WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Friday nominated Adm. Lisa Franchetti to be the Navy’s next top officer, which would make her the first woman to be a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff if she is confirmed by the Senate.

“Franchetti will bring 38 years of dedicated service to our nation as a commissioned officer, including in her current role of vice chief of naval operations,” Biden said. “She is the second woman ever to achieve the rank of four-star admiral in the United States Navy, and when confirmed, she will again make history as the first woman to serve as the chief of naval operations and on the Joint Chiefs.”

Marines, more aircraft and ships deploy to Middle East

By Matthew Adams
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States is deploying more aircraft, ships and troops to the Middle East to bolster security in the region amid a rise in threatening actions by Iranian forces, the Pentagon announced Thursday. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered the deployment of a portion of the Bataan Amphibious Readiness Group with a Marine Expeditionary Unit. The force includes Marines, the USS Bataan, an amphibious assault ship, the USS Carter Hall, a dock landing ship, and associated personnel and equipment.

“These additional forces provide unique capabilities which, alongside our partner nations in the region, further safeguard the free flow of international commerce and uphold the rules based international order, and deter Iranian destabilizing activities in the region,” said Army Gen. Michael “Erik” Kurilla, who leads CENTCOM.

In the past two years, Iran has attacked, seized or attempted seizure of nearly 20 internationally flagged merchant vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, a key global shipping channel, CENTCOM said. The move follows the Pentagon announcement last Monday that the USS Thomas Hudner, a new Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, and fighter jets, including F-35s and F-16s, were deploying to the region near the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman to defend U.S. interests.

“We have seen Iran continue to harass vessels in the Strait of Hormuz,” Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said last Monday. “So [Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Kurilla] felt it was appropriate to move more assets into the region, further bolstering our security posture there.”

See history on page 5

Making history
Navy admiral picked to be first woman on Joint Chiefs of Staff

By Doug G. Ware
Stars and Stripes

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See history on page 5
Cupkin children’s cups recalled over lead levels

Associated Press

NEW YORK — More than 345,000 children’s cups are being recalled due to lead levels that exceed the federal content ban, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission said Thursday.

Cupkin is recalling 8-ounce and 12-ounce models of its Cupkin Double-Walled Stainless Steel Children’s Cups — sold in various colors on Amazon and the Cupkin website from 2018 through earlier this year.

Consumers in possession of the recalled Cupkin cups are urged to stop using them immediately and contact Soojimus for a full refund. No illnesses or injuries related to the recall have been reported to date.

According to Cupkin, liquid in the now-recalled cups is “not exposed to lead due to the double walled construction.” The exposure to lead can occur if the cup bottoms are mistreated, the brand said.

In a response to the recall on its website, Cupkin noted that it initiated the voluntary recall after receiving consumer feedback and conducting additional testing. Lead was not detected during the products’ initial development, the brand added.

Soojimus and Amazon will be directly contacting all known purchasers of the recalled Cupkin cups, the CPSC said Thursday. To receive a refund, consumers can submit photographs of the cups showing their destruction and fill out a form on Cupkin’s website.

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The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.
**By Alex Wilson**  
Stars and Stripes

SHOAHLWATER BAY TRAINING AREA, Australia — Dozens of mortar shells and rockets screamed across the Australian bush into a mountainous area over the weekend, one of two live-fire demonstrations that kicked off the largest-ever Talisman Sabre exercise.

Troops from seven countries gathered at Shoahwater Bay Training Area — 442 miles north of Brisbane in eastern Australia — on Saturday to watch American, Australian, South Korean and Japanese crews fire artillery during a simulated attack. Behind the scenes, support personnel from France, Germany and New Zealand also participated.

“This event here is very, very important for us, because it’s not just the missiles shooting, it’s about us working with each other; being able to work with another military or another nation is about the human connectivity,” Brig. Gen. Nicholas Foxall, commander of the Australian army’s 1st Brigade, told reporters before the demonstration. “That is what this event is all about.”

At Beecroft Weapons Range, 1,000 miles south of Shoahwater Bay near Jervis Bay on Australia’s eastern coast, the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force kicked off Talisman Sabre with its own live-fire demo. It launched a Type 12 surface-to-ship missile from Australian soil for the first time, the Australian Defence Force said in a Saturday news release.

Now in its 10th year, the biennial exercise provides an opportunity for the individual nations to practice teamwork and communication in the event of “whatever crisis may exist in our region in the future,” Lt. Gen. Greg Bilton, the Australian Defence Force chief of joint operations, said Friday during the exercise’s opening ceremony in Garden Island.

That threat isn’t from any specific country, according to Talisman Sabre officials.

A Chinese surveillance ship was already off Australia’s east coast, not an unusual event, Bilton said at the ceremony, according to an Australian Defence Force transcript.

“They’ve done this for a number of years,” he said. “We’re well prepared for it.”

Foxall said every nation has the right to navigate international waters.

“We just expect those who are in those international borders to respect our rights and we ask them for that space,” he told reporters Saturday.

Saturday’s three-hour demonstration at Shoahwater began with four U.S. Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II stealth fighters from the amphibious assault ship USS America waiting off the coast. The jets launched 500-pound laser-guided missiles at a fictitious enemy stronghold.

U.S. Army, Marine Corps and Australian army crews quickly followed the strike with their own barrage from M777 howitzers.

South Korean crews manning a K9A1 Thunder howitzer, and a K239 Chunmoo missile launcher entered the fray as well. The exercise also marked the first use of a four-carriage armored train by the K239.

A Japanese Type-03 Suru face-to-air missile system preceded its first operational use in Australia failed to fire due to radar issues, Australian army Maj. Gen. Greg Bilton told reporters after the demonstration.

The system fired successfully during the previous day’s rehearsals, exercise spokesman Emma Brown told Stars and Stripes at the event.

ital.con旨iedallowscommercialflightsatUSNavybase

**By Alison Bath**  
Stars and Stripes

NAPELS, Italy — Italian officials are considering using a military base in Sicily for commercial air flights, but it’s unclear whether the plan would impact U.S. Navy operations on the shared installation.

Renato Schifani, the governor of Sicily, announced that the Italian Defense Ministry said it would be possible to use the base at Sigonella, a logistics hub in a key location on the Italian side of the base.

Naval officials did not respond Friday to questions about potential effects to flight operations if commercial airline traffic uses the airport.

The terminal was expected to reopen midweek, but officials announced it will remain closed until at least Monday, Ansa reported.

The Italian Civil Aviation Authority and airport manager said Wednesday they were working to expand another terminal to allow a gradual increase in flights.

NAS Sigonella is home to more than 34 commands, among them Commander Task Force 67, which operates maritime patrol, rotary wing and electronic attack aircraft.

Those operations include flights over the Mediterranean, North, Baltic and Black seas in anti-submarine, anti-surface, and surveillance roles, according to Navy.mil.

Earlier in the week, NAS Sigonella officials said they expect minimal travel disruptions for service members and their families during the busy change-of-station season.

Many personnel travel to and from the base on Defense Department-chartered commercial flights.

**Fiery crash appears to damage US Army tank in Australia**

**By Seth Robson**  
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Army M1A2 Abrams tank was involved in a seven-vehicle collision on an Australian highway Wednesday afternoon of large-scale drills by Indo-Pacific allies.

Video of the accident’s aftermath, aired Thursday by Australia’s 9 News, showed plumes of black smoke rising above Bruce Highway in Queensland and a fireman extinguishing flames in the wreckage. The tank could be seen on a semi-trailer in the footage.

The accident occurred near Rockhampton, ahead of Saturday’s start for Talisman Sabre.

Three vehicles caught fire and multiple explosions were heard following the 11:30 a.m. collision, 9 News reported.

Six people were taken to hospitals, the report said. The incident involved two trucks, including one carrying recreational vehicles, three cars and a four-wheel-drive vehicle towing a travel trailer.

Officials closed the highway, which reopened 24 hours later, and a rail line around the tank, according to the report.

The Abrams belongs to the 1st Armored Division and is one of 15 deployed for Talisman Sabre. Army spokesman Jimmy Sheehan said an email Thursday to Stars and Stripes.

U.S. and Australian military officials didn’t respond to questions emailed Thursday about damage to the tank and whether it could participate in the training.

Photographs of drill preparations posted by the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service show an Abrams tank driving off the USNS Bob Hope, a logistics naval vessel, at the port in Gladstone, Australia, on July 15.

Bruce Highway links Gladstone with Rockhampton, near Shoahwater Bay Military Training Area, where much of the Talisman Sabre training will take place.

“We’re grateful to the Australian first response team for their quick action in providing medical, police, and fire services,” Sheehan said. “We are working closely with the Australian Defence Force and local law enforcement on the recovery of this equipment. The investigation is on-going.”
WASHINGTON — There are no indications yet that Army Pvt. Travis King’s crossing into North Korea this week was planned or indications yet that Army Pvt. King, 23, crossed into the Demilitarized Zone — a section of land that separates North and South Korea — on Tuesday and hasn’t been heard from since. The Army, Defense Department and other U.S. agencies are working to learn more about his whereabouts and safety and how he can be brought back to the United States.

“We don’t know his condition, we don’t know where he’s being held, we don’t know the status of his health,” said Sabrina Singh, a Pentagon spokeswoman. “We know he is in custody of the North Koreans, but beyond that ... I can’t speak to that.”

The Army has launched an investigation into King’s disappearance and the top priority is to “bring him home,” she said.

Instead of getting on a plane to the United States on Monday as King was scheduled to do, he left the airport and eventually joined a civilian tour of the DMZ. During that tour, King sprinted across the DMZ and climbed into a van, raising questions about whether his swift actions could have been planned with North Korea, according to some news reports.

“We don’t have any inclination of that at this time,” Singh said. “We will let the investigation take its course.”

The Pentagon and State Department are working to learn more about King’s whereabouts, but Singh said U.S. officials have so far been unable to communicate directly with North Korea.

King — a cavalry scout with the Army’s 1st Armored Division — spent six weeks in a South Korean prison for assault and was facing more administrative punishment in the United States, military officials have said. He was released from prison on July 10 and a few days later was booked on the flight back to his home station at Fort Bliss, Texas. Military escorts saw King as flying in a small, unmarked Cessna with tactics security checkpoint — the farthest point that they could go without a ticket — but did not actually see him get on the plane.

“I don’t think there was any anticipation that he was going to not board his flight,” Singh said.

Army investigators are also trying to piece together King’s actions for multiple hours between the time that he left the airport and the moment he sprinted across the DMZ. Officials have said he joined a civilian tour of the border village of Panmunjom immediately before he crossed into North Korea.

Some of King’s relatives have speculated the soldier might have decided to flee to North Korea because he was feeling overwrought by his legal problems and a possible discharge from the Army.

“I can’t see him doing that intentionally,” he said in his right mind,” Carl Gates, King’s maternal grandfather, told The Associated Press.

I don’t understand why he would do that, because it seemed like he was on his way back here to the United States,” the soldier’s uncle Myron Gates said. “He was on his way home.”

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N. Korea: US sub’s visit may warrant nuke strike

By David Choi

Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The presence of a nuclear-capable U.S. ballistic missile submarine in South Korea could meet the conditions set by North Korea for a preemptive nuclear strike, according to the regime’s defense minister.

The USS Kentucky’s arrival Tuesday in Busan could trigger Pyongyang’s preemptive nuclear strike policy, Defense Minister Kang Sun-nam said in the state-run Korean Central News Agency on Thursday.

“I remind the U.S. military of the fact that the ever-increasing visibility of the deployment of the strategic nuclear submarine and other strategic assets may fall under the conditions of the use of nuclear weapons specified in [North Korea’s] law,” Kang said in an article posted online by KCNA.

“[North Korea’s] doctrine on the use of nuclear weapons allows the execution of necessary action procedures in case a nuclear attack is launched against it, or it is judged that the use of nuclear weapons against it is imminent.”

North Korea’s port call is part of an agreement between President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol to increase the visibility of strategic assets on the Korean Peninsula” in light of North Korean threats, according to a statement from the two leaders in April.

North Korea has “misinterpreted the purpose of the Kentucky’s visit, the South’s Ministry of National Defense said in a news release Friday.

Seoul and Washington’s decision to deploy the submarine is a “legitimate defensive response” and is “not a plot to use nuclear weapons or a nuclear threat against North Korea,” according to the ministry.

Yoon went aboard the Kentucky on Wednesday and in a speech said a nuclear attack by North Korea “would lead to the end of the regime.”

The submarine is one of 14 Ohio-class submarines in the Navy’s fleet and can carry 20 nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles that have a range of 4,000 miles.

North Korea has fired 17 ballistic missiles so far this year. The communist regime last fired a Hwasong-18 intercontinental ballistic missile on Wednesday.

North Korea’s Supreme People’s Assembly codified an “irreversible” no-nuclear weapons program and a preemptive-use policy in September. The law broadly states that the regime may conduct a preemptive nuclear operation if its leaders or nuclear operations were threatened by hostile forces.

U.S. and South Korean intelligence agencies have said that Pyongyang is prepared to carry out its seventh nuclear test.

The explosion from North Korea’s last nuclear device in 2017 was estimated to be equivalent to 250 kilotons of TNT, or roughly 16 times that of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, according to a study published in the Journal of Geophysical Research: Solid Earth.

In addition to the nuclear tests, North Korea is believed to have “reached a significant level in the miniaturization of nuclear weapons” and have a stockpile of around 150 pounds of plutonium, South Korea said in its annual military report in February.

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First leg of comedian’s USO tour hits Yokota

By Kelly Agee

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Comedian Iliza Shlesinger’s USO show packed the enlisted club Thursday at this Air Force airlift hub in western Tokyo.

The fan consensus: She, along with fellow comics Laura Peek and Hunter Hill, slayed.

“I was so pumped to be here,” Shlesinger said as she started her half-hour stand-up set. “We wanted to kick off the tour and I was, like, take me to the place where we have the smartest military, the best looking, so we’re going to a naval base tomorrow.”

The seats were brought in to fit approximately 400 people into the enlisted club ballroom to see Shlesinger, who has evolved from “party goblin” to a mother and voice of the ‘elder millennial’ generation,” according to the Los Angeles Times in October.

Before the show, Shlesinger — star of the Netflix special, an author and a YouTube staple — toured the base with Peek and Hill, who warmed up the crowd with their own 15-minute acts.

A tour highlight was a helicopter ride from Yokota’s flightline, Shlesinger told Stars and Stripes during a pre-show event with about 50 airmen and their families at the base.

“Going up in a Huey and touring above downtown Tokyo in a helicopter was a once in a lifetime for us,” she said. “It’s several times in a week for them.”

The comedians also visited the Yokota Fire Department, the Army and Air Force Exchange and ate lunch at the Samurai Café Dining Facility.

“Every base has its vibe and here definitely feels more family oriented,” Shlesinger said. “I asked somebody yesterday what it was like to have kids here and he said it’s like Mayberry.”

Shlesinger’s USO tour included stops Friday at Yokosuka Naval Base’s Fleet Theater and Saturday at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni’s Club Iwakuni. A scheduled show in Tokyo is canceled, according to Shlesinger’s Facebook page.

During the meet-and-greet, fans lined up to take photos with the comedian.

“At any time I’ve had a bad day at work I watch ‘Elder Millennial,’ [Shlesinger’s 2018 Netflix special] on TV,” said Tech. Sgt. Nichole Worthig, of the 374th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, at the event. “She’s one of the few people that makes me laugh when I’m already mad.”

On stage, Shlesinger combined current events with her signature style.

She said she met a guy at a Korean airport who was “so hot” and “so charming,” she could barely unintelligibly, though he had a down side.

“[He was] definitely at Jan. 6,” she said, referring to the day a mob of former President Donald Trump’s supporters attacked the U.S. Capitol building in 2021.

An apathetic “ohhh,” spread through the audience, followed by an outburst of laughter.

“I’m just talking to him,” Shlesinger said. “Listen, lunatics can be attractive.”

Airman 1st Class Alan Watson, on temporary duty at Yokota from Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., said her performance was good for morale.

“A lot of these times people — entertainers and comedians — they aren’t seen as patriotic people, so to know there are entertainers that still support the military means a lot,” he said.

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By Doug G. Warwick

Stars and Stripes

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Korea this week was planned or indications yet that Army Pvt. Travis King’s crossing into North Korea this week was planned or
By Matthew Adams

WASHINGTON — A simple typo caused millions of emails intended for Pentagon employees to be inadvertently sent to email accounts in Mali, according to a Dutch technology company.

The Defense Department has been collecting misdirected emails since January to persuade civilians to report the email flows, which have been reported to have been coming from the military services.

None of the emails are said to be classified, according to The Financial Times, which first reported the story. Details of the emails range from diplomatic documents, tax returns, passwords and travel details of senior military officials.

The problem was first noticed almost a decade ago by Johannes Zuurbeek, a Dutch internet entrepreneur, who has a contract to manage Mali’s domain.

Zuurbeek told The Financial Times that he has been collecting misdirected emails since January to persuade the U.S. to take the issue seriously. He has collected and sent more than 117,000 misdirected messages.

Some other contents of the emails include X-rays and medical data, security clearance information, crew lists for ships, staff lists at bases, maps of installations, photos of bases, naval inspection reports, contracts, criminal complaints against personnel, internal investigations into bullying, official travel itineraries, bookings, and financial records.

One of the misdirected emails contained travel plans for General James McConville, the Army chief of staff, who was on a trip to Indonesia in May.

“None of the leaked emails that were reported came from a [Defense Department] email address,” said deputy Pentagon press secretary Sabrina Singh last Monday.

When a Defense Department email address is used to send something to a .ml address, the email will bounce back and can’t be sent to that address, Singh said. Personal accounts do not offer the same protection.

Lt. Cmdr. Tim Gorman said Wednesday that the Defense Information Systems Agency, or DISA, at the start of the year was blocking outbound emails to 135 accounts within the .ml subdomains. Earlier in July, DISA began blocking outbound email to the entire .ml domain but procedures were put in place to allow legitimate business emails to be sent. Emails that originate outside of the Defense Department network and sent to a .ml address are out of the Pentagon’s control.

“The [Defense Department] is redirecting all personnel that personal email accounts should not be utilized to store and process sensitive unclassified information,” Gorman said.

The latest email incident comes after the Pentagon in February discovered U.S. Special Operations Command emails were publicly available online for about two weeks because of an information technology misconfiguration.
VA burial benefits for family could be permanent

By Svetlana Shkolnikova Stars and Stripes
WASHINGTON — Burial benefits for family members who die before service members could be extended permanently under new legislation introduced by a bipartisan group of senators.

The measure would give the Department of Veterans Affairs lasting authority to bury a spouse or dependent child of an active-duty service member in a national cemetery and provide a memorial headstone or marker for cases in which remains are unavailable.

Such benefits have been provided for years on a temporary basis and are due to expire Oct. 1, 2024, without congressional action.

Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., described the bill as “common sense.” Peters, a former lieutenant commander in the Navy Reserve and a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, introduced the legislation alongside Sens. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, and Kevin Cramer, R-N.D.

“Service members and their families sacrifice immensely in service to our country,” Peters said in a statement. “The least that we can do is ensure they can remain together in their final resting place.”

The VA operates more than 100 national cemeteries across 42 states and Puerto Rico. Burial benefits for eligible spouses and children include perpetual care, inscription of the spouse’s or child’s name, and birth and death dates on the veteran’s headstone at no cost to the family.

The legislation, called the Keeping Military Families Together Act of 2023, has been endorsed by Paralyzed Veterans of America and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

“During unfortunate times when a spouse or child passes away before the service member, it is paramount for provisions to exist that allow for a choice of final rest together at a VA national cemetery,” said Quandrea Patterson, associate director of the VFW’s disability assistance and memorial affairs.

The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs for consideration.

DOD seeks help to speed visa process for Afghan interpreters

By J.P. Lawrence Stars and Stripes
The Pentagon is asking for proposals that would improve a chronically slow visa process for Afghan interpreters and others who worked alongside American forces during the 20-year war in Afghanistan.

A Defense Department notice last week asked companies for ideas on how they could help verify past employment for Afghans seeking Special Immigrant Visas, many of whom worked for contractors that no longer exist or didn’t maintain adequate employment documentation.

The process has left applicants who face threats from the Taliban in limbo, military veterans and legal advocates have said.

The recent notice solicits companies willing to serve as contractors or subcontractors for the DOD Afghan Special Immigrant Visa support team, or DAS-T.

The contract responsibilities would include creating a web portal where former employers can input applicants’ work histories, verifying information, identifying people with corroborating records and helping to research and verify cases.

While some veterans and advocates cautiously welcome the Pentagon notice, they also point out that the program has grappled with problems since its inception in 2021.

Challenges have included under-staffing, delays and what they have said is a disconnect between the U.S. military and the State Department.

“I myself am a little bit skeptical but hopeful that (the DOD notice) was made to specifically address some of the shortcomings of the program,” said Kim Staffieri, co-founder of the Association of Wartime Allies, which assists Afghan SIV applicants.

The DOD-T program so far has processed 8,890 applicants, DOD spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Tim Gorman said Friday.

It was originally founded under the name Project Rabbit, after the State Department asked the military in July of 2021 to help verify that SIV applicants worked for DOD contractors.

Lack of documentation became a problem early on, as did cultural differences and details like spelling discrepancies in names, resulting in numerous rejections.

“The system required a specific kind of cleverness that just wasn’t present in so many of the cases that SIV would be really needed for,” said Rob Hargis, former chief operating officer of the contracting company IAP.

Hargis said he saw dozens of applications get rejected because of differences in how Afghans and Americans write names.

When the U.S-backed government in Kabul fell in the summer of 2021, Project Rabbit was an ad hoc effort without dedicated funding.

It was staffed by two DOD personnel who also had other duties, said a statement in June by Lt. Col. Rob Loew, an Afghanistan spokesperson for the Pentagon at the time.

The program was initially successful in matching thousands of applicants, internal documents from the time said. But Project Rabbit’s limitations soon became evident.

A program document obtained by the New York-based International Refugee Assistance Project in February 2022 noted that Project Rabbit could only process 100 cases per week, compared with a backlog of 30,000.

“More than just adding people to the task, they need to fix the broken processes that are inhibiting valid cases from getting approved,” said Gasper, who suffered a traumatic brain injury after a Taliban attack while deployed to Afghanistan in 2019.

Otherwise, she said, “some of these Afghan allies will be lost to the United States forever. It won’t taken by Taliban brutality or starvation, they will lose all faith in the United States.”

* Svetlana Shkolnikova/Twitter: @sptsjy

** J.P. Lawrence/Twitter: @jplawrence3

Deploy: US officials have expressed repeated concern over Iran’s maritime activity

FROM PAGE 1 region.

The Air Force already has A-10 Thunderbolt II combat aircraft in the region known as “Warthogs,” in the region, and they have been patrolling since Iranian naval forces attempted July 5 to seize oil tankers near the waterway, even opening fire on one of the vessels. Iran backed off after the U.S. Navy intervened and the tankers continued through the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman.

U.S. military officials have said they are becoming increasingly concerned about recent maritime activity from Iran and its possible cooperation with Russia and Syria.

Those three countries are aligned in the ongoing Syrian civil war between Syrian Democratic Forces and others fighting the government forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Last week, a Russian surveillance drone hovered over a U.S. base in southeastern Syria trying to collect intelligence, U.S. defense officials said, and a Russian fighter jet intercepted an American MQ-9 drone over Syria in an “unprofessional” manner. Roughly 900 U.S. service members are based in Syria to support operations against the Islamic State group and train partner forces.

* Matthew Adams/Twitter: @MatthewAdams60

** Adam Sullivan/Twitter: @svetashko

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* Svetlana Shkolnikova/Twitter: @sptsjy

** J.P. Lawrence/Twitter: @jplawrence3

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** Matthew Adams/Twitter: @MatthewAdams60

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** Adam Sullivan/Twitter: @svetashko

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**Army probing cause of ‘medical emergency’ that killed infantry trainee**

**By Corey Dickstein**  
*Stars and Stripes*

ATLANTA — Army medical officials are investigating what caused a “medical emergency” this month that killed a teenage infantry trainee at Fort Moore, officials at the Georgia installation said Thursday.

Pfc. Jacob T. Atchison, 19, died July 12 during a training event at Fort Moore after experiencing a sudden medical emergency, according to officials at the post formerly known as Fort Benning.

Atchison, of Pella, Iowa, was about nine weeks into Infantry One Station Unit Training, a 22-week training program for Army recruits bound for the infantry. Fort Moore’s Maneuver Center of Excellence is home to the service’s infantry training for all future infantry troops.

In Atchison’s sheet, the service listed the cause of death as a “medical emergency.”

In an obituary, Atchison, who graduated from high school in 2017, described the young man as a “loving son, a dedicated student, and a wonderful son.”

Atchison was recruited to Fort Moore’s Army ROTC program and earned a third-degree black belt in karate. He was a member of the Army’s top two teams and received numerous awards and recognitions.

The Army announcement noted that Atchison had been assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment and that his death was “a loss of life and a loss of a great warrior.”

The Army announced that it had launched an investigation into the death of Atchison and was working with local authorities to determine the cause of death.

The Army’s announcement did not provide any additional information about the nature of the medical emergency or what caused Atchison’s death.

The announcement noted that the Army was committed to investigating all deaths and ensuring that every service member’s death is thoroughly examined and that the Army takes every step to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

The Army also stated that it was offering support to Atchison’s family and friends and that it would provide counseling and other resources as needed.

The announcement concluded with a message of sympathy to Atchison’s family and friends and with a statement from the Army’s assistant secretary, expressing condolences to Atchison’s family and friends and reiterating the Army’s commitment to supporting all of its service members.

The announcement did not provide any information about the cause of Atchison’s death or any additional details about the investigation into the incident.
By Hanna Arhirova and Elise Morton

ODESA, Ukraine — Russia struck the Ukrainian Black Sea city of Odesa on Sunday, keeping up a barrage of attacks that has damaged critical port infrastructure in southern Ukraine in the past week. At least one person was killed and 22 others wounded in the early morning attack, officials said.

Four children were among those wounded in the blasts, which severely damaged 25 landmarks across the city, including the historic Transfiguration Cathedral.

Russia has been launching repeated attacks on Odesa, a key hub for exporting grain, since Moscow canceled a landmark grain deal on Monday amid Kyiv's grinding efforts to retake its occupied territories.

"When you enter this church, you feel like you're beyond the world," said Liudmyla, who gave only her first name. "I have a feeling that God, to protect apartments, took this pain, this explosion upon himself."

Anna FETCHENKO, who came to Odesa for a volunteer meeting, also pitched in to clear the debris. "I wanted to go to the seaside, but last night was so frightening that I cried for the first time in 2023," she said.

"This is our Ukrainian heritage, and now it's taken away from us," she said. Later Sunday, Palchuk urged people to gather in front of the destroyed part of the cathedral for an outdoor service and to pray in front of a sacred icon that "miraculously survived."

"We will pray that it protects us from the Russians," he said.

The cathedral belongs to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which has been accused of links to Russia. The church has insisted that it's loyal to Ukraine, has denounced the Russian invasion from the start and even declared its independence from Moscow.

But Ukrainian security agencies have claimed that some in the Ukrainian church have maintained close ties with Moscow. They've RAIDed numerous church holy sites and later posted photos of rubble, Russian passports and leaflets with messages from the Moscow patriarch as proof that some church officials have been loyal to Russia.

"We will stay here," she said to the worker who advised her to leave.

"I woke up when the ceiling started to fall on me. I rushed into the corridor," said Ivan Kovalenko, a 19-year-old resident of the building. "That's how I lost my home in Mykolayiv, and here, I lost my rented apartment."

His unit revealed a partially collapsed ceiling and a balcony that came off the side of the building. All the windows were blown out. Ukraine's air force reported on the Telegram messaging app that Russia had launched 19 missiles in the Odesa region, including five high-precision winged Onyx missiles and four sea-to-shore Kaliber cruise missiles. It said Ukrainian air defenses shot down nine.

Russia's Defense Ministry said Sunday that its forces attacked sites in Odesa "where terrorist acts against the Russian Federation were being prepared."

In a later statement, the ministry denied that its attacks struck the Transfiguration Cathedral, claiming the destruction of the cathedral was likely due to "the fall of a Ukrainian anti-aircraft guided missile."
Scholarships help Afghan students find homes

BY JAMIE STENGLE
Associated Press

DALLAS — As the Taliban swept back into power in Afghanistan, in the summer of 2021, Fahima Sultani and her fellow university students tried for a day to get into the Kabul airport, only to be turned away by gun-wielding extremists.

“Education, just go back home,” she recalled one shooting.

Nearly two years later, Sultani, now 21, is safely in the U.S. and studying at a university, in the summer of 2021, Fahi­

The Taliban’s return upended the lives of Afghans who arrived at Kabul International Airport on Tuesday to create the Emmett Till National Monument across three sites in Illinois and Mississippi, as well as the incorporation of dehumanization?” Harris asked in a speech delivered from Jack­

Biden will establish a national monument honoring Emmett Till

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden will establish a national monument honoring Emmett Till, the Black teenager from Chicago who was abducted, tortured and killed in 1955 after he was accused of whistling at a white woman in Mississippi, and his mother, a White House official said Saturday.

Biden will sign a proclamation on Tuesday to create the Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument across three sites in Illinois and Mississippi, according to the official. The individu­al spoke on condition of ano­nymity because the White House had not formally announced the president’s plans.

Tuesday is the anniversary of Emmett Till’s birth in 1941. The monument will protect places that are central to the story of Till’s life and death at age 14, the acquittal of his white killers and his mother’s activism. Till’s moth­er’s insistence on an open casket to show the world how her son had been brutalized and Jet’s maga­

The potential jackpot is now the fifth largest in the history of the game.

The estimated $820 million in the next drawing on Tuesday would only be distributed to a winner who chooses an annuity over matters concerning race. Conservative leaders are pushing back against the teaching of slav­ery and Black history in public schools, as well as the incorpora­

During a break in the lottery game’s latest drawing on Friday night, the estimated grand prize of $720 million.

The numbers drawn late Friday were: 29, 40, 47, 50, 57 and gold ball 6. No tickets were sold hitting all those numbers for the estimated grand prize of $70 million.

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Biden said he had no role in devising his state’s new education standards but defended the comp­onents on how enslavers people benefited.

“The lotteries, who win and millions of girls now in Afghanistan, they do not have this opportu­nity,” Sultani said. “I can dress the way I want and mil­

The estimated $820 million in the next drawing on Tuesday night would only be distributed to a winner who chooses an annuity

Mega Millions jackpot grows to $820 million

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Mega Millions has upped the ante by another $100 million.

The lack of a jackpot winner in the lottery game’s latest drawing on Friday night sent the top prize soaring to an estimated $820 million.

The numbers drawn late Friday were: 29, 40, 47, 50, 57 and gold ball 6. No tickets were sold hitting all those numbers for the estimated grand prize of $70 million.

The estimated $820 million in the next drawing on Tuesday night would only be distributed to a winner who chooses an annuity
Scientists say high heat shows warming world

By Seth Borenstein
Associated Press

The summer of 2023 is behaving like a broken record about broken records.

Nearly every major climate-tracking organization proclaimed June the hottest June ever. Then July 4 became the globe’s hottest day, albeit unofficially, according to the University of Maine’s Climate Reanalyzer. It was quickly overtaken by July 5 and July 6. Next came the hottest week, a tad more official, stamped into the books by the World Meteorological Organization and the Japanese Meteorological Agency.

With a summer of extreme weather records dominating the news, meteorologists and scientists say records like these give a glimpse of the big picture: a warming planet caused by climate change. It’s a picture that comes in the vibrant reds and purples representing heat on daily weather maps online, in newspapers and on television.

Beyond the maps and the numbers are real harms that kill. More than 100 people have died in heat waves in the United States and India so far this summer.

Records are crucial for people designing infrastructure and working in agriculture because they need to plan for the worst scenarios, said Russell Vose, climate analysis group director for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He also chairs a committee on national records.

In the past 30 days, nearly 5,000 heat and rainfall records have been broken or tied in the U.S. and more than 10,000 records set globally, according to the National Climate Assessment.

But the numbers can be flawed in what they portray. “We have no words to describe how we are feeling except truly heartbroken. But, the pain we feel is nowhere near what these families have been through,” the police said, vowing to the missing boy “we will never stop until we can bring you home.”

The girl’s body was found early Friday evening in the river near a Philadelphia wastewater treatment plant about 30 miles from where she was carried away, authorities said Friday night. The Philadelphia medical examiner on Saturday completed an investigation and “ruled that Matilda Shells’ cause of death was drowning and the manner is accidental,” a spokesperson for the office said.

Four other people drowned in the suburb about 35 miles north of Philadelphia, according to the Bucks County Coroner’s office: Enzo Depiero, 74, of Newtown; Yuko Love, 64, of Newtown; and Susan Barnhart, 53, of Tiltonsville, N.J.

Weekend shootings across Chicago leave at least 6 dead, 20 hurt

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Six people have died and at least 20 others were wounded in weekend shootings across Chicago.

A shooting early Saturday in the city’s North Lawndale neighborhood killed one man and wounded four other men, police said.

Three people, including two women, were shot Saturday night on Chicago’s South Side when gunfire rang out from an alley at a group of people.

A man was found shot inside an overturned vehicle at about 1:25 a.m. Sunday. He later was pronounced dead at a hospital, police said.

A 16-year-old boy was pronounced dead at a hospital after being shot Friday night, also on the city’s South Side.

Since Friday, Chicago police responded to at least nine separate shooting scenes. Forty people were shot, four fatally, across Chicago over the July 4 weekend, according to WLS-TV.
Conservative ‘mama bears’ among most coveted voters early on

By Sara Burnett  
Associated Press

In many election cycles, there’s a snappy shorthand used to describe the type of voters who may help decide the winner. Think soccer moms or security moms. Even NASCAR dads.

And now, the “mama bears.”

These conservative mothers and grandmothers, who in recent years have organized for “parental rights,” including banning discussion of gender identity in schools, have been classified as extremists by the Southern Poverty Law Center. They have also been among the most coveted voter blocs in the 2024 Republican presidential primary.

Donald Trump praised their work, saying organizations such as Moms for Liberty had taught the liberal left a lesson: “Don’t mess with America’s moms.” Ron DeSantis said “woke” policies had “waned the most powerful political force in the country: mama bears.”

His wife, Casey DeSantis, who launched “Mamais De Santis” in leadoff-voting Iowa, said moms and grandmas were the “game changers” in DeSantis’ breakout win for a second term as Florida governor. She predicted they will be again as he runs for president.

“It’s one thing when your policies come after us as mamas,” Casey DeSantis said in a talk peppered with stories about raising kids in the governor’s mansion. “It’s another thing when your policies come after our children, and that’s when the claws come out.”

These so-called mama bears whom DeSantis and other Republicans are courting are conservative women living across the United States. They are largely white and may belong to official groups such as Moms for Liberty, which says it has 200,000 members nationwide, or smaller groups like No Left Turn in Education.

The mama bear movement is “a contemporary iteration of a trend that began with backlash against COVID-19 pandemic policies in places around the nation. School board elections have become intense political battlefronts, with political action groups successfully electing candidates promising to take action against teachings on race and sexuality, remove books deemed offensive and stop transgender-inclusive sports teams.”

Now the board, led by new conservative board members elected since last year, has revoked that anti-racism resolution and copies of it will be removed from school buildings.

The resolution passed in August 2020 “pledges to our learning community that we will speak firmly against any racism, discrimination and senseless violence against people regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or ability.”

“We will promote racial healing, especially for our Black and brown students and families,” the resolution states. “We will no longer be silent.”

The board’s decision follows a trend that began with backlash against COVID-19 pandemic policies in places around the nation. School board elections have become intense political battlefronts, with political action groups successfully electing candidates promising to take action against teachings on race and sexuality, remove books deemed offensive and stop transgender-inclusive sports teams.

“Republicans have decided that this is, I think, their golden ticket for the primaries to rise up their base,” said Katie Paris, who runs Red, Wine and Blue, a network of women pushing back on GOP-backed policies such as the anti-LGBTQ and anti-trans efforts of Moms for Liberty.

In 2024, being a mama bear may also provide a space for conservative women who have not been politically active before or who may have sat out previous elections. If the mama bear narrative is persuasive, Beall said, there are a lot of women who would say, “That’s the spot for me.”

The Francis Howell district is among Missouri’s largest, with 17,000 students, about 87% of whom are white. The vote, which came during an often contentious meeting Thursday, rescinded resolutions 75 days after “a majority of current Board of Education members were not signatories to the resolution or did not otherwise vote to adopt the resolution.”

Dems hope for favorable rulings in Wisconsin

By Scott Bauer  
Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — Wisconsin’s Supreme Court will flip from majority conservative to liberal control in August, and Democrats hope the change will lead to the state’s abortion ban being overturned and its maps redrawn to weaken GOP control of the Legislature and congressional districts.

Democrats in the perennial battleground state focused on abortion to elect a liberal majority to the court for the first time in 15 years. The Democratic Party spent $8 million to tilt the court’s membership, something never done before.

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Republicans were angered when conservative candidates they backed in 2019 turned out to sometimes side with liberal justices.

While the court is widely expected to weigh in on abortion and redistricting, liberals are also talking about bringing new challenges to school choice, voter ID, the 12-year-old law that effectively ended collective bargaining for most public workers and other laws backed by Republicans.

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Missouri school board, now led by GOP, revokes anti-racism resolution

By Sara Burnett  
Associated Press

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After 1 year, climate law charges energy tech

By ISABELLA O’MALLEY and MICHAEL PHILLIS

Associated Press

FARKEPI, Ky. — A health clinic in a Montana town plagued by deadly asbestos contamination must pay the government almost $6 million in fines and damages after it submitted hundreds of false asbestos claims, a judge ruled.

The 337 false claims made patients eligible for Medicare and other benefits they shouldn’t have received. The federally funded clinic has been at the forefront of the medical response to deadly pollution from mining near Libby, Mont.

The judgment against the Center for Asbestos Related Disease clinic comes in a federal case filed by BNSF Railway in 2019 under the False Claims Act, which allows private parties to sue on the government’s behalf.

BNSF — which is itself a defendant in hundreds of asbestos-related lawsuits — alleged the center submitted claims on behalf of patients without sufficient confirmation they had asbestos-related disease. After a seven-person jury agreed last month, U.S. District Judge Dana Christensen said in a July 18 order that he was imposing a stiff penalty to prevent future misconduct.

Christensen said he was concerned in particular that the clinic’s high-profile doctor, Brad Black, had diagnosed himself with asbestos-related disease and that a nurse signed off on benefits for her own mother.

The judge also cited evidence at trial of high rates of opioid prescriptions from the clinic for people who may not have had a legitimate asbestos-related diagnosis.

The clinic demonstrated “reckless disregard for proper medical procedure and the legal requirements of government programs,” the judge wrote.

As instructed by the law, the judge tripled the $1.1 million in damages found by the jury, to almost $3.3 million, and imposed $2.6 million in additional penalties.

Judge: Montana health clinic must pay nearly $6M over false asbestos claims

Energy Department proposes green water heater standards

The Biden administration proposed a rule Friday that would make new water heaters more efficient by setting standards that encourage companies to use more energy-saving technologies.

The Department of Energy said its proposal would save consumers $11.4 billion on their energy and water bills each year. To comply with the rule’s efficiency standards, which would take effect in 2029, new electric storage water heaters in the most common size would have to use heat pumps, and some gas-fired instantaneous heaters would have to use condensing technology. The change would reduce harmful carbon emissions by 501 million metric tons over a 30-year period, the department says. It would also save Americans $198 billion over the same span.

Regulators and experts say the proposed rule is significant because water heating accounts for about 13% of U.S. consumers’ annual energy use and utility costs.

Heat pumps are more than twice as efficient as conventional technology.
Greece evacuates 19,000 as wildfire blazes on Rhodes

BY DEMETRIS NELLAS
Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — Some 19,000 people have been evacuated from the Greek island of Rhodes as wildfires continued burning for a sixth day on three fronts, Greek authorities said on Sunday.

Local police said that 16,000 people were evacuated by land and 3,000 by sea from 12 villages and several hotels. Six people were briefly hospitalized with respiratory problems and were later released. A person who fell and broke their leg during a hotel evacuation and a pregnant woman remain hospitalized, the latter in good condition, authorities say.

The Ministry of Climate Change and Civil Protection said it was “the largest evacuation from a wildfire in the country.”

British tourist Kevin Evans was evacuated twice on Saturday with his wife and three young children — first from Kiotari to Gennadi, then as the fire approached to the island’s capital in the northeast, he told Britain’s PA news agency.

“There were lots of people in Gennadi sent from the hotels — many in just swimsuits having been told to leave everything in the hotel,” he told PA. “As night fell, we could see the fire on the top of the hills in Kiotari. They said all the hotels were on fire.”

Rhodes travel agent Stelios Kotiadis confirmed to the Associated Press that the evacuation was hasty.

“The authorities were overwhelmed,” he said.

But, he said, the abandoned hotels “are in much better condition than reported in social media.... They will be ready to reopen very soon if Civil Protection gives the go-ahead.”

Fire Brigade spokesman Yannis Artopios said that early Sunday afternoon 266 firefighters and 49 engines were operating on the ground, together with volunteers. Ten firefighting planes, including two from France, two from Turkey and one from Croatia, are operating in the area, as well as eight helicopters.

Authorities have designated an unprecedentedly large part of the mainland, the whole eastern part of central and southern Greece, plus the islands of Evia and Rhodes as well as large swaths of the southwest, as Category 5, the highest for risk of fire outbreaks as of Sunday.

Greece evacuates 19,000 as wildfire blazes on Rhodes

Dozens missing in flash floods in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD — Heavy flooding from seasonal rains in Afghanistan has killed at least 12 people and left dozens missing, according to a Taliban spokesman and local officials.

Government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said Sunday that about 40 people are missing after the flash flooding late Saturday night in the Jareed district of Maidan Wardak province, west of Kabul.

He added that all relevant authorities have been ordered to provide necessary assistance to the people in the affected areas.

The provincial governor’s office in a statement said that hundreds of homes are either damaged or destroyed and the missing people are believed to be under the rubble of collapsed homes.

The statement also said that hundreds of acres of agricultural land were washed out and destroyed and the highway between the capital Kabul and the central Bamiyan province is also closed due to the floods.

Reading

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No one covers the bases the way we do.
Netanyahu gets pacemaker as key vote nears

By Tia Goldmanberg
Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was recovering in a hospital on Sunday after an emergency heart procedure, while opposition to his government’s contentious judicial overhaul plan reached a fever pitch and unrest gripped the country.

Netanyahu’s doctors said Sunday the heart pacemaker implantation went smoothly and that Netanyahu, 73, felt fine. According to his office, he was expected to be discharged later in the day. But tensions were surging as lawmakers began a marathon debate over the first major piece of the overhaul, ahead of a vote in parliament enshrining it into law on Monday.

Mass protests continued, part of seven straight months of the most sustained and intense demonstrations the country has ever seen. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets across Israel on Saturday night, while thousands more camped out near the Knesset, or parliament, ahead of Monday’s vote.

Netanyahu’s sudden hospitalization added another dizzying twist to an already dramatic series of events that are certain to shape Israel’s future. It comes as the longest-serving Israeli leader is battling the worst domestic crisis of his lengthy tenure, which has shaken the economy, forged cracks in the country’s military and tested the delicate social fabric that holds the polarized country together.

Lawmakers began their debate despite the hospitalization. In a fiery speech launching the session, Simcha Rothman, a main driver of the overhaul, denounced the courts, saying they damaged Israel’s democratic fundamentals by arbitrarily striking down government decisions.

“This small clause is meant to restore democracy to the state of Israel,” Rothman said “I call on Knesset members to approve the bill.”

Still, Netanyahu’s health woes disrupted his routine. The weekly Cabinet meeting scheduled for Sunday morning was postponed. Two upcoming overseas trips, to Cyprus and Turkey, were being rescheduled, his office said.

Netanyahu’s office said that he was sedated during the implantation and that a top deputy, Justice Minister Yariv Levin, stood in for him while he underwent the procedure. Levin, a close confidant of the prime minister, is the mastermind of the overhaul.

In a video from his hospital room on Sunday afternoon, Netanyahu, wearing a white dress shirt and dark blazer, said he felt fine. He said he was pushing forward with the legislation but also pursuing a compromise with his opponents.

Israeli media said last-ditch efforts were underway to find a solution out of the impasse. But it wasn’t clear whether those would bear fruit.

Legislators are set to vote on an overhaul measure that would limit the Supreme Court’s oversight powers by preventing judges from striking down government decisions on the basis that they are “unreasonable.” Monday’s vote would mark the first major piece of legislation to be approved.

Proponents say the current “reasonability” standard gives judges excessive powers over decision-making by elected officials. Critics say removing the standard, which is often invoked infrequently, would allow the government to pass arbitrary decisions, make improper appointments or firings and open the door to corruption.

The overhaul also calls for other sweeping changes aimed at curtailing the powers of the judiciary, from limiting the Supreme Court’s ability to challenge parliamentary decisions, to changing the way judges are selected.

Speaking in parliament, opposition leader Yair Lapid called for Netanyahu to resume compromise talks and lauded the protesters for standing up to the government.

The valley beneath the Knesset was dotted with silver-colored tents, many draped with Israeli flags. A large protest against the overhaul was expected later Sunday in Jerusalem, as was a counter-protest of government supporters in Tel Aviv.

Protesters, who come from a wide swath of Israeli society, see the overhaul as a power grab fueled by personal and political grievances of Netanyahu—who is on trial for corruption charges—and his partners who want to deepen Israel’s control of the occupied West Bank and perpetuate controversial draft exemptions for ultra-Orthodox men.

Netanyahu was rushed to the hospital in the middle of the night a week after being hospitalized for what doctors said was dehydration.

They released him then after implanting a device to monitor his heart but he was hospitalized again Sunday because it showed anomalies, prompting the need for a pacemaker.

Vox far-right supporters wave Spanish flags during the closing campaign rally at Colon square in Madrid, on Friday. Voters in Spain went to the polls Sunday in an election that could make the country the latest European Union member swing to the populist right.

A PP-Vox government would mean another EU member has moved firmly to the right, a trend seen recently in Sweden, Finland and Italy. Countries such as Germany and France are concerned by what such a shift would portend for EU immigration and climate policies.

Spain’s two main leftist parties are pro-EU participation. On the right, the PP, led by Alberto Núñez Feijóo, is also in favor of the EU. Vox, headed by Santiago Abascal, is opposed to EU interference in Spain’s affairs.

The election comes as Spain holds the EU’s rotating presidency. Sánchez had hoped to use the six-month term to showcase the advances his government had made. An election defeat for Sánchez could see the PP taking over the EU presidency reins.

Sánchez was one of the first to vote, casting his ballot in a polling station in Madrid.

Commenting later on the large number of foreign media covering the election, he said: “This means that what happens today is going to be very important not just for us but also for Europe and I think that should also make us reflect.”

“I don’t want to say I’m optimistic or not. I have good vibrations,” Sánchez added.

The Socialists and a new movement called Sumar that brings together 15 small leftist parties for the first time hope to pull off an upset victory. Sánchez is led by second Deputy Prime Minister Yo-landa Díaz, the only woman among the top four candidates.

Díaz called for everyone to vote, recalling that the freedom to vote didn’t always exist in Spain. “A lot is at risk,” said Díaz after voting. “For people of my generation, these are the most important elections.”

At stake is “waking up tomorrow with more rights, more democracy and more freedom.”

The Interior Ministry said voter turnout at 6:00 p.m. local time stood at 53%, compared with 56% at the same point in the country’s last national election, in November 2019.

The election was taking place at the height of summer, with millions of voters likely to be vacationing away from their regular polling places. However, postal voting requests soared before Sunday.

With no party expected to garner an absolute majority, the choice is basically between another left-wing coalition and a center-right alliance.
Mom charged with trying to hire hitman to kill son

MIAMI — An 18-year-old Miami woman is accused of trying to hire a hitman to kill her 3-year-old son.

The woman appeared before a Miami-Dade County judge Wednesday following her arrest on charges of solicitation of murder and unlawful use of a communications device.

The woman visited a parody hit-for-hire website — intended to assist law enforcement — in an attempt to have the boy “taken away, far, far, far away and possibly be killed but ASAP.” Miami-Dade police said in a report. It said she was willing to pay $3,000.

The woman listed wanting “to get something done once and for all” as the reason for hiring a hitman, the report said.

Police said she provided an address where the boy lives with his grandmother, a recent photo of him and her phone number when she made contact with the website.

A man who runs the website contacted Miami-Dade police and detectives tracked down the woman on Tuesday, using the IP address and phone number provided.

Souvenir seekers haunt ‘Beetlejuice II’ filming

EAST CORINTH — Souvenir hunters are haunting the “Beetlejuice II” movie set in Vermont.

State police are investigating two thefts, one of a large lamp post topped with a distinctive pumpkin decoration and the other a 150-pound abstract art piece taken from the vicinity of a cemetery.

Someone bundled up the lamp post, covered it with tarp and fled at a high rate of speed in a pickup truck on July 14, while the theft near the cemetery took place several days later, state police said Thursday.

The sequel to the 1988 movie is filming in East Corinth, near the New Hampshire border.

Wife of suspect in serial killings files for divorce

MPSAPEQUA PARK — The wife of Rex Heuermann, charged in the deaths of three women whose remains were found along a Long Island beach roadway, filed for divorce Wednesday, her attorney said.

Asa Ellerup filed the complaint in Suffolk County Supreme Court. Her attorney, Robert Macedonio, declined any additional comment.

Meanwhile, authorities spent another day at the Massapequa Park home where the couple had lived, continuing their search of the premises.

Heuermann, an architect, was charged this month with murdering the three women, and is a suspect in a fourth death, a prosecutor said.

He has pleaded not guilty and remains in custody under suicide watch.

Alcohol sales now allowed at college sporting events

LANSING, Mich. — A new state law allows alcoholic drinks to be sold at college sporting events in Michigan.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed legislation allowing liquor licenses to be issued to sporting venues at public universities, including Michigan State in East Lansing and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

“Authorizing the legal sale of alcohol at sporting events will bring us on equal footing with other universities, help reduce the likelihood of binge drinking before games, and bring in a heck of a lot more revenue that we can use to improve the student experience,” Whitmer said in a statement.

Whitmer also signed legislation making liquor-to-go permanent, which is expected to generate revenue for restaurants and small businesses.

Pastor gets 18-month prison sentence for theft

CONCORD — A New Hampshire executive pastor has been sentenced to 18 months in prison for stealing about $130,000 from his church to pay off gambling debts and make purchases.

Gregory Neal, of Barrington, 45, was sentenced in federal court Wednesday and ordered to pay back the Journey Baptist Church and the insurance company that covered a portion of the losses.

He pleaded guilty in April to one count of wire fraud.

“A man who abused his position of trust — as a leader of his church — and stole from his congregation to support his gambling habit has been brought to justice,” U.S. Attorney Jane Young said in a statement.

Prosecutors said that between January 2017 and March 2020, Neal made unauthorized withdrawals of the church’s funds to pay off his debts and made unauthorized purchases with church credit cards.

His lawyer asked for a sentence of five years of probation to allow Neal to continue running his car-pentry business so he can pay back the church and support his family.

Video shows judge on phone in murder trial

CHANDLER — A new judge in Oklahoma is facing scrutiny after courtroom video showed her scrolling through social media and texting on her cellphone throughout the murder trial for a man accused in the fatal beating of a 2-year-old, a newspaper reports.

Security video obtained by The Oklahoman shows Lincoln County District Judge Traci Soderstrom texting or messaging for minutes at a time during jury selection, opening statements and testimony in the trial for a man in the death of his girlfriend’s son. At one point, Soderstrom searched for a GIF, an animated image.

Soderstrom, 50, can also be seen checking Facebook during the trial, which began last month in Chandler, about 45 miles northeast of Oklahoma City, the newspaper reported.

Soderstrom was sworn in on Jan. 9 after being elected in November. Her four-year term expires in January 2027.

Soderstrom declined to comment Thursday, saying the verdict could still be appealed, saying judges are prohibited from discussing pending cases.

Sea otter harassing surfers builds fan club

SANTA CRUZ — A sea otter launched into the national spotlight after images of her aggressively wrestling surfboarders away from surfers off the coast of Santa Cruz, Calif., circulated on social media is building a fan club as she continues to evade capture.

A team of wildlife experts with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the nearby Monterey Bay Aquarium have been trying to capture the 5-year-old animal, known as otter 841, since last week because they say she poses a public safety risk.

They say they want to examine her and relocate her at a zoo or aquarium — as yet to no avail.

She now has a growing fan club, with people showing up every day to get a glimpse of her spending time sunbathing on the rocky shore, driving in the water and chomping down on crabs.

Rulings ease concerns about drag performers

ORLANDO — Librarians who feared fines for hosting drag queen story hours and Pride parade organizers who worried about citations for including drag performers can breathe easier now that a judge has ruled that his injunction blocking Florida’s anti-drag law extends to all Florida venues, an attorney who is helping challenge the new Florida law said Thursday.

A pair of orders that U.S. District Judge Gregory Presnell issued in the past month makes clear that drag performances in themselves are not lewd or lascivious behavior, said Gary Israel, one of the attorneys for an Orlando restaurant that filed a lawsuit challenging the new Florida law championed by Gov. Ron DeSantis as unconstitutional.

“The state has a very weak hand in this litigation,” Israel said. “Protecting the right to freedom of speech is the epitome of acting in the public interest,” Presnell wrote. “It is no accident that this freedom is enshrined in the First Amendment.”

From The Associated Press
China is serious about winning the new space race

By David Ignatius

WASHINGTON

All the potential threats that China poses to the United States, the most worrisome for me is future domination of space. Quietly but persistently, the Chinese are developing an arsenal of weapons that still endangers other satellites. Since then, they have tested satellites that can snatch other craft and carry them to a distant orbit known as the “graveyard zone.” They have also captured objects in orbit and have talked about building bases on the moon. Their researchers have described ways to use satellites to conduct cyberattacks in space. And then there are the threats that would be more conventional.
The point is: Beijing recognizes that space is the ultimate “high ground” and wants to control it.
The United States, the space pioneer, was slow to recognize China’s ambitions. NASA controlled civilian space flight, but when the moonshots ended and the Space Shuttle was retired, the United States’ interest in space began to wane. The Air Force was responsible for military aspects of space, but its attention was closer to Earth, and it didn’t react adequately to China’s rapid moves. President Donald Trump created a new branch of the military, the Space Force, to respond to the challenge, and it was one of the few solid decisions of his presidency.

I had a chance to discuss space issues last week with four of the leading American experts: Gen. James H. Dickinson, head of U.S. Space Command; John F. Plumb, assistant secretary of defense for space policy; Erinne Uno-Oikawa, assistant director for space policy in the Office of Science and Technology Policy; and Salvatore Bruno, chief executive of the rocket-building company United Launch Alliance. They were all speaking at the Aspen Security Forum, which I moderated.
The first takeaway from these conversations is that they recognize that, in space, China is the “pacing threat,” as the new buzz phrase describes it. If you want a quick summary of China’s remarkable space array, check out the latest “Space Threat Assessment” published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, which is the best collection of open-source reports.

A second theme is that the United States’ response to China’s bid for dominance will be a mix of government systems and commercial satellite arrays being developed by SpaceX’s Starlink, Maxar and many dozens of other “NewSpace” companies that are building what amount to commercial communications and surveillance networks in low-Earth orbit. The Pentagon is setting up something similar — less than 130 of these companies, Plumb said. China can’t match this exploitation of private entrepreneurial effort.

As a former director of the Pentagon, the Pentagon published a detailed “space strategic review” discussing the Chinese threat and what to do about it. Unfortunately, like nearly everything else that exudes as expansive national interest, the Air Force’s responsible for space matters.

The point is: Beijing recognizes that space is the ultimate “high ground” and wants to control it.
The United States, the space pioneer, was slow to recognize China’s ambitions. NASA controlled civilian space flight, but when the moonshots ended and the Space Shuttle was retired, the United States’ interest in space began to wane. The Air Force was responsible for military aspects of space, but its attention was closer to Earth, and it didn’t react adequately to China’s rapid moves. President Donald Trump created a new branch of the military, the Space Force, to respond to the challenge, and it was

OPINION

By Matt Bai

The Washington Post

Among my Democratic friends, just the mention of No Labels elicits a Yosemite Sam, steam-coming-from-the-ear kind of rage. They see the bipartisanship, which is talking about drafting a third-party presidential candidate, as a stalking horse for Republicans looking to steal votes from President Joe Biden.

As a committed independent, politically and temperamentally, I have a different problem with No Labels. The problem is not that it’s trying to find a reform agenda that defies the orthodoxies of either party. The problem is in assuming that such an agenda can advance a political force, no matter how small, that can go very far beyond that. There are hard kill and soft kill capabilities, if not that it’s trying to find a reform agenda that defies the orthodoxies of either party. The problem is in assuming that such an agenda can advance a political force, no matter how small, that can go very far beyond that. There are hard kill and soft kill capabilities, if not that it’s trying to find a reform agenda that defies the orthodoxies of either party. The problem is in assuming that such an agenda can advance a political force, no matter how small, that can go very far beyond that. There are hard kill and soft kill capabilities, if not that it’s trying to find a reform agenda that defies the orthodoxies of either party. The problem is in assuming that such an agenda can advance a political force, no matter how small, that can go very far beyond that. There are hard kill and soft kill capabilities, if not that it’s trying to find a reform agenda that defies the orthodoxies of either party. The problem is in assuming that such an agenda can advance a political force, no matter how small, that can go very far beyond that. There are hard kill and soft kill capabilities, if not that it’s trying to find a reform agenda that defies the orthodoxies of either party. The problem is in assuming that such an agenda can advance a political force, no matter how small, that can go very far beyond that. There are hard kill and soft kill capabilities, if not that it’s trying to find a reform agenda that defies the orthodoxies of either party. The problem is in assuming that such an agenda can advance a political force, no matter how small, that can go very far beyond that. There are hard kill and soft kill capabilities, if not that it’s trying to find a reform agenda that defies the orthodoxies of either party. The problem is in assuming that such an agenda can advance a political force, no matter how small, that can go very far beyond that. There are hard kill and soft kill capabilities, if
## Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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<td>15. Good poker hand</td>
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<td>17. Roulette bet</td>
<td>34. Citizen soldiers</td>
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<td>38. Showbiz job</td>
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<td>40. Paris summer</td>
<td>55. “Delicious!”</td>
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<td>42. Stiller’s partner</td>
<td>57. Praise in verse</td>
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<td>59. “Delicious!”</td>
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## Cryptoquip


Sunday’s Cryptoquip: If you turnesi perpetually stubborn starting right now, what are you? From this point “Foward.”

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: J equals P
Tony Bennett, stylist singer of American musical standards, dies at 96

By CHARLES J. GANS
Associated Press

Tony Bennett, the eminent and timeless stylist whose devotion to classic American songs and knack for creating new standards such as “I Left My Heart In San Francisco” graced a decades-long career that brought him admirers from Frank Sinatra to Lady Gaga, died Friday. He was 96, just two weeks short of his birthday.

Publicist Sylvia Weiner confirmed Bennett’s death to The Associated Press, saying he died in his hometown of New York. There was no specific cause, but Bennett had been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease in 2016. Bennett didn’t tell his own story when performing; he let the music speak instead — the Gershwins and Cole Porter, Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern. Unlike his friend and mentor Sinatra, he would interpret a song rather than embody it.

If his singing and public life lacked the drama of Sinatra’s, Bennett appealed with an easy, courtly manner and an uncommonly rich and durable voice — “A tenor who sings like a baritone,” he called himself — that made him a master of caressing a ballad or brightening an up-tempo number.

“I enjoy entertaining the audience, making them forget their problems,” he told The Associated Press in 2006. “I think people are touched if they hear something that’s sincere and honest and maybe have a little sense of humor... I just like to make people feel good when I perform.”

Bennett was praised often by his peers, but never more meaningfully than by what Sinatra said in a 1965 Life magazine interview: “For my money, Tony Bennett is the greatest living artist in the business. He excites me when I watch him. He moves me. He’s the singer who gets across what the composer has in mind, and probably a little more.

He not only survived the rise of rock music but endured so long and so well that he gained new fans and collaborators, some young enough to be his grandchild. In 2014, at age 88, Bennett broke his own record as the oldest living performer with a No. 1 album on the Billboard 200 chart for “Cheek to Cheek,” his duets project with Lady Gaga. Three years earlier, he topped the charts with “Duets II,” featuring such contemporary stars as Gaga, Carrie Underwood and Amy Winehouse, in her last studio recording. His rapport with Winehouse was captured in the Oscar-nominated documentary “Amy,” which showed Bennett patiently encouraging the insecure young singer through a performance of “Body and Soul.”

His final album, the 2021 release “Love For Sale,” featured duets with Lady Gaga on the title track, “Night and Day” and other Porter songs.

For Bennett, one of the few performers to move easily between pop and jazz, such collaborations were part of his crusade to expose new audiences to what he called the Great American Songbook.

“No country has given the world such great music,” Bennett said in a 2015 interview with Downbeat Magazine. “Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern. Those songs will never die.”

Ironically, his most famous contribution came through two unremarkable pop songs: “Once Upon a Time” and “Love for Sale.” The single “Once Upon a Time,” penned by a young composer and conductor, provided Bennett with his signature song at a time his career was in a lull. They gave Bennett’s musical director, pianist Ralph Sharon, some sheet music that he thought it would be good material for San Francisco. Bennett said: “We were rehearsing and the bartender in the club in Little Rock, Ark., said, ‘If you record that song, I’m going to be the first to buy it.’”

Released in 1962 as the B-side of the single “Once Upon a Time,” the reflective ballad became a grassroots phenomenon, staying on the charts for more than two years and earning Bennett his first two Grammys, including record of the year.

By his early 40s, he was seemingly out of fashion. But after turning 60, an age when even the most popular artists often settle for just pleasing their older fans, Bennett and his son and manager, Danny, found creative ways to market the singer to the MTV Generation. He made guest appearances on “Late Night with David Letterman,” “The Tonight Show,” “The Simpsons,” “MTV Unplugged,” which won two Grammys, including album of the year. Bennett, born Anthony Dominick Benedetto in the New York City borough of Queens, sons Danny and Dae and nine grandchildren.

Bennett’s last of the great saloon singers of the mid-20th century, Bennett’s passing reminded the world of the power of these songs: “Those songs will never die.”

“Tony Bennett: MTV Unplugged,” which won two Grammys, included album of the year. Bennett, born Anthony Dominick Benedetto in the New York City borough of Queens, sons Danny and Dae, and nine grandchildren. Bennett is the best singer in the business,’ said Tony Bennett, MTV Unplugged, which won two Grammys, including album of the year. Bennett, born Anthony Dominick Benedetto in the New York City borough of Queens, sons Danny and Dae, and nine grandchildren.

Tony Bennett is pictured at his New York studio in 1991. Bennett, the eminent and timeless stylist whose devotion to classic American songs and knack for creating new standards, died July 21. He was 96.

“Tony Bennett: MTV Unplugged,” which won two Grammys, including album of the year. Bennett, born Anthony Dominick Benedetto in the New York City borough of Queens, sons Danny and Dae, and nine grandchildren.

Momoa hosts Discovery’s ‘Shark Week’

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Discovery Channel has landed the perfect host this year for “Shark Week,” none other than a huge fan of all ocean creatures — Aquaman.

Jason Momoa, who in real life dreamed of a career as a marine biologist before finding success in Hollywood, is going back to his roots to celebrate all things shark.

“My heart is in the ocean,” Momoa told The Associated Press, moments before taking a trip to swim with some of the apex predators. “I’m a shark. ‘Shark Week’ is in my blood.”

Momoa will be the week’s recurring master of ceremonies, dipping in and out of the channel’s roughly 20 new hours of programs that started Sunday. Episode encores run most nights.

Viewers will get to see rare sharks off the coast of South Africa, examine deadly shark attacks off the posh beaches of Egypt’s Red Sea and investigate whether sharks in Florida waters are getting high on cocaine.

The week kicked off with “Belly of the Beast: Feeding Frenzy,” in which researchers tried to reproduce a great white shark single attack by building a life-sized dead whale carcass decoy.

They put veteran “Shark Week” biologist Dr. Austin Gallagher and cameras inside the cavity — along with 200 pounds of chum and 50 gallons of blood — to try to make dozens of sharks go mad.

“There are a few moments during the show where I was pretty freaked out,” Gallagher said. “There’s a healthy respect there and I don’t want that ever to go away because I know what these animals are capable of.”

“Cocaine Sharks,” which premieres Wednesday, examines whether the occasional bricks of cocaine abandoned by drug smugglers affect shark behavior.

Momoa watched “Shark Week” growing up, and says he couldn’t wait to meet the scientists behind the programs.

“I’m going to be every other fan,” he said in an interview before the Hollywood strike. “This is my life’s passion.”
**PRO SOCCER**

**MLS EASTERN CONFERENCE**

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**Note:**
- Colorado at Los Angeles FC
- Austin FC at Saint Louis City SC
- Indiana at New York

**PRO SOCCER**

**MLS**

**Note:**
- Three points for victory, one point for a draw, zero points for defeat.

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Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Ryan O’Hearn had a pinch-hit RBI single in the ninth inning and the AL East-leading Baltimore Orioles rebounded after blowing a five-run lead to beat the Tampa Bay Rays for the second time in three days, 6-5 on Saturday.

The Orioles, who won 11 of 14, took a one-game lead over the second-place Rays. Baltimore started July 6% games behind Tampa Bay, which dropped to an AL-worst 4-13 in July.

Pinch-hitter Adam Frazier had a three-run inning leading off the seventh to give Baltimore an 8-5 lead, knocking an RBI single for his fourth win in five starts. "Can we talk about McCann's bunt?" O'Hearn said. "That should be circulating on the internet because that is unbelievable that he got that bad break.

"It says everything about our team. We wound up out of it, they came back, and then we find a way to scratch out a run there. I think it was a special win."

Cionel Pérez (3-1) got the final out in the eighth, and Felix Bautista worked a perfect ninth to get his 27th save against a sellout crowd of 25,025 that included a large number of Orioles’ fans.

"There’s definitely some added intensity," Baltimore manager Brandon Hyde said. "The crowd was electric. It’s the loudest I’ve ever seen it here. It’s been a lot of fun.”

Rays All-Star Shane McClanahan was bidding to become the majors’ first 12-game winner but lasted just four innings, allowing five runs, five hits and three walks. The lefty, who threw 86 pitches, was making his second start after spending 17 days on the injured list because of mid­back tightness.

Mets 5-6, Red Sox 4-8: Triston Casas had his first career multihom­er game, and Yu Chang and Jarren Duran also went deep off Max Scherzer in the nightcap as New York and host Boston split a double­header.

Brandon Nimmo and Daniel Vogelbach each hit a two-run homer for the Mets before the rains came during a scheduled break on Friday night, when the series opener was suspended in the fourth inning. After they picked things up there on Saturday afternoon, the teams traded runs and the New York hit on to take the day game 5-4 for their fourth win in five games.

Cassad had four hits on the day, and Masataka Yoshida had three in the night game, knocking an RBI single in the seventh for his first career multihomer as New York won 17 of its last 21 meetings with Kansas City.

Nick Pratto homered and Brady Singer struck out nine in another strong start at Yankee Stadium for the Royals, who lost for the seventh time in nine games following the All-Star break.

Pirates 3, Angels 0: Edny Rodri­
guez hit his first major league homer, five pitchers combined on a five­
hitter and visiting Pittsburgh ended Los Angeles’ four-game winning streak.

Rodriguez sent a full-count slider from Gerardo Reyes into the elevate­
ners in right center leading off the sixth inning. At 23 years and 57 days old, he became the youngest Pa­


The Baltimore Orioles’ Ryan O’Hearn watches the ball after hitting an RBI single against the Tampa Bay Rays during the ninth inning Saturday in St. Petersburg, Fla. The Orioles won 6-5.

SCOREBOARD

American League

East Division

W L Pct GB

Baltimore 52 13 .806 5

New York 53 17 .763 6

Toronto 54 16 .761 7

Boston 55 17 .769 9

Central Division

W L Pct GB

Minneapolis 52 18 .727 3

Cleveland 53 14 .792 7

Detroit 54 15 .762 8

Chicago 55 16 .786 9

Kansas City 56 18 .763 11

West Division

W L Pct GB

Texas 59 13 .820 3

Houston 54 18 .750 5

Seattle 50 20 .714 7

Los Angeles 49 19 .723 8

Oakland 48 22 .683 13

National League

East Division

W L Pct GB

Milwaukee 55 16 .774 6

Cincinnati 54 17 .756 8

Chicago 51 20 .720 11

New York 49 22 .690 13

Washington 40 30 .553 23

Central Division

W L Pct GB

Milwaukee 54 16 .750 10

Cincinnati 53 17 .750 11

Chicago 50 19 .737 13

Cleveland 48 22 .683 15

Pittsburgh 43 27 .617 23

Thursday's games

Tampa Bay 3, Baltimore 0

San Diego 5, Detroit 4

Detroit 5, Kansas City 4

Minneapolis 5, Minnesota 4

Chicago 4, St. Louis 3

Washington 3, New York 3

Saturday's games

N.Y. Mets 8, San Diego 6

N.Y. Mets 9, Colorado 6

San Diego 5, Arizona 4

Cleveland 3, Kansas City 2

Kansas City 2, Minnesota 1

Cleveland 4, Minnesota 3

Saturday's games

N.Y. Mets 8, San Diego 6

N.Y. Mets 9, Arizona 6

San Diego 5, Arizona 4

Cleveland 3, Kansas City 2

Kansas City 2, Minnesota 1

Cleveland 4, Arizona 6

Friday's games

N.Y. Mets at Boston

N.Y. Mets at Arizona

San Diego at Pittsburgh

St. Louis at Minnesota

Kansas City at Chicago

Colorado at St. Louis

N.Y. Mets at Arizona

San Diego at Miami

Monday's games

San Francisco at Philadelphia

Toronto at Minnesota

Kansas City at Texas

Arizona at Colorado
Harman retains five-stroke lead

American 18 holes from winning first major of his career

By Doug Ferguson

HOYLAKE, England — The day started at the tee for Brian Harman when the British Open has little to do with his golf so far. It’s rare in Britain to hear tales of hunting turkey, skinning to deer at age 8 and packing wild game in the freezer for his family to eat.

One tabloid called him “Brian the Butcher.” Another headline screamed, “I Shot to Thrill.”

Harman’s only concern is bagging the biggest trophy of his career, and he stayed on target Saturday by overcoming an early wobble with a remarkably steady hand.

His 8-foot par putt on the last hole at Royal Liverpool gave him a 2-under 68 and allowed him to keep his five-shot lead, leaving him 18 holes away from becoming a major champion.

“I thought about winning majors for my whole entire life,” Harman said. “It’s the whole reason I work as hard as I do and why I practice as much as I do and why I sacrifice as much as I do. Tomorrow, if that’s going to come to fruition for me, it has to be all about the golf. It has to be execution and just staying in the moment.”

He said he is most proud of making the FedEx Cup playoffs each of his 12 years on the PGA Tour, where he has two wins in 335 tournaments.

Sunday could change all that.

His lead remained five shots. Only the contenders changed on a wet day at the British Open.

Cameron Young, the runner-up at St Andrews at age 22, showed superb touch from a pot bunker in front of the 18th green that set up a tap-in birdie for 66 and put him in the final group with Harman on Saturday.

“I feel like he’s not someone to back down,” Young said.

Equally daunting is the sight of Jon Rahm, finally getting rewarded with a 63 that he capped off just as Harman was starting. It was the lowest score by two shots ever recorded in an Open at Royal Liverpool, hosting the oldest championship for the 13th time.

“That’s the best round I’ve played on a links course,” Rahm said.

When it was pointed out that his idol, Seve Ballesteros, never shot 63 in a major, Rahm quickly replied, “I’d rather win three times and never shoot 63.”

At least Rahm has a chance, which looked unlikely when he began the third round in the rain and wind and was 12 shots out of the lead.

Harman was at 12-under 201 and has history on his side. Jean Van de Velde is the last player to lose a five-shot lead in the final round of a major. That was in Carneouste in 1999 and featured one of the most dumbfounding triple bogeys ever on the 72nd hole of a major.

Harman, the gritty lefty from Georgia, is not prone to such blunders. He has made the five-shot margin feel larger where he’s been hitting the golf ball — on the grass, not in the pot bunkers — and he rarely has been out of position.

Harman was paired with Tommy Fleetwood, the local star who grew up some 45 minutes up the Lancashire coast in Southport and had a throaty English gallery on his side. They were roaring when Harman bogeyed the opening hole and then went long of the fourth green for another bogey. His five-shot lead was suddenly down to two shots.

And then it wasn’t.

“I got off to a rough start, but I stayed the ship,” Harman said. “I hit a bunch of good ones coming down the stretch. … I was out there trying to hit every shot best the whole day, and I could, and I did an OK job with that.”

The day was a disappointment for so many others, starting with Rory McIlroy.

He opened with three birdies in five holes — he had birdie chances of 10 and 12 feet on the other two holes — and looked primed to post the kind of score Rahm did earlier.

But he didn’t make birdie the rest of the way, and the finish was particularly painful. McIlroy missed birdie chances from 8, 12 and 10 feet.

McIlroy shot 69 and was nine shots behind, his hopes all but over of ending his nine-year drought in the majors.

Fleetwood rolled in a 10-foot birdie putt on No. 2 and then didn’t make a birdie the rest of the day. He had to settle for a 71, leaving him in the group at 5-under 208 with seven shots out of the lead with Jason Day (69), Viktor Hovland (66), Sepp Straka (70) and Antoine Rozner (67).

Decision: Ohtani says his focus is on helping Angels make playoffs

FROM PAGE 24

“I’ve never really had any sit-down talks like that,” Ohtani said when asked if he had considered short-circuiting this whole drama by committing to the Angels before free agency. “I see Perry like once a week in the hotel lobby. We’ve never really had conversations about that.”

Strong arm arguments can be made on both sides of this debate, and the sheer volume of opinions on the topic has become noticeable even to Ohtani, whose ascetic lifestyle usually shields him from distractions. He was out of position at his sharpest Friday night, but he earned his eighth mound win of the year despite allowing four homers by the Pittsburgh Pirates.

“We’re in midseason, obviously, and I’m trying to focus on the season and block everything else out,” Ohtani said. “I think we’re in a decent spot to make a playoff run, which is all I’m really focused on at this moment.”

The Angels (30-48) have said they’re unlikely to trade Ohtani, particularly if they’re in the postseason race at the deadline. But their position with 10 days to go doesn’t really change anything. They’re a wild card spot with two teams ahead of them, standing precisely on the fringe of contention after a four-game winning streak despite the injury absences of high-priced sluggers Mike Trout and Anthony Rendon.

Ohtani is always careful not to make strong public pronouncements about his future, other than to stress his desire to be on a winning team. The Angels have never been winners with Ohtani, compiling five straight losing seasons since he joined them while missing the playoffs since 2014.

But the drama hasn’t stopped the Angels from teasing their two-way superstar teammate about his uncertain future.

“Around this time of the year, with all the talk surrounding it, we kind of joke around a lot,” Ohtani said of the clubhouse discussions. “But it’s nothing serious.”

Even with the speculation around Ohtani about to reach a peak, the injury-weakened Halos are still fighting and winning — four straight victories and five of six overall. When Ohtani gave up four homors to Pittsburgh, the Angels hit four homers of their own and pitched flawlessly in relief for an 8-5 victory.

If Ohtani is fatigued by the frenzied speculation around him, he isn’t acknowledging it. Manager Phil Nevin didn’t think it played a role in Ohtani’s spotty pitching performance, instead speculating that Ohtani might have been overly fatigued by running the bases four times.

“It’s nothing mental with him,” Nevin said. “He’s the most mentally strong person I’ve ever been around.”

FROM PAGE 1

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Messi hits sensational winner in Miami debut

By Tim Reynolds
Associated Press
FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Some people paid hundreds of dollars to be able to say they were in the stadium for Lionel Messi’s debut for Inter Miami. Some paid thousands of dollars to watch the game. The team’s owners committed well over $100 million just to have a chance at moments like this.

So far, it looks like money well spent.

From the you-can’t-miss-this-up-depart- ment, Messi capped the opening night with his new club by delivering the unforgettable. His magical left foot sent a free kick into the upper left corner of the net in the 94th minute Friday night, giving Inter Miami a 2-1 win over Mexican club Cruz Azul in a League Cup match.

“What I saw was the goal,” Messi said in an on-field interview amid the postgame celebration. “I saw the goal. I knew that I had to score.”

He makes it look so easy. Made it look so easy, too.

The game’s greatest active player — a seven-time Ballon d’Or winner and a World Cup champion — sent the ball over a wall of four Cruz Azul defenders for the winning goal, unquestionably the greatest moment in Inter Miami’s brief history.

Fireworks blew. The cheers turned near deaf­ening. Everyone was. James — who knows a goat emoji for emphasis.

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“Thank you for being here,” Messi said. “Thank you for being here.”

Messi was a showman throughout his de­but for his Major League Soccer club. He waved at fans while he was seated on the bench. Waved at them while he was actually warm­up. Waved at fans while he was seated on the bench.

And if that wasn’t enough, he saved his best moment for the end. He watched the ball sail into the net, something he’s done about 600 times before for club and country, then sprinted to the right corner of the field and leaped into the arms of teammates.

The team’s owners — David Beckham, Jorge Mas and Jose Mas — were waiting as he leaped onto the superstar’s sweat-coated cheek. Some Cruz Azul players stood in silence and just watched; they’ll have a story to tell, too, about how it took an incredible Messi mo­ment to defeat them.

It took Inter Miami four years of planning and two years of actual pursuit to bring Messi to the club.

“What a moment for this country,” Beckham said. “It’s such a moment for the league. And it’s a very proud moment for us.”

Nobody even left their seats when the halftime whistle blew. The reason: Messi was on the field. He warmed up for about 5 minutes during intermission with the other reserves before they all left for the locker room.

That’s when the fans, finally, could put their phones down and take a breath. Temp­orarily, anyway. The wait was officially over.

When Messi checked in and had plenty of chances to take a late lead. But the final act belonged to Messi, a storybook ending if there ever was one.

“Messi leaped from his seat, threw his hands in the air, applauded several times and broke into a wide smile.

Cruz Azul tied the game shortly after Messi checked in and had plenty of chances to take a late lead. But the final act belonged to Messi, a storybook ending if there ever was one.

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Mohamed El-Shenawy, who took a long cross from Tameem Ali, moved into the box and sent a low drive off the inside of the far post to a 1-0 Inter Miami lead late in the first half.

Messi leaped from his seat, threw his hands in the air, applauded several times and broke into a wide smile.

That’s when the fans, finally, could put their phones down and take a breath. Temp­orarily, anyway. The wait was officially over.

“He’s so excited to see Messi,” Kardash­ian said.

Everyone was. James — who knows a thing or two about making a highly cele­brated move to Miami, after he joined the Heat in 2010 and won his first two NBA titles in a four-year stay — greeted Messi with a long embrace as the teams took the field. And after the goal, James acknowledged the greatness.

“INCREDIBLE,” James tweeted, with a goat emoji for emphasis.

Fans flock to camp to get first look at Rodgers

By Dennis Waszak Jr.
Associated Press
FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — The loud “Aaron! Rodgers!” chants started almost as soon as the New York Jets quarterback stepped on the practice field.

The cheers turned near deafen­ning Saturday when Rodgers acknowledged the fans with a quick wave.

“That’s my QB! Let’s go!” someone shouted.

“Sure!” said another.

The Jets’ third practice of train­ning camp marked the first session open to the public — giving about 2,000 ecstatic fans their first in­person glimpse of their team’s new quarterback.

“It’s exciting, you feel the ener­gy from the fans,” said Claudia Juarez, a lifelong Jets fan from the New York City borough of Queens.

“It’s like, you wake up and you’re like, ‘Hello, Mr. Rodgers! Good morning!’ And everybody’s like, ‘Good morning! It’s hype, it’s ex­citing and it’s a lot of optimism that has been lacking in the past. Rodgers has put on a show with a terrific practice that included some precise passing and a few jaw-drop­ping throws.

“I’m just happy we have a com­petitive team,” said Phil DeMee, a 30-year-old from the New York City borough of Staten Island.

“I’m not looking for a Super Bowl or a bust. I’m hoping for a playoff win. A home playoff win would be awesome.”

New York acquired Rodgers from Green Bay in April, and the four-time NFL MVP wants to help end the league’s longest playoff drought at 12 years.

“Man, I’m pumped up,” said Greg Muscare, a 30-year-old fan and eight-year-season ticket hold­er from Staten Island.

“We got this. We’re going all the way this year. Rodgers, Sauce (Gardner), Garrett (Williams) — the boys are going to cook. We’re in.”

The Jets have plenty of work to do before they can even think about the postseason. But this is the type of optimism having a quarterback with the credentials of Rodgers, even at 39, breeds among a fan base that’s hungry for a winner.

“I’m hoping we turn over a new leaf,” said Ira Max, a 72-year-old from Wyckoff, N.J. “Everything we’ve done so far hasn’t quite worked, but I think this may be the time it’s all going to work out.

The stars are aligning.

“If you keep coming back 45 years, you have to have hope, right?”

That’s what Rodgers represents to so many frustrated fans who have been patiently waiting for the Jets to be a true Super Bowl contender again.

“For a lot of the folks who have been through the roller coaster, it’s been rough, it’s been fun, but not consistent,” said Juarez, the founder of the Jets fan club Goth­am City Crew. “The type of excite­ment, the long lines and how early folks have been here, you could feel it. You could see it — the hairs (on his arm) are sticking up be­cause it’s a very strong chance we’re going to the Super Bowl.”

“I love it when the fans come,” coach Robert Saleh said. “It’s easy for a coach because now these guys are excited to show out, but you try to keep them focused and level whether fans are there or not. ... But I love when they get the chant going.”

With the cameras from the “Hard Knocks” crew rolling, se­veral “J-E-T-S! Jets! Jets!” cheers cropped up throughout practice.

Rodgers got the fans fired up when he threaded a touchdown pass to Tyler Conklin in red zone team drills, and then zipped a throw to Corey Davis for a two­point conversion. He ended prac­tice with a toss on which Mecole Hardman made a pretty leaping grab for a TD.

“We’ve needed a quarterback, and hopefully we have one right here,” DeMee said.
Jamaica holds France to surprising 0-0 draw

By James Robson

SYDNEY — Hervé Renard knows all about World Cup shocks. He also knows an early setback can be overcome in international soccer.

With that in mind, the France coach was not unduly concerned by his team’s 0-0 draw with Jamaica on Sunday, which was one of the biggest surprises so far at the Women’s World Cup.

Renard led Saudi Arabia to a famous win against Argentina at the men’s World Cup in Qatar last year, before Lionel Messi’s team rebounded and went on to lift the trophy for their country.

“I’ve already won competitions after drawing my first two games,” Renard said. “Let’s talk about the World Cup 2022. I don’t think that we should be getting ahead of ourselves.

“I think it is the No. 1 result I have seen. Women or men,” he said. “I would put it against Argentina at the men’s World Cup.

“I’m very happy. This is still an unexpected result for the fifth-ranked team in the world and one of the tournament favorites. By contrast Jamaica is ranked 43rd and entered the tournament having lost all of its games at its World Cup debut in 2019 with a goal difference of -11.

“We always tell our players just don’t worry about the rankings,” said Jamaican coach Lorne Donaldson, who declared his country’s first point ever in the competition as his greatest achievement in this World Cup.

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Jamaica holds France to surprising 0-0 draw

Early goal enough for Netherlands

Associated Press

DUNEDIN, New Zealand — Stefanie van der Gragt scored on a header in the 13th minute, leading the Netherlands to a 1-0 win over Portugal at the Women’s World Cup on Sunday as the 2019 finalists began their tournament run.

The Dutch defender gathered herself as teammate Sherida Spitse lofted a corner kick her way, then headed the ball across the goal into the far side of the net. An offside review delayed the celebration.

The goal by the 30-year-old van der Gragt, who plans to retire after the Women’s World Cup, was the quickest first goal of the tournament. The Dutch controlled the tempo of the game — Portugal’s first shot of the match didn’t come until the 82nd minute.

“It’s an important goal. I’m proud of the team and it’s a good win. The first game is always the important game of the tournament and I think these three points are really good for us,” van der Gragt said.

The meeting with the Netherlands, ranked No. 9 in the world, marked Portugal’s first-ever tournament appearance.

Though most of the crowd appeared to be Dutch fans, a small but vocal group of Portuguese supporters with flags and team apparel banged on drums throughout the game, the beat echoing across the venue.

The Dutch victory raises the stakes for their upcoming match with the two-time defending world champion Americans, who beat Netherlands 2-0 in that 2019 final. A winner in that match will gain control of Group E and could very well wrap up a berth in the knockout stage.

Sweden 2, South Africa 1: Sweden had dominated a scoreless first half with 71% of possessions and eight corners.

But Switzerland had dominated a scoreless first half with 71% of possessions and eight corners.

Sweden also needed a spot kick to overcome Haiti 1-0. Nigeria held Olympic champions China 0-0.

The French were expected to be too strong for Jamaica, but favorites have not had everything their way so far.

Australia needed a penalty to get a 1-0 win against Ireland, while European champion England also needed a spot kick to overcome Haiti 1-0. Nigeria held Olympic champions China 0-0.

“The French are used to having the upper hand during the opening games, but this is something that is going to change because things are getting a lot closer,” Renard said.

“We need to keep our heads up and we need to keep our confidence high.”

Scoreboard

First round

GROUP A

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Thursday, July 20

New Zealand 1, Norway 0
Switzerland 2, Philippines 0

Tuesday, July 20

New Zealand vs. Philippines
Switzerland vs. Norway

Saturday, July 23

New Zealand vs. New Zealand
Norway vs. Philippines

GROUP B

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Thursday, July 20

Australia 1, Ireland 0
Canada 0, Nigeria 0

Friday, July 21

Australia vs. Nigeria

Saturday, July 21

Australia vs. Ireland

GROUP C

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Saturday, July 22

Spain 1, Costa Rica 0
Japan 1, Zambia 0

Wednesday, July 26

Canada vs. Jamaica

Thursday, July 27

Australia vs. Nigeria

GROUP D

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Saturday, July 22

England 1, Haiti 0
Denmark 1, China 0

Friday, July 28

England vs. Vietnam
China vs. Haiti

Tuesday, Aug. 1

China vs. England
Haiti vs. Denmark

GROUP E

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Friday, July 21

United States 1, Vietnam 0
Portugal 0, Vietnam 0

Wednesday, July 26

Netherlands 1, Portugal 0

Thursday, July 27

United States vs. Netherlands

GROUP F

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Sunday, July 23

France vs. Jamaica

Wednesday, Aug. 2

France vs. Panama

GROUP G

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Sunday, July 23

Sweden vs. Argentina

Monday, July 24

Sweden vs. Italy

GROUP H

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Monday, July 24

Germany vs. Morocco
Egypt vs. South Korea

Tuesday, Aug. 1

South Korea vs. Germany

Roundup

The Netherlands’ Stefanie Van der Gragt, left, celebrates with teammates after her goal was confirmed during the first half of the Group E match against Portugal in Dunedin, New Zealand, on Sunday.

But Sweden got on the board in the 84th minute with Fridolina Rolfö’s equalizer. Amanda Iles­tedt then hit a perfect header from a corner with a minute left in reg­ulation to help Sweden escape.

South Africa caught Sweden off guard when Hildag Maiga scored in the 48th minute to take a shocking lead.

The Netherlands’ Stefanie Van der Gragt, left, celebrates with teammates after her goal was confirmed during the first half of the Group E match against Portugal in Dunedin, New Zealand, on Sunday.
Big decision

Ohtani’s future still uncertain as Angels try to figure out if they should trade him

BY GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

A
ngels fans rose and roared when Shohei Ohtani walked toward the dugout after a tumultuous Friday night on the mound. The Big A echoed with “M-V-P!” chants for the unique talent who has revolutionized baseball over the last six seasons in Orange County.

The chants and cheers had a melancholy note, however.

Most of those fans were aware this might be their final chance to thank him.

Ohtani’s future has been the talk of baseball all year long, and the forecast isn’t much clearer as the Los Angeles Angels reach the last 10 days before the MLB trade deadline. Ohtani is in the final year of his contract before unrestricted free agency, and the Angels must decide whether to trade their generational superstar for a probable mother lode or risk the possibility of losing him for practically nothing in the winter.

Every serious Angels fan understands the stakes of the next several days — and of the next few months, if the Halos don’t trade Ohtani at the deadline. Ohtani also understands the nature of the current spotlight on him, but the major league home runs leader claimed he isn’t thinking about a potential farewell to his only major league team.

“That did not cross my mind at all,” Ohtani said through his translator Friday of the possibility he had just made his last home mound appearance for the Angels, who will be on the road next week.

“Obviously, I’m a part of the Angels at this moment, and I feel like we’re in a decent spot to make a playoff run, so I just try not to really think about that.”

Ohtani said he has no assurances he won’t be traded, and he didn’t acknowledge any discussions about a contract extension. His representatives have previously said he’s likely to explore free agency, increasing the stakes of the Angels’ decision.

It seems Ohtani, his teammates and their fans are all waiting on a move — or no move at all — by Angels owner Arte Moreno and general manager Perry Minasian.

SEE DECISION ON PAGE 21

At 50-48 and four games out of the final AL wild-card spot, the Angels don’t have an easy decision when it comes to trading two-way star Shohei Ohtani.

Associated Press/SHERRY LANE

Messi notches game-winner in Miami debut

SEE Soccer, Page 22

SEE DECISION ON PAGE 21