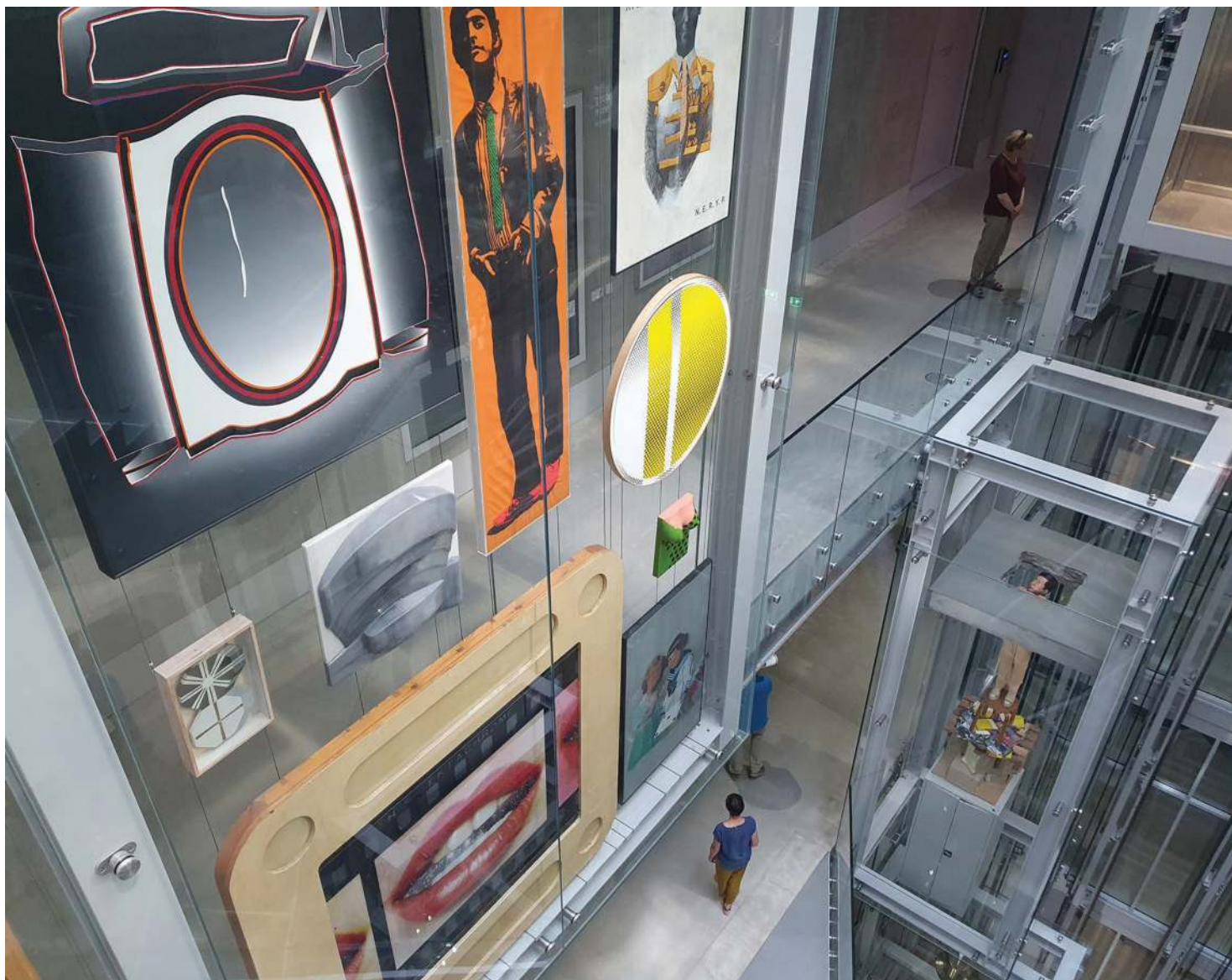
At the Van Gogh Museum and the Rijksmuseum, you'll almost always find lines of people waiting to get in. Not so here. Even its name, which translates to "municipal museum," downplays the Stedelijk's significance.

But if you step into "the bathtub," so nicknamed for its oblong addition protruding over the square, which was added to the original 1895 building a decade ago, you'll find an intoxicating mix of modern masterpieces and experimental work.

A current series, "POST/NO/BILLS," blends history and graphic design around the museum's historic staircase and in the arches of the corridor. The current show in the series is "Sophie Douala — Follow the Black Rabbit" (through Dec. 31).

Douala, born in Cameroon, raised in France and living in Berlin, creates trippy, colorful designs punctuated with somber, self-reflective videos that use current events as the backdrop.

The Stedelijk's permanent collection display contains about 500 art and design objects dating from 1870 to the present, shown in three categories. (The full permanent collection includes around 100,000 items.) The museum also was an early



PHOTOS BY SELINA KOK/For The Washington Post

At the six-story Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, visitors can find art on all levels, accessible by stairs or a clear elevator.



The oversize people in "Couple Under an Umbrella," by Ron Mueck, are a highlight at Museum Voorlinden.

supporter of the Dutch design duo Drift and recently acquired more of its lighting and material installations.

Coming up, "Anne Imhof — YOUTH" (Oct. 1-Jan. 29) features the German visual and performance artist, who will place a sound-and-light installation in the Stedelijk's nearly 12,000-square-foot lower-level gallery. "Bad Color Combos" (Oct. 22-March 5) is an overview of the recent work of French-Moroccan artist Yto Barrada, including her film, textiles, photography and sculptures.

Online: stedelijk.nl/en

Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen

Billed as the world's first publicly accessible art depot, aka storage space, this recently opened architectural stunner in Rotterdam holds some 151,000 objects from the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, located next door. The museum, which opened in 1849, is closed for renovation until at least 2029.

Before you get a peek at the vast hold-



TextielMuseum product developer Karen Zeedijk tufts a tapestry by designer Otobong Nkanga in 2021.

ings inside, you'll see your surroundings and the skyline reflected in the curved building's mirrored facade, perfect for selfies.

In the atrium, you can gaze up through glass at the depot's six stories, accessible by stairs and a clear elevator. Although not all the art here is contemporary, the overall look certainly is, as are many of the pieces highlighted. Most artwork is stored in rooms with huge windows, which you can enter with a guide.

Other work is cleverly displayed in glass cases positioned at eye-catching angles. You feel as if you're in a monsoon, with art and design objects coming at you from all directions. It's overwhelming in the best of ways.

On the free guided tours, you can go into storage areas to see works hung on racks or stored on pallets, in cases or on shelves. Some are exhibited often, while others are rarely seen.

During the workweek, you can also see art conservators laboring behind windows,

and you can sometimes get the opportunity to ask about their projects.

Once you've absorbed as much art as you can, check out the lovely tree-lined rooftop and its restaurant, where you'll be treated to a panorama of Rotterdam.

Online: boijmans.nl/en

Museum Voorlinden

Pick a warm, sunny day to visit this private museum and gardens in Wassenaar, just northeast of The Hague, where nature, art and architecture harmonize.

The museum, which opened in 2016, was founded by Dutch art collector and industrialist Joop van Caldenborgh. Housed in a 100-acre nature reserve, it features a private permanent collection and rotating temporary exhibits with a backdrop both old and new. The grounds include walking paths, gardens, sculptures and a 20th-century country mansion, where the restaurant and terrace are located.

The elongated museum building is designed to pull in light from every corner. The 20 galleries are lit by natural daylight, while a roof made of glass incorporates indirect LED lighting.

Several of the favorite permanent works here are huge and beg for interaction.

"Swimming Pool," designed by Argentine conceptual artist Leandro Erlich for the Voorlinden, makes a splash with its optical trickery. As visitors look down into the pool, they see other visitors — clothed and dry — walking on its floor. (The "swimmers" enter on a lower level of the museum.) It's the people that make this experience so fun.

SEE ART ON PAGE 23

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Art: Some of the museums also explore the past

FROM PAGE 22

Continuing the theme is “Couple Under an Umbrella,” one of Australian sculptor Ron Mueck’s oversize, hyperrealistic human figures. An older shirtless man in swimming trunks lies under a beach umbrella, with his head in his wife’s lap. They’re designed with uncanny precision, down to the wrinkles and hair.

On a more meditative note, American artist Richard Serra’s “Open Ended” is a huge work of six vaulted steel plates molded together to form a maze. A walk through it is both mysterious and calming.

Along with works from the permanent collection, current and upcoming exhibits include “GROUND,” a major retrospective from British sculptor Antony Gormley (through Sept. 25), and a retrospective from Italian artist Giuseppe Penone (Oct. 8-Jan. 29).

Online: voorlinden.nl/?lang=en

TextielMuseum and TextielLab

If the idea of a textile museum conjures images of clanking wooden looms, huge spools of cotton thread and elementary school field trips, you wouldn’t be totally wrong. But nowadays, this dynamic destination in Tilburg brings together textile design, art, fashion and innovation, with heritage at its core.

The building itself blends past and present. The museum is located in an old textile factory that was built in the 1860s by a woolen fabric manufacturer. The last addition, in 2008, extended the main building with a striking glass-covered entrance area. Another redevelopment is planned for the coming decade.

The future hums in the textile lab, located inside the museum. Here, fabric innovations are born through collaborations with staff and a host of Dutch and international designers. In fact, there’s a good chance that anything you see made by a Dutch designer that includes a clever use of textiles was executed here. Visitors can walk through much of the workspace, where staff members are on hand to demonstrate and explain the weaving, knitting, lasering, tufting and embroidery techniques employed today.

The museum also explores the industry’s past, especially in the permanent display “Woollen Blanket Factory 1900-1940.” The exhibit re-creates a textile factory from 1900 to 1940, including spinning and weaving looms driven by a steam engine built in 1906.

Temporary exhibits often focus on sustainability and research. “To Dye For” (through Nov. 13) explores the world of textile dyeing, from its origins to current practices, as well as its effects on people and the environment. “Secrets of making #2 — Artists and designers in the Textiel-Lab” (through June 4) is a behind-the-scenes look at the creative processes of 10 makers who recently worked in the lab.

The museum also has a colorful cafe and a beautiful shop, where many of the textiles designed and made in the Textiel-Lab are for sale.

Online: textielmuseum.nl/en



PHOTOS BY JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

Eliszijs Jahrmarktstheater in Stuttgart’s Killesberg Park is a small fair with food and amusements in an atmospheric setting.

Amusement area of beloved Stuttgart park charms with nostalgic diversions

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Wide-ranging appeal is one of the hallmarks of the old-time fun fair at Killesberg Park, where young and old can kick back at one of Stuttgart’s most scenic locales.

For about 30 years, the Eliszijs Jahrmarktstheater has been a mainstay at the park, located on the northside of Stuttgart and just a 10-minute drive from the Army’s Robinson Barracks. The amusement site sits along a paved area just beneath an eye-catching 130-foot observation tower that’s worth a visit in its own right.

Between April and November, the theatrics at Eliszijs bring a nostalgic atmosphere to Killesberg that harkens to a bygone era.

For several years, I’ve marked the season during walks through the park by their springtime arrival and late-fall departure.

And now, with the autumn months upon us, there’s still time for a visit before they pack up for the winter.

The setting is quaint, and at the center of it all is an antique wooden merry-go-round that’s popular with children. There’s also a small swing boat ride and simple amusements where kids can pass the time.

The place is run by a family that is involved in the performance arts, and various puppet and clown shows are regularly held inside a circular tent.

In the evening, Eliszijs is also a destination for amateur tango dancers, bringing a more adult flair as they dance into the night under the pavilion.

The food is typical of the fair scene, with



An antique merry-go-round is a highlight at Eliszijs Jahrmarktstheater, where you also can watch theatrical performances such as puppet and clown shows inside a tent.

homemade potato chips, waffles and flammkuchen, an Alsatian version of pizza, on the menu. And there are plenty of adult averages to choose from.

Any visit to Eliszijs, though, would be incomplete without taking a chance to explore the rest of Killesberg Park, which is arguably the most spectacular in a city that is known for its extensive network of parks and green spaces.

From Eliszijs, a short walk brings you to Killesberg Tower, which offers a view of the surrounding area. The park also is a destination for flower lovers, with large beds tended to year-round by park gardeners.

With a big playground, a small petting zoo and a steam train that courses around the grounds, activities abound to keep

On the QT

Address: Am Kochenhof 16, Stuttgart, Germany
Hours: Monday-Friday, 2 p.m.-7 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. (stays open later when the weather is nice).

Cost: Entrance to the park is free, but tickets must be purchased for shows at the theater. They are \$6 for children, \$8 for adults. All menu items are under \$10.

Information: Online: eliszijs.de

things interesting during a visit.

But visitors should be sure to let Eliszijs take center stage in their enjoyment of the park while they have the chance. Although fun is always in season, the park’s theatrical entertainment isn’t.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL



A floating market on one of Bangkok's canals.

PHOTOS BY LILY RADZIEMSKI
For The Washington Post

Going with the flow

An impulsive trip to Thailand embodies the magic, and the headaches, of spontaneous foreign travel

BY LILY RADZIEMSKI

Special to The Washington Post

On the southwestern coast of Thailand, limestone cliffs tower over seawater against the backdrop of swaying trees. Long-tail boats — the only means of transportation to Railay Beach — sit parked in the distance, neon-pink-and-green flags swaying at the bow. Sand bubbler crabs dip above and below the surface, leaving their intricate designs at the mercy of high tide and flip-flops. I'm sitting in a bar on the beach, watching water droplets fall down my ice-cold Singha beer, looking at the sunset glimmer on the water. Picturesque doesn't even begin to describe this. There's just one question on my mind: How did I end up here?

A few weeks earlier, I was fantasizing about going somewhere — anywhere — far away. I craved the feeling of being lost in an unfamiliar city, soaking in its sounds, smells, energy. This led to casually browsing plane tickets to Southeast Asia, when a reasonably priced ticket to Bangkok popped up. Later that month, I boarded the plane with a friend who booked her trip a few days after mine.

While jetting across the world on a whim admittedly made me feel pretty cocky, it turns out I'm part of a larger trend.

According to data from the online travel company Skyscanner, demand focused on the Asia-Pacific region — and Thailand in particular — has taken off since coronavirus restrictions began to ease in April. During May and June, for example, it was the third most popular long-haul destination from France, where I live.

Beyond the uptick in trips to the region, Matt Bradford, who analyzes trends and insights for Skyscanner, has identified short booking horizons — a window of 30 days or less between booking and takeoff — as a new behavior. He explained by phone that, in France during May and June, 39 percent of bookings made on the site were for departures within one month. (In the United States, that figure was 35 percent.)

When the doors slide open at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport, it hits you: wet, sweltering heat. Within one minute, my skin was covered in a slick film of humidity and sweat, dripping down the back of my neck as we hopped into a cab. We drove past

SEE THAILAND ON PAGE 25



Bangkok's Wat Arun temple complex was built on the Chao Phraya River during the Ayutthaya era.



Squid for sale at the Ao Nang Landmark Night Market.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Thailand:
Lovely beach,
lousy jellyfish

FROM PAGE 24

roadside dumpling joints, skyscrapers and a seemingly endless string of stalls selling sex toy souvenirs.

The next afternoon, after a delicious lunch at Rung Reung Pork Noodle — a bare-bones, plastic-stool, fan-blasting haven for pork meatballs, noodles and broth — we set off toward Wat Arun, a temple built during the Ayutthaya era on the bank of the Chao Phraya River. Its “prang” towers more than 200 feet overhead, intricately decorated with porcelain pieces and walkways that snake up and around it. As we were strolling through the grounds, a lady approached us offering a boat ride around a nearby floating market.

Our boat driver soon led us through Thonburi’s network of klongs, or canals, lined with worn wooden houses, many tilting on the stilts holding them above water.

I’m no floating-market expert, but let’s just say the one we encountered was underwhelming; after a quick snack of fried quail eggs with soy sauce and sugar, we set off back toward Bangkok and spent the evening on a rooftop paying for drinks with crypto, the bar’s only payment option.

The next two days would see endless heaps of sausages splattering into hot oil on street food carts, 3 a.m. massages on Khao-san Road and walks down the side streets of Sukhumvit. Then, after being seduced by travelers and locals raving about the south — they generally urged us to avoid Phuket, the notorious destination for tourists looking for



LILY RADZIEMSKI/For The Washington Post

Long-tail boats lined up along Railay Beach in Thailand. The boats are a primary mode of travel in Thailand.

nightlife — we hopped on a plane.

After the intense, electric urban energy of Bangkok, Krabi — a southern province on Thailand’s Andaman Sea — was a literal breath of fresh air. We hopped into a shuttle that made various drop-offs in towns throughout the area.

In Krabi, we set off by long-tail boat to explore the Ko Poda, Ko Thap and Ko Khai (or “Chick-en”) islands off the coast, within the Phi Phi Islands national park. To say our first stop looked like a postcard would be a vast understatement. If you’ve ever imagined yourself on a deserted island, gazing out into crystal-

clear waters under the shade of a mangrove tree on a white-sand beach, this was that.

There was no one else in sight as we dived into the calm water, splashing around gleefully with silly grins on our faces. I soon started to notice some stinging on my upper arm. Thinking I was being a hypochondriac, I ignored it. A couple of minutes later, back onshore, my friend mentioned that her arm was stinging but reasoned that it was probably because of the saltwater-and-sunburn combination.

As it turns out, the deserted white-sand beach wasn’t deserted at all, but was instead full of massive translucent jellyfish, in

the water and washed ashore, a small detail we didn’t register on our walk from the boat. Our driver didn’t seem too concerned, though. When asked whether the stings were dangerous, he laughed, shook his head and said, “No dead, no dead,” still chuckling as he returned to the stern.

On our last night, we returned to Railay Beach via long-tail boat, tilting dramatically against the waves, water splashing into the boat through the open sides. After wading through the water to get to shore, we dropped off our stuff and hit the beach bar. “Hotel California” played in the background as the sun disappeared over the horizon

Then, the power went out.

After a few minutes, the bartender created a makeshift glowing lantern by putting his phone flashlight under a bottle of Curaçao. Candles were lit. We asked for another round. “Why not?” he replied.

A wander through the pitch-black town revealed shadows of massage ladies, chatting quietly while huddled together, looking out onto the pathway. Bartenders hung out outside, just their silhouettes visible in the darkness. In one bar, candles cast a glowing light over a pool table beyond the open windowsills, an acoustic guitar player singing behind it. We spent a few hours in that bar as rains flooded the road outside.

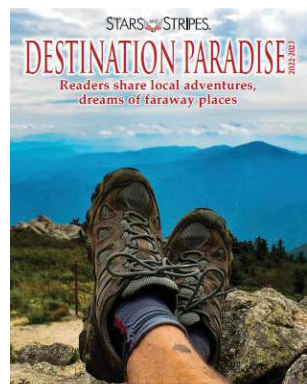
Behind us, the bartender kept laughing to himself, repeating, “Why not?” — seemingly the town’s unofficial catchphrase — every couple of minutes. We couldn’t make out the faces of the people opposite us, just their shadows. Reality felt conflated with a sort of dream world — in a good way.

Suddenly, the lights came on. Acoustic music quickly faded behind the Top 40 songs blasting on the stereo, and fairy lights blinked aggressively on the walls. It was time to go. The next morning, I left Krabi, already feeling nostalgic as that night shifted from reality into memory on the journey back to Paris.

I’m not advocating for always traveling without a plan. We missed a lot. The one thing we really wanted to do — travel by train from north to south — wasn’t possible without booking ahead. Our floating-market experience could have benefited from better research. We could have seen more sights.

But if someone had asked me, “Would you like to take a rickety long-tail boat in high swells to this isolated beach town that will lose power, where you’ll be essentially stranded until morning?”

I’d say, “Why not?”



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WEEKEND: FOOD

Nothing wasted

5 tips to cut food costs by cooking at home

BY ANN MALONEY
The Washington Post

Eat at home instead of dining out. Cook from scratch rather than buying packaged foods. Those are two pieces of advice you will hear if you ask for ways to cut food costs. The issue then becomes how to balance the money you'll save against the time you'll sacrifice. Grocery shopping, cooking and cleaning all take time — even if you are making a 30-minute recipe from the pantry.

As food prices climb — eggs, fish, meat and poultry are up almost 6% from that of last year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics — more of us are looking for ways to embrace thrift over convenience, necessity over indulgence.

“One of the best ways to save money is to stop wasting food at home,” said Adam Lowy, executive director of Move for Hunger, a nonprofit group that creates pathways for people who are relocating to donate their non-perishable foods to food banks.

“The average family wastes \$1,500 in food a year,” Lowy said. “We talk about tax credits; let’s just not waste \$1,500 a year.”

Lowy said he and his family strive to reduce waste through cooking more efficiently, which naturally results in lower food costs.

Want to try it? Here are five reasonable strategies you can follow to help you strike the right balance:

Plan meals ahead of time

The first step is to survey and organize your pantry, refrigerator and freezer. Use that to create a week of meals. If you know what you have and what you want to eat, you can shop smarter as well as cook from what’s on hand, and plan so that one dish feeds the next.

“My family loves pulled-pork carnitas,” Lowy said. “We’ll cook a 10-pound pork roast for the first two nights, and then freeze it in small portions, which will last a month and change. And because you’re not pulling out giant portions, you don’t waste it.”

Brainstorm your meal plan with this in mind: The investment in making an inexpensive pot of beans with rice on Sunday can pay off in easy burritos and bean salad on Monday and Tuesday. A thrifty pot of tomato sauce with spaghetti on Wednesday can be used for a shakshuka and a simple pizza on Thursday and Friday. At the end of the week, try fending, the buzzword used to

describe using what’s in the pantry and refrigerator to whip up a stir-fry, a chopped salad, or an odds-and-ends cheese or charcuterie board.

Accept that if you’re trying to save money, you might not satisfy your every craving, but make sure whatever you do prepare is something you enjoy.

Use dried herbs, spices

Fresh herbs can be pricey, and too often we only need a bit to make a difference, so don’t shy away from using dried herbs and pre-ground spices. In a recent conversation with cookbook author Sabrina Ghayour, garlic came up.

“They ask me, why aren’t you using [fresh] garlic? Garlic burns,” she said, adding: “Because I’m lazy and maybe I don’t have garlic. Powdered garlic is clever, smart and you can control the amount more easily. And, you always have it on hand.”

Like many of us, Ghayour cooks every day for her family, so she relies on dried herbs and spices, which can last for more than a year if stored properly. If a recipe calls for fresh, remember this simple rule: Dried herbs are more potent, so use a third of the fresh herbs called for.

Buy the spices you use most. And, if a recipe calls for one you don’t have, ask yourself: Is it essential? Is there a substitute? No crushed red pepper flakes? Try adding black pepper or a splash of hot sauce.

If you do buy or grow fresh herbs, find ways to use them by making a simple herb sauce to add to eggs, salads or grain bowls, or chop and freeze them in small portion sizes.

Think of meat as a side

This one choice can help protect not only your wallet but also your health and your planet. No doubt your doctor has warned you or someone close to you to cut back on beef to protect your heart. Recently, columnist Tamar Haspel wrote about the impact of simply switching from beef to a less environmentally adverse animal protein, such as pork.

No matter which animal protein you choose, consider making it a supporting player. Add inexpensive beans as a supplement to meat. Try this with tacos, soups and burgers.

A few other ideas: If you’re preparing a chopped salad, add big flavor with just a few strips of crumbled bacon; slice thick chicken breasts into cutlets to stretch them; or mix chopped broccoli in your next chicken



burger. Bulk up meatballs, Salisbury steaks or fish cakes with rice, breadcrumbs — even crumbled potato chips.

Check out freezer section

If you’re thinking, “But fresh fruits and vegetables — and seafood — are so expensive, too,” you’re right. That’s why frozen vegetables, frozen seafood and canned fish (or beans for that matter) can save money — and time.

Depending on where you live, the quality of the frozen seafood can be better than the fresh that is available. The same is true of out-of-season vegetables. The seafood often is frozen onboard the boat or just hours after being harvested, and the vegetables are picked at their peak and quickly frozen, too.

Put frozen cod fillets in the refrigerator before heading to work, and baked fish can be on the table a half-hour after you get home. Leftover chicken and frozen vegetables can quickly become a savory cobbler or part of fried rice.

“And if you are using fresh vegetables,” Lowy said, “chop them up and freeze them yourself.”

Store your food properly

This brings us back to cutting waste. Make your freezer work harder for you. So many things freeze well, from flour, nuts and egg whites to shredded cheese, butter and berries, even frosted cake slices.

Think about this as you cook and plan. If you use two of the three chicken breasts in a pack-

age or a cup of those mixed frozen vegetables, date and record the amount/weight of the rest and freeze it. Use half an onion and bell pepper? Freeze the rest. All of that can be turned into a stir-fry or a soup later in the week. (Another fun idea is to quick-pickle scraps, such as onions, celery and carrots.)

For both cold and shelf-stable items, take time to move older items forward in your pantry and refrigerator, so you will use them first. Check for freshness, but think before you pitch it. Remember that a sell-by date is different from an expiration date, especially when it comes to condiments. The USDA Food Keeper app is a useful tool if you’re unsure.

“The feeling of ‘I did not waste today’ feels good,” Lowy said.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Laughter, legacy and Bob Hope

National World War II Museum honoring late comedian with traveling exhibit about USO tours

By Joe Gromelski
Special to Stars and Stripes

For 50 years, as American service members battled the forces of dictators from Hitler to Hussein, they looked forward to the breaks from battle provided by Bob Hope and his entourage of entertainers.

From now through Jan. 27, 2023, the National Museum of the United States Army is honoring the late comedian and actor by hosting a traveling exhibit, “So Ready for Laughter: The Legacy of Bob Hope.”

The exhibit, created by the National World War II Museum and supported by the Bob and Dolores Hope Foundation, features numerous mementos from Hope’s tours on behalf of the USO, highlighting the early days of his career as an entertainer of the troops. There’s also a short documentary film.

“The exhibit looks at the service of Bob Hope in entertaining over 11 million troops overseas, from 1941 to 1991,” said Paul Morando, the museum’s chief curator. “From World War II to Desert Storm. He brought a piece of home to these soldiers and airmen and Marines, to give them a break from the daily life of war.

“The artifacts you see (in the exhibit), a lot of them are personal mementos that he acquired overseas, things that soldiers gave him or other entertainers gave him. But also very personal things, like a (1944) diary where he kept notes about what was happening, trying out jokes, writing ideas, things like that. All that is to kind of highlight his role in entertaining the troops.”

Morando said Hope “understood what (the troops) were going through,” and “it wasn’t just about entertaining for him. You can sing and dance and tell jokes all you want, but if you don’t follow through, visit the hospitals, go in the chow halls, talk to the troops and figure out what makes them tick ... I think he was one of the early pioneers to really focus on that.

“And he was a really charitable individual. I remember a quote by him, I’m paraphrasing a little bit, ‘if you don’t have charity in your heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble.’ He was essentially a very giving individual, he used his talents, he used his skills as an entertainer to give back.”

Hope, who died in 2003 at age 100, “was bringing a connection with home” during his tours, said museum public affairs officer Susan Smullen. “At that time, particularly in World War II, all you had was a letter. People don’t realize right now how connected we all are, (but) in that period of time there really was not that touch of home. In some cases they said he was able to do for soldiers what family members wished they could have — he was bringing that little touch of home, encouragement, a little break.”



PHOTOS BY JOE GROMELSKI/Special to Stars and Stripes

The National Museum of the United States Army’s chief curator, Paul Morando, poses Sept. 16 near part of the Bob Hope traveling exhibit. “So Ready for Laughter: The Legacy of Bob Hope” is at the Fort Belvoir, Va., museum until Jan. 27.



Part of the traveling Bob Hope exhibit currently on display at Fort Belvoir, Va.

And when Hope’s overseas shows were broadcast to the U.S. on radio and later in television specials, the home front was able “to see that soldiers are laughing, that for a brief moment they can break away from war. That being broadcast back home gives some comfort to the families and friends of those who were overseas,” Morando said.

With a selection of jokes and with help from such top World War II-era entertainers as comedian Jerry Colonna and singer-actress Frances Langford, Hope established the framework for entertaining the troops that carries on nearly 20 years after his death.

“He understood topical humor, meaning he understood the crowd,” Morando said.

“The jokes that he was saying were appealing to the crowd, whether it’s about life in a barrack, whether it’s about what you’re fighting for, or the drudgery of everyday life at war.”

The Hope exhibit is just a start. “We’re going to bring in more traveling exhibits, up until mid-2024,” Morando said. “And all of that’s going to culminate with our major blockbuster exhibit, the 250th (anniversary) commemoration of the American Revolution. This entire (special gallery) space — 5,000 square feet — will be dedicated to the Revolutionary War. We’ll have some rare artifacts that tell the soldiers’ story, the soldiers’ experience.”

And Smullen pointed out that the sol-



Bob Hope’s 1944 tour diary.



Bob Hope’s World War II ID card.

diers’ experience, a big part of the Hope exhibit, is central to the museum itself.

“We created the museum and the story line based around the perspective of the ‘every’ soldier,” she said. “It’s a very relatable museum. There are names here that you recognize, famous names. Those stories are here. But really, the majority of the soldier stories that are shared in this museum are names you haven’t heard before or seen in your history books. That’s intentional — to make it relatable, and (tell) the story of the ‘every’ soldier.”

“What we had hoped, and I think what we’re seeing come to fruition, is that a visitor can come here and whether they have an affiliation with the military or not, they find a story they can relate to.”

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Q&A

‘I don’t feel comfortable going’ to the CMA Awards

Maren Morris on publicly feuding with Jason Aldean’s wife and fighting for more inclusion in country music

By MIKAEL WOOD
Associated Press

Maren Morris knew the question was coming. “OK, let’s hear it,” the country star said with a grin as she sat in her dressing room before a concert last week at the Santa Barbara Bowl. Morris, 32, had arrived in Southern California on tour behind the wise and tender “Humble Quest,” which just scored a prestigious nomination for album of the year at November’s Country Music Association Awards. Produced by Greg Kurstin (known for his work with Adele and Foo Fighters), Morris’ third LP uses dreamy-rootsy arrangements to frame the singer-songwriter’s thoughts on romance, ambition and — impossible to ignore since she gave birth to a son, Hayes, in early 2020 — the demands and the elations of motherhood.

Yet as eager as she may have been to discuss her album, which is also expected to fare well in nods for next year’s Grammys, Morris understood that a different topic had put her in the news lately: her very public feud with a fellow country A-lister Jason Aldean and his wife, Brittany, over comments the Aldeans have made about young people seeking gender-affirming care.

It all started when Brittany, a conservative social media influencer with 2.3 million followers on Instagram, posted a video of herself applying makeup. “I’d really like to thank my parents for not changing my gender when I went through my tomboy phase,” she wrote in the caption. “I love this girly life.” Jason, who’s racked up 25 No. 1 hits on Billboard’s country airplay chart and has spoken critically about vaccine mandates and President Joe Biden, commented on his wife’s post with the laughing-crying emoji and wrote, “Lmao!!

Im glad they didn’t too, cause you and I wouldn’t have worked out.”

After singer and “The Voice” winner Cassadee Pope condemned Brittany’s statement on Twitter, Morris replied to Pope, referring to Brittany as “Insurrection Barbie” and writing, “It’s so easy to, like, not be a scumbag human?” Soon, Brittany took her story — “I think that children should not be allowed to make these life-changing decisions at such a young age,” she said — to Tucker Carlson’s Fox

SEE MORRIS ON PAGE 29



Harper Smith

Maren Morris received an album of the year nomination from the Country Music Association for her latest, “Humble Quest.” The awards will be presented in November.

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Morris: Singer on politics, postpartum depression

FROM PAGE 28

News show, where the right-wing host invoked the threat of unchecked castration and called Morris a “lunatic” and a “country music person who I hope leaves country music immediately.”

“I’ll wear that as a badge of honor,” Morris said in Santa Barbara — and indeed she quickly began selling T-shirts that read “Lunatic Country Music Person,” proceeds from which she said have raised more than \$150,000 for Trans Lifeline and GLAAD’s Transgender Media Program. (Brittany made Barbie-inspired T-shirts of her own that read “Don’t Tread On Our Kids.”)

Ahead of an Oct. 13 show at the Hollywood Bowl, Morris, who’s married to country singer Ryan Hurd, spoke in depth about the war of words, which has come amid a broader reckoning over Nashville’s treatment of women, queer people and people of color. These are excerpts from our conversation.

Los Angeles Times: Did you run your initial tweet by anyone before you posted it?

Morris: No, I just shot it off. I hate feeling like I need to be the hall monitor of treating people like human beings in country music. It’s exhausting. But there’s a very insidious culture of people feeling very comfortable being transphobic and homophobic and racist, and that they can wrap it in a joke and no one will ever call them out for it. It just becomes normal for people to behave like that.

Is that a new development, in your view?

It’s always sort of been there, if you talk about the Chicks and that kind of being the first canceling. But I feel like it got worse during Trump — which are all the years that I’ve been on a major label and active, since 2016. That’s when everything got worse — irreparable, almost.

Politics aside, ‘Insurrection Barbie’ is a hell of a phrase.

Well, it’s kind of true, because the whole conspiracy theory peddling of Jan. 6, they totally partook in that. Look, I’m not a victim in this and neither is she. But I don’t have feelings of kindness when it comes to humans being made fun of for questioning their identity, especially kids. The whole “When they go low, we go high” thing doesn’t work with these people. Any resistance movement is not done with kind words. And there’s a lot worse things I could’ve called her.

As a country star, does speaking out against transphobia feel riskier than speaking out against racism or sexism?

I think just the culture of misinformation that goes along with trans youth is where I was coming from. It’s not, “Oh, this is bad, and this is good, and we can agree to disagree.” No, we can’t, and you are being fed information that is false. And even though you’re not the one with the bullet in the gun, your words matter. Your disinformation matters. That hospital in Boston just had a bomb threat because people who listen to that rhetoric literally think they’re mutilating kids and don’t bother reading any sort of actual study on it.

This whole thing got so ugly so fast because the worst they can say to me is, “Oh, you must be a groomer then.” That’s literally their favorite word. I have a son, and I think we’re all — especially all parents — we’re just trying to do our best and take care of our kids and make sure they’re happy. You don’t know if one day they’re gonna come home in tears because they don’t feel right in their body. And it’s just so s— for the parents that are going through that right now to make a

joke out of it. Suicide rates are so high because of hateful bull— like that. I don’t care if it’s a joke. But they don’t want to talk about that part because it’s too real.

Did you see the Tucker Carlson segment as it aired?

No. I’m on a big group thread — it’s been going for probably 10 years now — with Brothers Osborne and Kacey Musgraves. Kacey sent it to me. And I was like, “Oh, here we go.” But I thought, “You know what? This would be really funny on a T-shirt: ‘Lunatic country music person.’”

Another A+ phrase, it must be said.

Thank you, Tucker. Was it funny? Sure. But if we can twist it into a charitable cause, let’s do it. Then it just exploded.

You ended up sparring with right-wing pundit Candace Owens, who said you sounded like “a 15-year-old girl on TikTok” and told you to grow up. Is there anyone whose scorn on this topic you’d fear?

I don’t think so. I’m from Texas. I have a ton of family and people I’ve grown up with who are conservative and watch Tucker and probably follow Candace. But even they all have reached out to say, “We’re on your side.”

Because they’re close to you or because they reject the other side’s reasoning?

Probably a little bit of both. But I think it’s just a common-sense thing at this point. Friends that aren’t in country music, they ask me, “What the hell is going on in Nashville right now with these people?” And I’m always like, “It’s fewer than you think.” Sometimes I feel like I’m in this abusive relationship and I keep defending it: “It’s not all bad!” But sometimes you have to call it out for what it is.

I think there are people in country music that want it to be niche. They don’t want it to expand. They don’t care about it becoming more inclusive. It’s theirs, and everyone else is an other, or woke, or whatever. That’s sad to me, because I feel like country music at its core is people’s real stories. And to think there’s only one kind of person that gets to live them out and celebrate them is not why I’ve chosen to live there or make music within those walls.

The veil seems to have lifted on the division between factions in country music: those who want it to expand and those who don’t.

I was talking after all this to Brandi Carlile, who was like, “It does feel like there are two country musics.” And, I don’t know, it should have been heartbreaking to hear that. But I was actually really relieved and encouraged to hear it. It made me feel like, OK, country music on this mainstream level absolutely could be two things, and I’ve been trying to make it one, and maybe I should stop. I don’t know if Brandi meant it to be a positive, but I took it as one. It was like a pressure release.

Has this whole thing made you think about your audience differently?

I don’t think I lost any fans over this, if that’s what you mean. I’ve been very clear from the get-go. It sucks when artists stay quiet, stay quiet, stay quiet, and then they finally reach their breaking point and have to say something because something is so unjust or disgusting. And then they lose half their crowd because they stayed quiet. I try to tell my husband this, because he’s still building: Let people know where you stand. The ones who don’t get it will fall away, but the ones that stick with you will know what they’re contributing to.

You could say Jason Aldean is finally doing

that after years of consciously avoiding politics.

Which is his prerogative. And he probably knows, “OK, I’m gonna lose my liberal fans,” if he had any. But the ones that stay I’m sure feel extremely close to him through all this. And that’s when I kind of have to take a step back and be like, What am I actually doing? Is it self-serving? Is it performative? All the things a neurotic will think through. But I sleep pretty good at night knowing that people feel safer in my crowd.

You’re sure to see the Aldeans at the CMA Awards on Nov. 9. Have you thought about what that will be like?

Honestly, I haven’t decided if I’m gonna go. I’m very honored that my record is nominated. But I don’t know if I feel home there right now. So many people I love will be in that room, and maybe I’ll make a game-time decision and go. But as of right now, I don’t feel comfortable going.

Does that make you sad?

I think I was more sad going last year. Some nights are fun. Others, I’m just crawling out of my skin. I’m not good at those events because I’m awkward. But this time I kind of feel peaceful at the notion of not going.

Morgan Wallen is nominated at the CMAs for entertainer of the year, and he recently won the ACM Milestone Award at the Academy of Country Music Honors. What do you think of his being re-embraced by the Nashville establishment after being caught on video drunkenly using the N-word?

I don’t know how I feel about it, honestly. I’ve never hated that guy. He made a mistake, and I will say after this Aldean drama, at least Morgan tried to apologize, even if it wasn’t perfect. I have to give him that, because he didn’t have to. He’s not going anywhere. And I feel like all you can do at this point is shut up and listen to people that are smarter than you try to tell you why what you did was wrong.

You’ve had your 2-year-old son on the road for much of this tour. How’s that been?

Fun but hard. He was born at the beginning of COVID, when we weren’t going anywhere. My bedtime was like 9 p.m. So being in mom mode all day, then having to play a show? Tequila helps.

You made the Highwomen album with Carlile and other friends before you had a kid. Does the song “My Name Can’t Be Mama” — in which you talk about being “a solitary girl ... free-wheeling in the city” — hit different now?

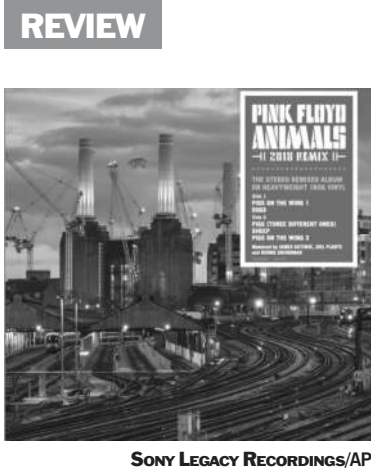
Oh, for sure. My verse seems so silly now. I feel Brandi’s verse the most probably because it’s about her being hungover and not wanting to be a mom that day. I think becoming a parent in general has made me a little bit closer to the truth. Writing my record, I just didn’t really have anything else to prove. It kind of disrobed a layer of caution or insecurity that was there for a long time. I was also going through postpartum depression.

Had you experienced depression before?

Not heavily. The postpartum element was the first time I had to be medicated for it, which I’ve been open about because it’s so normal to feel those feelings.

Yet they’re still taboo.

“Oh, if she’s dealing with PPD, she hates her baby.” That’s the soap-opera version of it. The reality is: No, I love my baby — I hate myself. But when the fog lifted and I got on antidepressants, I felt like, This is totally temporary. And it was.



SONY LEGACY RECORDINGS/AP

The 2018 remix of Pink Floyd’s 1977 release, “Animals,” is finally available to the public.

Delayed remix puts shine on Pink Floyd’s dark ‘Animals’

By Scott Bauer
Associated Press

Nothing is easy when it comes to Pink Floyd and its legacy, which explains why the 2018 remix of the band’s 1977 release “Animals” (Sony Music) is just now seeing the light of day.

Lead guitarist David Gilmour wouldn’t sign off on the liner notes, according to Floyd songwriter and co-lead singer Roger Waters, who agreed to letting the remix out without any notes. So fans are left with the music, now in 5.1 surround sound for the first time, a newly imagined cover, a 32-page booklet with previously unreleased photos, but none of the backstory. There are also no bonus tracks or previously unreleased songs.

“Animals” is a concept record much like its predecessor “Wish You Were Here” and “The Wall,” which was released two years later.

Taking its inspiration loosely from George Orwell’s “Animal Farm,” the record assigns animals to different types of people: pigs, sheep and dogs. The three main songs all run at 10-plus minutes, bookended by two slightly different versions of “Pigs on the Wing” clocking in at around 1:30.

“Animals” is a dark and brooding critique of capitalism and greed, making it perhaps among the least accessible of Floyd releases. Even so, its themes feel just as relevant today as they did when it was first released, and the remix gives the sound a new shine.

Floyd fanatics, of which there are legion, will be certain to hear nuances in the new mixes that will go right past first-time listeners. At the very least, it provides an excuse for those who haven’t listened to “Animals” in years, or maybe even decades, to give the new version a spin.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

‘Andor’ finds the story behind the voice

Luna reprises his ‘Star Wars’ role in new Disney+ series, which explores character’s backstory as a refugee

By David Betancourt
The Washington Post

Diego Luna always assumed his debut in the world of “Star Wars” was a one-and-done deal.

But his comeback began this week in “Andor,” which started streaming the first of its two planned seasons with a three-episode premiere Wednesday on Disney+. The series, which tells the backstory of Luna’s character, shows just how far “Star Wars” has come since he appeared in 2016’s “Rogue One.” It’s now an ever-expanding streaming universe, and one that is part of a surge of Latino representation in geek culture on screen.

The acclaimed Mexican actor, known for roles in the 2001 film “Y tu Mamá También” and the Netflix series “Narcos,” played the charismatic rebel spy Cassian Andor in the prequel to the original “Star Wars.” “Andor” will serve as a prequel as well, taking place before the events of “Rogue One.”

While filming “Rogue One,” Luna controlled his nerves despite entering a world he’d admired since his childhood by telling himself it would be a singular experience. That was because he knew he was a dead man.

He was there to bring to life one of the most meaningful deaths ever to happen in a “Star Wars” story, as his character was part of a team on a suicide mission that helps save the galaxy from an evil empire. During news conferences for “Rogue One,” Luna recalls, he was asked frequently just how long he’d stick around in the “Star Wars” neighborhood. All he could do was smile and try not to ruin the ending of the movie for everyone.

“It helped me a lot to come into this universe of ‘Star Wars’ feeling kind of like I was in control,” Luna said in a recent interview. “It was close to what I have been doing my whole life. I was going to be a part of one film. It had a beginning and an end. My experience was going to be one.”

“Rogue One” was a billion-dollar hit at the worldwide box office. In the at-times polarizing “Star Wars” film renaissance after Disney purchased Lucasfilm in 2012, the film was a shining beacon of quality storytelling. With its darker tones and bigger stakes, “Rogue One” was a “Star Wars” movie so good it didn’t need lightsabers but gave fans one anyway with one of Darth Vader’s greatest cinematic moments at the end of the film. But



Lucasfilm Ltd.

Diego Luna returns to the role of Cassian Andor in “Andor” on Disney+, a prequel to “Rogue One.”

with so many major characters dying, the only way to capitalize on “Star Wars” fans’ goodwill toward the film was to look to the past.

Luna’s return to “Star Wars” in “Andor” started to take form when Lucasfilm President Kathleen Kennedy wanted to give Luna’s character his own series. She reached out to Tony Gilroy, who had been instrumental in “Rogue One’s” success after coming in to assist director Ga-

Jon Favreau, and executive producer, Dave Filoni, happened. And the world, and how you could tell a “Star Wars” story in it, changed. Suddenly Gilroy’s impossible-to-achieve notes were looking quite doable.

Luna shared in the enthusiasm. “When I got the phone call about exploring the opportunity of doing this prequel, to explore the past of this character, I thought it made complete sense, to be honest,” Luna said. “For

glish) and their culture is severely impacted by the arrival of the empire, forcing Andor unwillingly down the path to legendary “Star Wars” status.

“He’s a refugee,” Luna says of Andor’s origin story. “He’s a man forced to migrate and has to leave everything behind. And there’s a hint of that in ‘Rogue One.’ No one has his accent. Clearly, he comes from somewhere no one else has come from ... we’re talking about marginalized communities. We’re talking about [what] oppression looks like. And obviously, there is a lot of parallels you can establish with the world [we] live in.”

There is a sense of galactic Indigenous uprooting and imperial colonization within “Andor’s” Kenari flashbacks. Gilroy, the series showrunner, says those flashback moments on screen evolved from the first question he asked himself when pondering Cassian Andor’s past. He wanted to know just what kind of horrific moment makes a kid want to grow up to help destroy an empire.

“My original, first, desperate, practical impulse was ... I’ve got to explain his accent,” Gilroy said. “That’s the place I start. I want him to have serious childhood drama. I want him to be angry. I want him to be desperate. I also want to allow him to do some very unpleasant things

along the way and yet you still not reject him.”

Luna now finds himself a part of a Latino “Star Wars” revolution. He recently shared the cover of Vanity Fair with “Obi-Wan Kenobi” star Ewan McGregor, “The Mandalorian’s” Pedro Pascal and Rosario Dawson, who will soon star in an “Ahsoka” streaming series as the former Padawan of Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader. Three-fourths of the cover was Latino: Luna (Mexican), Dawson (Cuban/Puerto Rican) and Pascal (Chilean). Luna also announced recently at Disney’s D23 event that he would be doing the Spanish dubbing voice-over for his character on “Andor.”

“Gladly, Lucasfilm and Disney found this important that our voices are there for the Spanish-speaking community,” Luna said. “We’re not done. I’m still working on it. Even though it is a lot of work. it was important for me. Many [Latino] kids see it [in Spanish]. and I don’t want to have someone else’s voice there.”

At D23, Luna says he was taken aback during a moment backstage with many of his fellow Latino actors that included Pascal, Gael García Bernal, his former “Narcos” co-star Tenoch Huerta and his “Andor” co-star Adria Arjona.

“There was a lot of Spanish speaking going on,” Luna said proudly. “It was quite interesting to see so many friends that I’ve worked with in other projects ... suddenly having space in these types of productions. And audiences reacting to it. When you come out in D23 and people are so pleased to see you because you sound like them, because you look like them, it means a lot.”

García Bernal, Luna’s longtime friend and “Y tu Mamá También” co-star, will star in a Disney+/Marvel Studios Halloween special “Werewolf by Night” in October. Huerta is set to debut as Namor the Sub-Mariner in November’s “Black Panther” sequel “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever.” And Salma Hayek recently starred in the Marvel Studios 2021 film “Eternals.”

“What it means is that there’s so much talent in Mexico,” Luna said, adding: “We are used to doing a lot with very little. Creativity gets triggered in a very special way when you have a lot to say and very little to do it with. Something activates ... we have this neighbor on top of us and a lot of what we consume comes from the States. Cinema. Music. Television. So it’s kind of cool that we are represented in these projects. It just makes sense.”

“He’s a refugee. He’s a man forced to migrate and has to leave everything behind. And there’s a hint of that in ‘Rogue One.’ No one has his accent.”

Diego Luna
Cassian Andor in “Andor”

reth Edwards with the film’s controversial reshoots, and asked him if he was interested in being a part of it. But in Disney’s non-streaming world pre-2019, the ideas Gilroy came up with seemed too costly and ambitious for television. He still left numerous notes and memos with Lucasfilm detailing how he thought it could succeed.

But then Baby Yoda happened in 2019.

Disney+ happened. “The Mandalorian” happened. Its creator,

me, ‘Rogue One’ is a beautiful film that shows you what these characters are capable of, but you don’t get to know much about Cassian — where he comes from. What triggers that confidence and commitment for the cause in him?”

In “Andor,” the story of Cassian Andor’s rookie rebel days are supplemented with flashbacks to the character’s youth on his home planet of Kenari. The Kenari people don’t speak Basic (the “Star Wars” term for En-

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

By ALICIA RANCILIO
Associated Press

There's a scene in the first episode of Hulu's "Tell Me Lies," where the character Stephen DeMarco — played by Jackson White — leaves the dorm room of freshman character Lucy Albright (Grace Van Patten) where he comforted her after a tragedy. He's spent the night selling himself as a sensitive, charming guy who is very interested in Lucy. As he walks away, the music changes and so does Stephen's expression. He returns to his dorm where his on-again, off-again girlfriend, Diana (played by Alicia Crowder), is waiting for him.

And this is one of many moments where viewers may want to throw pillows or scream at the TV while watching "Tell Me Lies," a 10-episode series now streaming on Hulu with new episodes dropping on Wednesdays.

It's about a young couple who can't seem to stay out of each other's orbit. The series shifts time between their college days and years later when they're about to meet again after years apart. The relationship is especially hard on Lucy, who is often confused by Stephen's intentions, makes excuses for him and waits for his call or text message. The show's writing and White's performance highlight DeMarco's manipulation tactics.

"Tell Me Lies" is based on a 2018 novel of the same name by Carola Lovering but does not follow the book to the letter.

"I wanted to stay true to the emotional core and the emotional heartbeat of the show, which is really this feeling between these two people and that addiction and that infatuation and Lucy's isolation within that," said show-runner Meaghan Oppenheim. "But in terms of the plot, I added a lot that is not in the book."

Emma Roberts' Belletrist book club co-founder, Karah Preiss, read "Tell Me Lies" first.

"When I finished it, I couldn't stop thinking about Lucy and Stephen," recalled Preiss in a recent interview. She recommended the book to Roberts who remembers Preiss saying, "I cannot get it out of my head." Roberts read it next and felt the same way. They decided to adapt it for television and took it to Hulu, who Roberts says "saw what we saw" and ordered it straight-to-series. Roberts and Preiss are co-executive producers.

Roberts says she's been pleasantly surprised at how fulfilling it is to create behind the scenes.

"I wouldn't be able to, like, look at myself in a show like this and be objective about it," she said. "It's very rare to to be excited to watch something when you already know what's going to happen. And I still get excited."



HULU/AP

Grace Van Patten, left, and Jackson White in a scene from the series "Tell Me Lies." Van Patten and White play Lucy Albright and Stephen DeMarco, respectively, a young couple in an unhealthy relationship.

Stuck under our skin

Emma Roberts, co-executive producer of 'Tell Me Lies,' says part of its appeal is that 'We can all relate to having a toxic relationship'



JAE C. HONG/AP

White, left, and Van Patten pose for photos in Los Angeles on Sept. 8 to promote their Hulu series "Tell Me Lies." Van Patten dyed her hair brown once they were finished filming to "say goodbye" to the project.

"This show has this thing that's kind of elusive, which is, it's a will-they-won't-they? And it can go on and on."

Karah Preiss

"Tell Me Lies" co-executive producer

She also believes a big part of the appeal is that most people have found themselves in an unhealthy relationship of some kind: "Whether it's romantic or friendship-wise, we can all relate to having a toxic relationship in our lives where it's not good for you, but you're not mature enough to verbalize that to yourself, so you kind of keep going down the rabbit hole."

"Anyone can have a Stephen," White said. "The Stephen is the person that gets under your skin and stays there for whatever reason, chemically, situationally, they fit with you in the wrong way and unlocks a part of you and it stays there. It's the person you can't shake. That's Lucy and Stephen."

Playing someone both charming and calculated was exhausting, White admits.

"There's so much going on with this guy. It's like putting on a backpack full of bricks," said White shortly after filming wrapped. "I finally feel like I can walk around and not have this thing on my back. He's someone who locks up, intellectualizes everything, compartmentalizes it and then moves on and puts on something else. I am the opposite. I'm like an open book. I'm talking about everything. So it was really an exercise in staying still and quiet."

Van Patten also dyed her hair from blonde to dark brown after production ended.

"I feel the need after every project to drastically change myself in order to say goodbye," she said.

Beyond Lucy and Stephen, Van Patten thinks the cast who makes up their group of fictional friends, including Catherine Missal, Spencer House, Sonia Mena and Brenden Cook, are also compelling to follow in their own right: "There's a lot to kind of latch onto. I feel like everyone's going to find their character that they're invested in and relate to the most because it's kind of laid out for everyone to choose their player."

A second season of the show has not been announced, but Preiss believes they have a case.

"This show has this thing that's kind of elusive, which is, it's a will-they-won't-they? And it can go on and on," she said.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



AP

For the first time the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force has recommended anxiety screening in primary care for adults without symptoms. Pictured: an airport in Atlanta.

Panel recommends anxiety test for most

Task force aims to catch undetected condition; some doctors concerned about strain on resources

BY RACHEL ZIMMERMAN
The Washington Post

In a nod to the nation's pressing mental health crisis, an influential group of medical experts for the first time is recommending that adults under age 65 get screened for anxiety.

The draft recommendations, from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, are designed to help primary care clinicians identify early signs of anxiety during routine care, using questionnaires and other screening tools.

Anxiety disorders are often unrecognized and undetected in primary care: One study cited by the task force found the median time for initiating treatment for anxiety is a staggering 23 years.

While the task force's initial deliberations on anxiety screening predated the coronavirus pandemic, the new guidance comes at a critical time, said task force member Lori Pbert, a clinical psychologist and professor at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School in Worcester, Mass.

"COVID has taken a tremendous toll on the mental health of Americans," Pbert said. "This is a topic prioritized for its public health importance, but clearly there's an increased focus on mental health in this country over the past few years."

In April, the task force made similar recommendations to begin anxiety screening in children and teens, ages 8 to 18. The proposal announced Tuesday focuses on young and middle-aged adults, including those who are pregnant or postpartum, citing research showing that screening and treatment can improve anxiety symptoms in those younger than 65.

But the guidance, somewhat surprising-

ly, stops short of recommending anxiety screening for people 65 and older.

One reason: many common symptoms of aging, such as trouble sleeping, pain and fatigue, can also be symptoms of anxiety. The task force said there wasn't enough evidence to determine the accuracy of screening tools in older adults, which may not be sensitive enough to distinguish between anxiety symptoms and conditions of aging.

The task force advised clinicians to use their judgment in discussing anxiety with older patients. The task force also reit-

"Our hope is that this set of recommendations can bring awareness of the need to create greater access to mental health care throughout the country."

Lori Pbert

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force member

erated an earlier recommendation that adults of all ages undergo routine screening for depression.

The task force, an independent panel of experts appointed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, wields enormous influence, and while its advice isn't mandatory, the panel's recommendations often change the way doctors practice medicine in the United States.

Some doctors questioned how the recommendations would play out in the real

world, where mental health providers say they already can't meet patient demand, and patients complain of waiting months for an appointment with a therapist.

"Screening is great, but with a dire shortage in the workforce, it's perplexing unless there are plans for increased funding of clinicians," said Eugene Beresin, a psychiatrist at Massachusetts General Hospital and executive director of the Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds.

Global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by 25% during the first year of the pandemic, the World Health Organization reported earlier this year. By the end of 2021, the WHO said, "the situation had somewhat improved but today too many people remain unable to get the care and support they need for both pre-existing and newly developed mental health conditions."

The panel also considered the benefits of screening patients for suicide risk but concluded that even though suicide is a leading cause of death among adults, there is "not enough evidence on whether screening people without signs or symptoms will ultimately help prevent suicide."

Still, the panel urged providers to use their own clinical judgment to determine whether individual patients should be screened for suicide risk.

For primary care physicians, already in the throes of a "crisis" of burnout, pandemic-driven stress and their own mental health challenges, adding yet another screening test to a long list of clinical tasks may feel burdensome.

"If primary care providers are asked to screen for one more thing, we are going to break without more resources," said a nurse practitioner in Northern California, who asked not to be named because she didn't have permission from her clinic to

speak about the issue.

Ticking off current requirements, like verifying up-to-date screenings for cervical, colon and breast cancer, as well as food insecurity, domestic violence, alcohol and tobacco use, she said everything must be packed into a 15-minute appointment, while also treating patients with complex, chronic conditions.

"It just feels wrong if people are positive for depression or anxiety, and we don't have the mental health support to help them," said the practitioner.

But Mahmooda Qureshi, an internal medicine physician at Massachusetts General Hospital, said that additional support for patients suffering from depression or anxiety will help.

"After 2020, it's the rare patient who is not anxious," said Qureshi, who noted that she now routinely asks patients, "How's your stress?" "We have found that when it comes to mental health, if we don't ask, often we don't know."

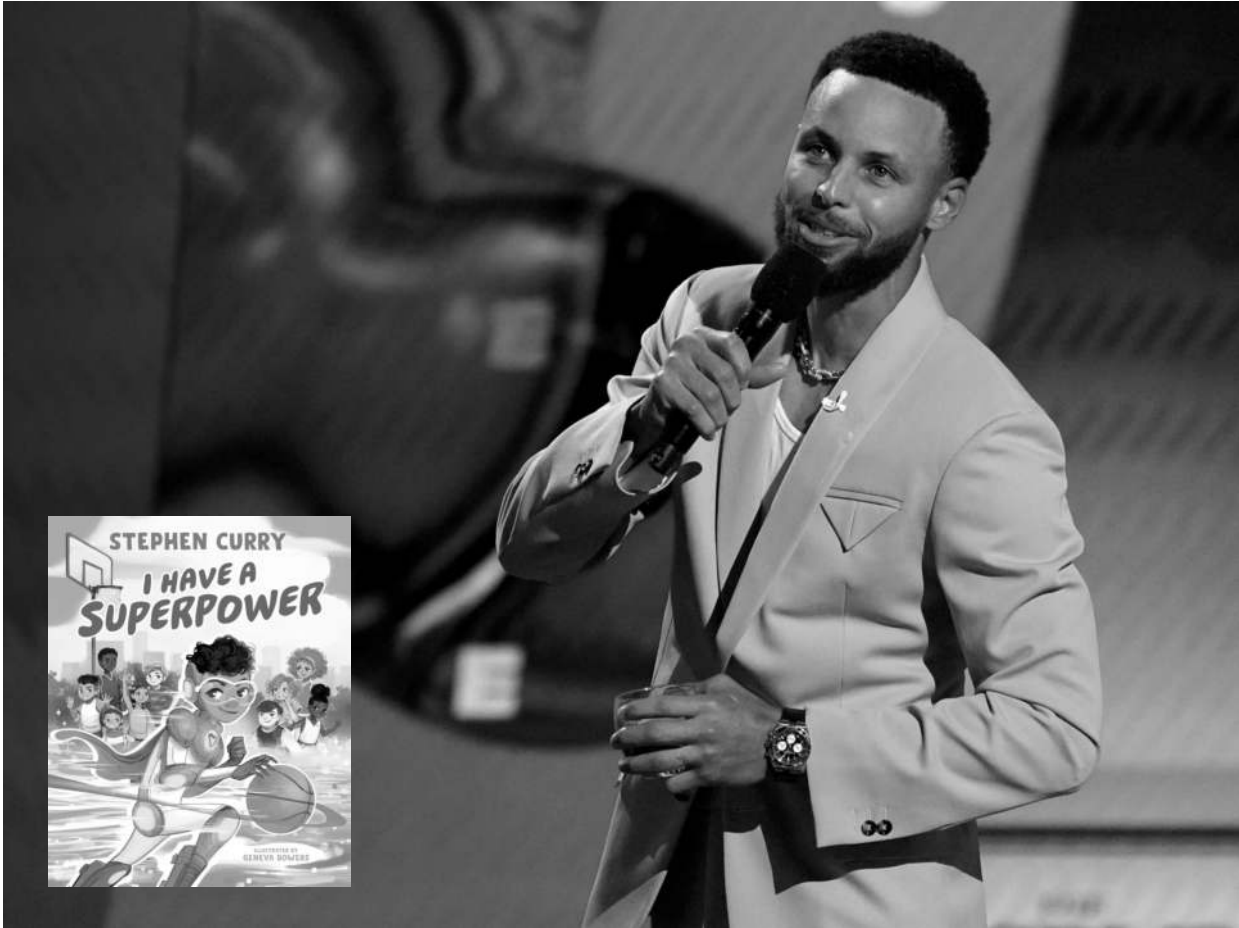
The task force acknowledged the challenges of delivering mental health care to all those in need, adding that fewer than "half of individuals who experience a mental illness will receive mental health care."

Pbert said the latest guidance is just one step in addressing the urgent mental health needs of patients.

"Our hope is that this set of recommendations can bring awareness of the need to create greater access to mental health care throughout the country," she said, as well as highlight "gaps in the evidence so funders can support critically needed research in these areas."

The proposed recommendations are open for public comment through Oct. 17, after which the task force will consider them for final approval.

WEEKEND: FAMILY



Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry hosts the ESPY Awards in Los Angeles on July 20. The NBA superstar has a new children's book, "I Have a Superpower" (inset). MARK TERRILL/AP

Inspiring a new generation
NBA champion Curry releases children's book, 'I Have a Superpower'

BY GARY GERARD HAMILTON
Associated Press

On nearly every basketball court around the world — from NBA arenas to elementary school gyms — you'll see players of all sizes regularly attempting long three-point shots. There's one man largely credited with transforming basketball from an above-the-rim game to long-range shooting: Stephen Curry.

But the Golden State Warriors megastar who broke the NBA's career three-point record last season is now aiming at a different target: children's books.

"This is our first project out and (we want) to hopefully reach the next generation of kids that are dreaming big, are going to be the next leaders and game changers," said Curry of "I Have a Superpower" illustrated by Geneva Bowers. "We want them to be able to set their sights on what they want to accomplish in the world and really believe that it's possible."

The father of three says the book was partly inspired by his own children's love of reading.

"You kind of have your kids in mind when you're talking about a book, and then you realize that this is kind of a universal opportunity to reach the next generation," explained the four-time NBA champion and reigning Finals MVP.

A member of the NBA's prestigious 75th Anniversary team and executive producer of the "Holey Moley" game show, Curry spoke with The Associated Press about empowering children and the upcoming NBA season. Answers have been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: What do you want young people to learn from "I Have a Superpower"?

Curry: We're all unique and we all have something to offer the world. And if you have a work ethic, if you have a belief and you feel like whatever that requires is already inside of you, then good things will happen.

What would you tell parents who might say it's easy for you to tell kids "just work hard"?

You can always go back to when I started playing basketball when I was 5 years old — I first started

playing organized basketball at 9. I was undersized, scrawny and never, ever talked about as being the greatest at anything. And (I) had to go through those experiences of trying and failing ... I think that's something that most people will hopefully be able to learn from, connect with and be inspired by.

You and your wife, Ayesha, are building a media brand with TV shows and books. Why choose the media space to make an impact?

There are a lot of different mediums to story-tell and to inspire. And publishing and writing this book is another example of ways to connect and kind of broaden your horizons ... my wife showed me how it's done, so now I got to follow in her footsteps a little bit.

Switching gears, most of this NBA offseason has been focused on the Brooklyn Nets drama with Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving along with the Lakers daily soap opera. Are you aware that much of the talk has not been about the Warriors, despite being the defending champions?

We're aware of everything that happens in the league in terms of different storylines and rumors and all that. It is the best place to watch it all happen when you're holding the trophy and enjoying your summer and understanding, as the champs, you're the ones being chased again now.

We don't need anybody to talk about us. We know what we accomplished; it's about getting ready for another run (and) we feel like we can do it again.

Sports fans know that you've probably transformed the way basketball is played forever. Are you personally aware of how you've changed the game?

I'm aware, but part of it is for me to keep doing what I'm doing in my career and hopefully stay at this level for as long as I can. There is no sense that I've hit my peak. I always feel like I can get better. So, I'm motivated by how far I can stretch this.

The biggest message for how I changed the game is that is possible, how I play is definitely possible ... But it requires a crazy amount of work that I've been doing since I was 9 years old. So, I don't want anybody to feel like they can skip steps to get there.

THE MEAT AND
POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari

Close encounters
at the commissary

I scurried through the commissary doors and out of the rain, grabbing the last small cart in the vestibule. I preferred the smaller, more maneuverable carts, but as my luck would have it, this one had a wheel that screeched every fourth rotation like a cornered rat. Muttering discontentedly to myself, I dug in my purse for my grocery list, which I found torn and crumpled at the bottom. It was one of those days.

My temperamental bladder urged me to stop at the ladies' room before beginning my lonely sojourn through the commissary aisles. At the mirrors, I noted that my hair was protesting the humidity by imitating a dirty, wet mop.

Retrieving my squeaky cart, I resolved to complete the task at hand, but in the produce section, the bananas were too ripe, the avocados were too hard, and I couldn't for the life of me figure out which end of the bags opened.

I moved on to the meat coolers against the back wall, where cellophane-wrapped beef, pork and poultry parts lay out on display. Seeing slabs of oozing red steak and swollen mounds of hamburger meat reminded me of the painful throb in my gut. Retrieving a pen from my purse, I scribbled "feminine products" on the bottom of my grocery list.

Somewhere in the snack food aisle, I realized I was ravenous. Someone had thoughtfully left a coupon for Pringles on the shelf, which compelled me to throw two cans into my cart. Oreo Thins are so tasty, I recalled while reaching for a bag, especially with ice cream, which I reminded myself to pick up when I got to the freezer section.

Crampy and squeaking, my reject cart and I wheeled our way through the next few aisles, scratching items off the crumpled list, and impulsively adding extras such as frozen pizza bites, Peanut M&Ms and a half-pound block of cheese.

Aisle six contained many necessary goods for a woman of my age. I stooped low to retrieve a humongous canister of orange-flavored fiber laxative powder. A few feet further, I scanned the bottles of pain relievers, finally selecting maximum strength capsules that would target my womanly symptoms. And finally, I stood before the colorful display of feminine products. Just as I selected a large box that would meet my absorbency needs, it happened.

"Hey Lisa! How've you been?"

Shaken from my shopping trance, my eyes darted toward the source of the masculine voice calling my name. "Oh, hey Jerry!" I said to my husband's former co-worker with a startled tremble that gave a guilty impression. "I'm just fine ... uh, how are you these days? I heard you got married, huh?"

As we exchanged the kind of idle chitchat that one does at the commissary, Jerry's eyes naturally glanced at the shelves beside us, at the large box in my hands, and down into my cart at an array of products and foodstuffs that told my personal and very private story. Although he had stumbled into this innocent interaction unknowingly, I could see that he felt as awkward as I did.

I resisted the impulse to run and hide behind a nearby display of shoe inserts, and quickly brought the conversation to a friendly conclusion. "It's been great to see you, Jerry. You and Francis really need to catch up!"

Breathing a sigh of relief, I shoved my misfit cart, which now seemed to be whimpering, forward, determined to snag my last few items and get the hell outta there. However, our mutual suffering continued when Jerry and I ran into each other in front of the dog food, at the deli and in the checkout line, where I was forced to reveal my embarrassing items again on the conveyor belt for the world to inspect and judge.

Teetering precariously on the threshold of hell, I over-tipped the bagger, snatched a can of Pringles for the car ride home and careened out of the parking lot as fast as the base speed limit would allow.

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

OPPOSITES ATTRACT

BY DERRICK NIEDERMAN / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Derrick Niederman, of Charleston, S.C., is a former teacher of mathematics at the College of Charleston. Currently he's finishing a statistics textbook that incorporates puzzles. Derrick is one of the longest-running crossword contributors to The Times, spanning 39 years from 1983 to now. This puzzle got its start when he noticed the curiosity of 114-Across, followed by 24-Across. The other theme examples are a result of a methodical search. — W. S.

- ACROSS

1 Try to hit

7 Numbskull

11 With 108-Down, hot stretch of summer

14 Moment of inspiration

19 “He’s” this, in a 1963 hit for the Chiffons

20 Woes

21 “I know, I know!”

23 What this might mean: “

24 English poet who wrote “The Highwayman”

26 World Cup org.

27 Digs in the ice?

28 Persian ____ (rug maker’s deliberate mistake)

29 Humorist Bombeck

30 Early American pseudonym

32 Within

33 Prop that enabled Houdini to “walk through” a brick wall

35 Napoleonic ____

36 Sounds of disapproval

37 Accept imminent punishment

39 Republic toppled in 1933

41 Red block in Minecraft

42 Sopranos’ highlights

43 Rapper Fiasco

45 Curse out

49 Word with open or pigeon

50 I, personally

52 Bird associated with bats

53 Place side by side

56 Doctrine of East Asia

58 Six-Day War combatant: Abbr.

59 Natural fertilizer

60 Jack of old TV

61 Neighbor of Jammu and Kashmir

64 Instrument that makes a “tsst” sound

66 “Mazel ____!”

67 Wrestler’s goal

68 Caesar-salad ingredient

71 Clanton at the O.K. Corral

72 It’s over here

73 Ground

74 Works a wedding, perhaps

75 Flying ____ (martial arts strike)

76 Spots for snorkeling

78 Women’s ____

80 Helpful connections

81 Friendly conversation ender

83 Wrap on a rancho

84 Opts

87 Horse-drawn carriage

88 “In Praise of Folly” essayist

90 Norman or English king?

91 With 93-Across, young river critter

93 See 91-Across

96 Tribal circle, perhaps

98 Scramble some eggs, say

101 Smile . . . or shine

104 Burden

105 Large electromotive unit

106 Strong cleaners

107 Branch of dentistry that specializes in root canals

110 Name hidden backward in “excellent”

111 Actress Teri

112 Davis of “Thelma & Louise”

113 Go to sleep, with “out”

114 Noted songwriter behind Wynonna Judd’s “Tell Me Why” and Linda Ronstadt’s “All My Life”

117 You can’t run on this for long

118 ____ Martell, “Game of Thrones” princess

119 Goods for sale: Abbr.

120 Taiwan-born filmmaker

121 George Washington chopping down a cherry tree, and others

122 Total mess

123 Sought redress, in a way

124 Heeded an owner’s order

4 Rant

5 “So let us begin ____ . . .”: J.F.K.

6 Talk acronym

7 Model for a grade schooler

8 Mountain residence

9 Argues

10 What three dots might mean

11 Accomplish on behalf of

12 Home of Kenyon College

13 Walk, so to speak

14 Org. created under F.D.R.

15 Shower

16 Eponym for one of the earth’s five oceans

17 Baby bearer, maybe

18 Stove toppers

22 Vice president after Pence

25 One of Neptune’s moons

30 Second half of an incantation

31 Helen Reddy’s signature hit

32 Rearward, to a rear admiral

33 It shares space with #

34 Like dipsticks

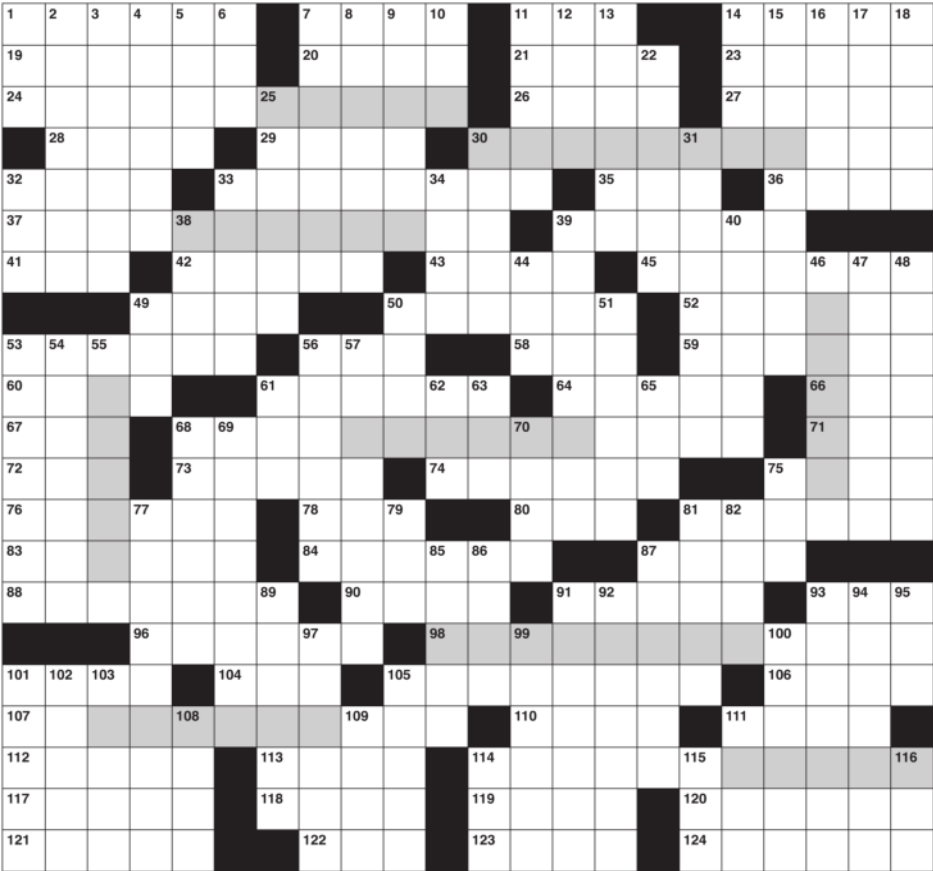
38 Southwestern art hub

39 Tom Jones and Anthony Hopkins, by birth

40 Make bubbly

44 Suzhou Museum architect

46 Same old, same old



- 47 He set a Guinness World Record in 2014, reporting for 34 consecutive hours

48 Boob tubes

49 Northernmost N.B.A. city, on scoreboards

50 Magic power

51 Brotherly figures

53 Placate

54 Job with numerous applications?

55 Her name is Greek for “all-gifted”

56 One always having a place to hide

57 Mounds of activity

61 The standard

62 Pro Bowl side, for short

63 Item with straps

65 ____ Master’s Voice

68 “I’m in trouble!”

69 Approach gradually

70 One who gave us all a lift?

75 Development in cryptography

77 A few weeks ago, probably

79 Worker with a comb

81 Mountebank

82 “Listen!”

85 Some hangouts for remote workers

86 It has its ratios, for short

87 Popular beer brand, casually

89 Meeting with a dead line?

91 One side of the coin

92 Baited online

93 What all companies try to make

94 Service charge

95 Scoring figs.

97 Lifts up

99 Literary utopia

100 Projecting edge

101 Deck out with spangles

102 The other side

103 Crackerjack

105 Longtime sports journalist Jim

108 See 11-Across

109 Still competing

111 Sold out

114 Tour de France distance units: Abbr.

115 “____, humbug!”

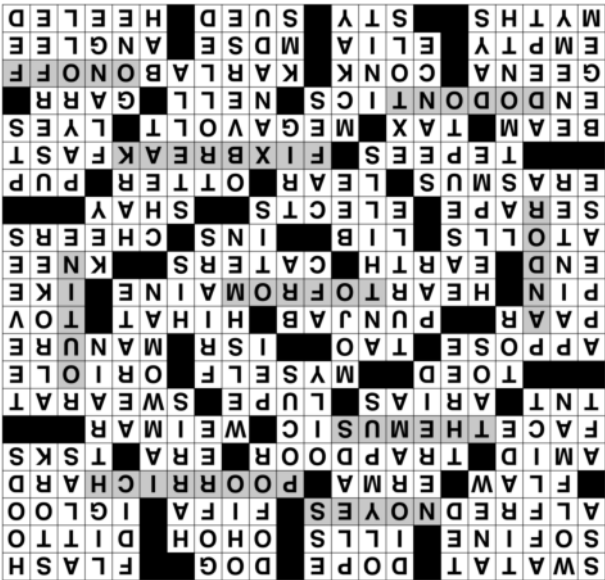
116 Added paper to, as a printer

GUNSTON STREET



“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



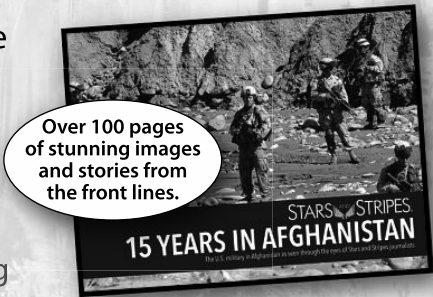
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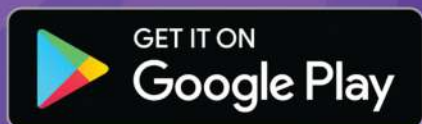
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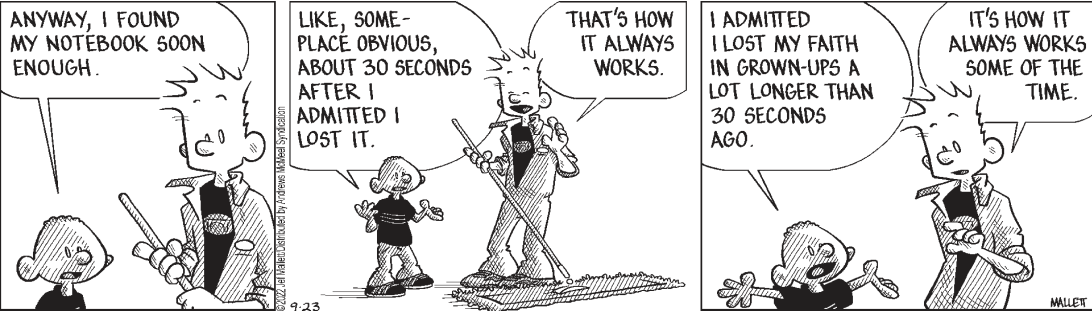


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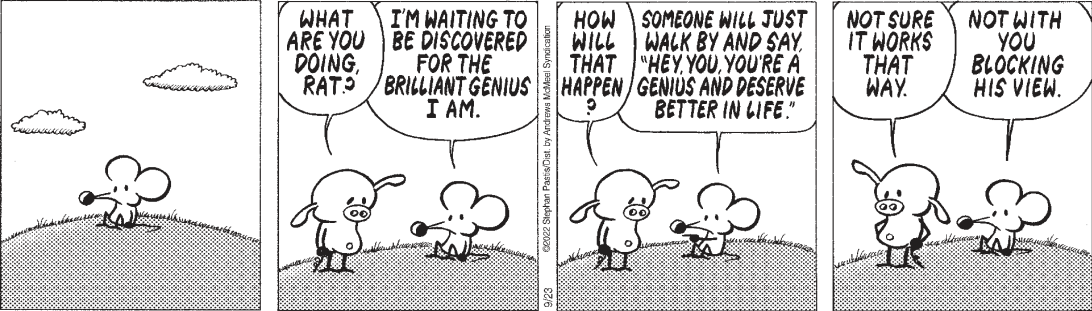
Frazz



Dilbert



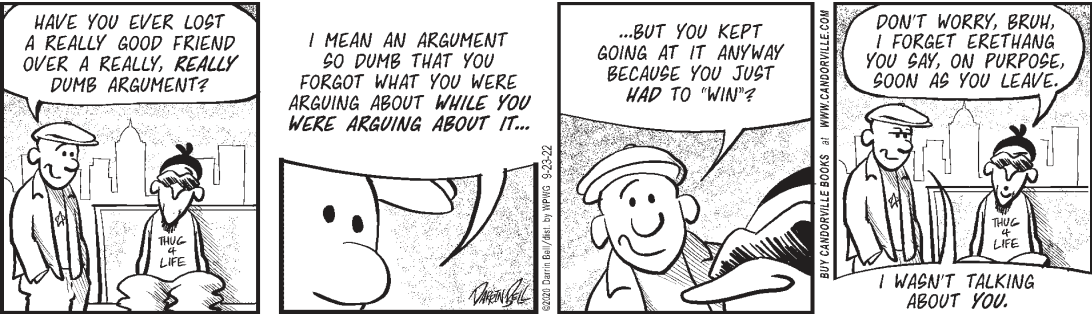
Pearls Before Swine



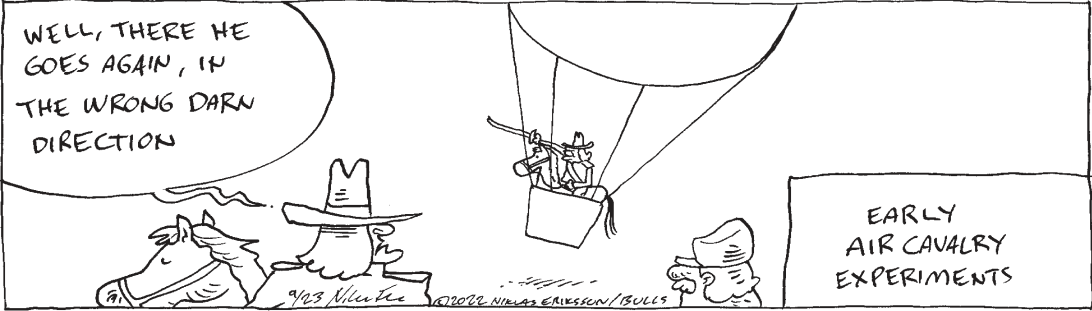
Non Sequitur



Candorville



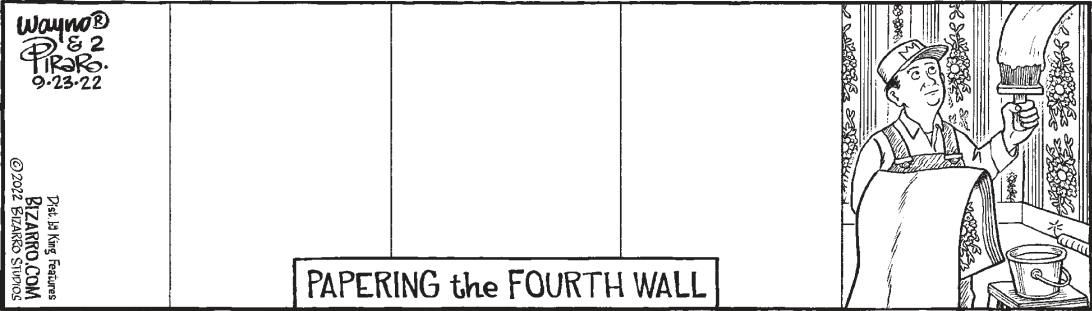
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11
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47				48				49			50	51
52				53				54				
55				56				57				

- ACROSS**
- 1 Surrenders
6 Tennis match division
9 Cover
12 Fold
13 Sch. founded by Jefferson
14 Blackbird
15 Shadow
16 Utter disaster
18 Author Lurie
20 Bump into
21 Soup cooker
23 Cowboys quarterback Prescott
24 Has an intense craving
25 Actor Guinness
27 Toothpaste holders
29 Strange thing
31 Deceived
35 Welsh pooch
37 Bargain
38 “Downton —”
41 ER workers
43 Quilters’ get-together
44 Tragic king
45 Rum cocktail
47 TV anchor Norville
49 “Glee” guitarist
- 52 Packed away
53 Historic period
54 Property claims
55 Radiator sound
56 Tiara sparkler
57 Stows cargo
- 21 Kung — chicken
22 Vintage
24 Floral garland
26 Roman orator
28 Russian pancakes
30 Playpen item
32 Deducted
33 — kwon do
34 Flamenco cheer
36 Cracker type
38 Actors Robert and Alan
39 Borscht base
40 Innocents
42 Play for time
45 Stallion’s mate
46 Operatic solo
48 Rule, for short
50 Chemical suffix
51 Curved letter
- DOWN**
- 1 PC’s brain
2 Shade tree
3 Battled verbally
4 — Grey tea
5 Composed
6 Number puzzle
7 Divisible by two
8 Bar bill
9 Shoe fasteners
10 Cove
11 Losing ventures?
17 Tickled
19 Nymph pursuer

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

9-23 CRYPTOQUIP

OMBECNQIMB QGCEPJ FEMEPF

BPXCWG CG ZTCNT OPWOIP

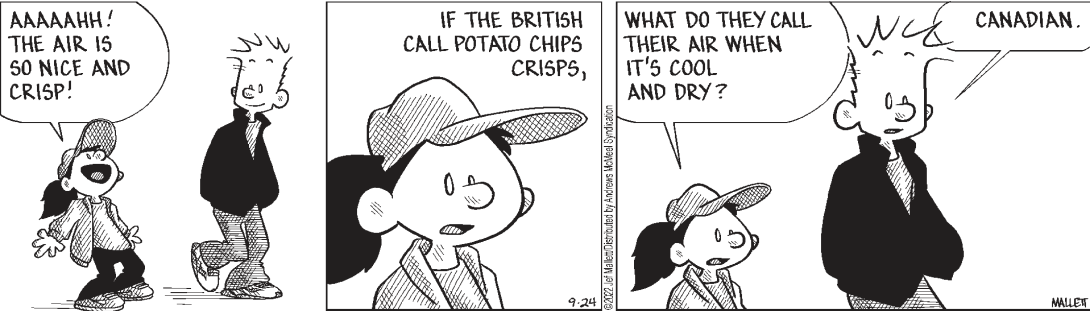
MBP MIZMLF NTMEEPBCGX

CJIL: ETP HMHHIP HPIE.

Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: A SONG ABOUT SOMEONE WEARING A CORSET STIFFENED WITH WHALEBONE COULD BE “BALEEN ON ME.”

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: X equals G

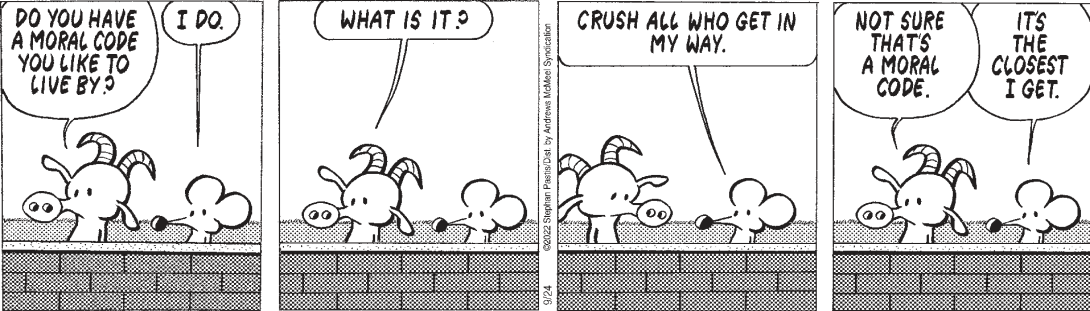
Frazz



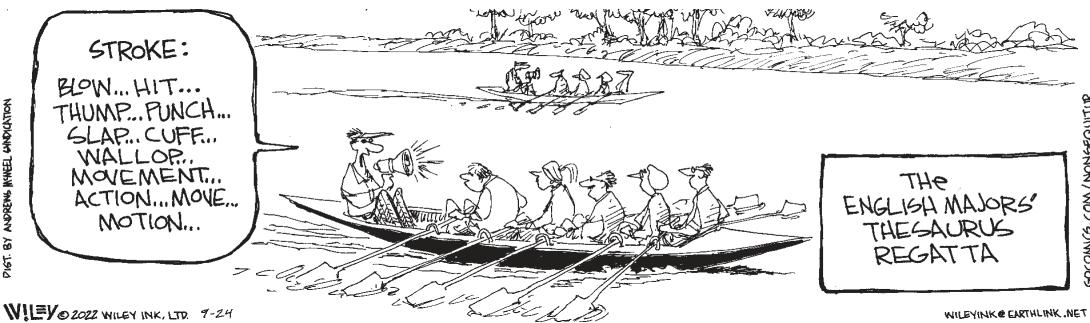
Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	
11							12					13
14							15					
16				17		18				19		
20			21		22				23			
24				25		26		27				
			28		29		30					
31	32	33				34		35		36	37	38
39					40		41		42			
43				44				45		46		
47			48				49		50			
51							52					
	53						54					

- ACROSS
- DOWN
- 25 Bathroom, to a Brit
- 27 — Mahal
- 29 Expenditures
- 31 Rose parts
- 32 Target at a fiesta
- 33 "That makes me happy!"
- 34 Airport screening org.
- 36 Type of skiing
- 37 Beethoven's Third
- 38 Sculptor's material
- 41 Loop of lace
- 44 Arsonist
- 45 iPod model
- 48 Onassis nickname
- 50 Train lines (Abbr.)
- 1 Bulgaria's capital
- 6 Tub toys
- 11 Bacon pieces
- 12 Mistakes in print
- 14 Serengeti howlers
- 15 Pre-Easter
- 16 Swiss canton
- 17 Univ. divisions
- 19 Toll rd.
- 20 Lincoln in-law
- 22 "No seats"
- 23 Spring
- 24 Entangle
- 26 Surpassed
- 28 Tic-tac-toe win
- 30 Roofing goo
- 31 Indy 500 skid
- 35 Singer Norah
- 39 Marathoner's stat
- 40 Recipe abbr.
- 42 Humorist Sahl
- 43 Chang's brother
- 44 Unadorned
- 46 Kanga's kid
- 47 Asian peninsula
- 49 Designer Pierre
- 51 Van Gogh's "— Night"
- 52 How chicken may be served
- 53 Juan's farewell
- 54 Puccini opera
- 1 "Sophie's Choice" author
- 2 Frozen fries brand
- 3 Shark feature
- 4 Apple tablet
- 5 Ninnies
- 6 Sing loudly
- 7 Unrefined metals
- 8 Prince Valiant's son
- 9 Body art
- 10 Intervene
- 11 Closes
- 13 Bracelet site
- 18 Expert
- 21 Unmanned plane
- 23 PC drive insert

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

9-24 CRYPTOQUIP

MQWRQ DLOQ LATLRIJO OF OQI

BFLA WX TZ XO CFB XDWOICZK,

XJLBGE DIAIXOBWLJX? OQI

XJWAI-MLKG.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: PARTICULAR UNITED STATES REGION IN WHICH PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS CHATTERING IDLY: THE BABBLE BELT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals J



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OPINION

No, Mr. President, pandemic isn’t over

By ERIC J. TOPOL
Los Angeles Times
On “60 Minutes” on Sunday, President Joe Biden declared “the pandemic is over.” Well into our third year of battling COVID-19, we all wish that were true. But unfortunately, that is a fantasy right now. All the data tell us the virus is not contained. Far too many people are dying and suffering. And new, worrisome variants are on the horizon. There are 400 to 500 Americans dying of COVID each day, and that high daily death toll has remained constant for the last six months. In July 2021, we were down to just over 200 deaths per day, half of where we are now. A daily toll in the hundreds is a tragedy, because most COVID deaths could have been prevented by vaccinations, boosters and early treatments. It’s not just the deaths. There have been more than 2 million confirmed new COVID infections in the last month, and considering the untested and unreported cases, the real number is a multiple of that, most probably at least fivefold. This means the virus is still fulfilling its principal objective of finding a huge number of new or repeat hosts to help spread and perpetuate itself. Some percentage of these people who get infected or reinfected will develop long COVID, manifesting chronic and frequently disabling symptoms for many months or years. There is still no validated treatment for long COVID. The only way to be certain of preventing it is to never become infected. In June 2021, we were at our nadir, averaging fewer than 12,000 new confirmed cases in the U.S. per day. That is containment of the virus, a level we can live with, associated with low numbers of hospitalizations and deaths. It is by no means “zero COVID,” the policy of suppressing all infections, which has proved to be unattainable around the world. But it is achievable.

But that didn’t last because new variants came on the scene, first delta and then the omicron variant and subvariant family in successive waves. The virus substantially evolved to evade our immune response and become far more contagious. The myth that the virus would ultimately become milder has been fully debunked. We will remain vulnerable if we pretend the pandemic is over. The United States is a negative outlier for booster shots, with only 1 in 3 Americans having had any booster shot. For people 50 and older, only 1 in 4 have had a second booster (fourth shot) even though repeated studies have indicated a lifesaving benefit from the second booster. The U.S. currently ranks 72nd in the world for its booster rate, which is extraordinary given we are the lead manufacturer of vaccines, were the first to validate them, and are purchasing and wasting tens of millions of shots that cannot find a recipient. Every other rich country in the world has at least double our booster rate. We should redefine “fully vaccinated” to mean at least three shots, not just the initial two. But the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention refuses to budge on that definition. We should encourage all eligible Americans to get the new boosters, which are fully aligned with the current BA.5 variant that accounts for almost 90% of cases. Yet the uptake has been disappointing, leaving the nation highly vulnerable. And now the president has declared “the pandemic is over,” which surely will not help to get more Americans boosted. Two intertwined, troubling issues also illustrate why that statement is disconnected from the science. First, there is now strong evidence of imprinting, meaning that after being exposed to an earlier strain of COVID-19, we do not mount as strong an immune response to

new strains. This gives the virus a further edge. Not only are some new variants more evasive of our immune system, but also our bodies are less capable of taking them on when we do fight back. Then there are the new variants that have already surfaced, such as BA.2.75.2, which exhibits more evasion of our immune system than any prior version. It is sadly inevitable that this variant, or another one with many new, important mutations, will lead to another wave months from now. Such variants are so distinct from what we’ve been exposed to — what our immune systems recognize after infections and vaccines — that we will be less protected against future waves. We desperately need a way to block infections and transmission, along with more durable, effective and variant-proof vaccines. One asset that would encourage more people to get boosted, and would be better at blocking infections and spread, would be nasal, oral or inhaled vaccines, rather than a shot. Two such vaccines have recently received approval in China and India, but the U.S. has not backed any of these programs. Nor has it made any strong commitments to developing second-generation vaccines — not boosters, which are like remodeling a house, but truly new vaccines with more powerful nanoparticles containing antigens or mRNA that could take on the entire sarbecovirus family. That could be part of how we get to a point of credibly saying “the pandemic is over.” To assert this, it takes a look back after we have achieved a durable, stable, low number of infections and their sequelae for many months. We will get through this, but we’re not through it yet.

Eric J. Topol is a professor of molecular medicine at Scripps Research and author of the newsletter Ground Truths.

Alleged social media operations demand reckoning

Washington Post editorial
The U.S. military has apparently adopted a new national security strategy: internet trolling. The Washington Post reports that the Pentagon will conduct a sweeping review of its policies regarding clandestine information warfare, after Facebook and Twitter removed fake accounts suspected of being run by the Defense Department. The news raises the question of whether social media companies should crack down on fake accounts that exist for benign purposes, such as promoting democracy. On the other hand, it is also reasonable to ask whether the U.S. government should conduct offensive cyberoperations to influence foreign peoples. Though it seems contradictory, the answer to both questions is yes. Social media sites need rules against platform manipulation, and those rules need to have a bright line: A site can’t pick and choose which false personas it likes and which it doesn’t based on the countries they come from or values they promote — doing so would make effective enforcement nearly impossible. At the same time, the U.S. government cannot leave the online influence battlefield. U.S. adversaries are all too present

on the front of online influence, from China’s so-called 50-Cent Army of propagandists, which spreads misinformation about Hong Kong, Taiwan, the cultural genocide of the Uyghur Muslim minority and more, to Russia’s Internet Research Agency, which sought to magnify racial tensions among American feminists preparing for the 2017 Women’s March. Fighting back is tricky. The U.S. military’s reluctance to cede the clandestine information space to malign foreign forces makes sense — but in trying to seize some of the territory for itself, the Defense Department also risks undermining this country’s own objectives. Spreading truthful information, such as the facts about the coronavirus pandemic, through false means, such as inauthentic personas, reflects this nation’s values better than spreading false information through false means. But inauthentic personas themselves can prove a problem: Their widespread use, when uncovered, promotes an internet-era nihilism, suggesting that nothing on the internet can really be believed. Under narrow circumstances, deception might be the best or the only option. But the Pentagon’s alleged efforts don’t seem to have been effective: The operations un-

covered by Facebook and Twitter and documented by researchers show the indiscriminate creation of fake accounts, sometimes with faces generated by artificial intelligence, spamming platforms with petitions, memes and hashtag campaigns, all boosted inorganically. They did not succeed; overt operations generated more engagement. And, of course, they could not hide their fake nature; the platforms managed not only to disrupt them but also to identify them as likely associated with the U.S. military. The Defense Department should ensure that any policy emerging from its audit treats platform manipulation not as a default but as an intervention that demands careful justification. Meanwhile, the government as a whole, from the Pentagon to the State Department to intelligence agencies, ought to rethink, with the help of academic input and public debate, what a digital-age hearts-and-minds campaign looks like. U.S. information operations should elevate the truth and expose falsehoods, and any clandestine tactics should be based on research about what works. Those conducting these salvos should be trained in how to do the job right. They should also make sure not to get caught.

SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE FOOTBALL	
Schedule	
Friday's games EAST	
Virginia (2-1) at Syracuse (3-0)	
SOUTHWEST	
Boise St. (2-1) at UTEP (1-3)	
FAR WEST	
Nevada (2-2) at Air Force (2-1)	
Saturday's games EAST	
Rhode Island (2-1) at Pittsburgh (2-1)	
ETSU (1-2) at Robert Morris (0-2)	
Cent. Michigan (1-2) at Penn St. (3-0)	
Harvard (1-0) at Brown (1-0)	
Columbia (1-0) at Georgetown (1-2)	
Holy Cross (3-0) at Colgate (1-2)	
Bryant (0-3) at LIU Brooklyn (0-3)	
Lafayette (1-2) at Penn (1-0)	
Dartmouth (1-0) at Sacred Heart (1-2)	
Yale (0-1) at Cornell (1-0)	
Umass (1-2) at Temple (1-2)	
Merrimack (1-2) at Delaware St. (2-1)	
Lehigh (1-2) at Princeton (1-0)	
CCSU (0-3) at Albany (NY) (0-3)	
Monmouth (NJ) (1-2) at Villanova (2-1)	
New Hampshire (2-1) at Towson (2-1)	
Hampton (3-0) at Delaware (3-0)	
Iowa (2-1) at Rutgers (3-0)	
SOUTH	
Missouri (2-1) at Auburn (2-1)	
South Florida (1-2) at Louisville (1-2)	
Clemson (3-0) at Wake Forest (3-0)	
Bowling Green (1-2) at Mississippi St. (2-1)	
Kent St. (1-2) at Georgia (3-0)	
Furman (2-1) at Charleston Southern (0-3)	
Morehead St. (1-2) at Stetson (2-1)	
Grambling St. (1-2) at Bethune-Cookman (0-2)	
Stony Brook (0-2) at Richmond (2-1)	
MVSU (0-3) at Jackson St. (3-0)	
St. Francis (Pa.) (1-2) at Norfolk St. (0-3)	
W. Carolina (2-1) at Samford (2-1)	
North Texas (2-2) at Memphis (2-1)	
Florida (2-1) at Tennessee (3-0)	
Elon (2-1) at William & Mary (3-0)	
James Madison (2-0) at Appalachian St. (2-1)	
Notre Dame (1-2) at North Carolina (3-0)	
Middle Tennessee (2-1) at Miami (2-1)	
FIU (1-1) at W. Kentucky (2-1)	
Va. Lynchburg (0-2) at NC Central (3-0)	
E. Kentucky (2-1) at Austin Peay (3-1)	
Georgia Tech (1-2) at UCF (2-1)	
Tulsa (2-1) at Mississippi (3-0)	
Jacksonville St. (3-1) at Nicholls (0-3)	
Lamar (0-3) at Northwestern St. (0-3)	
E. Illinois (0-3) at Murray St. (0-3)	
Ball St. (1-2) at Georgia Southern (2-1)	
Arkansas St. (1-2) at Old Dominion (1-2)	
Navy (0-2) at East Carolina (2-1)	
Wofford (0-3) at Kennesaw St. (0-2)	
Akron (1-2) at Liberty (2-1)	
Prairie View (1-2) at Alabama St. (2-1)	
Alabama A&M (0-3) at Florida A&M (1-2)	
Mercer (2-1) at Gardner-Webb (1-2)	
Southern Miss. (1-2) at Tulane (3-0)	
Lindenwood (Mo.) (2-0) at UT Martin (1-2)	
Incarnate Word (3-0) at SE Louisiana (1-2)	
Tarleton St. (2-1) at North Alabama (1-2)	
N. Illinois (1-2) at Kentucky (3-0)	
SC State (1-1) at NC A&T (0-3)	
Ark.-Pine Bluff (2-1) at Alcorn St. (1-2)	
Louisiana Tech (1-2) at South Alabama (2-1)	
Marshall (2-1) at Troy (1-2)	
Davidson (2-1) at Presbyterian (1-2)	
Charlotte (1-3) at Presby Carolina (1-2)	
Vanderbilt (3-1) at Alabama (3-0)	
Uconn (1-3) at NC State (3-0)	
New Mexico (2-1) at LSU (2-1)	
Louisiana-Lafayette (2-1) at Louisiana-Monroe (1-2)	
Mississippi College (0-0) at McNeese St. (0-3)	
Boston College (1-2) at Florida St. (3-0)	
MIDWEST	
Duke (3-0) at Kansas (3-0)	
Baylor (2-1) at Iowa St. (3-0)	
Maryland (3-0) at Michigan (3-0)	
Buffalo (0-3) at E. Michigan (2-1)	
San Diego (1-2) at Valparaiso (1-2)	
Fordham (3-0) at Ohio (1-2)	
Marist (0-2) at Drake (0-3)	
N. Dakota St. (2-1) at South Dakota (1-2)	
Lincoln University (CA) (0-1) at St. Thomas (Minn.) (1-1)	
S. Dakota St. (2-1) at Missouri St. (2-1)	
Cent. Arkansas (1-2) at SE Missouri (2-1)	
North Dakota (2-1) at S. Illinois (1-2)	
Minnesota (3-0) at Michigan St. (2-1)	
Indiana (3-0) at Cincinnati (2-1)	
N. Iowa (0-3) at W. Illinois (0-3)	
Wisconsin (2-1) at Ohio St. (3-0)	
Miami (Ohio) (1-2) at Northwestern (1-2)	
FAU (2-2) at Purdue (1-2)	
SOUTHWEST	
TCU (2-0) at SMU (2-1)	
Texas Southern (1-2) at UTSA (1-2)	
Texas (2-1) at Texas Tech (2-1)	
Rice (2-1) at Houston (1-2)	
North American University (0-1) at Texas A&M Commerce (1-2)	
Texas A&M (2-1) vs. Arkansas (3-0) at Arlington, Texas	
Warner University (0-0) at Stephen F. Austin (1-2)	
Houston Baptist (1-1) at Texas State (1-2)	
W. New Mexico (0-0) at Abilene Christian (2-1)	
Kansas St. (2-1) at Oklahoma (3-0)	
FAR WEST	
UCLA (3-0) at Colorado (0-3)	
Idaho St. (0-3) at N. Colorado (1-2)	
Toledo (2-1) at San Diego St. (1-2)	
Portland St. (0-2) at Montana (3-0)	
Oregon (2-1) at Washington St. (3-0)	
Sacramento St. (2-0) at Colorado St. (0-3)	
Montana St. (2-1) at E. Washington (1-1)	
Idaho (1-2) at N. Arizona (1-2)	
Arizona (2-1) at California (2-1)	
UNLV (2-1) at Utah St. (1-2)	
Utah Tech (1-2) at S. Utah (2-1)	
Hawaii (1-3) at New Mexico St. (0-4)	
Southern Cal (3-0) at Oregon St. (3-0)	
Weber St. (3-0) at UC Davis (1-2)	
Wyoming (3-1) at BYU (2-1)	
Stanford (1-1) at Washington (3-0)	
Utah (2-1) at Arizona St. (1-2)	
W. Michigan (1-2) at San Jose St. (1-1)	

NFL						
AMERICAN CONFERENCE						
East						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Buffalo	2	0	0	1.000	72	17
Miami	2	0	0	1.000	62	45
N.Y. Jets	1	1	0	.500	40	54
New England	1	1	0	.500	24	34
South						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Jacksonville	1	1	0	.500	46	28
Houston	0	1	1	.250	29	36
Indianapolis	0	1	1	.250	20	44
Tennessee	0	2	0	.000	27	62
North						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Baltimore	1	1	0	.500	62	51
Cleveland	1	1	0	.500	56	55
Pittsburgh	1	1	0	.500	37	37
Cincinnati	0	2	0	.000	37	43
West						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Kansas City	2	0	0	1.000	71	45
Denver	1	1	0	.500	32	26
L.A. Chargers	1	1	0	.500	48	46
Las Vegas	0	2	0	.000	42	53
NATIONAL CONFERENCE						
East						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	2	0	0	1.000	40	36
Philadelphia	2	0	0	1.000	62	42
Dallas	1	1	0	.500	23	36
Washington	1	1	0	.500	55	58
South						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Tampa Bay	2	0	0	1.000	39	13
New Orleans	1	1	0	.500	37	46
Atlanta	0	2	0	.000	53	58
Carolina	0	2	0	.000	40	45
North						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Chicago	1	1	0	.500	29	37
Detroit	1	1	0	.500	71	65
Green Bay	1	1	0	.500	34	33
Minnesota	1	1	0	.500	30	31
West						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Arizona	1	1	0	.500	50	67
L.A. Rams	1	1	0	.500	41	58
San Francisco	1	1	0	.500	37	26
Seattle	1	1	0	.500	24	43
Thursday's game						
Pittsburgh at Cleveland						
Sunday's games						
Baltimore at New England						
Buffalo at Miami						
Cincinnati at N.Y. Jets						
Detroit at Minnesota						
Houston at Chicago						
Kansas City at Indianapolis						
Las Vegas at Tennessee						
New Orleans at Carolina						
Philadelphia at Washington						
Jacksonville at L.A. Chargers						
Atlanta at Seattle						
Green Bay at Tampa Bay						
L.A. Rams at Arizona						
San Francisco at Denver						

Wednesday's transactions	
BASEBALL	
Major League Baseball American League	
BOSTON RED SOX — Placed RHP Garret Whitlock on the 15-day IL. Recalled RHP Connor Seabold from Worcester (IL).	
CLEVELAND GUARDIANS — Designated 2B Ernie Clement for assignment. Optioned SS Richie Palacios to Columbus (IL). Selected the contract of OF Will Brennan from Columbus. Recalled SS Gabriel Arias from Columbus.	
NEW YORK YANKEES — Optioned INF/OF Miguel Andujar to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL). Reinstated RHP Luis Severino from the 60-day IL. Transferred the rehab assignments of RHPs Albert Abreu and Stephen Ridings from Somerset (EL) to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. Optioned RHP Greg Weissert to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.	
SEATTLE MARINERS — Recalled OF Jarred Kelenic from Tacoma (PCL). Selected the contract of C Luis Torrens from Tacoma. Optioned OF Taylor Trammell to Tacoma. Designated INF/OF Jake Lamb for assignment.	
TAMPA BAY RAYS — Placed RHP Nick Anderson on the 60-day IL. Placed LHP Jalen Beeks on the 15-day IL, retroactive to Sept. 18. Recalled RHP Nick Anderson from Durham (IL). Selected the contract of RHP Dusten Knight from Durham.	
TEXAS RANGERS — Agreed to terms with C Kevin Plawecki on a major league contract. Activated C Kevin Plawecki. Placed INF/OF Nick Solak on the 60-day IL.	
TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Recalled LHP	

PRO FOOTBALL	
Monday's game	
Dallas at N.Y. Giants	
NFL injury report	
NEW YORK — The National Football League injury report, as provided by the league (OUT: Player will not play; DOUBTFUL: Player is unlikely to play; QUESTIONABLE: Player is not certain to play; DNP: did not practice; LIMITED: limited participation; FULL: Full participation):	
Monday	
ATLANTA FALCONS at SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — ATLANTA: LIMITED: CB Darren Hall (knee). SEATTLE: DNP: G Gabe Jackson (knee/nir-rest), G Damien Lewis (thigh), CB Justin Coleman (calf), S Quandre Diggs (knee), DE Shelby Harris (glute/nir-personal matter), LB Cody Barton (shoulder/hip), S Joey Blount (hamstring). LIMITED: C Austin Blythe (shoulder), CB Artie Burns (groin), LB Uchenna Nwosu (shoulder/knee), NT Al Woods (knee). FULL: Deelaj Dallas (knee).	
BALTIMORE RAVENS at NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — BALTIMORE: DNP: DE Calais Campbell (NIR-resting player), WR Devin Duvernay (concussion), OLB Justin Houston (NIR-resting player), CB Marlon Humphrey (groin), CB Marcus Peters (NIR-resting player). LIMITED: QB Lamar Jackson (right elbow), TE Isaiah Likely (groin), WR James Proche II (groin), T Ronnie Stanley (ankle), DB Brandon Stephens (quadricep), CB Damirion Williams (ankle). FULL RB J.K. Dobbins (knee), DT Travis Jones (knee). NEW ENGLAND: DNP: S Kyle Dugger (knee), WR Jakobi Meyers (knee). LIMITED: S Joshua Bledsoe (groin), DB Cody Davis (calf), DL Davon Godchaux (back), LB Raekwon McMillan (thumb), DL DaMarcus Mitchell (knee), S Adrian Phillips (ribs).	
BUFFALO BILLS at MIAMI DOLPHINS — BUFFALO: DNP: S Micah Hyde (neck), CB Dane Jackson (neck), TE Dawson Knox (foot), DT Jordan Phillips (hamstring). LIMITED: WR Gabe Davis (ankle), C Mitch Morse (elbow), DT Ed Oliver (ankle), S Jordan Poyer (foot), DT Tim Settle (calf). FULL: CB Cam Lewis (forearm), LB Matt Milano (neck). MIAMI: DNP: T Terron Armstead (toe), TE Cethan Carter (concussion), CB Xavien Howard (groin), LB Melvin Ingram (NIR-resting player), TE Hunter Long (ankle). LIMITED: LB Channing Tindall (illness), WR Cedrick Wilson Jr. (ribs/toe). FULL: TE Tanner Conner (knee), DT Raekwon Davis (knee), FB Alec Ingold (shoulder).	
CINCINNATI BENGALS at NEW YORK JETS — CINCINNATI: DNP: OT La'el Collins (back), LB Germaine Pratt (knee), TE Drew Sample (knee). LIMITED: TE Hayden Hurst (groin). FULL: TE Devin Asiati (quadricep). NEW YORK JETS: DNP: T George Fant (knee), DL John Franklin-Myers (toe/quadricep). LIMITED: TE C.J. Uzomah (hamstring), S Jordan Whitehead (calf), DL Quinnen Williams (foot), QB Zach Wilson (knee).	
DETROIT LIONS at MINNESOTA VIKINGS — DETROIT: DNP: DE John Cominsky (wrist), DE Aidan Hutchinson (thigh), G Jonah Jackson (finger), RB D'Andre Swift (ankle). LIMITED: TE T.J. Hockenson (hip), S Juju Hughes (shoulder), CB Amani Oruwarlye (back), C Frank Ragnow (foot). FULL: S Ifeatu Melifonwu (hamstring). MINNESOTA: DNP: CB Andrew Booth Jr. (quadricep), S Harrison Smith (concussion).	
GREEN BAY PACKERS at TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — GREEN BAY: DNP: OT David Bakhtiari (knee), WR Randall Cobb (illness). LIMITED: G Elgton Jenkins (knee), WR Allen Lazard (ankle), TE Mercedes Lewis (groin), WR Sammy Watkins (hamstring), WR Christian Watson (hamstring). TAMPA BAY: DNP: WR Chris Godwin (hamstring), DT Akiem Hicks (foot), WR Julio Jones (knee), TE Cade Otton (not injury related - personal matter), T Donovan Smith (elbow). LIMITED: CB Carlton Davis (hip), RB Leonard Fournette (hamstring), WR Russell Gage (hamstring), C Robert Hainsey (knee), WR Scott Miller (calf), WR Breshad Perriman (knee). FULL: CB Zyon McCollum (hamstring).	
HOUSTON TEXANS at CHICAGO BEARS — HOUSTON: DT Maliek Collins (knee), DE	

DEALS

Foster Griffin from Buffalo (IL). Optioned RHP Julian Merryweather to Buffalo.

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Recalled LHP Tyler Holton from Reno (PCL). Placed RHP Ryne Nelson on the 15-day IL.

CHICAGO CUBS — Reinstated RHP Keegan Thompson from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Jeremiah Estrada to Iowa (IL).

CINCINNATI REDS — Placed OF Nick Senzel on the 10-day IL. Selected the contract of OF Mike Siani from Louisville (IL).

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Sent OF Kevin Pillar to Oklahoma City (PCL) on a rehab assignment. Returned RHP Ryan Pepiot to Oklahoma City.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Reinstated RHP Trevor Gott from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Jason Alexander to Nashville (IL).

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Reinstated RHP Zack Wheeler from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Sam Coonrod to Lehigh Valley (IL).

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Announced Buster Posey has joined the team's ownership group. Activated RHP Jharel Cotton. Recalled INF Jason Vosler from Sacramento (PCL). Optioned RHP Sean Hjelte to Sacramento. Designated OF Lewis Brinson for assignment.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

NFL — Suspended Pittsburgh's S Damon-tae Kazee and Los Angeles Rams TE Brycen Hopkins for three games for violating the substance abuse policy.

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed WRs Stanley Berryhill and C.J. Boyd and CB Nate

Jerry Hughes (not injury related - resting player), TE Brevin Jordan (ankle), CB Isaac Yiadom (thigh). LIMITED: LB Blake Cashman (hip), LB Kamu Grugier-Hill (neck). FULL: QB Davis Mills (right thumb). **CHICAGO:** DNP: S Dane Cruikshank (hamstring), TE Ryan Griffin (Achilles), WR Velus Jones (hamstring), LB Roquan Smith (hip).

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS at LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — **JACKSONVILLE:** No Injuries to Report. **LOS ANGELES CHARGERS:** DNP: DB J.C. Jackson (ankle), C Corey Linsley (knee). LIMITED: WR Keenan Allen (hamstring), QB Justin Herbert (ribs), TE Donald Parham (hamstring), OT Trey Pipkins (foot).

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS at INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — **KANSAS CITY:** K Harrison Butker (left ankle), DE Michael Danna (calf). LIMITED: WR Mecole Hardman (heel). FULL: T Orlando Brown (knee), G Trey Smith (ankle), WR Juju Smith-Schuster (shoulder), WR Marquez Valdes-Scantling (hip), WR Justin Watson (chest). **INDIANAPOLIS:** DNP: T Bernhard Raimann (ankle). LIMITED: DT DeForest Buckner (hip), DE Yannick Ngakoue (back), WR Michael Pittman (quadricep). FULL: S Julian Blackmon (shoulder), LB Zaire Franklin (shoulder), LB Shaquille Leonard (back), WR Alec Pierce (concussion), DT Grover Stewart (shoulder).

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS at TENNESSEE TITANS — **LAS VEGAS:** DNP: C Andre James (concussion), DE Chandler Jones (nir-rest), S Tre'von Moehrig (hip), DT Bilal Nichols (shoulder), LB Denzel Perryman (ankle), WR Hunter Renfrow (concussion). LIMITED: RB Brandon Bolden (hamstring), T/G Jermaine Eluemunor (hip), DT Neil Farrell Jr. (shoulder). **TENNESSEE:** DNP: S Ugochukwu Amadi (ankle), LB Bud Dupree (hip), T Jamarco Jones (triceps), T Taylor Lewan (knee). LIMITED: LB Olasunkanmi Adeniyi (neck), DE Denico Autry (not injury related - resting player), WR Treylon Burks (ankle), CB Kristian Fulton (hamstring), RB Dontrell Hilliard (hamstring), LB Joseph Jones (hamstring), WR Kyle Philips (shoulder).

LOS ANGELES RAMS at ARIZONA CARDINALS — **LOS ANGELES RAMS:** DNP: C Brian Allen (knee), DT Aaron Donald (nir-rest), CB Cobie Durant (hamstring), WR Van Jefferson (knee). LIMITED: CB David Long Jr. (groin). **ARIZONA:** DNP: OL Kelvin Beachum (nir-rest), WR Marquise Brown (nir-rest), RB James Conner (ankle), TE Zach Ertz (nir-rest), WR A.J. Green (nir-rest), OL Rodney Hudson (nir-rest), WR Rondale Moore (hamstring), OL Justin Pugh (nir-rest), LB Ezekiel Turner (ankle). LIMITED: DL J.J. Watt (calf). FULL: WR Andy Isabella (back), CB Trayvon Mullen Jr. (toe).

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS at CAROLINA PANTHERS — **NEW ORLEANS:** LIMITED: CB Paulson Adebo (ankle), WR Deonte Harty (foot), QB Taysom Hill (rib), RB Alvin Kamara (rib), S Marcus Maye (rib), FB Adam Prentice (shoulder), T Ryan Ramczyk (elbow), WR Tre'Quan Smith (shoulder), QB Jameis Winston (back, ankle). **CAROLINA:** DNP: RB Christian McCaffrey (NIR-resting player). LIMITED: CB Donte Jackson (hamstring).

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES at WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — **PHILADELPHIA:** DNP: WR Quez Watkins (illness). LIMITED: CB Avonte Maddox (back), LB Haason Reddick (knee). **WASHINGTON:** DNP: DE Shaka Toney (illness), DE Casey Toohill (concussion), DE Daniel Wise (ankle). LIMITED: T Saahdiq Charles (shoulder), LB Cole Holcomb (quadricep), G Trai Turner (quadricep). FULL: DT Jonathan Allen (groin), S Kamren Curl (thumb), G Wes Schweitzer (hamstring).

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS at DENVER BRONCOS — **SAN FRANCISCO:** DNP: DL Arik Armstead (

Calendar

Oct. 5 — Regular season ends.

BASKETBALL/TENNIS



MARK BAKER/AP

The United States' Alyssa Thomas, left, grabs a rebound over Belgium's Emma Meesseman during their women's Basketball World Cup game Thursday in Sydney, Australia. The U.S. won 87-72.

Stewart, Thomas help US top Belgium in World Cup

By DOUG FEINBERG
Associated Press

SYDNEY — It's been a whirlwind week for Alyssa Thomas. She went from losing in the WNBA Finals on Sunday to flying 10,000 miles to Australia a day later to play for the United States in the World Cup. Thomas had 14 points, nine assists and seven rebounds in her debut for the Americans, who beat Belgium 87-72 in the tournament opener on Thursday.

After finding out she'd be on the U.S. roster, she never gave any thought to skipping the World Cup.

"Excited to be a part of this, been waiting a long time," the 30-year-old Thomas said.

U.S. coach Cheryl Reeve was impressed with what Thomas was able to do with the short turnaround time.

"It's what I expected Alyssa to do, as it's just what she does. She's a competitor and knows how to (play)," Reeve said. "WNBA players don't get enough credit for how well that they transition from

overseas play to WNBA play to national team play."

Breanna Stewart scored 22 points and Jewell Loyd also scored 14 for the short-handed U.S. team, which was still missing Las Vegas Aces players A'ja Wilson, Chelsea Gray and Kelsey Plum. They were on their way to Australia after celebrating the franchise's first WNBA championship with a parade on Tuesday. The trio is expected to be in Sydney on Friday.

Thomas and her Connecticut Sun teammate Brionna Jones, who also arrived on Wednesday, were two of six players on the roster who hadn't played for the U.S. in either the World Cup or Olympics.

This team is very different from the one that won a third straight gold in Spain in 2018. Sue Bird is retired and Diana Taurasi is out as well. Brittney Griner, who would have been on this team, is in a Russian jail after being convicted of drug possession last month in a politically charged case and sentenced to nine years in prison. The U.S. government is trying to secure her release.

These teams met in the semifinals of the 2018 World Cup, with the Americans using a big third quarter to pull away and win by 16.

The Americans jumped out to a quick 12-0 lead before Belgium settled down to get within one. The U.S. lengthened the lead again behind Stewart and Loyd and was up 48-39 at the half. The Americans went on a 12-4 run to start the third quarter and put the game away.

The U.S. did a stellar job defensively on Belgian Emma Meesseman. The Chicago Sky star led the Olympics in scoring last year, averaging 26.8 points. She had four against the U.S., which has now won 23 consecutive World Cup games since losing in the 2006 semifinals to Russia. The Americans are three wins short of matching their record 26-game run from 1998-2006.

Julie Vanloo scored 13 points to lead Belgium.

"Really proud of this young team," Meesseman said. "Sometimes we lacked focus but a lot to be proud of and looking forward to the next few games."

Federer weighs in on GOAT debate ahead of farewell

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

LONDON — Roger Federer is a father of four — two girls who are 13, two boys who are 8 — and so perhaps that is why, as he wraps up his playing career, he thinks about the "GOAT" debate that has engulfed the tennis world the way parents might look at their children.

Folks love to ask: Who's the "Greatest of All Time" in men's tennis, Federer, Rafael Nadal or Novak Djokovic?

"People always like to compare. I see it every day with my twins. Without wanting, you compare them. You shouldn't — ever," Federer said during an interview with The Associated Press on Wednesday, hours after his farewell news conference at the arena that will host the 20-time Grand Slam champion's final competition, the Laver Cup.

"Naturally, we do the same in tennis. ... I am my own career, my own player, that needed those challenges. They needed a challenger like myself," he said, leaning back on a couch, having traded in the blue blazer and polo shirt he wore earlier for a post-practice navy pullover, white T-shirt and black jogger pants. "We made each other better. So at the end of the day, we'll all shake hands and be like, 'That was awesome.' Now is somebody going to be happier than the other? I mean, in moments, maybe."

He called the topic "a good conversation, let's be honest" and "definitely a fun debate" that "you can endlessly talk about."

But he also used the word "silly," given all that he, 22-time major champ Nadal and 21-time major champ Djokovic have accomplished.

"I always say it's wonderful to be part of that selective group," he began, talking about the so-called Big Three rivals, then paused to sigh.

"How can you compare? What's better? To win when you're old or when you're young? I have no idea, you know. Is it better to win on clay or grass? Don't know. Is it better to have super dominant years or come back from injury? I don't know," he said. "It really is impossible to grasp."

Referring to Nadal, who is 36 and is expected to be Federer's doubles partner for his final match Friday, and Djokovic, who is 35, Federer said: "What I know is they are truly amazing and greats of the game and forever and will go down as one of the — maybe THE — greatest."

Federer, who is Swiss, grew up a basketball fan, and brought up the Michael Jordan vs. LeBron James back-and-forth from hoops.

"Who is the greatest? Probably MJ. But is it LeBron? Some stats say he is. I think it's a phenomenon of (social) media. Everybody calling each other 'GOAT.' 'GOAT.' 'GOAT.' 'GOAT.' 'GOAT.' 'GOAT.' 'GOAT.' 'GOAT.' I'm like, Come on, OK? There cannot be possibly that many 'GOATs,'" Federer said, then cracked himself up with a Dad joke: "In Switzerland, we have a lot of them, but they're in the fields."

Federer promises he won't make a comeback; his surgically repaired right knee won't allow it. His age, 41, doesn't help.

He is adamant, though, that he will remain connected to tennis. That will include showing up at certain tournaments, he said, "to say farewell or goodbye, because I've been a part of those tournaments for 20 years."



KIN CHEUNG/AP

Switzerland's Roger Federer attends a training session ahead of the Laver Cup tennis tournament at the O2 in London on Wednesday.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Irish in search of more offense

ND facing porous Tar Heels defense

BY ANDREW MENTOCK
Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Notre Dame's choppy offense finally found smoother sailing — at least for one week.

Now, quarterback Drew Pyne needs to help the Fighting Irish perform at a high level on Saturday when they visit North Carolina (3-0) and a defense that's ranked among the nation's worst.

"We definitely executed together a lot more often, but we're still not quite where we want to be yet," Notre Dame center Zeke Correll said, critiquing last weekend's 24-17 victory over California. "We're still focused on building off of each performance and improving."

The win finally provided some glimmers of hope after the struggles that led to back-to-back losses to start the season and were compounded when starting quarterback Tyler Buchner suffered a season-ending shoulder injury.

Pyne replaced Buchner and won his first career start, which also gave first-year coach Marcus Freeman his first career win.

But the Irish (1-2) still find themselves in potentially troubled waters. A loss Saturday would give Notre Dame its first 1-3 start

since a 4-8 finish in 2016. A win would put the Irish back at .500 and give them another confidence boost before playing three ranked teams — No. 19 BYU, No. 5 Clemson and No. 7 Southern California — later in the season.

The most glaring problem has been the struggling offense, which ranks No. 114 in total yards (300.3 per game) and No. 115 in scoring (18.3 points). North Carolina, meanwhile, has been outscoring opponents from the Group of Five or the Football Championship Subdivision while their defense has struggled mightily. It ranks No. 123 in total yards allowed (486.3) and 119th in scoring defense (37.7).

For Notre Dame, which rushed for a season-best 147 yards against Cal, squaring off against a run defense that allows 193 yards per game offers a chance to control the clock and limit possessions. The Tar Heels allowed Appalachian State to score 40 points — in the fourth quarter — in a two-point victory (63-61).

No surprise that North Carolina defensive coordinator Gene Chizik spent last week's bye seeking solutions.

"I think the communication has gotten better," Chizik said. "I



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Notre Dame quarterback Drew Pyne tries to escape the grasp of California linebacker Jackson Sirmon during the first half of last weekend's game in South Bend, Ind.

think to get a breather and go back and look at when you were playing poorly and why, and you put it all together and not just look at a single event or a single game, I think it's pretty glaring. I feel really good in terms of the players seeing what we need to do a better job of collectively."

Pyne looked like a first-time starter early against Cal. Then he cast aside those early game misuses to complete 13 of his final 14 passes for 123 yards and two TDs, giving Freeman and the Irish hope

that he can pick up where he left off.

"He's a passionate dude," Freeman said. "Sometimes that can almost be your biggest challenge as you look at the start of the game."

Offensively, North Carolina has been virtually unstoppable. Second-year quarterback Drake Maye has thrown 11 touchdown passes and rushed for 146 yards and another score, helping the Tar Heels average 51.3 points so far.

Freeman knows the Irish defense must find a way to replicate

the way it played the first three quarters at Ohio State in the season opener, when Notre Dame led at halftime.

"They're going to go at different tempos and they're going to make you get lined up fast," Freeman said. "We have to be able to control the ball, but we have to score some points. I don't expect it to be a 10-7 game in the third quarter like it was at Ohio State. This is going to be a game where we're going to have to score some points and limit them defensively."

More: Georgia's defense has given up one TD in three games

FROM PAGE 48

The Bulldogs have rampaged through their first three opponents while barely breaking a sweat in the southern humidity.

They blew out then-No. 11 Oregon 49-3 in the season opener. They coasted past FCS opponent Samford 33-0. And this past weekend at South Carolina, they demolished their Southeastern Conference rival 48-7 in a performance that was so dominating many of the home fans went streaming for the exits by halftime.

The only touchdown allowed so far by the Bulldogs came in the waning seconds against the Gamecocks, a meaningless score that came long after the starters had been pulled.

Still, it seemed to tick off the Georgia defenders, who have set a very high standard for themselves.

"It definitely bothered me," Smith said. "We never want to give up any points whenever we step out on the field, and we were so close to keeping a goose egg on the board. But things didn't work out, so back to the drawing board. That gives us something else to fix."

While the defense has kept up its dominating ways — even with all those former Dawgs now playing in the NFL — the offense has clearly stepped up its game from a



CURTIS COMPTON / AP

Georgia quarterback Stetson Bennett pumps his fist at cheering Georgia fans while leaving the field after last weekend's 48-7 victory over South Carolina.

year ago. Stetson Bennett, the former walk-on quarterback who has worked his way into the early Heisman conversation, directs an offense with a seemingly unlimited supply of weapons at his disposal.

Eleven players had at least one catch against the Gamecocks, all of it adding up to 339 yards and 16.1 yards per reception.

Ten players ran the ball, with no one gaining more than Bennett's 36 yards on three carries, but the cumulative effort produced 208 yards and a 5.9 average.

"When things are working, you roll with it," coach Kirby Smart said. "Getting the players out on the perimeter to do their things whether it's receivers, tight ends, or running backs. I think we have done a good job of dispersing the ball and letting everybody get a piece of the action."

Last year's Georgia team had an offense that played it close to the vest, knowing it could win most games simply by being efficient and not making any major mistakes.

Not so with this group, which is willing to attack from anywhere on the gridiron.

Bennett has been on the field for 21 possessions, which have produced 14 touchdowns, four field goals, a missed field goal, and just two measly punts.

Last Saturday, it was Brock Bowers taking the lead role.

The tight end had five catches for 121 yards and two touchdowns — one of them a remarkable, twisting grab before tumbling out of bounds, the other a 78-yard scamper in which he broke one tackle, sidestepped another defender and took off down the middle of the field like Usain Bolt.

For good measure, Bowers scored the first of his three TDs on a 5-yard reverse.

But Bennett has far more players he can go to than just Bowers, which means the defense can't put too much focus on the tight end described by Kent State's coach as a "superfreak."

"I think that's what is separating us," Smart said. "It's not just one player. They can't key in on one receiver, tight end, or running back."

Smart refused to get drawn into any speculation about whether this team could actually be better than his 2021 squad.

"I don't do comparisons," he said. "You can't compare anybody to last year, because last year's team, 15 of them are in the NFL."

But the way things are going, the biggest challenge facing the Bulldogs might be overconfidence.

"This team has a long way to go," Smart said. "The worst thing that can happen to this team is to start believing what people say about them."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



Wisconsin's Graham Mertz, right, throws against New Mexico State on Sept. 17 in Madison, Wis. He is ranked fifth among all Bowl Subdivision quarterbacks in passer rating after finishing 92nd a year ago.

Buckeyes test gives Mertz chance to show progress

Wisconsin QB has increased efficiency, reduced mistakes

BY STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press
MADISON, Wis. — Wisconsin has a new offensive coordinator and a mostly new group of receivers this season.

It turns out the Badgers also might have a new version of quarterback Graham Mertz. Mertz has increased his efficiency and decreased his mistakes in his third season as a starter after throwing more interceptions than touchdown passes last year. Mertz is ranked fifth among all Bowl Subdivision quarterbacks in passer rating after finishing 92nd in that category a year ago. "I think (I've been) solid," Mertz said. "That doesn't mean anything unless we build on it. That's what I'm excited for." That brings him to arguably the biggest test of his career Saturday when Wisconsin (2-1) opens its Big Ten schedule at No. 3 Ohio State (3-0). The Badgers have lost its last eight meetings with the Buckeyes and are a 17½-point underdog this time, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. Mertz will likely need to have the best game of his career for Wisconsin to have any chance. His teammates and coaches like what they've seen from him so far. "He's trusting in himself," Badgers coach Paul Chryst said. "He's trusting what he's seeing. He's trusting those around him." Measuring Mertz's progress re-

Wisconsin (2-1)
at No. 3 Ohio State (3-0)
AFN-Atlantic
1:30 a.m. Sunday CET
8:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

mains difficult because of the way Wisconsin's season has gone. It has two lopsided victories over Championship Subdivision program Illinois State and winless New Mexico State, one of the nation's worst FBS teams. Mertz played well against Washington State, but the Badgers still lost 17-14 despite being favored by about 17 points. The Ohio State game will provide a better indication of how far Mertz has come. Even so, it's hard to ignore Mertz's improved numbers. Mertz has completed 71% of his passes with six touchdowns and two interceptions. Last year, Mertz completed 56.8% of his passes with six interceptions and one touchdown through the first three games of the season. "The only (stat) that really matters is the winning percentage," Mertz said. "If you're winning, you're playing good football. That kind of goes hand in hand. For me, that's all I'm really focused on." Mertz is making those strides while playing for his third offensive coordinator in as many years, former Baltimore Ravens assistant Bobby Engram. Chryst served as his own coordinator last season. Joe Rudolph, now the Virginia Tech offensive line coach,

filled that role in 2020. Wisconsin remains a run-oriented team under Engram, but the Badgers also are showing a willingness to air it out on occasion. Mertz is averaging 11.2 yards per pass attempt to rank third among all FBS players. "I would say he's getting the opportunity to throw the ball down the field a little bit more than we were last year," running back Braelon Allen said before adding one more factor in Mertz's improvement. "Just his approach the entire offseason, he kind of transformed himself, I feel like. It's showing now." Wisconsin's changes on offense weren't limited to the staff. The only wideout on the 2022 roster who caught more than three passes last season is Chimere Dike, who had 19 receptions for 272 yards and a touchdown. The Badgers added UCLA transfer Keontez Lewis and hoped for breakthrough seasons from some returning players who didn't have major roles last season. Mertz believed getting to know them off the field would pay off on Saturdays. "You can run routes here all winter, all spring, all summer, but you're never going to really know your guys unless you go golf with them, go out to eat, just hang out, grill out," Mertz said. "You can't force it. You've got to truly love the guys you're spending time with. That carries over to the field."

ANALYSIS
Venues, dates, TV, NFL: How to assemble CFP expansion puzzle

BY RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

The College Football Playoff is built to expand. While only three games determine a champion, the current format is seven games: Two semifinals, a title game and four marquee bowls. To convert a four-team playoff into a 12-team version requires four more games and about three more weeks. The four-team model is already scheduled for the 2024 and '25 seasons, but conference commissioners who manage the CFP are working to flip the format for those years. "There's a lot of moving parts, a lot of pieces," Mountain West Commissioner Craig Thompson said earlier this month after a meeting of the management committee in Dallas. True, but the framework is there. Expanding for the 2024 and '25 seasons — and accessing an additional \$450 million in revenue over those two years — largely hinges upon whether the semifinals and championship games can be pushed back from their existing dates, with venue availability, big-event accommodations and television windows all lined up. "It's the calendar," CFP Executive Director Bill Hancock said. "It's when are we going to play these games?" The NFL schedule will play a huge role in determining when games will be played in a 12-team format for both 2024 and '25 and beyond. A warning to college football fans: Be prepared for playoff games on weeknights. The four new first-round games to be played on campus will be played at least 12 days after the conference championship games, currently played the first weekend of December. This gives teams that play for their conference titles extra rest and keeps Army-Navy as the only major college football game on tap the second weekend of December. The NFL steers clear of the first two Saturdays in December in deference to college football, but that's it. Starting the third weekend of December, the CFP can expect the NFL to play multiple Saturday games through mid-January and the first two weekends of its playoffs. The CFP will either relinquish scheduling games on Saturday or risk going head-to-head with the NFL. There are Thursday night NFL games streaming on Amazon to consider, too, and the NFL is ba-

sically unrivaled in drawing American viewers. "It's just such a ratings behemoth," said Bob Thompson, former president of Fox Sports Network. There have been 18 college football playoff semifinals. Five have drawn television audiences of more than 20 million viewers. The rest ranged from 15.7 million to 19.5 million. But that's a reality to be dealt with no matter when the CFP expands, not a reason to avoid early expansion. For the 2024 and '25 seasons, the CFP quarterfinals in a 12-team format would be played in the non-playoff New Year's Six bowls already scheduled on and around Jan. 1. This should be a relatively easy switch. The existing bowl lineup for those two years provides some help toward the expansion effort. Neither the Rose nor Sugar bowls would have to be moved off their contractually bound Jan. 1 time slots. The other two games might need their dates changed, but only by a few days. Here's where things get potentially complicated. For example, in the 2024-25 season: ■ The semifinals are scheduled to be played at the Cotton and Orange bowls on Saturday, Dec. 28. To remain semifinals in a 12-team format, those games would likely need to be played no earlier than Wednesday, Jan. 8. The NFL schedule again squeezes what's available to the CFP. The NFL's wild-card weekend would be Jan. 11-12, 2025. Ideally, the CFP would play its semifinals that weekend or Monday, Jan. 13 — but the NFL's expanded wild-card round now has six games, including one Monday night. ■ That would leave Thursday, Jan. 9, and Friday, Jan. 10, as the best dates for the CFP semifinals to be played in North Texas and South Florida, both in stadiums used by NFL teams. ■ The championship game for that season was recently awarded to Atlanta and scheduled for Monday, Jan. 6. That would likely need to be bumped back two weeks, to Monday, Jan. 20. Hosting the CFP championship also requires more than an available football stadium. Hotel space is needed for teams, media and thousands of fans from out of town. Plus, the CFP schedules events in and around the host city leading up to the championship, trying to give it a Super Bowl feel.

GOLF/NFL

Kim a fresh face for Internationals in Presidents Cup

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Tom Kim can be excused for his mistake Wednesday. The Presidents Cup is new for the 20-year-old South Korean, just like it is for seven other players on the International team that face a daunting task at Quail Hollow.

Only this was more a math mistake than a rookie mistake.

“We’re on 12 today, and he makes a mistake doing simple math there,” said Camilo Villegas of Colombia, one of the assistant captains for the International team. “So I look at the kid and said, ‘Tom, is that college math?’ He looks at me and goes, ‘Dude, I didn’t even graduate from high school.’”

Kim ticks about every box when it comes to the fresh faces at this Presidents Cup, which starts Thursday, only looks are deceiving.

At age 20, he is the youngest player to play for the International team since Ryo Ishikawa of Japan was 18 in 2009 at Harding Park. Kim has also won more tournaments this year than anyone on his team. And he brings as much personality as he does game.

He likes to laugh and talk trash. The team has players from seven countries who speak four languages. That’s not a problem, as Kim speaks three languages.

Captain Trevor Immelman was asked earlier in the week who would be his starting five if they were playing basketball. He had Kim penciled in as his point guard because of his size and his “fast mouth.”

Kim’s given name is Joohyung. As a boy, he was so smitten with Thomas the Tank Engine that he wanted that for his name, and eventually it was shortened to Tom.

Born in South Korea, his family moved to Australia when he was a child. He picked up golf at age 6 and when the cost of living became too high, his parents decided to move to

the Philippines. Kim’s golf thrived even more.

As for the high school math? As he said in a first-person account for Golf Digest, “College scouts weren’t coming after me, and my goal was always to turn pro, so I decided to do it early.” He was 15.

Kim worked his way through developmental tours in Asia. His path was slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and he spent the last two years on the Korean tour, winning twice.

He ended last year at No. 131 in the world, and then quickly made himself known. He won the Singapore International to start the year (and was runner-up in the Singapore Open a week later). He received a sponsor exemption to the Scottish Open — Korea-based Genesis is the title sponsor — and finished third.

That sent him on his way toward a PGA Tour card and he nailed that a few weeks later by winning the Wyndham Championship, where he started the tournament with a quadruple-bogey 8.

There is very little dull about Thomas the Tank.

Kim was invited to the Saudi International in February and shared a table at the press conference with LIV Golf CEO Greg Norman to talk about Saudi money going to the Asian Tour. But the kid left little doubt where he always wanted to play.

He was overjoyed at getting his PGA Tour card, and he’s even more amped up about the Presidents Cup, a chance to hand the mighty American team its first loss since 1998, before Kim was even born.

“I’ve dreamt of this as a kid. For me to be able to represent the international team is an absolute honor. So I’m super pumped,” he said. “I can’t wait for Thursday to come. I’ve always dreamt of doing crazy fist bumps because it’s match play. So I’m really looking forward to it.”



CHUCK BURTON/AP

Joohyung Kim of South Korea, also known as Tom Kim, tees off on the second hole during the final round of the Wyndham Championship on Aug. 7 in Greensboro, N.C. Kim is playing in the Presidents Cup.



PETER JONELEIT/AP

Jacksonville Jaguars quarterback Trevor Lawrence (16) celebrates a touchdown with running back James Robinson during Sunday’s game against the Indianapolis Colts in Jacksonville, Fla.

Jags relaxed in approach to West Coast road woes

By MARK LONG
Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — No NFL team has fewer victories on the West Coast than the Jacksonville Jaguars.

The franchise is 3-15 all-time in the Pacific Time Zone and winless when facing the Chargers on the road: 0-4 in San Diego and 0-1 in Los Angeles.

It’s one of two losing streaks Jacksonville (1-1) hopes to end when it plays at the Los Angeles Chargers (1-1) on Sunday. The Jaguars have also dropped 18 consecutive road games, tied for the eighth-longest skid in league history.

“That (junk) is done with and we’re moving forward,” veteran defensive end Roy Robertson-Harris said. “Everything we’re doing is completely different.”

Everything about these Jaguars certainly looks and feels different right now. They’re coming off a 24-0 drubbing of AFC South rival Indianapolis, the franchise’s eighth shutout in 28 seasons and first since 2018. The last three have come against the Colts.

Jacksonville’s eighth consecutive home victory against Indy followed a less-than-ideal opener at Washington in which coach Doug Pederson’s team made countless mistakes and squandered a fourth-quarter lead.

Pederson’s message to his players has been the same both weeks: “So what, now what?” His motto might resonate more com-

Jacksonville Jaguars (1-1)
at Los Angeles Chargers (1-1)
AFN-Sports2
10 p.m. Sunday CET
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ing off a dominating win and preparing to face one of the AFC’s top teams.

“If you keep dwelling on the good stuff or the bad stuff from the past, it’s going to haunt you because now you’re spending all your attention on something that’s passed,” linebacker Josh Allen said. “You can’t really look at your work and say, ‘Dang, I did good.’ You just can’t live on that.”

“As a professional team, we have to move forward. We expect to win. I think this team is built to win, so we expect to win. We have to learn how to win and learn how to move forward to get another one and another one and another one, and fight adversity when needed. That’s our mentality.”

Upsetting the Chargers, who are 7-point favorites according to FanDuel Sportsbook, would be a huge step forward for one of the youngest teams in the league and one that appears, finally, to be headed in the right direction after years of futility.

Jacksonville has allowed at least 33 points in each of the six games at the Chargers, outscored 182-91 in those contests. All of them have been decided by double digits.

Of course, that’s the norm for Jacksonville on the opposite coast.

Of the team’s 15 road losses against the Chargers, Oakland, San Francisco, Seattle and the Los Angeles Rams, 13 of them have been by 10 points or more.

The Jags were non-competitive in both West Coast trips in 2021, losing 31-7 after a bye week at the Seahawks and 37-7 to the Rams in early December. Then-coach Urban Meyer had the team leave Friday, a day earlier than usual for most road trips, in hopes of getting everyone acclimated to the time difference. It backfired.

Pederson is switching things up and keeping his team on East Coast time.

“Every time zone you go back, it takes a day or so, 24 hours, to kind of catch up,” he said. “So really you should go out on like Thursday if you really want to catch up. If you just keep everything sort of status (quo) and keep the way we’ve been doing it here, you don’t have to worry about anything other than the time.”

Jacksonville last won on the West Coast in December 2019, spoiling the Raiders’ final game at the Oakland Coliseum. That’s also the team’s last road victory. The Jags were winless on the road in 2020 and 2021.

“We’ve got to do things different,” Robertson-Harris said. “We can’t do the same things we did a year ago because obviously what we did didn’t work. We were 2-100 or whatever it was; I don’t even know what the damn record was, but it wasn’t good.”

NFL

Wilson starts slow under hesitant Hackett

By ARNIE STAPLETON
Associated Press

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — Nathaniel Hackett blames his own dawdling as an unpolished play caller for Russell Wilson's slow start in Denver.

The Broncos' rookie head coach vowed to clean up his game management miscues and call plays more quickly beginning Sunday night when the Broncos (1-1) host Jimmy Garoppolo and the San Francisco 49ers (1-1).

He even huddled with general manager George Paton and assistant GM Darren Mougey this week to get their input.

"It starts with me," Hackett said before practice on a rainy Wednesday. "I'm doing every single thing I can to try to put myself in position to be able to make quicker, faster, more efficient decisions."

Hackett said Paton and Mougey "have been absolutely spectacular in helping me through that process because that is something that is new for me. And I think we're gonna have some good answers as we move forward."

The home crowd took to mockingly counting down the play clock during Denver's 16-9 win over Houston on Sunday after a multiplicity of false starts, delays of



JACK DEMPSEY/AP

Denver Broncos quarterback Russell Wilson (3) is sacked by Houston Texans linebacker Blake Cashman during the second half of last week's game in Denver. The Broncos host San Francisco on Sunday.

game and burned timeouts.

Packers coach Matt LaFleur came to his former offensive coordinator's defense, noting that growing pains are inevitable for first-time head coaches.

"It's a process for anybody

when you're in a new role," LaFleur said. "I've got all the confidence in the world that he's going to do a great job. I don't know necessarily all the nuts and bolts or details ... but it's important that you lean on other people, as well.

"I've got a lot of confidence in him, not only as a coach but he's super organized and he'll figure it out, no doubt," LaFleur said. "Everybody needs to stop hitting that panic button down there."

Wilson thinks so, too.

"I trust coach Hackett tremendously," said Wilson, adding that his own newness to the system and personnel has played a role in Denver's offense committing a dozen penalties so far and going 0-for-6 in the red zone.

"I started somewhere brand new. There's always going to be challenges and changes and things" that could be done differently, Wilson said.

The hiccups have prevented Wilson from making the kind of splash so many expected of the nine-time Pro Bowl quarterback who cost the Broncos five draft picks, three players and \$165 million in guarantees.

Wilson recovered from a slow start Sunday to lead the Broncos to a fourth-quarter comeback over the Texans after completing just six of his first 20 passes.

He finished 14-for-31, a 45% completion rate that was his worst since 2015 and the fourth-worst in his 160 regular-season starts.

Wilson said he's encouraged after studying the Broncos' offensive foibles. He said he counts five TDs the Broncos easily could have scored in the red zone.

"We're doing a lot of things well," he said. "It's just fine-tuning the details and we've got to get more touchdowns."

Garoppolo's return feels just like 'Niners football'

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — The San Francisco 49ers know painfully well from first-hand experience how an injury to the starting quarterback can derail an entire season.

The Niners never recovered from early season injuries that sidelined Jimmy Garoppolo in 2018 and 2020.

The situation is far different this time around after Trey Lance went down with a season-ending ankle injury in Week 2. Instead of going to an unproven backup with no history of success, the 49ers are in the same spot they were when they ended last season with a loss in the NFC title game.

Garoppolo is back as the starting quarterback, leading fullback Kyle Juszczyk to say it "felt like Niners football."

"It kind of felt the same," Juszczyk said about the switch from Lance to Garoppolo. "We've been running the ball since the first snap of the season. So that's why I was kind of getting that. It's that not too much has really changed."

Garoppolo lacks the running ability of Lance and doesn't have as strong an arm on deep passes.

But the foundation of the offense is the same one they've always run under coach Kyle Shanahan, so he believes the differences will be

**San Francisco 49ers (1-1)
at Denver Broncos (1-1)**
AFN-Sports
2:15 a.m. Monday CET
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mostly minor.

"We put all the same stuff in last year, too, so it is not as big of a difference as people think," Shanahan said.

The biggest difference might be something that seems minor, but is very noticeable to the players in the huddle: Garoppolo's voice.

His loud delivery cuts through crowd noise, brings a level of calm to the huddle and might be Garoppolo's most unique attribute.

"It's just clear. It's distinctive," Juszczyk said. "He's a leader, it's commanding. That was one of the first things I noticed about Jimmy when he steps into the huddle is just how much he takes command of the huddle. It's just really well-orchestrated."

But the Niners will need more than just command in the huddle if they want to have the kind of success they're hoping for this season as a Super Bowl contender.

Despite a 31-14 record as the starter in San Francisco, Garoppolo's limitations led to the decision in 2021 to trade three first-round draft picks to take Lance third overall.

San Francisco was all set to trade

Garoppolo away, but he needed shoulder surgery in March, which dampened any potential interest early in the offseason.

There were no starting jobs available by the time Garoppolo was healthy, so he opted to stay in San Francisco on a reduced salary following an awkward training camp where he threw on his own on a side field and didn't attend any meetings while the rest of the Niners prepared for the season.

But Garoppolo's decision on Aug. 29 to take the reduced salary has left the Niners in much better shape following Lance's injury because they have a proven starter ready to take over.

Garoppolo had a non-guaranteed \$24.2 million salary for this season, but agreed instead to take \$6.5 million guaranteed with the chance to earn up to \$16 million depending on playing time and other incentives.

He already earned an extra \$350,000 for playing at least 25% of the snaps on Sunday and the Niners winning the game.

"It's never about you. I'm not a big me guy," Garoppolo said after the game. "It's about winning football games. I'm a big believer in that and people can say whatever they want, talk stats, whatever, but when you win football games, that's what we're here to do. That's all I'm trying to do."



LACHLAN CUNNINGHAM/AP

San Francisco 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo gestures after a first down against the Seattle Seahawks on Sunday in Santa Clara, Calif.

SPORTS



Familiar territory

Garoppolo once again finds himself starting at QB for 49ers » **NFL, Page 47**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



PHOTOS BY CURTIS COMPTON, ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/AP

Georgia tight end Brock Bowers leaves South Carolina linebacker Brad Johnson in the dust on the way to a 78-yard touchdown reception last weekend in Columbia, S.C.

Despite losing 15 players to the NFL Draft, top-ranked Georgia may be better this year

BY PAUL NEWBERRY
Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. College football coaches are notorious for hyping up their opponents with preposterous accolades. Still, it was a bit jarring to hear Kent State's Sean Lewis sizing up the reigning national champion Georgia Bulldogs.

"I don't think it's an exaggeration," Lewis said Monday, "to say this is the greatest collection of talent ever assembled on a football team."

OK, maybe it was just the desperate ramblings of a coach looking to plant the seeds of complacency in the top-ranked Bulldogs before they tear into his over-

"The worst thing that can happen to this team is to start believing what people say about them."

Kirby Smart
Georgia head coach

matched team on Saturday. After all, Georgia lost a record 15 players in the last NFL Draft — five of them first-rounders from one of the great defenses of the last quarter-century.

But three games into a new season, Lewis' assessment doesn't seem that out of line.

Seriously, could this Georgia team be even better than the last one? You know, the one that celebrated in Indianapolis some eight months ago after claiming the school's first national title in 41 years?

"I think so," said Bulldogs defensive back Christopher Smith, sounding more matter-of-fact than boastful, "but that just comes with our standard. Our standard is our motivation. We hear a lot of things that people say, but we never fade into that. We just continue to work."

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Georgia defenders, including from left, inside linebacker Jamon Dumas-Johnson, inside linebacker Smael Mondon, and defensive lineman Jeremy Butler gang tackle South Carolina running back MarShawn Lloyd for a 3-yard loss during the first half.

US women win basketball World Cup opener » Page 43

