

**MUSIC:** AC/DC ready to rock again on 'Power Up' **Page 28**

**BOOKS:** Obama explores hope in memoir **Page 27**

**COLLEGE FOOTBALL:** Irish in for another test **Page 48**

EUROPE  
& PACIFIC  
**WEEKEND**  
EDITION

**VIDEO GAMES**  
Call of Duty  
Black Ops  
Cold War  
**Page 18**

# STARS AND STRIPES®

stripes.com

Volume 79 Edition 160 ©SS 2020

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2020

平成12年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可 日刊(土日除く)  
発行所 星条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価 ¥100

**\$1.00**

## ANALYSIS

# Trump causing angst over Africa

CHRISTOPHER RUANO, COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE/AP

Army Spc. Kevin Martin provides security for a 75th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron C-130J Super Hercules during unloading operations at an unidentified location in Somalia in June. No country has been involved in Somalia's future as much as the U.S.

## Some experts dismayed as US weighs pullout from Somalia

By CARA ANNA  
Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya — No country has been involved in Somalia's future as much as the United States. Now the Trump administration is thinking of withdrawing the several hundred U.S. military troops from the Horn of Africa nation at what some experts call the worst possible time.

Three decades of chaos, from warlords to al-Qaida affiliate al-Shabab to the emergence of an Islamic State-linked group, have ripped apart the country that only in the past few years has begun to find its footing. The U.S. Embassy returned to Somalia just last year, 28 years after diplomats and staffers fled.

Somalia faces a tense election

season that begins in the next few weeks to decide the presidency and parliament. United Nations experts say al-Shabab, supporting its 5,000 to 10,000 fighters on a rich diet of extorting businesses and civilians, is improving its bomb-making skills. And an ever bigger military force, the African Union's 19,000-strong AMISOM, has begun its own withdrawal from a

country whose forces are widely considered unready to assume full responsibility for security.

It is not clear whether President Donald Trump will order the withdrawal of the some 700 U.S. military forces from Somalia, following his orders for Afghanistan and Iraq, or whether the reported urge

SEE SOMALIA ON PAGE 4

## Miller meets with troops in Middle East

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY  
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller is serving Thanksgiving meals to troops in the Middle East this week during his first international trip as the Defense Department begins the transition to President-elect Joe Biden's administration.

"I will ensure there is an effective transition process because that is what the American people expect from national security professionals," Miller said Wednesday during a stop in Bahrain.

Miller's trip comes at a busy time for the Defense Department.

With the official switch to a new administration less than two months away and only being on his new job for a couple of weeks, Miller was already part of a major decision last week to reduce the U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Some troops will leave Afghanistan and Iraq by Jan. 15, just five days before Biden is sworn into office. The force reduction will leave 2,500 troops in Afghanistan

SEE MILLER ON PAGE 5



CAITLIN M. KENNEY/Stars and Stripes

**Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller gives a thumbs-up to a sailor while serving a meal at Naval Support Activity Bahrain on Wednesday. Miller is visiting troops in the Middle East for Thanksgiving.**

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Delta says it won't furlough pilots

*Associated Press*

DALLAS — Delta Air Lines on Wednesday dropped a threat to furlough more than 1,700 pilots after they ratified a cost-cutting agreement that the airline said would help it cope with a downturn caused by the pandemic.

The airline had planned to furlough about 13% of its 12,900 pilots Saturday if an agreement to reduce costs wasn't reached.

The deal doesn't cut pilot pay rates, but it indirectly lowers their

pay by reducing guaranteed monthly working hours by up to 5%. In exchange, Delta promised not to furlough pilots through Jan. 1, 2022. The Air Line Pilots Association said about four-fifths of its Delta members voted and 74% of those ratified the deal.

The union said the 1,713 pilots who would have been furloughed will get 30 hours of pay per month and keep their benefits. They won't fly but will be notified if they can be recalled to service.

Southwest Airlines has warned its unions their members could face the first furloughs in Southwest history if they don't accept concessions in exchange for job security through 2021. The airline says it is overstaffed by an estimated \$1 billion.

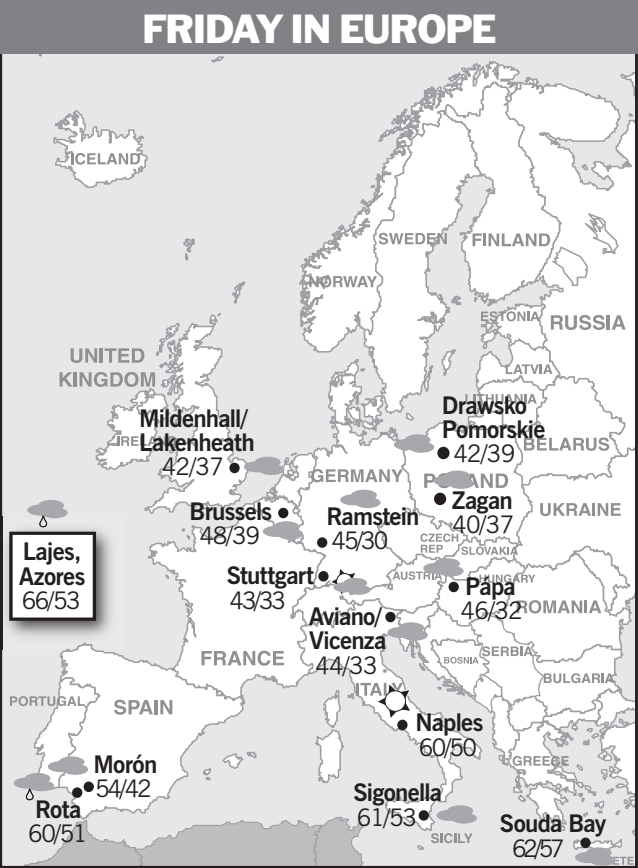
Dallas-based Southwest has sent letters warning more than 1,900 workers that their jobs could be eliminated starting in late January unless the airline gets union concessions or more federal aid.

EXCHANGE RATES

| Military rates             |          |  |
|----------------------------|----------|--|
| Euro costs (Nov. 27)       | \$1.16   |  |
| Dollar buys (Nov. 27)      | 0.8189   |  |
| British pound (Nov. 27)    | \$1.30   |  |
| Japanese yen (Nov. 27)     | 102.00   |  |
| South Korean won (Nov. 27) | 1,078.00 |  |
| Commercial rates           |          |  |
| Bahrain(Dinar)             | 0.3770   |  |
| Britain (Pound)            | 1.3363   |  |
| Canada (Dollar)            | 1.3017   |  |
| China(Yuan)                | 6.5763   |  |
| Denmark (Krone)            | 6.2488   |  |
| Egypt (Pound)              | 15.6601  |  |
| Euro                       | 0.8398   |  |
| Hong Kong (Dollar)         | 7.7512   |  |
| Hungary (Forint)           | 303.35   |  |
| Israel (Shekel)            | 3.3210   |  |
| Japan (Yen)                | 104.33   |  |
| Kuwait(Dinar)              | 0.3055   |  |
| Norway (Krone)             | 8.8755   |  |
| Philippines (Peso)         | 48.13    |  |
| Poland (Zloty)             | 3.76     |  |
| Saudi Arab (Riyal)         | 3.7501   |  |
| Singapore (Dollar)         | 1.3419   |  |
| So. Korea (Won)            | 1,107.42 |  |
| Switzerland (Franc)        | 0.9099   |  |
| Thailand (Baht)            | 30.32    |  |
| Turkey (Lira)              | 7.9381   |  |

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

WEATHER OUTLOOK



**TODAY**  
IN STRIPES

|                        |       |
|------------------------|-------|
| American Roundup ..... | 36    |
| Comics .....           | 40-41 |
| Crossword .....        | 34    |
| Faces .....            | 35    |
| Opinion .....          | 39    |
| Sports .....           | 42-48 |



However you read us,  
wherever you need us.

Mobile • Online • Print

EUROPE

KRISTI KIMMEL

CustomerService@stripes.com

+49 (0) 0631.3615.9111  
DSN: 314.583.9111

MIDDLE EAST

KRISTI KIMMEL

CustomerService@stripes.com

+49 (0) 0631.3615.9111  
DSN: 314.583.9111

PACIFIC

ICHIRO  
KATAYANAGI

PacificAdvertising@stripes.com

CML +81 (42) 552.2511 ext. 77313  
DSN: 227.7313

**PCSing? STARS AND STRIPES®**

**RELOCATION GUIDE**

Every Friday in the **European and Pacific** editions  
of Stars and Stripes AND online daily at  
[www.stripes.com/relo](http://www.stripes.com/relo)

MILITARY

# Some sailors offered voluntary early separation

Navy announces it will allow release for those in overstaffed jobs

**By COREY DICKSTEIN**  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Navy will allow some enlisted sailors serving in overstaffed jobs to apply to leave the service before the end of their enlistment contract, the service has announced.

The Navy hopes granting some enlisted sailors an early release from their enlistment commitment will ensure promotion opportunities for sailors who intend to remain in the Navy without

forcing people from the service involuntarily, according to a service news release.

Early separations will be considered on a case-by-case basis, the service said.

“As the Navy has grown over recent years, some enlisted ratings at specific pay grades have become overmanned due to high retention in these ratings,” Vice Adm. John B. Nowell, the Navy’s chief of personnel, wrote in a Nov. 19 memorandum. “Fleet readiness is our No. 1 priority while also allowing for a flexible marketplace of talent management.”

The Navy will publish further information about sailors who might be considered for early sep-

aration in the coming weeks. Such information including identification of overstaffed jobs and year groups will be posted on the Navy Personnel Command website, the Navy release said.

Officials said the Navy will offer several paths to early separations, but they expect most to be granted via the recently reestablished Early Enlisted Transition Program, which grants early separations on a first-come, first-served basis based on quotas determined by a sailors’ job, rank, year group and skills.

Other pathways would allow enlisted sailors to request early separation to go to college, to pursue a commission or a change to another service. Sailors who intend to commission or transfer military services would have to apply for a “conditional release,” which can only be approved by Navy Personnel Command, the service said. Sailors interested in those possibilities should submit requests to that command through their commanding officer, according to the memo.

Sailors facing forced rating changes with less than a year left in the service would also be able to apply for early separation, according to the service. Those sailors would have to request to be separated immediately and would forfeit any bonuses that required them to complete the full terms of

their enlistment.

The Navy is also encouraging sailors who might apply for early separation to consider instead a transfer to the Reserve or a change in specialty.

“All sailors considering early out options are also highly encouraged to seek conversion to other ratings for which they are eligible and qualified,” Nowell wrote in the memo. “Command career counselors and enlisted community managers are available resources for determining the ratings for which a sailor is best suited.”

dickstein.corey@stripes.com  
Twitter: @CDicksteinDC

## Top Democrat accuses Air Force of interfering in Ga. runoff elections

**By NIKKI WENTLING**  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The leader of the House Armed Services Committee accused the U.S. Air Force on Tuesday of attempting to influence two Senate runoff elections in Georgia by announcing the state as a candidate for a C-130J operating base.

Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., said the Air Force preemptively announced its preferred locations for the aircraft, and the timing “raises serious concerns” about the motives of Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett, an appointee of President Donald Trump.

“I am disappointed that the Air Force rushed today’s announcement, a decision that could mar the service’s historically repeatable, transparent, and deliberate strategic basing process, which until now has helped insulate basing decision from political influence,” Smith said in a statement.

The Air Force announced this week its four preferred locations for the new C-130J transport aircraft, including bases in Kentucky, West Virginia, Texas and Georgia. Kentucky, West Virginia and Texas will each receive eight aircraft in 2021, the announcement said. The Air Force indicated that Georgia would receive new aircraft “if they become available in the future.”

The Air Force said Wednesday that naming Georgia allowed the branch to move forward with environmental impact studies. However, Congress is still negotiating legislation that determines whether enough C-130Js will be authorized for a fourth location. The Air Force told lawmakers during a briefing earlier this year that only the three sites would be an-

nounced, Smith said.

“The Air Force did not need to make this decision now — plain and simple — and should delay moving forward with these basing actions until conference negotiations have concluded and the decision is not at risk of being politicized,” Smith said.

Lawmakers typically lobby for military resources to come to their states, as they provide a boost to local economies. Sen. David Perdue, a Georgia Republican who is in one runoff election in January, celebrated the Air Force’s decision and highlighted his work to secure the new fleet in a statement Tuesday.

“As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and proud Senator for Georgia, I continue to focus on making sure our women and men in uniform always have the tools they need to carry out their missions, and that our state is at the forefront of that effort,” Perdue said.

Perdue is running against Democratic challenger Jon Ossoff in a runoff, and Sen. Kelly Loeffler, R-Ga., faces the Rev. Raphael Warnock. Both races will be decided in a Jan. 5 election, and the stakes are high: The election will determine whether Democrats can gain control of the Senate.

Smith said that if the Air Force doesn’t halt the process to adopt Georgia as the fourth site for C-130Js, Congress may be forced “to take action to protect the basing process from being used to potentially influence congressional action or election outcomes.” He did not outline potential next steps.

wentling.nikki@stripes.com  
Twitter: @nikkiwentling



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND  
GLOBAL CAMPUS | EUROPE

UMGC IS AVAILABLE TO YOU  
ANYWHERE, ANY TIME.



HERE FOR  
THE HOLIDAYS?  
GIFT YOURSELF  
WITH 4-WEEK  
COURSES STARTING  
16 DECEMBER.

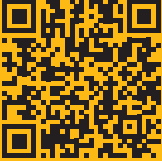
TAKE CLASSES FROM YOUR HOME OR ROOM

// Make the most of the holidays and gift yourself with one of our more than 40 remote 4-week intersession courses.

// Registration is open for mid-December course starts.

// Our special overseas tuition rate applies to all U.S. DoD ID card holders.

ENROLL NOW  
Start by contacting the UMGC Europe team in our virtual offices:  
[europe.umgc.edu/locations](https://europe.umgc.edu/locations)



Scan for  
our schedule!

# Somalia: US troop withdrawal 'is really just the worst time'

will pass before he leaves office in January. But the idea is taken seriously, even as U.S. drone strikes are expected to continue in Somalia against al-Shabab and ISIS fighters from neighboring Djibouti and Kenya — where al-Shabab carried out a deadly attack against U.S. forces early this year.

The U.S. Africa Command has seen a “definitive shift” this year in al-Shabab’s focus to attack U.S. interests in the region, a new report by the Department of Defense inspector general said Wednesday — and the command says al-Shabab is Africa’s most “dangerous” and “imminent” threat.

## Counterterrorism

“The first thing ... it’s disastrous for Somalia’s security sector, it just causes that first panic reaction: You know, why now?” said Samira Gaid, a Somali national security specialist who served as senior security adviser to the prime minister and special adviser to the head of AMISOM. “Especially since over the past three and half years in particular the security sector really improved, and we tried to work closely with” the U.S., she told The Associated Press.

Recent progress includes a “war council” between the U.S. and Somali governments, she said, where the U.S. helps to draw up military plans. “We call them Somali-led operations, but really the U.S. is hand-holding us through it.”

The U.S. military also trains Somalia's elite Danab special forces that now number around 1,000, and is providing Danab with air cover and intelligence, Gaid said.

“Danab was expanding, that’s why this is so shocking,” she said. “Is it possible to move forward with that plan now?”

Danab units are now operational in four of Somalia's five member states, the U.S. military says, and they conducted about 80% of the Somali national army's offensive forces in the quarter ending Sept. 30 and "nearly all" operations against al-Shabab.

The Danab forces also serve as a model for how the rest of Somali military forces can develop to be “more meritocracy and less clan-focused,” said Omar Mahmood, an analyst with the International Crisis Group.

The loss of U.S. forces is widely seen as a gain for al-Shabab, and for the far smaller presence of hundreds of ISIS-affiliated fighters in Somalia's north. "From the al-Shabab perspective, they just need to hold out," Mahmood said, and they might even ask themselves what need there is for any potential Taliban-style negotiations.

Al-Shabab's messaging has al-



**U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Damian T. Donahoe, center, deputy commanding general, Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa, talks with service members in September in Somalia. The Trump administration is thinking of withdrawing U.S. troops from the nation at what some experts call the worst possible time.**

ways stressed the extremist group's staying power, national security specialist Gaid said: "These external forces will always leave." A U.S. withdrawal will play into that narrative.

Gaid said she doesn't see any other country stepping into the U.S. military's role, though a withdrawal would open space for powers like Russia and China. Somalia also has some 1,500 special forces that have been trained by Turkish troops, she said, but "they don't benefit from Turkish advisers on the ground."

## Security

Without U.S. forces, al-Shabab “will find it easier to overrun AMISOM, let alone the Somali national army,” Vanda Felbab-Brown, co-director of the African Security Initiative at the Brookings Institution, told an online event this week. And with neighboring Ethiopia’s conflict increasing pressure to withdraw more Ethiopian forces from Somalia, a U.S. troop withdrawal “is really just the worst time.”

The support that U.S. forces give AMISOM is “huge,” Gaid said, including as a key interlocutor with Somali forces. And with AMISOM also drawing down by the end of next year, “it’s a tricky time.”

The U.S. has said implementation of the plan for Somali forces to take over the country's security next year is "badly off track," said the new report by the Department of Defense inspector general.

Somali forces cannot contain the al-Shabab threat on its own, the report said. They still rely on

the international community for financial support, and yet they “sometimes go unpaid for months.”

Maybe a U.S. withdrawal would lead the AMISOM force to adjust its own withdrawal timeline “more realistically,” Mahmood said.

The U.S. has been the most engaged security partner in Somalia “willing to get down and dirty,” he added. But no other country appears to have the willingness to re-

place what U.S. forces are doing  
on the ground

And a withdrawal of both the U.S. and AMISOM would risk leaving the impression that “Somalia increasingly can rely less and less on external security partners,” Mahmood said.

## Political stability

Somalia is on the brink of elections, with the parliamentary vote scheduled in December and the presidential one in February.

**“The first thing ... it’s disastrous for Somalia’s security sector, it just causes that first panic reaction: You know, why now?”**

**Samira Gaid**  
**Somali national security specialist**

What had meant to be the country's first one-person-one-vote election in decades instead remains limited by disputes between the federal government and regional ones — which the U.S. has said also weakens command and control of Somali forces.

At least keep U.S. forces in Somalia until after the elections, Felbab-Brown wrote this week, warning of possible post-election violence or al-Shabab taking advantage of any chaos.

Even though U.S. forces don't provide election security, "our problem is, with the U.S. focused on a drawdown of troops, it would not be focused on how the elections are going politically," Gaid said.

The U.S. has been one of the most vocal actors on Somalia's election process, she said. "We were all expecting after November that the U.S. would be clear on a lot of stuff. Now it seems we have to wait."

# The Health Plan that Covers You Worldwide



## 2020 OPEN SEASON

Mon. Nov. 9 –  
Mon. Dec. 14

### FOREIGN SERVICE BENEFIT PLAN

- ✓ Receive access to mental health programs designed to help ease life's stressors
- ✓ Enjoy generous chiropractic, acupuncture and massage therapy benefits

- ✓ Receive worldwide coverage – 200+ direct billing partners, overseas providers treated as in-network
- ✓ Use our convenient 24/7 translation line & nurse advice line

- ✓ Save with our competitive rates and low annual deductibles
- ✓ Keep this health plan if you return to the U.S.

[afspa.org/fsbp](https://afspa.org/fsbp)



FOREIGN SERVICE BENEFIT PLAN

*Caring For Your Health Worldwide®*

FEHB High Option Plan open to eligible Federal Civilian employees.

All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations, and exclusions set forth in the Foreign Service Benefit Plan's Federal brochure (RI 72-001)

## MILITARY

# Miller: Acting defense secretary serves food to troops for Thanksgiving

## FROM PAGE 1

and 2,500 in Iraq as both countries continue to see violence against government forces and civilians by terrorist groups such as the Islamic State and the Taliban.

More so, the Defense Department on Monday was contacted by Biden's transition team after the U.S. General Services Administration authorized resources and services, such as funding and space in government buildings, to the incoming administration.

"The DOD Transition Task Force will arrange and coordinate all DOD contact with the Biden [transition team]. DOD is prepared to provide post-election services and support in a professional, orderly, and efficient manner that is befitting of the public's expectation of the department and our commitment to national security," Pentagon spokeswoman Sue Gough said in a statement.

But as the transition took shape in Washington on Wednesday, Miller toured units on Naval Support Activity Bahrain, including the headquarters for U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces, and met with sailors on the waterfront.

Later, Miller went to the dining facility on the base to start off the Thanksgiving holiday by meeting with service members and serving them a traditional meal to show appreciation for their service that has taken them far from home.

"Come out and show them a little love, show them some respect,

thank them, because with this [coronavirus pandemic], they're not getting to go home... So it's really important for me in this position to get out and make the rounds," Miller said at the start of the trip.

Sailors and Marines lined up to have Miller, as well as some members of his staff, serve them a plethora of food, including roast beef, turkey, stuffing, sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, green beans and gravy.

Miller grabbed a plate of food for himself and sat at a table with two sailors and a Marine.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, plexiglass has been installed on all the dining tables to allow for people to eat together as safely as possible.

Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Tayler Maddalena, 28, said it was intimidating to see the acting defense secretary serving the Thanksgiving meal because she said she normally does not talk to such high-ranking people.

"But it was really cool that he came out here and did that for us, especially when he could stay home and be with his family for the holiday," she said.

While celebrating the holiday is difficult due to the pandemic, Maddalena said people at the base are uniting around the added hardship by looking out for one another, adding she does know people who have it "pretty rough."

She said she was planning to get together with friends Thursday for Thanksgiving dinner and then celebrate Friday with her col-



CAITLIN M. KENNEY/Stars and Stripes

**Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller, left, speaks with Marine Sgt. Joshua Jackson, right, with Fleet Logistics Center at Naval Support Activity Bahrain over a Thanksgiving meal Wednesday. Miller is visiting troops in the Middle East for the Thanksgiving holiday.**

leagues in the mental health clinic.

Yeoman 3rd Class Tevin Warren, 28, said the pandemic has made it hard to have the same camaraderie that is usually felt during the holidays.

"It makes it a bit harder because you're away from family but then the family you have here, you can't really enjoy it the way that you

want to," he said.

Warren said it might not seem like it but it meant a lot to see Miller spending the holiday with them, and that it showed he cared.

Yeoman Seaman Rattanavalee Buranapim, 19, is spending her first Thanksgiving away from home this year.

"It's been difficult but it's a new experience," she said.

While she cannot be home with her family, Buranapim said the Navy is her second family.

"I'm really grateful and thankful to be where I am right now, even though it's really hard. But I chose to do this and I'm always thankful for it," she said.

kenney.caitlin@stripes.com  
Twitter @caitlinmkenney

## 31 charged in Coast Guard test score-fixing scheme

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — More than 30 people were charged for their participation in a test score-fixing scheme that happened over seven years at a United States Coast Guard exam center in Louisiana, federal prosecutors announced.

The indictment centers around Dorothy Smith, a former employee at an exam center in Mandeville, who was required to enter scores for exams merchant mariners were required to pass to get licenses for positions on ships, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Louisiana said Monday in a news release.

Prosecutors said Smith took bribes to fix exam scores and used intermediaries to connect her to maritime workers who were willing to pay.

The release said those intermediaries would funnel the money and the mariners' requests to Smith, who would then falsely report the scores in the Coast Guard computer system. This allowed different applicants to get licenses to work on ships, including for positions like chief engineer.

Six people, including two former Coast Guard employees, are accused of acting as intermediaries for Smith. Authorities said four of those intermediaries had their own exams fixed by Smith, too.

All of them, including Smith, were charged with conspiracy to defraud the United States.

Prosecutors said 24 current and former merchant mariners were charged with unlawfully receiving officer-level licenses.

## HAVE YOU BEEN INJURED?

### Defense Base Act Legal Representation

**Know and Protect your Legal Rights**

**Including Both US and Non-US Citizens**

If you work for a company under contract with the United States Government outside the U.S. and fall ill or are injured at work, you may have the right to pursue a claim in the U.S. for benefits under the Defense Base Act. This law protects and applies to all injured employees, regardless of their citizenship or nationality. Under the law, you may be entitled to select a doctor and to payment of wages if restricted from working.

**Hire Us Online Now!**  
[www.barnettandlerner.com](http://www.barnettandlerner.com)



**Barnett, Lerner, Karsen, Frankel & Castro**  
Professional Association  
Attorneys and Counselors at Law

For a *FREE* consultation **888.732.7425**

# NATION

# Trump pardons former adviser Flynn

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump pardoned his former national security adviser Michael Flynn on Wednesday, ending a yearslong prosecution in the Russia investigation that saw Flynn twice plead guilty to lying to the FBI and then reverse himself before the Justice Department stepped in to dismiss his case.

“It is my Great Honor to announce that General Michael T. Flynn has been granted a Full Pardon,” Trump tweeted. “Congratulations to @GenFlynn and his wonderful family, I know you will now have a truly fantastic Thanksgiving!”

The pardon, in the waning weeks of Trump’s single term, is part of a broader effort by Trump to undo the results of a Russia investigation that shadowed his administration and yielded criminal charges against a half-dozen associates. It comes just months after the president commuted the sentence of another associate, Roger Stone.

A Justice Department official said the department was not consulted on the pardon and learned Wednesday of the plan. But the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, noted that the president has the legal power to pardon Flynn.

The move is likely to energize supporters

**“The president’s enablers have constructed an elaborate narrative in which Trump and Flynn are victims.”**

**Jerry Nadler**  
House Judiciary Committee Chair

who have taken up Flynn as a cause celebre and rallied around the retired Army lieutenant general as the victim of what they assert is an unfair prosecution, even though Flynn twice admitted guilt. Trump has repeatedly spoken warmly about Flynn and, in an indication of his personal interest in his fate, asked then-FBI Director James Comey in February 2017 to end a criminal investigation into the national security adviser.

In a statement, Flynn’s family thanked Trump “for answering our prayers and the prayers of a nation” by issuing the pardon.

Democrats lambasted the pardon as undeserved and unprincipled. House Speaker

Nancy Pelosi called it “an act of grave corruption and a brazen abuse of power,” while Rep. Adam Schiff, the chair of the House Intelligence Committee, said a “pardon by Trump does not erase” the truth of Flynn’s guilty plea, “no matter how Trump and his allies try to suggest otherwise.”

“The president’s enablers have constructed an elaborate narrative in which Trump and Flynn are victims and the Constitution is subject to the whims of the president,” House Judiciary Committee Chair Jerry Nadler said in a statement. “Americans soundly rejected this nonsense when they voted out President Trump.”

The pardon is the final step in a case defined by twists and turns. The most dramatic came in May when the Justice Department abruptly moved to dismiss the case, insisting that Flynn should not have been interviewed by the FBI in the first place, only to have U.S. District Justice Emmet Sullivan resist the request and appoint a former judge to argue against the federal government’s position and to evaluate whether Flynn should be held in criminal contempt for perjury.

That former judge, John Gleeson, called the Justice Department’s dismissal request an abuse of power and said its grounds for dropping the case were ever-evolving and “patently pretextual.”

As Sullivan declined to immediately dismiss the prosecution, Flynn lawyer Sidney Powell sought to bypass the judge by asking a federal appeals court to direct him to drop the matter. A three-judge panel did exactly that, but the full court overturned that decision and sent the case back to Sullivan.

At a hearing in September, Powell told Sullivan that she had discussed Flynn’s case with Trump but also said she did not want a pardon — presumably because she wanted him to be vindicated in the courts.

Powell emerged separately in recent weeks as a public face of Trump’s efforts to overturn the results of his election loss to President-elect Joe Biden, but the Trump legal team distanced itself from her after she advanced a series of uncorroborated conspiracy claims.

The pardon spares Flynn the possibility of any prison sentence, which Sullivan could potentially have imposed had he ultimately rejected the Justice Department’s dismissal request. That request was made after a review of the case by a federal prosecutor who had been specially appointed by Attorney General William Barr.

At issue in the prosecution was an FBI interview of Flynn, days after Trump’s inauguration, about a conversation he had during the presidential transition period with the then-Russian ambassador.

## Career CENTER

Are you in the picture?



Reading Stars and Stripes gives you a better handle on issues that affect you most.  
*No one covers the bases the way we do.*

STARS AND STRIPES

In print • Online at [starsandstripes.com](http://starsandstripes.com) • Mobile for Android, iPhone & iPad



Teaching As a Second Career (TASC) briefings are military career transition seminars that are designed to help eligible members of the armed forces begin new careers as K-12 public school teachers. Skills acquired in the military like leadership, initiative, discipline, integrity, and the ability to thrive in an ever-changing environment are a natural fit for the classroom. Become a part of the Texas teaching family!

Contact us at [texastroopstoteachers.org](http://texastroopstoteachers.org) or 1-800-810-5484.



VIRUS OUTBREAK

High court blocks NY limits on houses of worship

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As coronavirus cases surge again nationwide, the Supreme Court late Wednesday barred New York from enforcing certain limits on attendance at churches and synagogues in areas designated as hard hit by the virus.

The justices split 5-4 with new Justice Amy Coney Barrett in the majority. It was the conservative’s first publicly discernible vote as a justice. The court’s three liberal justices and Chief Justice John Roberts dissented.

The move was a shift for the court. Earlier this year, when Barrett’s liberal predecessor, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, was still on the court, the justices divided 5-4 to leave in place pandemic-related capacity restrictions affecting churches in California and Nevada.

The court’s action Wednesday could push New York to reevaluate its restrictions on houses of worship in areas designated virus hot spots. But the impact of the court’s action is also muted because the Catholic and Orthodox Jewish groups that sued to challenge the restrictions are no longer



KELSEY KREMER, THE DES MOINES REGISTER/ AP

A woman celebrates Mass at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church in Perry, Iowa. The Supreme Court on Wednesday blocked New York from enforcing coronavirus limits on houses of worship.

subject to them.

The Diocese of Brooklyn and Agudath Israel of America have churches and synagogues in areas of Brooklyn and Queens previously designated red and orange zones. In those red and orange zones, the state had capped attendance at houses of worship at 10 and 25 people, respectively. But those particular areas are now

designated as yellow zones with less restrictive rules neither group challenged.

The justices acted on an emergency basis, temporarily barring New York from enforcing the restrictions against the groups while their lawsuits continue. In an unsigned opinion the court said the restrictions “single out houses of worship for especially harsh treat-

ment.”

“Members of this Court are not public health experts, and we should respect the judgment of those with special expertise and responsibility in this area. But even in a pandemic, the Constitution cannot be put away and forgotten. The restrictions at issue here, by effectively barring many from attending religious services, strike at the very heart of the First Amendment’s guarantee of religious liberty,” the opinion said.

The opinion noted that in red zones, while a synagogue or church cannot admit more than 10 people, businesses deemed “essential,” from grocery stores to pet shops, can remain open without capacity limits. And in orange zones, while synagogues and churches are capped at 25 people, “even non-essential businesses may decide for themselves how many persons to admit.”

Roberts, in dissent, wrote that there was “simply no need” for the court’s action. “None of the houses of worship identified in the applications is now subject to any fixed numerical restrictions,” he said, adding that New York’s 10 and 25 person caps “do seem unduly re-

strictive.”

“The Governor might reinstate the restrictions. But he also might not. And it is a significant matter to override determinations made by public health officials concerning what is necessary for public safety in the midst of a deadly pandemic,” he wrote.

Roberts and four other justices wrote separately to explain their views. Barrett did not.

The court’s action was a victory for the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox Jewish synagogues that had sued to challenge state restrictions announced by Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Oct. 6.

The Diocese of Brooklyn, which covers Brooklyn and Queens, argued houses of worship were being unfairly singled out by the governor’s executive order. The diocese argued it had previously operated safely by capping attendance at 25% of a building’s capacity and taking other measures. Parts of Brooklyn and Queens are now in yellow zones where attendance at houses of worship is capped at 50% of a building’s capacity, but the church is keeping attendance lower.



# Put More Happy in Your Holidays With a Low Intro APR and \$150 BONUS CASH



1.5%  
CASH BACK ON PURCHASES<sup>2</sup>

Open a new *cashRewards* credit card, and you can save on interest with a **0% intro APR** on purchases for **6 months**. After that, a variable APR between **9.65%** and **18%** applies.<sup>1</sup>

Plus, you'll earn **\$150 bonus cash** back when you spend **\$2,000** within **90 days** of account opening.<sup>2</sup>



ARMY  
MARINE CORPS  
NAVY  
AIR FORCE  
COAST GUARD  
SPACE FORCE  
VETERANS

Our Members Are the Mission

Insured by NCUA. <sup>1</sup>As of 5/1/2020, rates range from 9.65% APR to 18.00% APR, are based on creditworthiness, and will vary with the market based on the U.S. Prime Rate. ATM cash advance fees: None if performed at a Navy Federal branch or ATM. Otherwise, \$0.50 per domestic transaction or \$1.00 per foreign transaction. <sup>2</sup>Offer valid for cardholders issued new *cashRewards* credit card accounts. To be eligible for the \$150 cash back, you must make \$2,000 or more in net purchases within 90 days of account opening. Earn rewards on eligible net purchases. "Net purchases" means the sum of your eligible purchase transactions minus returns and refunds. Eligible purchase transactions do not include, and rewards are not earned for, the following transactions: cash advances, convenience checks, balance transfers, or fees of any kind, including finance charges, late fees, returned check fees, ATM cash advance fees, and annual fees, if any. Cash equivalent transactions, such as the purchase, loading or reloading of gift and prepaid cards (e.g., money orders, Visa® Buxx Cards, GO Prepaid Cards and other cash equivalent gift cards), may not be eligible purchase transactions and may not earn rewards. Please allow up to eight weeks after the 90-day period for the \$150 to post to your rewards balance. Account must be open and not in default at the time the \$150 is scheduled to post to your rewards balance. Limit of one promotional offer at account opening. Excludes Navy Federal Business cards. Offer expires 1/4/2021. © 2020 Navy Federal NFCU 13920 (10-20)

Apply today!

[navyfederal.org/cashrewardsoffer](https://navyfederal.org/cashrewardsoffer)

# VIRUS OUTBREAK

## Congress prepares for Biden's national coronavirus strategy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress is bracing for President-elect Joe Biden to move beyond the Trump administration's state-by-state approach to the COVID-19 crisis and build out a national strategy to fight the pandemic and distribute the eventual vaccine.

The incoming administration's approach reflects Democrats' belief that a more comprehensive plan, some of it outlined in the House's \$2 trillion coronavirus aid bill, is needed to get the pandemic under control. Republicans have resisted big spending but agree additional funding is needed. With the nation on edge but a vaccine in sight, the complicated logistics of vaccinating hundreds of millions of Americans raise the stakes on the major undertaking.

"We have an incredible challenge on our hands," said Sen. Patty Murray of Washington state, which is approaching the anniversary of its first reported case of the virus last January.

A vaccine can only go so far, Murray warned, without a distribution plan. "A vaccine can sit on a shelf. A vaccination is what we're talking about," she said.

As Congress weighs a new round of COVID-19 relief, federal officials say doses of the vaccine could begin shipping within a day of Food and Drug Administration approval. Three pharmaceutical manufacturers — Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca — have announced early results. But the rollout faces a patchwork of state plans, a transitioning White House and potential backlash from vaccine skeptics, despite the rising U.S. death toll of nearly 260,000 people.

### Alaska

ANCHORAGE — Bars and restaurants in Anchorage will be closed for indoor service, employers must allow people to work from home if possible and many businesses will be limited to 25% capacity for the month of December as Alaska's largest city tries to stem the increase in coronavirus cases, Acting Mayor Austin Quinn-Davidson said Wednesday.

The new rules go into effect Tuesday and won't end until Jan. 1, she said during a teleconference.

"Today, we find ourselves in a situation that nobody wants to be in. There are no easy answers, but we must act because continuing on this path is the worst of all bad options," she said.

The director of the Anchorage

Health Department, Heather Harris, says the agency "has been waving red flags for weeks as we have experienced record-breaking case counts."

As of Wednesday, a total of 15,100 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Anchorage since the pandemic began; of those, 2,115 were reported in the last week.

### California

LOS ANGELES — Firefighters in Silicon Valley were sent out to enforce statewide business restrictions as the state faced a Thanksgiving shadowed by an out-of-control coronavirus surge and health officials begged people to avoid large family gatherings that could become "superspreader" events.

"You have a 15-person gathering at a dinner table, then 1 in 10 of those tables could have ... a person that is unknowingly infecting others," said Dr. Christina Ghaly, health services director in Los Angeles County, which has seen about a third of all COVID-19 cases in California and 40% of the deaths.

Ghaly said 1 in 145 people in the county is now infectious to others and the rate of spread could double every two weeks.

The county has passed a threshold that could see it implement a stricter and more sweeping stay-at-home order for residents soon, although not as sweeping as a March lockdown.

As with many other states, cases of COVID-19 have been skyrocketing for weeks in California. A record 18,350 were reported Tuesday, surpassing the previous daily high of more than 15,000 cases announced Saturday.

The seven-day average of positive tests has gone from 5.3% to 6.5% in the past week. The 14-day average has gone from 4.8% to 5.9%.

### Colorado

DENVER — Denver Mayor Michael Hancock flew to Mississippi to visit family despite sending messages on social media and to city staff asking them to avoid traveling for the Thanksgiving holiday.

The mayor's spokesperson Mike Strott told The Denver Post that Hancock flew out of Denver on Wednesday to spend Thanksgiving with his wife and youngest daughter, who are already in Mississippi.

"That is incredibly disappointing," Dr. Sandy Johnson, head of the University of Denver's school



DAMIAN DOVARGANES/ AP

**Airport workers take a shuttle bus between terminals at Los Angeles International Airport in Los Angeles, on Wednesday.**

of global health affairs, said of Hancock's actions. "So many folks in the city of Denver have been doing the right thing. Unless there is some family emergency compelling the travel this just seems hypocritical at a time when we need leaders to lead by example."

On Wednesday evening, Hancock released a public apology admitting that he went against his own public guidance.

"As a public official, whose conduct is rightly scrutinized for the message it sends to others ... I apologize to the residents of Denver who see my decision as conflicting with the guidance to stay at home for all but essential travel," he tweeted.

### Oregon

SALEM — Bars and restaurants can reopen for limited outdoor service next week but many restrictions will remain in place until a vaccine against the coronavirus is widely available, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said on Wednesday.

She pleaded with Oregonians to stay safe during the Thanksgiving holidays, and protect others, by not ignoring safety protocols, like wearing masks and limiting personal contacts.

"Please, please make smart choices this holiday weekend that will protect you, your family and your neighbors," she told a Zoom news conference. "Irresponsible behavior over Thanksgiving, at best, will only make the pandemic last longer. At worst, it will send one of your loved ones to the ICU."

State officials also announced vaccines would soon be coming to Oregon, though details remained unclear.

Meanwhile, the rate of infections continues to skyrocket. A total of 8,687 new daily cases occurred last week, a 34% increase over the previous record-high week. Weekly hospitalizations

rose to a record 366, a 26% increase.

### New York

NEW YORK — At one New York eatery, your table is ready — along with your coronavirus test results.

City Winery, an upscale chain, is trying a novel approach to indoor dining during a pandemic: Two nights a week, all patrons and staffers at its Manhattan location have to take a rapid virus test on-site and get an all-clear before coming in. (Other nights unfold without testing but with precautions including temperature checks and spaced-out tables.)

Costing diners \$50 per person on top of their tabs, it's an elite experiment — complete with a free glass of sparkling wine — and health experts caution that a test isn't a failsafe. So does City Winery CEO Michael Dorf, but he thinks the idea is worth trying as restaurants try to get through a year of shutdowns and social distancing.

With winter looming over New York eateries' outdoor-dining lifeline, "how do we get people to dine inside, feel comfortable, feel as safe as possible, so that they can spend money in our restaurant, and our staff can make money?" asks Dorf, who says City Winery's business is down 85% compared to 2019. "We feel that this is what we need to do over the next five or six months in New York if we're going to be able to survive as a restaurant."

### Washington

SEATTLE — A new report shows people infected with the coronavirus in Washington state's most populous county in recent weeks have been mostly exposed in homes, during social activities and gatherings, and in workplaces.

Instead of a few "hotspots," the

report shows the risk of exposure is now widespread throughout King County as cases have increased in the past two months.

Public Health — Seattle & King County released the report on outbreaks and exposure settings Wednesday showing where people most frequently reported being exposed.

County health officer Dr. Jeff Duchin said case numbers in King County are now triple what they were in October and it's fair to assume exposure can happen anywhere people are around other people, especially indoors.

"We should expect COVID to be introduced everywhere we go," Duchin said during a media briefing.

### Wisconsin

MADISON — The number of confirmed COVID-19 infections in Wisconsin continued to tick downward Wednesday, a rare bit of good news for health officials as they struggle to contain the deadly disease.

The state Department of Health Services reported 5,469 confirmed cases Wednesday. The number of confirmed cases has now declined for five days, an encouraging sign after the state saw a record-high 7,989 cases on Nov. 18.

What's more, the seven-day average of positive tests was 28.3% as of Tuesday, continuing a downward trend from a record-high 36.6% on Nov. 11.

But the disease is still running rampant across the state.

According to DHS, the total number of confirmed infections stood at 369,442 as of Wednesday. The disease was a factor in 63 more deaths, bringing the death toll to 3,178, according to the department. Wisconsin remains sixth in the nation in per capita infections, according to Johns Hopkins University.

STARS AND STRIPES®

# LETTERS TO SANTA



## STARS AND STRIPES IS HELPING TO SEND YOUR WISH LIST TO SANTA!

STEP 1

WRITE  
YOUR LETTER  
DON'T FORGET  
TO DECORATE IT!

STEP 2

ADDRESS IT TO  
SANTA CLAUS  
C/O STARS AND STRIPES  
NORTH POLE

STEP 3

DROP IT IN  
ANY US OR APO  
MAILBOX\*



FOR MORE INFO, VISIT  
[LETTERSTOSANTA.STRIPES.COM](http://LETTERSTOSANTA.STRIPES.COM)

\*Postmark by Dec. 24th and Santa may have time to send a note in return!

## NATION

# Biden offers Thanksgiving message of unity

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. — On a day of grace and grievance, President-elect Joe Biden summoned Americans to join in common purpose against the coronavirus pandemic and their political divisions while the man he will replace stoked the fading embers of his campaign to “turn the election over.”

Biden, in a Thanksgiving-eve address to the nation, put the surging pandemic front and center, pledging to tap the “vast powers” of the federal government and to “change the course of the disease” once in office. But for that to work, he said, Americans must step up for their own safety and that of their fellow citizens.

“I know the country has grown weary of the fight,” Biden said Wednesday. “We need to remember we’re at war with the virus, not with one another. Not with each other.”

President Donald Trump, who has scarcely mentioned the pandemic in recent days even as it has achieved record heights, remained fixated on his election defeat.

He sent his lawyer Rudy Giuliani and other members of his legal team to meet Pennsylvania Republican state senators in Gettysburg. Inside a hotel near the hallowed battlefields of civil war, they again aired complaints about the election and repeated allegations of Democratic malfeasance that have already disintegrated under examination by courts.



CAROLYN KASTER/AP

**President-elect Joe Biden removes his face mask as he arrives to speak Wednesday in Wilmington, Del.**

“We have to turn the election over,” Trump said from the Oval Office, where he joined the meeting by speakerphone.

“This was an election that we won easily,” he said. “We won it by a lot.” In fact, the election gave Biden a clear mandate, and no systemic fraud has been uncovered. Judge after judge has dismissed the Trump campaign’s accusations as baseless, and the transition to Biden’s presidency is fully underway.

Nevertheless, Trump repeated: “This election has to be turned around.”

Trump had been expected to appear in person in Gettysburg, but did not after another member of his legal team tested positive for the coronavirus. Few at the meeting

wore masks.

Altogether, the forum heard — and cheered — yet another declaration from a U.S. president seeking to reverse a democratic election and the voters’ will because he wants to stay in power. The setting was about a mile from the scene of Pickett’s Charge, where Union troops repelled a desperate Confederate attack in July 1863 and helped turn the tide of the Civil War.

The president followed up by pardoning former national security adviser Michael Flynn, the second Trump associate convicted in the Russia probe to be granted clemency by Trump.

For his part, Biden has largely projected serenity as the necessary elements of a presidential transition — money, access to office space and more — were held at bay for nearly three weeks by Trump’s machinations and a delayed ascertainment by the General Services Administration that he had won the election. On Wednesday, he addressed Trump’s raw tactics only in passing.

“Our democracy was tested this year,” Biden said, “but the people of this nation are up to the task.”

“In America, we have full and fair and free elections, and then we honor the results,” he said. “The people of this nation and the laws of the land won’t stand for anything else.”

And he offered an optimistic vision, call-

ing on Americans to “dream again” and predicting that “the 21st century is going to be an American century.”

Biden pledged more virus testing, more protective gear and clearer guidance for businesses and schools to reopen when he becomes president. Until vaccines are distributed, he said, masks, social distancing and limits in the size of gatherings “are our most effective tools to combat the virus.”

Biden’s remarks came as COVID-19 cases are surging nationwide.

Hospitalizations, deaths and the testing positivity rate were also up sharply as the nation headed into Thanksgiving, and public health experts have warned that the large family gatherings expected for the holiday are likely to extend and exacerbate the surge.

He has formed a coronavirus advisory board of scientists, doctors and public health experts, and plans to establish a COVID-19 coordinator in the White House to lead his administration’s response.

This week, however, Biden focused beyond the crisis stateside and unveiled his national security team on Tuesday, including his nominees for secretary of state, director of national intelligence and U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Drawing implicit contrasts with Trump, Biden said the team “reflects the fact that America is back, ready to lead the world, not retreat from it.”

## Some California counties winding down hotels for homeless program

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Some California counties are pushing ahead with plans to wind down a program that’s moved homeless people into hotel rooms amid the coronavirus pandemic, despite an emergency cash infusion from the state aimed at preventing people from returning to the streets in colder weather as the virus surges.

Gov. Gavin Newsom recently announced \$62 million for counties to move hotel guests into permanent housing or to extend hotel leases that were part of “Project Roomkey,” which he rolled out this spring as a way to protect some people experiencing homelessness from the virus. The Federal Emergency Management

Agency agreed to pick up 75% of the cost.

But counties say that with some federal relief funding expiring soon or its status uncertain, it’s time to transition residents from expensive hotel rooms to cheaper, more stable housing. Officials hope to offer a place to every resident leaving a hotel, though they acknowledge not everyone will accept it and affordable housing is difficult to find.

California is one of several states, including Washington, that turned to hotels to shelter homeless people as the virus took hold. Homelessness has soared nationwide during the pandemic, and it was already at a crisis level in California because of an expensive housing market and a shortage of

affordable options. The nation’s most populated state has by far the highest number of people on the streets, though other places have a higher per capita rate.

In San Francisco, advocacy groups and some officials are outraged by the mayor’s plan to start moving hundreds of people out of hotels around the holidays. They say it’s ridiculous when thousands of people are still sleeping on sidewalks and in cars, and they don’t believe the city can find enough virus-safe housing for 2,300 people living in more than two dozen hotels.

“It makes absolute zero sense. It is outrageous, it’s irresponsible, and it basically tells people experiencing homelessness that you’re not a priority for the city,” Super-



JEFF CHIU/AP

**People linger on a street corner in front of tents set up in a fenced lot in San Francisco on Saturday.**

visor Hillary Ronen said as she and other leaders announced proposed legislation to slow the move and ensure every resident is offered alternative housing.

The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing said

in a statement that money from the state will provide “more flexibility and time” but would not say if San Francisco had changed its timeline. The department has said it plans to move homeless people out of all 29 hotels by June.

## US will appeal judge’s order barring expulsions of immigrant children

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The U.S. government on Wednesday appealed a judge’s order barring the expulsions of immigrant children who crossed the border alone, a policy enacted during the coronavirus pandemic to deny the children asylum protections.

Judge Emmet Sullivan issued a preliminary injunction on Nov. 18

sought by advocates for immigrants that barred expulsions of unaccompanied children under public health laws.

The Justice Department filed a notice of appeal Wednesday night to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. It also asked Sullivan to issue a stay of the injunction pending appeal, a request he previously denied.

Since March, border agents have expelled 200,000 immigrant adults and children citing the pandemic and a need to prevent the spread of the virus, even though COVID-19 is spreading broadly through border communities and the country at large.

Sullivan’s order only covered children who cross the border without a parent and not adults or

parents and children.

At least 8,800 unaccompanied children have been expelled without having a chance to seek asylum protections or speak to a lawyer.

Most people have been expelled within hours or days, though the Trump administration detained hundreds of children for weeks in hotels near the U.S.-Mexico bor-

der for days or weeks at a time until another judge barred that practice.

President-elect Joe Biden has said he will reverse several of President Donald Trump’s immigration programs when he takes office in January.

Biden has not stated whether he will stop expulsions of immigrants.



# 8 DAYS TO SAVE BIG!



NOV 26  
thru  
DEC 3



CYBER WEEK

NOVEMBER 30th - DECEMBER 3rd

ONLY AT  
shopmyexchange.com.

STARTS ONLINE THU 12 AM CST

SAVE \$40

Apple AirPods® with charging case.  
#1868769

Also available. SAVE \$40

AirPods with wireless charging case.



SAVE \$100

4K | 65"

Samsung Class QLED 4K UHD Smart TV, 65".  
#QN85Q70TAFXZA

• AI upscaling  
• Motion Rate 240  
• Real Game Enhancer  
• Bixby, Google, & Alexa voice capable  
#2298146

Also available. SAVE \$500

75". #QN75Q70TAFXZA  
#2298143



SAVE 50%

4K | 55"

LG UHD Smart LED TV, 55".  
#55UN7000PUB

• Motion Rate 120  
• Quad-Core processor  
• Active HDR (HDR10, HLG)



BLACK FRIDAY

NOVEMBER 27th

DOORS OPEN FRI 8 AM

STARTS ONLINE FRI 12 AM CST



SAVE \$150

4K | 75"

SAMSUNG

holid

sho

SAVE \$200

LATEST MODEL

MacBook Air® with Touch ID®, 13.3", Intel Core i3, 8GB memory, 256GB SSD. Gold. #MWTJ2LL/A  
Space gray. #MWTJ2LL/A  
Silver. #MWTJ2LL/A  
#2341721

SAVE \$130

iPad® 7th generation with Wi-Fi, 32GB, 10.2" Retina® display. Space gray. Silver or Gold. #MW742LL/A  
#2110666

Limit 2 per customer please.

SAVE \$60

SAVE \$500

4K | 85"

SAMSUNG

Samsung 4K OLED TV with Quantum Dot technology, 85". #QN85Q60TA

• Bixby & Alexa voice capable

• Active Sound Optimizer

• voice remote

#2298151

Also available. SAVE \$500

75". #QN75Q60TA  
#2298139

THANKSGIVING DAY SALE

NOVEMBER 26th

ONLY AT  
shopmyexchange.com.

STARTS ONLINE THU 12 AM CST

LG

LG 4K OLED TV, 65".  
#OLED65BXPJA

• Self-lighting pixels for Perfect Black

• o7 Gen 3 AI Processor with

NO SALES TAX | EXCLUSIVE MILITARY PRICING

\* Free shipping on orders over \$49 or any amount when you use your MILITARY STAR® Card.

Starting Thanksgiving Day at  
shopmyexchange.com!



CELEBRATING

VETERANS

All honorably discharged Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Marines and Coast Guard members are invited to visit [shopmyexchange.com/vets](https://shopmyexchange.com/vets) to confirm eligibility to access the Veterans online shopping benefit. This tax-free benefit saves Veterans money and helps the military community by generating earnings in support of critical Quality-of-Life programs.



WORLD

# Ethiopia PM: Attack on Tigray rebellion is ready to launch

*Associated Press*

NAIROBI, Kenya — Ethiopia’s prime minister said Thursday the army has been ordered to move on the embattled Tigray regional capital after his 72-hour ultimatum ended for Tigray leaders to surrender, and he warned the city’s half-million residents to stay indoors and disarm.

The military offensive “has reached its final stage” after three weeks of fighting, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s office said. That means tanks and other weaponry can close in on Mekele, whose residents were warned of “no mercy” if they didn’t move away from Tigray leaders in time.

That caused international alarm as rights groups said such wording could violate international law and put civilians in further danger. “We will take utmost care to protect civilians,” Abiy’s statement said.

It also asserted that thousands of Tigray militia and special forces surrendered during the 72-hour period.

The United Nations has reported people fleeing Mekele, but communications and transport links remain severed to Tigray, and it’s not clear how many people received the warnings in time. Tigray regional leaders couldn’t immediately be reached.

“What is happening is beyond words, and it is heartbreaking to see a great country is collapsing,” said a message sent from a Mekele resident on Wednesday and seen by The Associated Press. The message expressed hopelessness at not being able to reach loved ones elsewhere in the region, adding, “Ohhhhhhhh GOD!”

The international community is pleading for immediate de-escalation, dialogue and humanitarian



**A Tigray girl who fled the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region, walks near her shelter in Umm Rakouba refugee camp in Qadarif, eastern Sudan, on Wednesday.**

access as Ethiopian forces have fought their way through Tigray to Mekele. “The hostilities in Ethiopia are of major concern for the EU. Next to the casualties, the danger of a major humanitarian crisis is imminent. An immediate de-escalation is needed by all parties,” European Union commissioner for crisis management Jannez Lenarcic tweeted Thursday.

But Abiy, last year’s Nobel Peace Prize winner, has rejected international “interference.” His government has said three high-level African Union envoys for the conflict can meet with Abiy, but not with the Tigray leaders.

Abiy’s office on Thursday for the first time did say a “humanitarian access route” would open under the management of the country’s Ministry of Peace, with no details. It also said distribution of supplies has begun in areas of Tigray now under government control.

That came hours after the U.N. said shortages have become “very critical” in the Tigray region as its population of 6 million remains sealed off.

# Culled minks resurface from graves

*Associated Press*

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Some of the thousands of mink culled to minimize the risk of them re-transmitting the new coronavirus to humans have risen from their shallow graves in western Denmark after gases built up inside the bodies, Danish authorities said Thursday.

“The gases cause the animals to expand and in the worst cases, the mink get pushed out of the ground,” Jannike Elmegaard of the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration said. He said it affected “a few hundred” animals.

The mink are buried in trenches that are 8.25 feet deep and 10 feet wide. A first layer of about 3 feet of dead mink are then covered with chalk before another layer of animals is laid, covered again with chalk and then with dirt, Elmegaard told The Associated Press.

But because the soil where they are buried is sandy, some have re-emerged. “We assume it is the mink that were in the upper layer that pop up,” he added calling it “a natural process.”

# Troops, civilians given life sentences in Turkish coup

*Associated Press*

ANKARA, Turkey — A Turkish court sentenced hundreds of military and civilian personnel at an air base to life prison sentences Thursday, proclaiming them guilty of involvement in the 2016 failed coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s government.

A total of 475 defendants, including some generals and fighter jet pilots at the Akinci air base, on the outskirts of the capital, Ankara, had been on trial for the past three years, accused of directing the coup and bombing key government buildings, including a section of Turkey’s parliament.

The massive trial was one of two main trials against suspected members of a network led by U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom Ankara accuses of orchestrating the failed attempt.

Gulen, who was also named among the defendants, has denied involvement in the coup that resulted in around 250 deaths and injured thousands. About 30 coup-plotters were also killed.

The court convicted four men of crimes against the state, attempts to kill the president as well as 77 counts of murder, and sentenced them to 79 separate “aggravated” life sentences without the possibility of parole. Fifteen officers, including one-star generals, were also sentenced to the same term.

All 19 were held responsible for the deaths of nine people who were killed by gunshots and 68 people who died in aerial attacks on the parliament building, a police special operations headquarters, the Ankara police department and an area close to Erdogan’s presidential complex.

# Cajun-style Turkey

## Heat, serve & enjoy!





EXCHANGE

Limited time only at participating AAFES locations.

TM & © 2020 Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen, Inc.

# POPEYES



Accountability

A Suggested Book For Reading Groups

Laura Strobel

“Their departure is interrupted and in sudden recognition, Aurora’s hands shoot to her mouth and she whispers, “Oh, my -” as a black and white police car slowly advances toward them.”

Read / Listen to Chapter 1 and her blog at [LauraStrobelAuthor.com](http://LauraStrobelAuthor.com)

Be inspired by this to true story of Aurora’s journey from Shock and Denial to Acceptance of her own Accountability.

\*\*\*\*\*

Available on Amazon

Printed Audio eBook

# WEEKEND

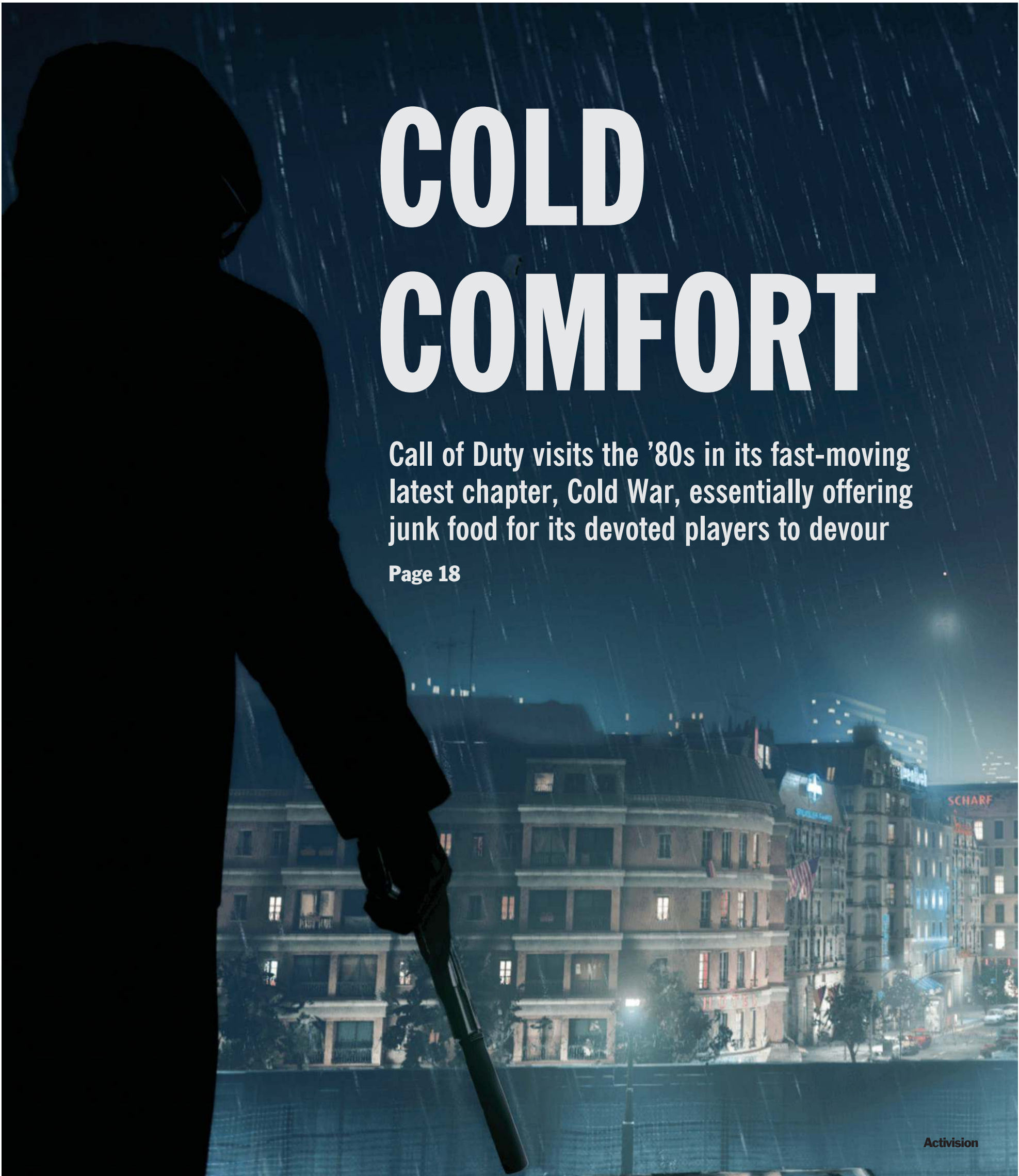


AC/DC back,  
and ready to rock  
**Page 28**

# COLD COMFORT

Call of Duty visits the '80s in its fast-moving latest chapter, Cold War, essentially offering junk food for its devoted players to devour

**Page 18**



Activision

## WEEKEND: GADGETS &amp; TECHNOLOGY

# Snatched from the jaws of obscurity

## Bruce the shark given a place of honor at LA's Academy Museum of Motion Pictures

BY LINDSEY BAHR  
Associated Press

**B**ruce, the fiberglass shark made from the “Jaws” mold, is ready for his close-up. The 1,208-pound, 25-foot-long, 45-year-old shark, famous for being difficult to work with on the set of Steven Spielberg’s classic thriller, was hoisted up in the air Nov. 20 above the main escalator of the new Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles where he will greet guests for the foreseeable future. And this time, he cooperated.

It is the culmination of years of planning, including a seven-month restoration by special effects and makeup artist Greg Nicotero. The shark is expected to be a major draw for the museum, which plans to open its doors to the public on April 30, 2021.

Super fans know that the “Jaws” crew started calling the shark Bruce after Spielberg’s lawyer Bruce Ramer. They’ll also know that the Bruce that will greet guests in the museum wasn’t technically in “Jaws.” He’s a replica, and it’s the last of his kind. The three mechanical Great Whites designed by art director Joe Alves were destroyed when production wrapped. But once the film proved to be a box-office phenomenon, a fourth shark was made from the original mold. For 15 years, he hung at Universal Studios Hollywood as a photo opportunity for visitors until he wound up at the Sun Valley junkyard he would call home for the next 25.

But Bruce wasn’t quite camera ready. A quarter century in the California sun, plus all the years of being repainted at Universal, had taken its toll on the poor crea-

ture, who badly needed care and attention. Nicotero, who has worked on “Day of the Dead” and “The Walking Dead,” said he got into the business because of “Jaws” and volunteered for the task of bringing him back to life.

“One of the great things about being the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures is that we have access to Academy members in all craft areas of the industry,” said Academy Museum Director Bill Kramer. “We can call on our members and other members of the film industry who have either worked on the film that the artifact is from or know enough about the provenance and work that had been done to help us restore it. We’re in an incredibly privileged position.”

Restoration was one thing, but loading Bruce into the museum proved to be another ordeal. Pritzker Prize-winning architect Renzo Piano made sure to account for large-scale objects in his restoration of the Saban Building, which was originally the May Company department store. But Bruce is their biggest piece to date, and everyone soon realized that he wouldn’t be able to get into the building with his fins attached.

Last week Bruce was transported from a storage facility on a 70-foot flatbed to the museum at Fairfax Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard where engineers, construction workers and art handlers removed two panels of glass three stories up to get him into the building. Once inside with fins reattached and a final touching up, Bruce was hooked onto five cables, each of which could hold his weight if any were to fail, and hoisted up on a truss by remote control to get into position in the building’s



CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP

**A fiberglass replica of Bruce, the shark featured in Steven Spielberg’s classic 1975 film “Jaws,” is lifted into a suspended position for display where he’ll be visible from the street at the new Academy of Museum of Motion Pictures.**

“spine” where he faces East and is visible from Fairfax.

Shraddha Aryal, Vice President of Exhibition Design and Production, described the years of painstakingly detailed modeling and work that went into preparing for this moment, including full-scale mock-ups and light tests to ensure that all of Bruce’s 116 teeth would be visible to tourists.

Seeing him lifted into the building was “such an exciting moment,” she said.

Kramer said they expect Bruce to be a huge draw for visitors, which is why he’ll be hanging in a public area where people can see him without having to pay for a museum ticket. Almost a half century after Bruce made generations of kids and adults scared to get in the water, he’s now beckoning film lovers into a museum.

“We plan on having Bruce greet our

visitors for as long as we can keep him up there,” Kramer said. “It’s a free space and a free moment for our visitors to bring delight and hopefully inspire them to learn more about the movies, the history of visual effects and how this prop was made.”

Curious visitors can come and check out the massive great white, the restaurant and the Spielberg Family Gallery to see a 10-minute film on the history of cinema before even committing to purchasing a ticket.

There will also be a public programming series on conservation and restoration drawing on items from the collection that have been restored including the ruby slippers from “The Wizard of Oz,” the Aries-1B from “2001: A Space Odyssey,” the extra-terrestrial from “Alien” and, of course, Bruce.

## GADGETS

## Be ready with this dash cam

BY GREGG ELLMAN  
Tribune News Service

As they say, a day late and a dollar short. But with the window-mounted Scosche NEXS1 Smart, full high-definition dash camera, powered by Nexar, I’ll be ready for next time.

I’m referring to a minor car accident (no injuries) I was in while this dash cam sat boxed up on my desk, waiting to be tested. Not 24 hours later I had it unpacked and ready for testing; it would have helped me greatly, and hopefully there’s not a next time.

It wasn’t that long ago that dashcams were a complicated setup, often ending in frustration. With NEXS1, which is part of Scosche’s SafeTech line of products designed to make driving safer, you can have it set up and filming in no time.

A quick-release StickGrip suction cup mounts on the windshield (front or back) and an included dual-port adapter plugs in with an 11.5-foot cable for power.

Setting up the Wi-Fi to connect the cam-

era and a cell phone is done with the Wi-Fi pairing button.

The image quality from the NEXS1 front-facing dashcam is outstanding.

A 140-degree lens captures a wide-angle view in 1080p full HD. Inside, a SONY Starvis image sensor works well at night and in other low-light environments. A high-precision G-Sensor automatically detects the impact and crucial moments for recording. This includes parking mode for recording incidents when the driver isn’t in the car.

When you start driving, the camera turns on and when you stop, it shuts off. Auto-loop recording is done directly to the included SanDisk 32GB micro-SD memory card, which can be expanded up to 256GB. With the included free cloud storage, along with the Nexar app (iOS and Android) recordings are uploaded so they can be deleted from the camera.

A great feature that caught my attention is the 1-Click reporting. It works with the app for submitting an incident report



SCOSCHE/TNS

**The Scosche NEXS1, a front-facing dashcam, mounts with suction or adhesive.**

directly to participating insurance companies, which includes the location with the automatic GPS. Nexar’s Groups feature can immediately alert anyone you choose along with the location if an accident occurs.

Online: scosche.com; \$159 for the suction cup mount version, \$149 for the automotive-grade adhesive dash mount

If it’s possible to get excited about a portable battery, Satechi’s Quatro wireless charging power bank is it.

Consider it a charging and organization power solution, since it can eliminate a bunch of other chargers and a mess of tangled cables.

Four charging sources are built into the pocket-sized (6.4-by-2.9-by-0.7-inches) 10,000 mAh rechargeable battery. Inside is a Qi charging pad with a 5W charging speed, and an Apple-certified Apple Watch charging puck up to 2.5W. The Qi charging area can be used for wireless charging devices including iPhones and AirPods in addition to non-Apple Qi-enabled devices.

On the side are two additional charging ports, a 12W USB-A port for connecting charging cables (not included) and a fast-charging 18W USB-C output port, which doubles as a charging port for the battery.

All this adds up to one charger for multiple devices at home or on the go. Apple users will also admire the Quatro’s slick, modern style. Its appearance is reminiscent of an iPhone with its black finish and chrome sides. LED battery level indicators on the end display how much power remains in the battery itself.

Online: satechi.net; \$99.99

## WEEKEND: MOVIES



DAVID LEE/Netflix

Viola Davis' role as a Southern blues singer in "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" is expected to land her an Academy Award nomination.

# 'She was unapologetic'

Viola Davis says she learned a lot while playing Ma Rainey

BY JEN YAMATO  
*Los Angeles Times*

**V**iola Davis has collected an Academy Award, an Emmy, two Tonys and dozens more acting kudos, and now another powerhouse role has propelled her to the top of the 2021 best actress Oscar race: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, the unapologetically brash real-life Southern blues singer at the center of a tempestuous 1927 Chicago recording session in the August Wilson adaptation "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom."

It's a juicy role that has landed Davis in the Oscar conversation along with her costar, the late Chadwick Boseman, who dazzles in his final performance as a hotheaded young horn player with eyes for Ma's girlfriend and radical new ideas for Ma's music. (Netflix unveils the film in a limited theatrical run Nov. 25 and begins streaming it Dec. 18.) But even the formidable Davis admits she wasn't initially sure she could pull off the swaggering blues legend.

"There's a typecasting that happens in the business, and after a while you start to typecast yourself and think of 50 million other people who could have played the role," says Davis, 55, whose six-season, Emmy-winning star turn on the ABC hit drama "How to Get Away with Murder" concluded this year. "But that's not what acting is. It's a transformative art form. It's about taking whatever you have and using it to transform into a character that is completely different than you."

She typecasted herself, Davis says — until she stopped comparing herself to other actresses and embraced the challenge. Denzel Washington, who starred opposite and directed Davis in 2016's "Fences," never doubted that she could fill Rainey's shoes. "Viola can do anything," says Washington, a producer on "Ma Rainey." "There was no question that she could do it. She's a once-in-a-generation talent."

In "Ma Rainey," Davis sinks her teeth into the title character's grandiosity with nuance and rings even her

triumphs with a bruising, melancholy aftertaste. An openly queer Black songstress defiant of the bigotry of the era, Ma Rainey demands her due from all who cross her path, from the strangers whose hostile glares she returns while parading her much-younger girlfriend (Taylour Paige) on her arm, to the bickering members of her band (Colman Domingo, Michael Potts, Glynn Turman and Boseman) and the white managers (Jeremy Shamos, Jonny Coyne) trying to squeeze another hit song out of her on the cheap.

Filmed last summer in Pittsburgh in a soundstage transformed into a sweltering Chicago recording studio, "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" — titled after the hit song that becomes hotly contested over the course of the chaotic afternoon — left Davis invigorated.

In Rainey, she found an artist whose battles hit close to home. "She was a woman who was unapologetic about her worth and her power. She's constantly reminding people who she is, and that had a transformative effect on me too," says Davis. "That's what happens a lot in our profession: You're always hustling for your worth. That's what you're constantly doing in this business and in this world, so it felt very liberating to play a woman who was not doing that."

Donning a rubber suit and a horsehair wig, her skin slicked with sweat, Davis revels in Rainey's physicality, outfitted in period dress and furs by costume designer Ann Roth. When Ma sings, resplendent in her gold teeth and greasepaint makeup, the aches and joys of living reverberate within her all at once. (Aside from one song sung by Davis, vocals are courtesy of singer Maxayn Lewis.) And when Ma fumes over slights dealt to herself or those in her care — well, no man wants to find himself in the path of that train.

Researching such a singular historical figure was no easy feat, says director George C. Wolfe, considering that only "six or seven" photographs of Rainey exist today. Unlike contemporaries like Bessie Smith, Rainey was not considered glamorous or anointed by white mainstream



RACHEL MURRAY/TNS

**Denzel Washington, one of the producers for "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," says there was no question that Viola Davis, shown, could fill her character's shoes. "She's a once-in-a-generation talent," Washington said.**

media, which led to inspired set decoration: a 1926 Vanity Fair article celebrating Ma's musical rivals sits next to her in one of the character's more emotionally revealing scenes. "I just wanted it sitting there, haunting Ma without her even necessarily being aware of it," Wolfe teases.

Instead, Davis drew on Wilson's text, adapted for the screen by playwright and actor Ruben Santiago-Hudson, and searched within to understand who Rainey was. "What I have to rely on is my life experience, because therein lies the problem: Ma Rainey is considered the Mother of the Blues, but finding any material about Ma Rainey was very difficult," she says.

She thought of her aunts, her mother, her grandmother and of women in tune with Rainey — "someone who could be at a bar on Tuesday and beating up a 200-pound man, to an orgy on Thursday and be arrested by the police and thrown in jail, to church on Sunday! I understand the emotional life of those people because they're in my life — those complicated, beautiful, funny, hardcore, unapologetic people have been in my life forever."

Davis is bringing the lessons of Rainey with her as she continues to forge her own path in Hollywood. Centering stories like those on her producing slate "is always at the forefront of everything that I do," Davis says. "When you ask me what's on my agenda — silently, blatantly — it's absolutely part of my agenda."

## WEEKEND: MOVIES

## The importance of family ... and Terminator

Adams, Close connect to the domestic side of 'Hillbilly Elegy'

BY GLENN WHIPP  
*Los Angeles Times*

Glenn Close's turn as the ornery, larger-than-life and fiercely loyal grandmother Mamaw in "Hillbilly Elegy" wasn't even fully unleashed into the world before it took on a life of its own. A friend of Close's daughter, the actress Annie Starke, dressed up as Mamaw for Halloween. This friend, it should be noted, was a man, who donned a curly wig, big glasses, an oversized T-shirt and a dangling, lit cigarette — a costume pick not all that surprising since the Guardian already crowned Mamaw a style icon.

"I was so chuffed by that," Close says, smiling. Meanwhile, Amy Adams, who plays Mamaw's drug-addicted, unstable daughter Bev in "Hillbilly Elegy," which is now streaming on Netflix, can't stop laughing at Mamaw's unlikely ascent to sartorial stardom. We're talking by Zoom, with Adams calling from her home in Los Angeles and Close connecting from Bozeman, Mont., where she moved last year to be close to siblings.

"Hillbilly Elegy" is based on J.D. Vance's 2016 memoir, which detailed his Rust Belt upbringing and drew both praise and criticism for its cultural musings about the causes of white poverty. The movie, directed by Ron Howard, mostly steers clear of the author's conservative politics, concentrating on the family's story and Vance's escape from the destructive behavioral patterns that, he believes, mire poor people in hopelessness.

Both actresses say it was the book's vivid portraits of women struggling with dire circumstances and personal demons that appealed to them.

Some may call it obvious awards bait, and point to the fact that Adams, with six Oscar nominations, and Close, with seven, enjoy rarefied status among the most nominated actresses ever to not actually win Academy Awards. Surely they must make every career decision based solely on what could bring that trophy home, right?

But talking to Adams and Close, together and separately, it's easy to feel their connection to the material's domestic side. Their own families, particularly their daughters, are central to their lives. Emotions bubble up quickly during our conversations. Tears are constantly being dabbed away.

Close lays part of the blame on the pandemic; in COVID times, she says, the smallest things make her cry. That revelation itself makes Adams tear up.

Their current coping methods revolve around comfort food. Adams has noticed a "weird" amount of cheese in her refrigerator lately. Close has been devouring Doritos, Oreos and coffee ice cream,



Close

"Doritos, I really have to stay away from," Close says. "I



Adams

learned when you eat a Dorito, it lights up the same area of your brain as cocaine."

Adams doesn't miss a beat. "My daughter, of course, loves Doritos. So that makes sense."

Adams' daughter, 10-year-old Aviana, figures into why she was interested in "Hillbilly Elegy" in the first place.

"Examining generational trauma and how we pass things down from one generation to the next is something I'm interested in — and something I'm trying not to do to my daughter," Adams says. "It's really about awareness to me."

Asked what things about herself that she doesn't want her daughter to inherit, Adams launches into a cheerful dissection of the differences between worry and pragmatism. She'd like Avi to be rational, but not over-evaluate every situation. Adams says she spends a lot of time on the "treadmill of my mind, getting nowhere." Two weeks before Thanksgiving, on one of her many sleepless nights, she spent a fair amount of time debating when would be the optimum time to preorder her Thanksgiving shopping list.

"There are so many bigger things going on, but I think micromanaging a meal helps me think I'm in control," Adams, 46, says.

Close says Montana has been a sanctuary for her this past year.

"One of the reasons I came to Montana to be with my family is that I've sacrificed so much fam-



Netflix

Glenn Close and Amy Adams star in "Hillbilly Elegy," based on author J.D. Vance's 2016 memoir.

ily time in my career, and you realize that the only thing that really counts is family," Close, 73, says. Her daughter lives in Los Angeles, a city Close says is "not in her DNA." But Bozeman is closer than New York.

Close and Adams had never talked outside of brief conversations at awards shows. "We were red carpet buddies," Adams says, noting all the times they bumped into each other a couple of years ago when Close earned an Oscar nomination for "The Wife" and Adams for portraying Lynne Cheney in "Vice."

Adams surprises Close when she reveals that she first saw her in "The World According to Garp," the 1982 adaptation of John Irving's bittersweet bestseller in which Close played Garp's strong-willed mother. But Adams is just getting warmed up.

"I saw 'Fatal Attraction' ... with my mom," Adams tells Close. And, yes, it was awkward as you might expect, Adams being 13 and watching Close and Michael Douglas throwing the kitchen sink into a sex scene.

"But the thing that stuck with me is that I've never been more terrified in my life than when Glenn came out of that bathtub," Adams says. "I must have clung to the theater ceiling."

Adams is more circumspect when talking about her work in "Hillbilly Elegy" and how she found a way into portraying Vance's mom, Bev, whose abuses and addictions fuel much of the movie's drama. Adams and Close met Bev and other relatives in Middletown, Ohio, where Vance's family moved from Kentucky's Appalachia region.

To play the force of nature that

was Mamaw, a quick-tempered woman who lit her husband on fire and also raised Vance, offering stability absent in his own home, Close watched home movies and spoke extensively with Vance. Howard says they dialed the character back, though reviewers, who have not been kind to the movie, might disagree.

"Mamaw made a lot of mistakes, and I think she realized that, but without her, J.D. would not have broken that cycle," Close says.

Mamaw also apparently had a fondness for "Terminator 2: Judgment Day," and tells the young Vance in the movie: "Everyone in this world is one of three kinds — good Terminator, a bad Terminator and neutral."

So, going by "Terminator 2," Arnold Schwarzenegger would be the good Terminator and Robert Patrick's T-1000 the bad Terminator. But a neutral Terminator? I've seen six Terminator movies, and I don't remember an indifferent Terminator. What gives?

"We all live in a gray area and that's where we have to deal with life," Close muses. "So maybe the neutral would mean a willingness to take life as it comes. It's not all good. And it's not all bad. It's in the middle."

"I was just talking with my daughter about that," Adams says, "about living in the middle, about how not everything's good, not everything's bad and people aren't all good or all bad, for the most part. I have my opinions about a few people we don't need to talk about. But most of life happens in the middle ... and those are the parts that you'll remember."

To play the force of nature that was Mamaw, a quick-tempered woman who lit her husband on fire and also raised J.D. Vance, Close watched home movies and spoke extensively with Vance. Director Ron Howard said they dialed the character back, though reviewers, who have not been kind to the movie, might disagree.

## WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

## Music and conflict

The late Chadwick Boseman's inventive performance in 'Ma Rainey's Black Bottom' his last and perhaps finest

By JUSTIN CHANG  
*Los Angeles Times*

Where to begin? It seems an appropriate question to ask of "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," the gale-force whirlwind of a film adapted from August Wilson's 1982 play. Sweepingly directed by George C. Wolfe and incisively adapted by Ruben Santiago-Hudson, it's a story of Black lives and Black music in the early 20th century that has lost little of its significance in the 21st. And like most stage and screen productions of Wilson's work, it's a feast of inspired talk that leaves an audience, in turn, with no shortage of things to talk about.

There is, for one, the undimmed resonance of Wilson's insights into the challenges and contradictions of African American identity. There are the joys, frustrations and inevitable compromises of making art, especially if you happen to be a musician of color in a white man's recording studio, fighting to assert every inch of your domain (or to forge one to begin with). Most of all, there is the late Chadwick Boseman, giving a furiously inventive screen performance that also happens to be his last. It's one spellbinding final reminder of what we've lost, and of how easily God, to invoke one of Wilson's unseen major characters, can giveth and taketh away.

So again — where to begin? I'm still not sure, but then I'm not in bad company. After all, one of the story's key conflicts finds several characters butting heads over the opening notes of a song, the very one that gives this play its title. Gertrude

"Ma" Rainey (a spectacular Viola Davis), the pioneering Southern singer hailed far and wide as "the Mother of the Blues," wants to stick with her usual arrangement, complete with an old-timey introduction that she expects her hapless nephew, Sylvester (Dusan Brown), to deliver. But her ambitious trumpet player, Levee (Boseman), wants to dispense with that "old jug-band music" and tap into a newer, jazzier sound, one far removed from the traveling tent shows where Ma Rainey's career began.

The story unfolds over a sweltering hot day in 1927 Chicago, briefly evoked with outdoor sets that have a glorious studio-backlot artifice. Ma Rainey is running predictably late for her recording session and winds up ceding much of the narrative spotlight to her band, which includes Ma's guitar and trombone player, Cutler (Colman Domingo); her pianist, Toledo (Glynn Turman); and her bass player, Slow Drag (Michael Potts). They're all consummate professionals who want the same thing as Ma's frazzled agent, Irvin (Jeremy Shamos): to rehearse the songs, cut a good record and get in and out as quickly as possible.

They are thwarted on all fronts by Levee, who shows up well before Ma but turns out to be her near-equal in stubbornness and ego. Waltzing into the studio's dingy rehearsal space with a shiny new pair of shoes and a pocket full of original songs he's writing, Levee dreams big and talks even bigger: He's impassioned, impudent and proudly insubordinate. Fancying himself a brilliant artist in a sea of dutiful drones, he hurls himself into the session



DAVID LEE/TNS

Chadwick Boseman, left, is Levee, Colman Domingo is Cutler, Viola Davis is Ma Rainey, Michael Potts is Slow Drag and Glynn Turman is Toledo in "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom."

determined to outsmart and upstage everyone — his bandmates, Ma Rainey and the systems of power that have kept him and other Black people in psychological shackles. We're made to contemplate what it means to be a Black artist in a profoundly racist industry, and also what kind of moral justice a Black person can reasonably expect from "a white man's God," as Levee demands in one of two searing monologues.

Do you pray to that God, or curse him? Do you fight back, or buckle under? As Levee notes, he's been negotiating these questions all his life. So, for that matter, has Ma Rainey, though unlike Levee, she also has an established star persona and a keen sense of self-preservation. As we can see from her literally traffic-stopping appearance at the studio, Ma isn't afraid to flaunt or flex. But she also understands that her power is still ruthlessly circumscribed in a white man's world. And she knows exactly how far she can push the limits of Irvin's patience, whether she's insisting on keeping Sylvester on the payroll or demanding a bottle of Coke before the session can continue.

And it's a measure of this movie's discipline that the other actors, rather than being crowded out of the frame or overpowered by Boseman or Davis, register as vividly as they do. Domingo's Cutler, bent on maintaining order and ensuring that no one supersedes Ma's will, goes head-to-head with Levee and acquits himself admirably. Turman nails the gorgeous wistfulness of Toledo's lament for an African diaspora in tatters: Likening all of history to a richly flavored stew, he sadly concludes that "the colored man is the leftovers."

Levee sets out to refute that cruel fate, only to rush headlong into another. And Boseman, evincing the same integrity he clung to his entire career, refuses to soft-pedal the destination. He imparts to this seething, shattered man the gift of a broken soul, riven by anger and trauma, and makes him all the more human for it. His final moments of screen time are among his darkest, and also his finest.

"Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" is rated R for language, some sexual content and brief violence. Running time: 104 minutes. Available Dec. 18 on Netflix.

## 'Happiest Season' a breezy home-for-the-holidays rom-com

By LINDSEY BAHR  
*Associated Press*

Who we are with our parents and who we are in a romantic relationship can seem like different people.

For Harper (Mackenzie Davis), a newspaper reporter living a nice adult life in Pittsburgh with her art student girlfriend Abby (Kristen Stewart), the gap is more dramatic than most: She has yet to come out to her parents. She has also invited Abby, who intends to propose, home with her for Christmas only to drop the truth on her in the car ride there. For five days, they're going to be close friends and roommates. Then, Harper promises, she'll tell her parents.

High-profile Hollywood films about lesbian couples are more often than not dramatic, set in the past and pretty sad, so on the most basic level it is instantly refreshing that "Happiest Season" is a modern romantic come-



AP

Mackenzie Davis, left, and Kristen Stewart star in "Happiest Season."

dy through and through. It's also one of the better recent ones. It is charming, funny and easy to watch, if a little by the book.

We meet Harper and Abby on a particularly happy occasion, having a possibly ironic, but still flirty date night on a group tour of their neighborhood's Christmas decorations. Abby doesn't love Christmas the way Harper does, but she decides to give it a

try anyway when Harper invites her home. This was obviously a mistake on Harper's part considering the aforementioned complications and lies. But they go through it anyway and descend on her parents' fancy suburban home.

The Caldwell family are conservative, upper middle-class clichés, obsessed with education, status and success. And Harper

falls right back into her old ways, and wardrobe, around her parents Tipper (Mary Steenburgen) and Ted (Victor Garber), who is running for local office. Her younger sister Jane (Mary Holland) is sweet but skittish and constantly projecting her own inferiority, and her older sister Sloane (Alison Brie) is a repressed, type-A mother of two who has disappointed her parents by going into a gift basket-making business instead of law. These parents are hard to please, and a political campaign makes it even more difficult for Harper to finally tell her family the truth.

The actors are the big draw and hook in this endeavor with a story that hits very familiar beats following a standard home-for-the-holidays rom-com script. Standouts include Dan Levy, of "Schitt's Creek," who plays Abby's truth-telling best friend John, and Aubrey Plaza as Riley, an ex of Harper's who strikes up a friendship with Abby as she

becomes more and more alienated in the Caldwell home. Steenburgen especially does some truly wonderful work here with a character that could have just been a terrible stereotype.

Stewart also seems to be having fun and making a great case that she should consider more broad comedies. In fact, it's so enjoyable spending time with her and some of the tertiary characters that part of me wished she would just ditch the Caldwells altogether while they work out their issues and go hang out with Riley and John for the holidays.

"Happiest Season" is a little all over the place in its tone, whipping between over-the-top comedy and sincere emotional moments, but it's not hard to look past the clunkiness. Overall, it's a very pleasant watch, and I wouldn't hesitate to put it on again soon.

"Happiest Season" is rated PG-13 for language. Running time: 102 minutes. Available on Hulu.

## WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

## FAIR FIGHT

Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War is a shallow, speedy, sometimes frustrating shooter that fans of the title will no doubt buy and enjoy anyway

MIKHAIL KLIMENTOV  
*The Washington Post*

Is there anyone reading this trying to make an informed purchasing decision about Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War? It's Call of Duty. What feature, or lack thereof, would compel a Call of Duty fan to buy or skip a new entry at this point? It plays fine, and it's the most recent one. That's usually enough.

To be clear, there's plenty to dislike about the new entry at the game's outset. The matchmaking infrastructure is broken in tons

of tiny, just-frustrating-enough-to-be-noticeable ways. The multiplayer maps feel one dimensional, and there aren't many to begin with. (Not that it matters; play moves at a breakneck pace that makes any instinct beyond "see enemy, aim, shoot" totally superfluous). The bigger, marquee game modes — namely Zombies and Dirty Bomb — are impenetrable gross mutations of superior modes from older games.

Am I going to keep playing? Sure.

Part of what draws me to Cold War is sheer novelty, but the game's faster pace is also undeniably fun, if a bit shallow. What I appreciated about Warzone (and many of the other comparatively ruminative shooters that have come out this year) is how slowly things moved, and how protracted engagements sprouted their own little narrative arcs. Fights had pal-

pable tension and stakes. By contrast, Cold War tickles a more primitive, lizard part of the brain. It's popcorn. Junk food. Death is no obstacle. It is merely an invitation to try again, and again, and again, to cor-

rect past mistakes, to exact revenge. I accept that invitation.

It may take a moment to actually get in-game, though. Even simple things, like creating a party and getting into a game, are a challenge. Over and over, my friends and I would try to create a party, only to learn that someone or even multiple people couldn't connect. Someone else would host, and then a different person wouldn't be able to join. Every Cold War session begins like this, a game of ring around the rosie until the right configuration of party leader and guest is found. There are countless tiny pebble-in-your-shoe-like issues plaguing Cold War, which can sometimes feel like it's running the same netcode as Among Us, a notoriously un-

stable game made with a fraction of Call of Duty's budget.

When you finally get into the game, all the standard modes — Team Deathmatch, Free For All — are here, and they're fine. If that's what you like, you'll get your money's worth. But if you want to play a mode with objectives, temper your expectations. I've played far too many Kill Confirmed matches with teammates who have seemingly gone out of their way to avoid confirming kills (as the name implies, doing so is a prerequisite to winning).

In Cold War's multiplayer, the overarching feeling is that the simpler things are, the better. The standard, quick-respawn modes are fun, even if the available maps leave something to be desired. But the game's bigger, marquee ideas collapse under the weight of their own bloat.

I am not a fan of Call of Duty's Zombies mode. I just hadn't ever devoted much time to it. As it turns out, that's a huge liability. If you're a longtime Zombies player, maybe you have the sequence memorized already: Blow up this wall, then the next one, get the mystery gun, go into the lab, activate a trial, save up for armor and pack-a-punch, and so on. There's inherited wisdom: Keep a zombie alive at the end of the round so that players have time to resupply, for example. But as a new player, I found myself totally overwhelmed, dragged forward by more experienced players who already knew what to do.

Even now, knowing the basic steps, I still don't want to play Zombies. It's unpleasant to look at, and just generally kind of dull. It's not for lack of trying: Zombies wants you to know it's zany and "out there." Now and again, your party is



REVIEW



Activision photos

pulled through a wormhole into an alternate Day-Glo dimension, where things are basically the same — except, get this, the colors are wacky. Yawn.

Then there's the gameplay itself: In my latest and likely last ever Zombies session, I spent a good chunk of time running in circles around the spawn area with a grenade launcher, blowing up zombies and chipping away health from the midgame boss, Megaton. There is a narcotic effect to watching the numbers tick up as the grenades incinerate their targets; a great deal of design work must have gone into perfecting the satisfying audiovisual cues that whisper into the deepest folds of your brain, "You're doing great, sweetie." But that feels like a failure for a game mode about fighting the undead — Nazi undead, no less. (This session ended on round 17 of 20, with a connection error).

Zombies as it exists in Cold War is not really a game mode any sane person would create if hired to make something called a Zombie mode. Instead, it is a Frankenstein monster of features, an ugly snowball that's been rolling for more than a decade, more mud, stick, stone and old Band-Aids than snow, and it's still rolling because nobody at Treyarch was brave enough to stop it.

Once you're done with multiplayer, you

might dip a toe into the campaign. Over the next few weeks, as smarter writers and researchers pick at the game's story, I'm sure it will get called all sorts of things: Jingoistic; imperialistic; a marketing exercise for endless war; apologia for extrajudicial killing; a game that stares point-blank at the moral equivalences it draws and does not see them; stupid; evil; a slurry of genre beats that only vaguely add up to something resembling the actual, historic Cold War; etc. All of this is, of course, true. But I've wondered, lately, whether this is a useful lens for evaluating a Call of Duty game.

There's plenty of thoughtful, deeply researched criticism that highlights where games fall short and replicate historic ills. But sometimes, at the crossroad of existential doubt and pettiness, I wonder whether this is a helpful exercise for readers. In a less-than-generous reading, it can feel like the critic is parachuting in to explain to the lowly dunce reader that the media they just enjoyed actually had some unnoticed flaw that the bridge-troll reader would never pick up on their own. Surely nobody is getting their history from Call of Duty. Isn't there some merit to "It's just a game"?

SEE CALL ON PAGE 19

# WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Activision photos

The latest Call of Duty Zombies mode (above and below) can come across as a dull mashup of features.

## Call: Game's moral ambiguity abounds

FROM PAGE 18

Cold War probably isn't going to convince anyone that rogue Russian agents were behind the Iranian hostage crisis, nor will players suddenly feel the pull to enlist after foiling the villain's plot in service of CGI Ronald Reagan. In a sense, the weird militarism of Cold War is a mere drop in the bucket. But the bucket's been collecting water for years.

**Spoiler Warning:** The remainder of the review focuses on the campaign and discusses its ending in detail. Do not proceed if you want to preserve the story's surprises.

Right from the story's start, the game hints that something is off. You're placed into a mission in Vietnam that your character had no business participating in, purely in terms of timeline and narrative. Conversations happen in which you forget about things you've evidently done. It all culminates in a fascinating end-of-game twist, where it's revealed that your entire team has been lying to you. You are a former lieutenant of the main villain, brainwashed by the CIA to help bring that villain to justice. And right at the end, you are asked to make a pivotal decision: Betray your new American allies — the only people you've actually spent time with for the duration of the game — and help your former rogue Russian agent boss decimate Europe with American nukes, or side with your captors to avert nuclear calamity.

I chose to betray my team, and while that isn't the canonical ending, it should be. The game doesn't do a convincing job of selling me on the spooks who had drugged me and rewired my brain. I am not sure it wanted to convince me. I won't fault anyone for looking at the lovingly rendered 40th President and believing that Cold War is on his side. But his portrayal can also be read as one of an image-obsessed, corrupt man who ordered a series of extrajudicial missions only to get way over his skis. Reagan's closest lieutenant, a man named Hudson, is bald, wears a leather jacket, and doesn't trust anyone. Surely a "cool guy" archetype, right? Well, he's also the genius behind the plan to leave American nukes under every major European city. (Cold War kicks off with Perseus, the game's villain, obtaining one of these nukes, an instant classic in the "this is the one thing we didn't want to happen" genre).



Cold War is positively gleeful about you slaughtering your former teammates, highlighting each kill with an almost perverse intensity. I chose the sniper rifle, and the game followed each bullet in slow motion along its path. My first victim was Helen Park; I had saved her life in an earlier mission, and we shared a tender exchange about scars and betrayal. Her face exploded like a giant wet sponge on impact. Next, I shot Frank Woods (bland jock, not important) and Alex Mason (roid rage Charlie Day). If they mattered in some past Black Ops game, they barely register in this one.

Finally, I was tasked with killing Adler, the architect of my suffering and an inveterate liar. The game prompted me to plunge a dagger into his chest. I did.

I later learned that the anticlimactic "good" ending (you help America destroy some cell towers) ends with Adler demanding one final sacrifice as he pulls a gun on you. The game closes with the gunshot.

The story lives in a perpetual haze of ambiguity, an interpretive gray zone, less choose-your-own-adventure, and more draw-your-own-conclusions. Does Cold War really expect us to think Adler is a good guy? It's not clear. But then there's the fact that choosing to help him — and be killed by him — is the canonical "good" ending. The game is as confused as its brainwashed protagonist.

I hope that the folks at Raven Software and Treyarch think about the better ways in which they could have spent the million billion dollars given to them by Activision. Perhaps it's naive to expect Call of Duty to ever change. But as a glass half full person, I enjoyed Cold War. It is, at times, a genuinely fascinating little artifact. And if you're a glass half empty person? Don't kid yourself. You'll still play Cold War.

**Platforms:** PC, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S

**Online:** callofduty.com/blackopscoldwar

## Cold War runs the same on Series X and PS5 — the DualSense is the difference

By MIKE HUME  
The Washington Post

One of the challenges for game developers this fall — on top of a pandemic — was the sheer number of platforms they needed to account for during production. Mark Gordon, co-studio head of Treyarch, which released Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War on Nov. 13, said his studio needed to make the game run on nine different platforms.

Three of those, the PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X and S, gave them their first opportunity to tackle next-generation console features, including the PS5's unique haptic feedback.

Cold War developers say they are trying to give each weapon a unique feel on the controller when it comes to rumble and recoil. A shotgun would feature a different vibration pattern than a submachine gun, which would also feel different than a light machine gun.

"Sony has done some really interesting things with their controller and we're using that to try to improve the immersion of the feel of using a weapon," Dan Olsen, principal software architect at Treyarch, said. "The things that we have to work with are the trigger tension and the rumble, and we're combining them to try to create a feeling of weapon heaviness, classes of weapons. So you look at the recoil, you look at the trigger tension as you fire. And it's different for all those classes of weapons. So we're actually really interested to get it to players hands because I feel like the design space in this is so open that we're just maybe scratching the surface of what we can do with it."

The DualSense features will not apply to the Xbox Series X or S, but that is the only major difference between the game on Sony and Microsoft's latest consoles.

"I really doubt that a player will notice the differences [in gameplay on a PS5 or Series X], if a frame draws in a fraction of a second faster on one platform or another or we read faster on one platform or the other," said Eran Rich, Treyarch's director of technology. "The feeling, the experience will be the same pretty much on both the PS5 and Series X."

The lack of platform differentiation is due in large part because of the need for Treyarch to keep the game experience level for competitive players in a game that will be playable online across both platforms and generations.

"I think that is one of the chal-



SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT/TNS

**The DualSense Wireless Controller for the PlayStation 5 enhances the haptic feedback that the developers of the latest Call of Duty put a lot of thought into.**

lenges when trying to add next-gen features because you want to make it so that the next-gen is an improvement, but you want to make it so it's not so essential to the experience that someone who is playing on a current-gen console is going to have a bad experience," Gordon said.

While the developers themselves were most fond of the next-generation's rapid load times, competitive types will likely focus on the fact the game will run at up to 120 hz on the next-gen consoles, providing better frame rates for hit registration and reaction times. The added frames will come at the cost of ray-tracing, which will only be available at 60 fps.

Both the PS5 and Series X/S will benefit from revamped audio, according to the developers, which allowed them to not only localize channels to the front, sides and rear of a player using headphones or a surround-sound speaker set up, but also pinpoint sounds above or below a player.

"When our audio team got it working the first time I had a bot just shooting bullets over my head and I would just stand up or crouch and you can really hear the bullets hitting above you or below you," Rich said.

Perhaps most intriguing is what's yet to come. As developers get more time with the next-gen tools, they figure to build even better experiences.

"This is my third time doing a console transition, and it's always different; it's always fun," Olsen said. "It's a learning process throughout the whole thing. ... We get the specs a little bit early, but never early enough to ever really do what we want to do. And I think that's why you always see improvement in the second wave of titles on a console generation."

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

O'er the ramparts: Castles in Great Britain

*As we've had to postpone our travels because of the pandemic, I believe a weekly dose of travel dreaming can be good medicine. Here's a reminder of the fun that awaits us in Europe at the other end of this crisis.*

For centuries, Great Britain's castles were the literal and political high points of their communities. Designed to keep people out, today these formidable structures are open to visitors and appreciated for their romantic allure. Everyone loves a good castle — who can resist the appeal of drawbridges, secret passageways and pointy turrets towering over a moat?

Much of the fun of a visit to a castle comes from learning the nitty-gritty facts about what life was really like for its inhabitants. Life in the Middle Ages was actually a lot like the people then: nasty, brutish and short. Most countryside castles began not as palaces for princes, but as armored bunkers, with all the romance of a fallout shelter. Sure, they had a lofty tower or two, but only to spot trespassers and to give attackers second thoughts. And while your home may be far less impressive on the outside than the castles you'll see, you'll

definitely come away with a renewed appreciation for the state of your plumbing.

The habit of castle building came to Britain with William the Conqueror in 1066. To protect himself and his invading Norman force, William left a trail of wooden forts throughout the land. They were in the classic "motte-and-bailey" design, with an ear-

Rick Steves

then mound — the motte — providing a lookout tower for the stockade encircling the protected area — the bailey. One of the first was at Windsor, high above the Thames River, built to secure the western approach to London (and today an easy day trip away). Over time, later monarchs spiffed up the original fortress, and today's stone heap — with sprawling grounds and lavish staterooms — is said to be the largest and oldest occupied castle in the world. It's been the official home of England's royal family for 900 years.

Windsor may be the biggest of England's castles, but the award for most spectacular goes to Warwick (just north of Stratford),

with its lush, green, grassy moat and fairy-tale fortifications. It too was originally built at William the Conqueror's command and then gradually rebuilt in stone throughout the Middle Ages by the earls of Warwick. The current earl has turned to professionals to wring maximum tourist dollars from his home, and the greedy feel of the place can be a little annoying. But there's something for every taste — an educational armory, a terrible torture chamber, a queenly garden, merry bands of musical jesters and a peacock-patrolled, picnic-perfect park. Even with its crowds of modern-day barbarians and its robber-baron entry fee, Warwick's worthwhile.

The biggest concentration of castles is in Wales, said to have more per square mile than any place in Europe. And most of them are English castles, built in the 13th century by King Edward I to establish his rule over the feisty Welsh. The greatest of Edward's castles — like Caernarfon and Conwy — were true engineering feats of their time. Their towers were round, with no corners to knock off, making them tougher to break through. Their castle-within-a-castle floor plan gave defenders a place to



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI

**The evocative ruins of Scotland's Urquhart Castle overlook Loch Ness (monster sightings possible).**

retreat and wreak havoc on the advancing enemy, or just wait for reinforcements. And every castle Edward built had a river or sea exit, so he could resupply — or escape — on the water.

Conwy Castle — my personal favorite — is dramatically sited on a rock overlooking the sea, with eight mighty drum towers. It was a power statement from the English king to the Welsh — who had little more than bows and arrows to fight with. The castle is built on solid rock, making it impossible to tunnel under-

neath the walls. The English paid dearly for Conwy's construction through heavy taxes. And today, with the Welsh flag proudly flying from its top, the English happily pay again just to visit.

These landmarks tell their stories all over Great Britain. Make time for some in your itinerary. You'll find castle thrills lurking in every direction.

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

Saints of the Advent season: Nicholas and Lucia

If you weren't born Catholic, you could be forgiven for not knowing much about the more than 10,000 saints venerated by the largest Christian church. According to the U.S. Catholic website, research carried out by 17th- and 18th-century scholars of the faith determined that while several saints' stories were backed by solid historical evidence, the lives of others were based on legends predating Christianity or seemed to be made up entirely. But the celebrations recalling the professed virtues of many of them are a very real part of European culture today. In the period known as Advent, the four weeks spent in anticipation of the celebration of Jesus' birth, two saints' feast days stand out: those of St. Nicholas and Santa Lucia.

**Saint Nicholas:** Nicholas is thought to have been born in 270 in Patara, a city on Turkey's Mediterranean coast, at the time a part of the Roman Empire, and to have died in 343. The son of wealthy Christian parents, he was made the Bishop of Myra at an early age. Of his many good deeds, perhaps best known was how he secretly dropped sacks of gold coins through the window of a poor father, allowing him to provide dowries for his three daughters. It's suggested his anonymous gift-giving habit gave rise to the traditional model of Santa Claus. Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of children, coopers, fishermen, brewers, pharmacists, the falsely accused, repentant thieves and many others.

In 1087, merchants from the Italian city of Bari sailed to where St. Nicholas' relics were kept, unlawfully seized them and

brought them back to their hometown. Although much of what's left of his earthly being remains enshrined in Bari's impressive Basilica di San Nicola, it's far from the only place to claim parts of him. The

second-most important repository of his relics is the church of San Nicolo in the Lido of Venice; other churches housing fingers and various slivers of him include those in Minsk, Belarus; Sint-Niklaas, Belgium; Sofia, Bulgaria; Brighton, England; Brauweiler, Germany; Utrecht and Maastricht, Netherlands; St. Petersburg, Russia; Murcia, Spain; and Fribourg, Switzerland.

On his feast day of Dec. 6, Saint Nicholas is the focus of celebrations throughout much of Europe. In Greece, his role as the protector of sailors is celebrated with festivities aboard ships. In many northern countries, it's a day for gift-giving. Children might leave carrots in their shoes for the saint's horse before going to bed and wake up to find small gifts for themselves. Some of Europe's largest-scale Nicholas-related events include a mass celebration of Sinterklaas' arrival by ship and a horseback parade in mid-November in Amsterdam; a meet-and-greet with Mikulas on the Old Town Square in Prague Dec. 5; and two days of parades, processions and merriment in the streets of Nancy, France, on the first weekend of December.

With most public events associated with



Karen Bradbury



iStock

**This artwork of Saint Nicholas hangs in a Greek Orthodox church in Madaba, Jordan. This saint's secret gift giving gave rise to the legend of Santa Claus.**

the upcoming holiday season canceled for this year, our next-best chance to fete St. Nicholas might come in spring. Bari's Festa di San Nicola, a three-day affair of parades, period costumes and a boat journey of the saint's bones around the bay, traditionally takes place May 7-9, in accordance with the date attributed to the transfer of his relics.

**Santa Lucia:** Born into a noble family in Syracuse, Sicily, in 283 AD and martyred at the age of 20, this saint is revered in

Italy and Scandinavia, particularly Sweden. Legend holds Lucia vowed herself to a Christian life at an early age, and was known for her compassion to the poor. Her generous behavior displeased her betrothed, himself a pagan. After he reported her Christian beliefs to the Roman authorities in charge at the time, she was sentenced to a life of prostitution. When the guards tried to move her into the brothel, divine intervention rendered her immovable. Wood was stacked around her and set alight, but Lucia remained impervious to the flames. She died only when she was stabbed in the neck.

A famous image of the saint includes Caravaggio's Burial of Saint Lucy (as she's also known), which hangs in the Church of Santa Lucia alla Badia on Syracuse's Cathedral Square. Painters often depict her as blind and holding a golden plate on which two eyeballs rest. St. Lucia is the patron saint of the blind, as well as authors, laborers, electricians, martyrs and peasants. The relics of Santa Lucia are displayed at the Chiesa di San Geremia in the Cannaregio district of Venice.

On Dec. 13, her date of death, the feast day of Santa Lucia enlivens many parts of Italy, particularly in her hometown. There, a weeklong celebration includes a procession in which a silver statue of Santa Lucia is carried through her streets, fireworks, and the eating of a wheat dish called cuccia. Last year's solemnities were livestreamed online at [gds.it](http://gds.it) and [gazzettadelsud.it](http://gazzettadelsud.it), as well as the Facebook page of the Giornale di Sicilia.

WEEKEND: FOOD AND DINING

The best sushi outside Japan

Japanese food doesn't get better than Hashimoto in Saarbruecken

BY ERIK SLAVIN  
Stars and Stripes

There are no dragon rolls at Hashimoto. There are no rolls with cream cheese, jalapeño, mango, or much else invented in the West to get people who don't like sushi to eat it. Some of those types of rolls do taste good — any New York deli knows salmon and cream cheese belong together. But Japanese sushi is all about the preparation of the seasoned rice and the quality of the topping. It sounds simple, but it isn't.

Hashimoto in Saarbruecken is one of the few restaurants in the region that serves authentic sushi, along with other dishes you rarely see outside of a large Japanese community. I spent a large chunk of my adult life living in Japan, and this is where I go with Japanese friends and family.

Hashimoto's serene decor and its window views of the neo-Gothic St. John's Church across the street are going to waste for the moment because of coronavirus restrictions. But Hashimoto is offering limited takeout, and what they've got makes for a seriously classy picnic at Saarbruecken's parks. There are some nice spots along the Saar river, though I recommend the expansive German-French Garden, a few miles from the restaurant and just inside the German border.

The sushi "ume" plate comes with eight nigiri and six maki. Salmon and tuna will invariably be there, while cured mackerel, yellowtail, eel and egg may be in the mix based on availability. My most recent order included some higher-grade tuna in some of the rolls.

It's not a lot of sushi for 22 euros, and like at many restaurants, the prices have gone up to compensate for lost business. But what you get is superb, particularly the rice. Don't believe me about the importance of the rice? Take a glob of unseasoned, mushy rice and put it under your favorite topping. It's not going to make the topping better.

Plump, firm, slightly sticky, short-grained rice will elevate something as humble as cucumber and turn high-quality fish into a delight. The rice is normally cold-rinsed several times, strained, steamed and then seasoned with rice vinegar, and hints of salt and sugar. Sake may also play a role, depending on the chef.

I haven't asked for Hashimoto's rice recipe, but its sushi, while not in the same league as Japan in terms of fish variety, is as good as what you'll find at many restaurants there.

Hashimoto offers some a la carte sushi; I'll usually add a salmon roll for about 6 euros. Our last picnic outing also included a bento box with "karaage," or Japanese fried chicken.

There's a proverb saying that "Japanese eat with their eyes," and unfortunately the bento loses a lot in terms of presentation as takeout.

The fried chicken still had hallmark flavors of sake and mirin, but if you don't eat it right away, it suffers the same indignities of texture as any fried food left to sit. For the same reason, I'd recommend against takeout tempura, which is excellent in the restaurant.

The bento boxes do have a nice variety to go with the main dish, including a piece of pork belly, potato, cooked fish, spinach and a dash of kimchi with the fried chicken. Other bento boxes include beef, vegetables, and chicken or salmon teriyaki.

The menu options grow at dinner for in-person dining. I



PHOTOS BY ERIK SLAVIN/Stars and Stripes

A doubled-up sushi combination platter and a fried chicken bento box with perfectly cooked rice from Hashimoto in Saarbruecken, Germany, is ready to eat at a picnic in the city's German-French Garden.



A platter of two combination sushi lunches and some added salmon rolls from Hashimoto.



A lunch bento box from pre-pandemic times at Hashimoto. The meal includes sushi, grilled fish, vegetables, pickles, rice and green tea, and makes a perfect to-go option.

recommend the akadashi, a red miso soup with fish as a starter. If you're ready to splurge, they do offer 150 grams of Kobe-style wagyu beef for 44 euros. I haven't had it here, but good wagyu's marbling makes it surprisingly filling.

Hashimoto is more expensive than some Japanese-style options in the Ramstein area, and it's about a 40-minute

HASHIMOTO

**Location:** Cecilienstrasse 7, 66111 Saarbruecke  
**Hours:** Takeout pickup times: 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. (Sundays from noon); evenings between 5 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Dining in: noon to 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m., last order at 9 p.m. Closed Monday and Thursday; Saturday open for dinner only. Hours are subject to change.  
**Dress:** Smart casual for dining in.  
**English menu:** Menus are in German, Japanese and French, but it's nothing a translator app can't handle. Some staff speak a little English. Menus available at their website. For takeout, orders can be emailed, preferably the day before.  
**Prices:** 16.50 euros for a lunch bento box, 22 euros for a combination sushi plate. A la carte dinner entrees mostly range from 11-26 euros. Wagyu beef, 44 euros. Six-course dinner menu starts around 55 euros.  
**Information:** Online: hashimoto-saar.de; Phone: +49 0681-398034; Email: info@hashimoto-saar.de

Erik Slavin



A double sushi combination takeout platter from Hashimoto. The offerings change based on availability. In this case, extra salmon and higher-grade tuna are included.

drive from the air base. But when I take a bite and close my eyes, for a moment I'm back in Yokohama. That's worth a little extra for me.

slavin.erik@stripes.com  
Twitter: @eslavin\_stripes

# WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



From the vineyard on the Neroberg, visitors get expansive views of the city.

PHOTOS BY DAVID EDGE/Stars and Stripes

# A residential favorite

The views, architecture at the Neroberg will erase any doubt about this popular Wiesbaden location

BY DAVID EDGE  
*Stars and Stripes*

I was a little dubious about why I was heading up the Neroberg, a hill said to be one of the favorite places for a day trip for residents of Wiesbaden. We were driving past the downtown area, through a couple of nondescript neighborhoods and up into the woods, and I still didn't quite see the allure. But as we came out of the woods and I caught a glimpse of the Monopteros, a Greek-style temple perched atop the Neroberg, my perspective changed and I understood why this place is so popular. Rising 800 feet above sea level, the Neroberg is hardly Everest, but the views from the top are spectacular. People have been taking in the panorama of Wiesbaden from the Monopteros since it was built in 1851. Next to it, there's a small amphitheater, where plays and other events are normally held in the summertime. Downhill from the temple is a Russian Orthodox church with golden onion domes, built by Duke Adolph von Nassau from 1849 to 1855 to house the tomb of his wife, who died during childbirth. Nearby are a parsonage and the largest Russian cemetery in Europe outside of Russia. Also on the hill is what initially looked to me like a concrete block, but is actually a stark World War I memorial. On one side, it's engraved with images of soldiers marching; on the other, it shows soldiers dying.



The amphitheater next to the Monopteros at the Neroberg hosts impromptu theater performances in the summer.

From the memorial, some steps lead to a brick wall and more views of the city, and on the other side of the wall is one of the few inner-city vineyards in Germany. The southern side of the Neroberg has had a vineyard for around 500 years. Now planted with Riesling grapes, the vineyard is managed by the Hessian State Wine Estates. Another popular feature of the hilltop getaway is the Nerobergbahn, a water- and gravity-powered train that takes passengers up and down the Neroberg, reaching speeds of around 5 mph. You'll have to wait to ride it, though; the train operates from late March until the end of October.

edge.david@stripes.com  
Twitter: @DavidEdge96798393

## On the QT

**ADDRESS**  
Neroberg 1, 65193 Wiesbaden

**HOURS**  
The hill stays open, though caution is suggested late at night.

**PRICES**  
The site is free; train tickets cost 5 euros per adult return ticket, 3 euros for children.

**FOOD**  
There is a restaurant, Der Turn, at the Neroberg, which was closed in November due to coronavirus restrictions. Plenty of restaurants are available down the hill in the downtown area.

**INFORMATION**  
[wiesbaden.de/leben-in-wiesbaden/freizeit/ausfluege/neroberg/neroberg.php](http://wiesbaden.de/leben-in-wiesbaden/freizeit/ausfluege/neroberg/neroberg.php); [nerobergbahn.de](http://nerobergbahn.de)

David Edge



The St. Elizabeth Russian Orthodox Church is one of many sights on the Neroberg overlooking Wiesbaden, Germany.



The Monopteros, a Greek-style temple, sits on the Neroberg in Wiesbaden, Germany. It was built in 1851 to give visitors a view of the city.

# YOU SERVED TOGETHER

# STAY CONNECTED FOR LIFE!



## TOGETHERWESERVED.COM

---

2 MILLION MEMBERS AND GROWING  
GET A FREE 1 YEAR PREMIUM MEMBERSHIP  
AT:

## STRIPE.S.TOGETHERWESERVED.COM

# WEEKEND: FOOD AND DINING

## A taste of normalcy

Co-Lab Kitchen's outdoor patio in Okinawa is an oasis for service members still barred from indoor dining

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE  
Stars and Stripes

**D**ining options on Okinawa remain limited for service members barred from indoor dining thanks to the coronavirus.

Co-Lab Kitchen, short for "Collaboration Kitchen," is next to Legend Sports Heroes at the Aeon Mall Okinawa Rycom in Kitanakagusuku.

Like a siren song, a large sign out front advertising cheap, all-you-can-drink specials beckons weary consumers and Americans looking for a pandemic pause. The restaurant patio is a rare oasis in what has become a virtual food desert.

From the outside, Co-Lab is underwhelming and a bit confusing. Its sign reads "sports and dining" and on a night in mid-November, a football match played on overhead television sets spread throughout. But the decor also includes streetlamps, pirates' portraits on the walls next to burlap coffee sacks and a massive, fake tree rising through the center of the restaurant. A ping-pong team banner hangs in one corner.

In the plus column, the restaurant seems brand new. It was well-lit, warm and cozy with stained woods, shining surfaces and nooks spread asunder. The massive front window opens into the dining room, so those seated outside don't have to feel completely shut out.

Flipping through Co-Lab's expansive menu, it's easy to see they fancy themselves as the local pub, a gathering place where large groups can share small plates and drink together. In normal times, that spirit hits the spot for pretty much any demographic.

Co-Lab specializes in grilled meats and Mediterranean-style tapas: mushrooms, pickled peppers and radishes, bruschetta, horse meat and salmon carpaccio, prosciutto, pate, canapes, tofu, ajillo and skillet.



**AFTER  
HOURS  
OKINAWA**

They also offer pizza, pasta and fried appetizers. The other half of the menu is dedicated to alcoholic beverages.

The assortment appetizer for 1,480 yen was as tasty as it was diverse. It came with pate and saltines, prosciutto, smoked salmon, mushrooms in a delicious, savory dressing and homemade pickled vegetables. It tasted like it had come from an authentic Italian kitchen.

The bacon and mustard potato salad for 480 yen had ample bacon and packed a flavorful mustard punch. Sea urchin and kimchi varieties are also available.

The Co-Lab pizza is personal sized for 1,080 yen. Half-and-half pies are available.

We tried half salmon and cream cheese and half teriyaki chicken and mayo. As far as Japanese pizza is concerned, it was really good. Both sides were clean and crispy, cooked to perfection.

The salmon and cream cheese offered a flavor that was new to me and quite delicious. The chicken teriyaki, not surprisingly, tasted of teriyaki, but with no sauce or mayo to be seen, just a balanced profile of flavored meat, cheese and crisp crust.

The rump and aitchbone steak, part of the sirloin, for 1,380 yen was soft and juicy, cooked medium. It came on a board, sliced, with rock salt and Japanese steak sauce. But the star of the show was the grilled pork miso for 980 yen. It was tender, juicy, melt-in-your-mouth succulent, with a tinge of savory miso flavor, the best piece of pork I can ever remember eating.

Co-Lab's pork is the result of a collaboration between the eatery and the local



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

The rump and aitchbone steak from Co-Lab Kitchen on Okinawa was tender and juicy.



This half-and-half pizza features salmon and cream cheese on the right and teriyaki chicken and mayo on the left.

Fukumaru Farm, according to the menu. Fukumaru has long experimented with feeding its pigs different things to influence the taste of the meat. It found that a diet of sugar cane, purple sweet potatoes and herbs, all local to Okinawa, gave the meat beautiful marbling and a special flavor. It made the fat almost gelatinous when cooked so that it melts in the mouth.

Fukumaru calls it Kibimaru-Ton, which has since won Japanese food awards. It more than lived up to its reputation.

The cheapest cut on the menu is the braised roast Kibimaru-Ton pork for 780 yen. Co-Lab also offers mixed grill platters for between 2,980 and 5,780 yen.

Salads include items like crab and prosciutto and cost up to 880 yen. A variety of

### Co-Lab Kitchen

**Location:** Aeon Mall Okinawa Rycom, Higa, Kitanakagusuku, Nakagami District, Okinawa 901-2305. GPS 26.314869, 127.797595

**Directions:** You'll find it in the northeast corner of the island's most acclaimed mall, at the intersection of Routes 330 and 85, between Camp Foster and Kadena Air Base.

**Hours:** 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily

**Prices:** The average dinner bill per customer is between 2,001 yen and 3,000 yen, according to the Co-Lab website.

**Dress:** Casual

**Information:** 098-923-2622; Online: colab-kitchen.owst.jp/en

Matthew M. Burke

pasta dishes with clams or eggplant cost up to 1,280 yen. Soft drinks, cocktails and wine range from 480 to 580 yen. Co-Lab also offers set menus starting at 2,980 yen per person that include eight food items and two hours of all-you-can-drink, until 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

Sitting outside the restaurant made me long for the days of normalcy, the days before the pandemic. Yet it also made me thankful for places like Co-Lab, where I can pull up a chair, share a laugh over a good meal and a drink and forget the world for a while.

burke.matt@stripes.com  
Twitter: @MatthewMBurke1

**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF SERVING  
US MILITARY IN THE PACIFIC • 1945-2020**

**75.stripes.com**  
**STARS AND STRIPES**

**How Many Candies  
in the Jar**

Give your best guess and you could win a gift card!

**Exact Guess: \$75**  
**Closest Guess: \$25**

**Nov. 24 to Dec. 6 (Pacific area only)**

For more details and rules, visit [Facebook.com/StripesPacific](https://Facebook.com/StripesPacific)

## WEEKEND: FOOD

## No more dull blades

## Expert knife-sharpening tips for home cooks

BY KARI SONDE  
The Washington Post

**W**hen the coronavirus pandemic hit in the spring, we started cooking a whole lot more. And we're still cooking!

Though delivery is as popular as ever, many of us are figuring out three meals a day, seven days a week for the foreseeable future. That means our kitchen knives are getting much more use than usual — dulling their blades.

There are plenty of ways to get your knives professionally sharpened, including such mail-in services as Knife Aid and drop-offs at a Sur la Table, hardware store or local knife-sharpening shop. If you'd rather do it yourself, though, experts offer these tips:

**Know when it's time**

When should you sharpen your knife? "When you're not happy with it," says Ryan Swanson, co-owner and director of sharpening operations of District Cutlery in Washington, D.C. If you're putting too much strength behind your blade, it's time to sharpen. "A knife should do the work for you."

If you're smooshing tomatoes instead of slicing through them or struggling to make a clean cut through chicken skin, "these are some good signs that you might want to touch up your knives," says Vincent Lau, knife-sharpening specialist at Korin, a New York City shop focused on Japanese knives.

He suggests sharpening, generally speaking, every few months, while Andrew Curtis-Wellings, regional business manager for Wusthof, cautions against oversharpening — removing too much metal from the blade — and thinks twice a year should do the trick.

**Pick your tool**

Lau and Swanson aren't fans of hand-held, countertop tools that you pull your

knife through or electric sharpeners, both of which they say remove too much metal, unevenly. "I've seen more knives ruined from those things than have been fixed," says Swanson, though he says these are OK in a pinch. Curtis-Wellings, on the other hand, says that with preset angles and user-friendly design, these devices can be helpful.

Swanson and Lau recommend using a whetstone. Sometimes called a water stone or sharpening stone, they are usually rectangular and come labeled with a number to indicate their grit — how coarse they are. "The lower the number, the coarser or rougher the stone, and the higher the number, the finer the stone," says Lau. He recommends that home users get a double-sided whetstone, which comes with a coarser side for the initial sharpening and a finer side to finish.

**Know your knife's angle and how to maintain it**

According to Swanson, typical Western-style knives have symmetrical edges, in a 20- to 25-degree range, on each side of the blade. Japanese knives can have asymmetrical edges, where only one side of the blade is sharp or where the sides might be at different angles; the sharp angle is usually between 10 and 20 degrees.

"If you're buying your knife from a reputable company, whether it's ours or whether it's other places online, generally all that information is available to you," says Lau. "Make sure you know your knife."

**Take your time, and relax**

"A knife is a sharp object, obviously," says Lau. "So I always like to say, when you're sharpening, there's no need for fast movement." Going slow means you're more conscious of holding your angle. "Because when you're slower, you're more aware of where your knife is leaning, where the edge is facing, where the



iStock

**With all the cooking being done at home these days, knife blades can get dull quickly. Learning to sharpen them at home can save time and money.**

tip is facing." In Lau's videos, you'll watch him point the edge away from him, angling the knife against the stone, and gently pressing down sections of the knife from tip to heel as he pulls it toward himself. Then, he flips the knife, edge facing toward him, as he gently presses down along the knife and pushes it away from himself.

It can be intimidating, but Lau says it actually takes a lot of effort to hurt your knife on a whetstone.

"You're grinding so little at a time when you're doing it by hand on a stone, that you would have to be sitting there for hours before you wear down your knife to the point where it's not fixable," says Lau. Home cooks, he says, don't need more than a few minutes for a touch-up; there's no need to keep at it for too long.

**Keep your knife sharp by honing**

Honing rods do not sharpen knives like a whetstone does, but can keep them sharp longer. "Honing is just realigning the edge of the knife, so you're not removing metal," say Curtis-Wellings. "What it does is it reflects the microfibers on the edge, which get broad as you chop." Honing your knife, he says, takes only a few

seconds, so you can hone your edge after every use, though "the textbook statement is you want to hone your knife after every two hours of use."

"You cannot overhone a knife," he says.

Swanson says you'll find both metal and ceramic honing rods; both will align your knife, though ceramic will take off a tiny amount of steel.

**Once you've got a sharp knife, treat it well**

Curtis-Wellings says to stick to wood or plastic cutting boards, not glass or granite or marble, as "anything that doesn't have any give on it will damage your knife more." Swanson suggests using the back of your knife instead of the sharp blade to scoop up chopped food on a cutting board to protect the edge.

**Keep your knife clean and dry**

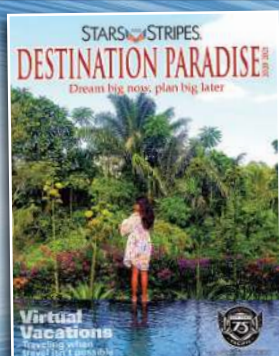
"Don't let them air dry," says Swanson. "Actually take the time, wipe it down and put it away." Never put it in the dishwasher, and don't leave it loose in a drawer — use a blade guard, a designated knife block or drawer system to keep your knife protected. A magnetic knife strip can also be a great way to store knives.

**NEW TO THE PACIFIC?**

Contact [CustomerHelp@stripes.com](mailto:CustomerHelp@stripes.com) to get your free copy of Welcome to the Pacific magazine!

STARS AND STRIPES

Digital edition also available. Download online



# EXPLORING THE BEAUTY OF THE PACIFIC

## DESTINATION PARADISE

View the digital edition or download now

STARS AND STRIPES



WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

# Forget turkey: Early Christmas fever spikes

Many are decorating for the holidays much earlier than usual, hoping to brighten the end of a difficult year

**BY LEANNIE ITALIE**  
*Associated Press*

**L**indsey Catarino is the talk of her neighborhood. She put up her Christmas tree, lights and all, in mid-September. By Oct. 1, her mantel was decorated. Since then, she has added more trees and decorations in just about every room of her Connecticut condo.

The goal for the 42-year-old, like other newly minted early birds, is to bring on the warmth and comfort of Christmas by beating back “an otherwise insane world.”

As some holiday tree sellers fear they’ll sell out by Thanksgiving and parcel shipping companies worry about November gridlock, a growing number of people on a quest for joy have bucked tradition and gone full-on Christmas weeks earlier than they normally would.

“It has definitely overtaken me, and very early,” said Catarino, who lives in West Hartford. “I enjoy being home in a different way. It just gives me a chance to be busy on something that’s happy. I wanted my house to bring me that peace, and we just want to tune out. The election was the final straw.”

She’s definitely not alone.

Brandon Stephens, president of the professional holiday decorating company Christmas Decor, said early business is up 15% to 20% compared to the same period last year. Orders came in as early as April — for April, he said. The company’s franchises serviced more than 43,000 homes and businesses last year around the country and expect a jump to about 52,000 this year. Most of the early activity is residential.

“We knew that it was kind of an emotional response. People were looking for hope. People were looking for something to feel good about while cooped up in their houses,” he said. “Lots of folks are not traveling for the holiday, so they are celebrating at home.”

Jacob Pinkham, a new father in Huntington Beach, Calif., said he and his wife had a hard-and-fast no-Christmas-’til-



**This combination photo shows views of the Christmas-decorated exterior of Danielle Martin’s home in Manteno, Ill. Martin usually waits to decorate until the day after Thanksgiving. This year, though, she got busy on Nov. 1 with a candy cane-themed front porch.**

December rule, until this year amid pandemic fatigue, election turmoil and the economic devastation hitting millions around the world.

The couple got to thinking about their Christmas trip to Cork, Ireland, a few years back and the all-Christmas radio station they discovered there, Christmas FM. They’ve been listening for weeks.

“Our daughter was born just before COVID hit, so having to deal with being a new parent, a new family and with a highly contagious virus circulating, we decided we needed some Christmas cheer earlier than usual,” he said. “We also have two dogs. I don’t know how they feel about the

Christmas music, but they’re not barking, so that’s a positive sign.”

In Louisville, Ky., 29-year-old Mindy Jones has about 1,100 square feet and an additional 400-square-foot basement in a new home she moved into about a month ago with her husband, their 3-year-old daughter and the family dog.

In the past, they’d hold the holiday to two Christmas trees, including a 7-footer adorned with all their special ornaments standing post in the living room. This year, the tree count is five. The first two went up Nov. 11, and there may be more by the time Christmas rolls around.

Usually, Jones waits until the Saturday after Thanksgiving to jump start the holiday.

“I wanted to spread the ‘holly jolly’ feeling a little longer than just December,” she said. “With everything going on this year, if it brings a little more joy and excitement to what’s been a really tough year, why not?”

The drive in Jones and many others to push the holiday cheer is in part the desire to connect with rituals, especially now when so many traditions and so much holiday fun at work and among extended family has been upended.

Erica Keswin, a business consultant with a new book out in January, “Rituals Roadmap,” describes the benefits with three Ps.

“We feel psychological safety and a sense of purpose, which leads to increased performance,” she explained, noting that the power of our senses — smell, taste, touch etc. — helps lead the way.

That might go a long way toward explaining Lisa Torelli-Sauer’s cookie stash in Aschaffenburg, Germany, where the

American lives with her husband and two boys, 9 and 7.

“We’re experiencing partial lockdowns and will likely have limits on our ability to celebrate the holidays with family,” she said. “I’ve found early and intense solace in one thing: Christmas cookies.”

She’s buying, not baking, the stash of gingerbread, cinnamon stars and spiced coconut cookies she has kept on hand since the beginning of November.

“I haven’t left the grocery store without picking up multiple packs of cookies,” Torelli-Sauer said. “After a long and stressful day, it’s deeply satisfying to settle down with a cup of coffee and the perfect assortment of Christmas sweets.”

Much of the early Christmas fervor has to do with the paring down of Thanksgiving due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“I think the rush is because Thanksgiving is normally about gathering, which more than likely won’t happen for a lot of people this year,” said Jennifer Rizzo, an artist and interior designer who wrote a book titled “Creatively Christmas.”

“Much of the enjoyment of the holidays is really as much about the preparation as the day itself, and people are digging into that aspect of Christmas,” she said.

Danielle Martin, 42, in Manteno, Ill., is a big Christmas person. But usually she waits to decorate until the day after Thanksgiving. This year she got busy on Nov. 1, a candy cane-themed front porch included.

“It’s probably earlier than most but we love it. It definitely made a change in our moods,” she said of herself, her husband and her three kids, ages 10, 7 and 5. “The world is so difficult right now for everybody, so we were ready.”



**This combination photo shows Lindsey Catarino posing in front of her decorated Christmas tree in her condo in West Hartford, Conn. Catarino put up her Christmas tree, lights and all, in mid-September. By Oct. 1, her mantel (right) was decorated.**

## WEEKEND: BOOKS

## Fragile hope

Barack Obama takes a critical look at the first 2½ years of his presidency in his new memoir

By ELI STOKOLS  
*Los Angeles Times*

**R**eading Barack Obama's deeply introspective and at times elegiac new presidential memoir, I thought often about something the writer James Baldwin said in 1970, two years removed from the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and despairing about America from abroad.

"Hope," an exhausted Baldwin told a reporter from *Ebony* magazine, "is invented every day."

Inventing hope has long been the Obama project, from his early days as an organizer

through the 2008 campaign, a two-term presidency and now, in retrospect, his intermittent career as a memoirist. Finally free of electoral politics, the

former president concedes that the project has gotten harder, that he has struggled at times to find hope — the very thing he personified for so many.

"A Promised Land" often reads like a conversation Obama is having with himself — questioning his ambition, wrestling with whether the sacrifices were worth it, toggling between pride in his administration's accomplishments and self-doubt over whether he did enough. Written in the Trump era, his elegant prose is freighted with uncertainty about the state of our politics, about whether we can ever reach the titular promised land.

On that central question, he writes glumly in the book's preface, "the jury's still out."

Covering only the first two and half years of his presidency, this 701-page tome — part one of two — isn't the usual post-presidential legacy-burnishing project. There is a literary grandness, to be sure — references to Hemingway and Yeats and dramatic renderings of moments high and low captured in sometimes Sorkin-esque dialogue. But the triumphs are tempered with brooding reflections about the inevitable limitations of the presidency. In this surprisingly fast-moving volume, the audacity isn't in the hopefulness but the

acknowledgment of its low ebb.

Readers might have a hard time determining whether Obama's expressions of disappointment reflect his actual feelings at the time or, rather, emotions colored by the hindsight of having seen his legacy unraveled.

That muddling might be unconscious, but the general omission of Donald Trump seems intentional. Not until page 672 does Obama mention him by name, in a passage on the inane 2011 controversy over his birthplace. Obama only foreshadows Trump's unlikely ascent by registering his concerns about rising nativism and the tribalism his election seemed to unleash, an implacable opposition party and conservative media increasingly untethered to truth.

Unspooled chronologically, the book's first 200 pages recapture the headier days of the future president as a young man, highlighted by Obama's evocative account of his bright-eyed 2004 address to the Democratic National Convention. He relates what it was like to feel the first spark of an electrical charge that would carry him to the White House just four years later.

"There comes a point in the

**Finally free of electoral politics, the former president concedes that the project has gotten harder, that he has struggled at times to find hope — the very thing he personified for so many.**

speech where I find my cadence. The crowd quiets rather than roars," he recalls. "It's the kind of moment I'd come to recognize in certain magic nights. There's a physical feeling, a current of emotion that passes back and forth between you and the crowd ... [Y]ou've tapped into some collective spirit, a thing we all know and wish for, a sense of connection that overrides our differences and replaces them with a giant swell of possibility — and like all things that matter most, you know the moment is fleeting and that soon the spell will be broken."

The bulk of the book is about what happened when the spell began to break — about facing something he recalls the Czech



JEFF CHIU/AP

**Former President Barack Obama, shown in 2019, sold nearly 890,000 copies of his book "A Promised Land" in the first 24 hours and more than 1.7 million copies in the first week in the U.S. and Canada.**

writer Vaclav Havel warning him about early in his presidency, the "curse" of having raised his country's expectations.

Obama took office in January 2009 amid a spiraling economic crisis, his lofty plans for change running smack into the buzzsaw of Washington's partisan realities.

and in recalling moments when he seethed, as when a recalcitrant general went rogue in an interview. He lavishes praise on his staffers but is unsparing and funny in depicting some world leaders.

The narrative puts the reader in the room at defining moments — but also in the head of an acutely self-aware individual.

On finding out he'd been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, he asks, incredulously, "For what?" When a candle-holding crowd gathers outside his hotel window in Oslo before the ceremony, he thinks of the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan: "The idea that I, or any one person, could bring order to such chaos seemed laughable," he writes. "On some level, the crowds below were cheering an illusion."

Nowhere is the heaviness of the presidency clearer than in Obama's descriptions of deciding to authorize military action, first in Libya as part of a NATO coalition and then in the raid that resulted in the killing of Osama bin Laden, which concludes this volume. The ticktock of the raid's secret planning and execution is exhilarating, but Obama reflects on the cathartic euphoria of the aftermath.

Reading an email from the daughter of a 9/11 victim after announcing Bin Laden's death to the country, he considered the profound losses of so many, the courage of CIA analysts and Navy SEALs involved in the successful raid and the sadly

unique swell of national pride and common purpose: "The fact that we could no longer imagine uniting the country around anything other than thwarting attacks and defeating external enemies, I took as a measure of how far my presidency fell short of what I wanted it to be — and how much work I had left to do," he writes.

Obama's anguish is leavened, however, by his sense of history and what Dr. King called the long arc of the moral universe.

A visit to the former Buchenwald concentration camp with Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, along with a D-Day commemoration at Omaha Beach, France, "answered whatever doubts stirred in me" about how individuals can change the world.

And in 2007, when Obama was still a candidate, a visit to Selma, Ala., to mark "Bloody Sunday" similarly fortified him: elders who'd endured bombings, beatings and firehoses connected their journey to his own, casting themselves as "the Moses generation" and leaving it to him, "the Joshua generation ... to take the next steps."

Four years later, Obama delivered a college commencement speech in Miami, offering his presidency as proof to another generation "that the American idea endures."

"At about the same age as the graduates were now, I'd seized on that idea and clung to it for dear life," he writes. "For their sake more than mine, I badly wanted it to be true."

## WEEKEND: MUSIC

# Back on the track

AC/DC ready to rock out of the darkness with 1st new album since 2017

ANDREW DALTON  
Associated Press

**T**hrough decades, deaths and disasters, AC/DC keeps thundering on.

Forty-seven years along, and with the closest thing possible to their original lineup, the rockers on Nov. 13 released "Power Up," their first album in six years.

It's also the first since the 2017 death of Malcolm Young, who founded the band in Sydney, Australia, in 1973 with his little brother, Angus. "Power Up" is dedicated to the elder brother and is shot through with his spirit and songwriting.

"We all felt Malcolm around us; he was there. We're not spiritual-type people, but, boy, oh boy," lead singer Brian Johnson, 73, said during an interview via Zoom from his home in Sarasota, Fla. "Malcolm was a very strong character in real life, and him passing away wasn't gonna stop that. He was there, everywhere, and I think you can tell it on the record."

All 12 tracks are co-written by Malcolm

and Angus Young, selected by the younger Young from a trove of unused songs that piled up during the band's long life.

"Malcolm and myself over the years, whenever we'd come to an album we always walked in with a lot of A-grade songs," the 65-year-old Angus Young said via Zoom from his home in Sydney. "We always had a stack full more left that were all great, great tracks."

Most of the songs came from a fruitful writing period in a long gap between albums from 2000 to 2008, and Angus Young chose those that most evoked his big brother.

"I concentrated on the ones I knew were Mal's favorites," Young said. "It's a fitting project for him. He always liked being simple and direct, so I felt, what better than his music?"

"Power Up," their 17th studio album, whose first single and video, the blues-inflected "Shot in the Dark," were released in October, is overflowing with the same thundering chords and schoolboy sneers that made them legends with albums like "Highway to Hell" and "Back in Black." The latter was also dedicated to a recently deceased essential bandmate, original singer Bon Scott, who died in 1980.

SEE BACK ON PAGE 29

Angus Young of AC/DC performs at Nationwide Arena on Sept. 4, 2016, in Columbus, Ohio.

AP

## AC/DC

Power Up (Columbia)

A new AC/DC record may well be the only good thing to happen in 2020. The legendary Aussies are back with "Power Up," the latest in a long line of electricity-themed albums that not only talk about power but bristle and crackle with it.

It's been 40 years since AC/DC released arguably the best heavy metal album of all time with "Back In Black," but these guys still sound as good as they did then.

For some, that's a bit of a problem: Decades of AC/DC albums have tended to sound like each other, and that's the case with at least part of "Power Up."

The opening track, "Realize," uses almost the same "ah-ah-ah-ah" chant that served as the foundation of 1990's "Thunderstruck." Another new track, "Witch's Spell," uses a similar-sounding guitar line. "Rejection" uses the same four-chord pattern as 1979's "Shot Down In Flames."

But it's all good. I can eat pizza five nights a week, with it tasting the same each night, and it's still awesome.

Not everything here has been heard before. "Kick You When You're Down" has a funky, catchy riff atop pounding drums, and "Demon Fire" is a fast-paced boogie with a riff that burns into your brain with just one listen.

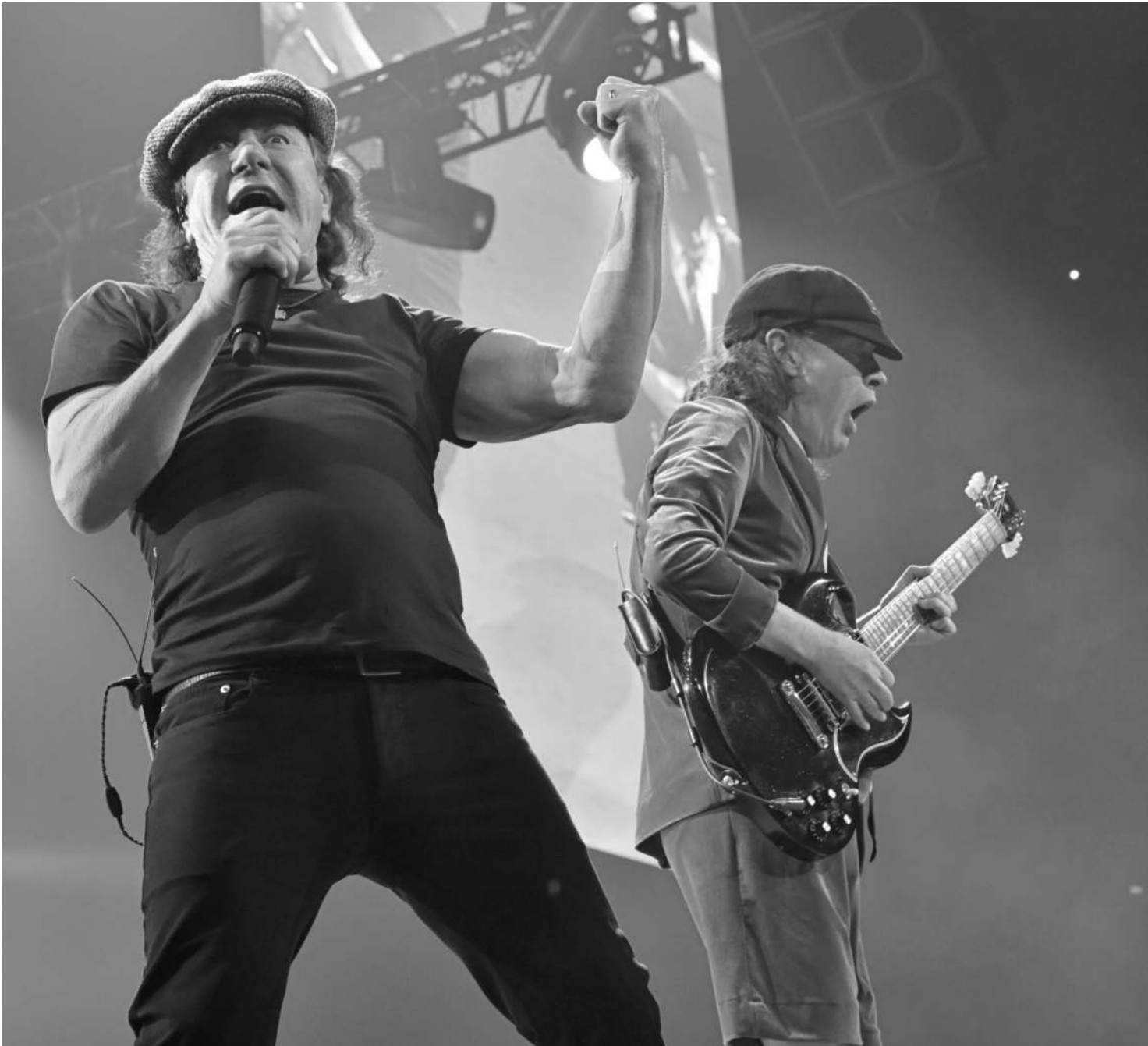
After an extended hearing-related absence that necessitated Guns N' Roses' Axl Rose filling in to finish an AC/DC tour, lead singer Brian Johnson is back at the mic, and his voice, subjected to so much torture over the decades, sounds powerful again.

And no guitar player anywhere sounds quite like Angus Young; the sound of his fingers sliding up and down the strings is as raw as it is instantly recognizable.

— Wayne Parry  
Associated Press



# WEEKEND: MUSIC



ROB GRABOWSKI, INVISION/AP

**Brian Johnson, left, and Angus Young, of AC/DC, perform on the Rock or Bust Tour on Feb. 17, 2016, in Chicago. Johnson was unable to complete the tour because of hearing problems, but is back for the band's new album, "Power Up."**

## Back: Band planned to tour

FROM PAGE 28

“There is the similarity between Bon’s tragedy and Mal’s,” Angus Young said.

With Malcolm Young suffering from the dementia that would lead to his death, his nephew Stevie Young stood in for him on 2014’s “Rock or Bust,” and did it again on “Power Up,” although at 63 he’s hardly the new kid.

“We’ve known Stevie forever and ever. He’s been around us for decades,” bassist Cliff Williams said via Zoom from his home in North Carolina. “So there was no trying to fit him into any kind of thing.”

After a tough tour in 2016 that Johnson couldn’t finish because of hearing loss that had grown increasingly severe, it appeared the classic version of the band might never play together again.

He’s since been equipped with state-of-the-art hearing-aid technology and had been anxious to get back on stage, especially after feeling how well it worked to rehearse with the band at full power.

“It was just a lot of fun to be with the boys, and I felt like I was equipped to actually go out and do something,” Johnson said. “My ammunition belt was full. I



AP

**“Power Up” is dedicated to AC/DC co-founder and guitarist Malcolm Young, who died in 2017.**

was ready to go.”

The album had been recorded in 2018 and early 2019, and the jam sessions came in preparation for the planned release date, early in 2020.

“We rehearsed quite a bit, because we were hoping to be able to maybe do some

**“We’re doing a lot of promotional stuff to let people know, to get the message out that AC/DC’s got a new album. Hopefully to cheer you up.”**

**Angus Young  
AC/DC guitarist**

shows,” Young said. “We’d done a couple of weeks of that, and then a few days later the world started to shut down.”

When the coronavirus reached pandemic levels, the album was shelved and the band went dark, stuck across different continents as they isolated with families and friends.

After nearly a year passed, the band and Columbia Records opted to release it in November.

“We’re doing a lot of promotional stuff to let people know, to get the message out that AC/DC’s got a new album,” Young said. “Hopefully to cheer you up.”

### Kelsey Waldon

They’ll Never Keep Us Down (Oh Boy)

Kelsey Waldon’s “They’ll Never Keep Us Down” is a serviceable homage, as the proud

Kentuckian covers everyone from Nina Simone to Neil Young, and everything from union labor to feelings of freedom.

It’s her own voice and artistry that often struggles to shine through.

Last year Waldon became the first artist to sign to John Prine’s Oh Boy Records in 15 years when the late songwriter took Waldon under his wing. Since then Waldon has done Prine proud, but she doesn’t appear to be aiming for radio play with these relatively listless cover tracks.

Young’s “Ohio” is beautifully handled by Waldon’s collection of accomplished musicians, but her vocals have trouble breaking through the sonic wall and come off as an afterthought.

Waldon’s version of Simone’s “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free” falls similarly short. The peppy country pace doesn’t deliver the passion the song deserves. On “The Law Is for Protection of the People,” a song penned by Kris Kristofferson, Waldon never quite lets her voice rise to a level that would match the fire of the lyrics.

Waldon finally shines on “They’ll Never Keep Us Down,” a pro-union song written by Hazel Dickens in the mid-1970s for the Oscar-winning documentary “Harlan County, USA.” This clearly rings special to Waldon and her feelings for her home state, and this bluegrass composition and pace suits her best.

— Ron Harris  
Associated Press



### Randall Bramblett

Pine Needle Fire (New West)

On “Pine Needle Fire,” Georgia soul man Randall Bramblett’s warm,

weathered tenor gives voice to average folks who are hanging on, and he provides a beat to keep them going.

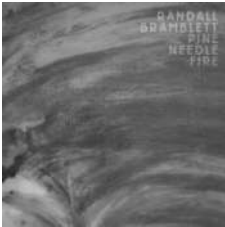
Bramblett laments mortality, the rat race, co-dependency and misplaced passion. His solution? Dance those blues away. Nearly everything comes with an irresistible groove, as has been the case for most of Bramblett’s 45-year recording career. He and his crack crew of studio musicians do swampy, sweaty, Southern-fried funk, and like a great bar band they’re both loose and tight, while riding a gospel undercurrent.

Nick Johnson contributes stinging guitar, and horns — including Bramblett’s tenor sax — add momentum.

“Built to Last” lives up to its title, thanks to a six-note rock riff as its foundation. “Rocket to Nowhere” swings with Steely Dan-style syncopation, references “Kid Charlemagne” and serves up a Fagenesque aside: “At least they didn’t look in the glove compartment.”

Imagine a world where musicians play concerts: These songs would have folks on their feet.

— Steven Wine  
Associated Press



## WEEKEND: TELEVISION

# The great Hallmark escape

Network's holiday movies bring comfort and joy in dark times

BY CHUCK BARNEY  
*The Mercury News*

**R**uthie Caitham's driver's license and other official documentation insist she resides in Vallejo, Calif.

Ah, but when fall and winter roll around, Caitham proudly proclaims that she dwells in "Hallmark Land."

"It's my happy place," she says. "And in these crazy, hateful times, I want to live where people care for each other."

Don't check your GPS. Hallmark Land isn't a spot on a map, but a powerful head rush of feel-good vibes, romantic happily-ever-afters and relentless outpourings of holiday cheer that emanate from the sleighload of made-for-TV Christmas movies annually offered by the Hallmark Channel and its cable sibling, Hallmark Movies & Mysteries.

"I can't help it. They just warm your heart," says Caitham, who has been known to watch 35 or more of the festive flicks at this time of year. And that doesn't include reruns and/or the vintage Hallmark movies she owns on DVD.

Clearly, she's not the only one mainlining this televisual comfort fare. What began as a modest TV experiment has become a full-blown, twinkle-lit, pop-cultural juggernaut enjoyed by millions and mimicked by other outlets like Lifetime, Netflix and UPtv.

Between 2002 and 2008, the Hallmark Channel produced no more than six holiday films per year — and only one in several of those years. In 2010, that number jumped to a dozen, and by 2017, it was up to 20.

This year, across a schedule that kicked off before Halloween, the two Hallmark networks will combine to gift fans with 40 new original yuletide movies — matching last year's output, which cumulatively drew 70 million unduplicated viewers.

Don't be surprised if the audience grows bigger this winter. After all, 2020 has been marked by political and social turbulence and a health crisis that has left so many of us anxious and stressed. Hallmark holiday movies, with their abundance of comfort and joy, surely will be counted on to deliver some much-needed relief.

"Our movies are rooted in warmth and positivity, meaningful connections, family gatherings," says Michelle Vicary, the executive vice president of programming for Crown Media Family Networks, who hopes it's a "winning formula" that will bring viewers "much-needed levity and holiday cheer at the end of a tough year."

Those scenes of meaningful connections and family gatherings? They now come when holiday gatherings across America



Crown Media photos

**In "Chateau Christmas," a pianist (Merritt Patterson) returns home to spend the holidays with her family. While there, her former bandmate (Luke Macfarlane) convinces her to headline the annual Christmas concert, and working together brings back old feelings.**



**Game designers (Mallory Jansen and Tyler Hynes) create a city-wide scavenger hunt and start falling for each other in the process in "On the 12th Date of Christmas."**

figure to be greatly downsized — or curtailed altogether. And Hallmark's largely predictable storylines? They arrive amid highly unpredictable times.

The Hallmark formula is simple, on the surface at least: Give the audience what it wants, including familiar stories stuffed with unlikely romances, holiday homecomings, charmingly snow-covered hamlets and life-affirming tales of redemption.

And by the end of two hours, good triumphs over evil, the requisite love connections are made, Scrooge-like tendencies are squelched, Christmas is saved from ruin and everything is tied up in a big, bright, beautiful bow. Last year, that bow also wrapped up two Hanukkah movies, Hallmark's first.

Along the way, Hallmark capitalizes by going against the grain — offering a cozy alternative to the dark and edgy dramas that are lathered over much of television, and populating its casts with people in their 40s and 50s, a demographic underserved by the broadcast networks.



**When a woman (Krystal Joy Brown) offers a stranded mother and son (Bradley Rose) shelter in a blizzard, she learns that they are royals in "One Royal Holiday."**

And many of its go-to leading ladies, like Lacey Chabert, Candace Cameron Bure and Holly Robinson Peete, have become

part of the seasonal TV family over the years, making visits as regularly as Charlie Brown and Rudolph.

"We are honored to work with some of the best talent in the entertainment industry," Vicary says. "They each have amazing bodies of work with loyal fan bases who also loved the (previous shows) in which they starred. Many of our stars tell me that when they are recognized in public, they are thanked by viewers for the Hallmark Channel movies they make. That makes me so proud."

Of course, the holiday films have their Grinchy detractors. Critics call them "corny" and "sappy." Late-night comedians and "Saturday Night Live" have gleefully mocked them. Even Caitham glumly reveals that her husband "rolls his eyes" when the holiday onslaught begins. (He undoubtedly will be getting a lump of coal in his stocking.)

Vacaville, Calif., resident Lisa Rico used to be among the naysayers. That was until early this year, when a longtime friend, Debbie Segura, was in the final stages of a battle with terminal brain cancer. During the months before her death, Rico would drop by and spend some TV time with Segura, who only wanted to watch Hallmark movies.

"It was a really lovely and calming experience," Rico recalls. "They made her feel good. And considering that she was in so much pain, that's really saying something."

Rico soon came to believe that such films "serve a beautiful purpose." And since Segura's passing in April, Rico has often found herself watching more of them — with an 8-by-10 photo of her pal perched right near the TV.

"I'm still watching them with her," Rico says. "So often this year, I just can't bring myself to watch the news. The world is so dark and depressing. So I go and find the Hallmark Channel. There are times when you just want to tune out everything else and watch someone fall in love."

Obviously, many fans — so-called "Hallmarkies" — will be yearning for the same thing, as their favorite channels unleash a blizzard of films that includes cheeky titles like "On the 12th Date of Christmas," "Jingle Bell Bride" and "Never Kiss a Man in a Christmas Sweater." In addition, the 2020 slate appears to be more diverse. It features a gay couple trying to adopt ("The Christmas House," starring Jonathan Bennett and Brad Harder) as well as a woman who discovers via a DNA test that she's Jewish ("Love, Lights, Hanukkah!" with Mia Kirshner, Ben Savage and Marilu Henner).

"This year, our holiday table is bigger and more welcoming than ever," Vicary says. "The movies reflect our most diverse representation of talent, stories and families."

Hallmark is also expanding its holiday empire with, among other things, wines, books, a new Monopoly game, "Countdown to Christmas"-themed tea tins, special apparel and, of course, enough reruns of past classics to keep viewers experiencing a potent case of mistletoe merriment through January.

That's all fine with Caitham, who encourages others to jump on the Hallmark bandwagon.

"If you need to take a break from reality and go to fantasyland and feel good about the world," she says, "this is for you."

# WEEKEND: TELEVISION

## NEW ON DVD

“**Beverly Hills Cop**”: The 1984 comedy starring Eddie Murphy as a police officer avenging his best friend’s murder has been remastered in 4K.

“**Blade**”: The 1998 action/horror film starring Wesley Snipes as a vampire hunter out to seek justice for his mother’s death is being rereleased in a 4K Ultra HD/Blu-ray Combo Pack.

“**Bugs Bunny 80th Anniversary Collection**”: The collection includes 60 theatrical shorts and interviews with stars, animators and historians centering on Looney Toons’ lovable stinker.

“**Coming to America**”: The 1988 comedy starring Eddie Murphy as an African prince seeking a bride in the U.S. has been remastered in 4K.

“**The Curse of Frankenstein**”: In this 1957 horror film, Dr. Frankenstein (Peter Cushing) faces the consequences of bringing a deadly creature back to life (Christopher Lee).

“**The Golden Child**”: The 1986 film starring Eddie Murphy as a social worker sent to find a humanity-saving kid has been remastered and is available on Blu-ray for the first time.

“**Green Eggs and Ham: The Complete First Season**”: The animated series loosely based on the Dr. Seuss story follows the adventures of Sam-I-Am (Adam DeVine).

“**The Hobbit**” and “**The Lord of the Rings**” trilogies: Both sets of epic J.R.R. Tolkien tales directed by Peter Jackson are being released on 4K UHD.

“**Holiday Affair**”: A store clerk (Robert Mitchum) falls for a young mother (Janet Leigh) attempting a Christmas shopping scheme in this 1949 rom-com.

“**Perry Mason: The Complete First Season**”: The HBO reboot of the 1957-66 legal drama stars Matthew Rhys as the broody defense lawyer.

“**Popeye**”: Robin Williams’ 1980 take on the sailor man is being released on Blu-ray for the first time with new content in celebration of its 40th anniversary.

“**Top Gun**”: The 1986 action/adventure film starring Tom Cruise, Val Kilmer and Kelly McGillis as pilots with the need for speed is being released in a limited-edition 4K Ultra HD/Blu-ray Combo Steelbook.

“**Trading Places**”: The 1983 prince-and-pauper tale starring Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd has been remastered. Also available on DVD:

“**Chernobyl**”: The Emmy-winning HBO miniseries follows the tragic 1986 nuclear explosion and aftermath in Ukraine. Stars Jared Harris, Stellan Skarsgard, Emily Watson, Jessie Buckley and Paul Ritter.

“**Dune Drifter**”: A pilot (Phoebe Sparrow) fights to survive on a bleak new planet.

“**Evergreen**”: A couple (Olivia Grace Applegate and David Bianchi) face relationship challenges while on a winter holiday vacation in a remote cabin.

“**Made in Italy**”: A father (Liam Neeson) and son (Micheal Richardson) attempt to reconnect while fixing up a run-down house.

“**The Neighborhood: Season Two**”: The hit CBS series starring Cedric the Entertainer as a skeptical neighbor of a white Midwestern transplant (Max Greenfield) in a rough area of Los Angeles returns.

“**The Rental**”: Vacationing couples begin to suspect they’re being watched. Alison Brie, Sheila Vand, Dan Stevens, Jeremy Allen White and Anthony Molina-ri.

— Katie Foran-McHale/TNS



Peacock

From left, Mac Morris (Mitchell Hoog), Jamie Spano (Belmont Cameli), DeVante (Dexter Darden), Lexi (Josie Totah), Aisha (Alycia Pascual-Pena) and Daisy (Haskiri Velazquez) are the new “Saved by the Bell” class.

# Back to Bayside

‘Saved by the Bell’ fans should take notice of Peacock’s culturally relevant reboot

BY DAVID BETANCOURT  
*The Washington Post*

Remixing “Saved by the Bell” is nothing new. Making the remix slap? That’s something else entirely.

On Peacock’s new “Saved by the Bell” reboot, which started streaming Nov. 25, a funnier and more culturally relevant reimagining of Bayside High will make even the most die-hard SBTB fans take notice.

Many will probably give the series a try because of well-advertised appearances by the original cast: Mark-Paul Gosselaar as Zack Morris; Tiffani Thiessen as Kelly Kapowski, who is Zack’s wife; Elizabeth Berkley as Jessie Spano; and Mario Lopez as A.C. Slater are all set to return, with a confirmed cameo appearance later this season from Lark Voorhies as Lisa Turtle.

On the reboot, Zack is now the governor of California. Gov. Z stumbles through fiscal mistake after fiscal mistake until he has obliterated the education budget, forcing less-fortunate students across California to transfer to wealthier schools — like Bayside — when their own are shut down.

Even though the show wouldn’t be the same without Gosselaar returning, he’s not around too much the first few episodes (only three episodes were made available for this review). Part of the shock is how well the show clicks without him. While Zack and Kelly may have always been the draw in the day, SBTB’s other couple, Jessie and Slater, are the Bellers pulling full-time duty on this show.

They’re no longer a thing, but both work at Bayside, Jessie as a counselor and Slat-

er as a — what else? — gym teacher. Jessie’s son attends the school and Slater still calls her “mama,” so yes, it’s awkward.

However, the key ingredient to what makes this new series work isn’t the majority of the original cast reassembling like the Avengers, but the standout cast of young newcomers that work so well together, you barely notice when the OG Baysiders aren’t around.

The heir to the Zack Morris throne? His son, Mac Morris (duh), played air-headedly well by Mitchell Hoog, who, when we first meet him, is sliding down a school handrail wearing a sweater so expensive he looks like Chris Evans’ stunt double in “Knives Out.” He is the peak representation of the Bayside rich kids who are too oblivious to realize not everyone has it like them. A Zack clone? Yes. Bleach blond and funny? Yes. Heroically biracial? No.

Jesse’s aforementioned son, Jamie (Belmont Cameli), is tall just like her, and ... that’s about it. Whereas Jesse was the brains of her crew, Jamie is a jock and not particularly bright, which leads us to a matter of paternity: Where is Daddy? Does Slater have an “I am your father moment” down the line? (Sorry, Just fell down an SBTB wormhole.)

Lexi (Josie Totah) is the most popular girl in school, and openly transgender. Totah plays the token rich cheerleader ready to defend the honor of every Kardashian, and is at her funniest when she’s trying to be serious. DeVante (Dexter Darden) is a gentle giant who does his best not to be noticed, and while he has no interest in being the new Black kid at school, he’s intrigued by the potential

rebirth a change in scenery offers. Because he towers over his classmates, everyone thinks he’s destined for greatness on the football field, but he’s got a hidden talent that shows his star shining brightest elsewhere.

What really makes this new “Saved by the Bell” show next level, though, are its two main protagonists, the Latina dynamic duo of Daisy (Haskiri Velazquez) and Aisha (Alycia Pascual-Pena). These two real-life native New Yorkers (Velazquez is Puerto Rican and Dominican, Pascual-Pena is Dominican) shine bright in Bayside’s Hollywood lights as best friends forced into the Bayside life after their old school closes.

Having these chicas take center stage in a new SBTB world matters. And it is exciting to think of those who will see themselves in these characters.

Here in this new streaming world, Velazquez and Pascual-Pena show us what we’ve been missing with their outstanding chemistry and comedic chops, switching between English and Spanish with undeniable flair. And the fact that Velazquez is given SBTB’s only superpower — the timeout that freezes space and time and allows her to speak to the viewing audience — as well as the legendarily large cellphone ... well, move over, Miles Morales.

The show has many lighter moments, of course, including the use of curse words, deep-cut cameos (Mr. Dewey as the math teacher!), and an updated version of the classic theme song, so don’t worry about history being completely rewritten. This new class gets a passing grade.

## WEEKEND: HEALTH &amp; FITNESS

## Fear the burn

Kitchen injuries on the rise as the pandemic incites more people to stay home and cook

BY KATHERINE ELLISON

Special to The Washington Post

Holly Koscinski used to like to multitask, until one evening last March when she was watching “The Great British Bake Off,” boiling water for pasta with Alfredo sauce and cleaning the microwave over her gas stove. As she leaned forward, her shirt went up in flames, and when she tried to pull it off, her arm caught fire, leading to third-degree burns over nearly one-fifth of her body. She spent the next 17 days in an intensive care unit.

Today, Koscinski, a 42-year-old elementary school speech therapist, hopes she can be a cautionary tale for friends and neighbors in her small town of Yerington, Nev.

It’s good timing. For much of the pandemic, while Instagram feeds have filled with “stress baking” photos of sourdough bread and cakes, burn units have filled up with injured cooks.

From Sacramento to Washington, D.C., and even as far away as Israel and Australia, more people have been spending more time in their kitchens, resulting in more fires and burns.

The number of accidents has been climbing with colder weather and the approach of Thanksgiving, traditionally the worst day of the year for kitchen fires. In 2018, with restaurants open and no lockdowns, cooking fires averaged 470 a day but on Thanksgiving Day shot up to 1,630, an increase of nearly 250% over average, according to the National Fire Protection Association. (On Christmas Day, the increase was 59%.)

“This is a time of high stress, and cooking is one way to relieve it,” said burn surgeon Tina Palmieri, director of the Firefighters Burn Institute Regional Burn Center at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, Calif. “Unfortunately, it’s also a record year for burn injuries.”

At Palmieri’s center, one of the largest burn treatment facilities in the western United States, cooking-accident burns have even outnumbered injuries from the major wildfires earlier this year, Palmieri said. Her team has treated 92 serious cooking-related burns since January vs. 79 in 2019, with a sixfold increase from March to May. An additional 122 patients have been treated in the emergency room so far this year.

At MedStar Washington Hospital Center in Washington, D.C., burn surgeon Laura Johnson said

her team saw more than a 40% increase in cooking-fire burns during the first three months of the pandemic. About 50 patients with serious cooking-fire burns were admitted from August to October.

A moment’s distraction can lead to lifelong discomfort. Besides leaving scars, third-degree burns can cause nerve damage and decreased sensation, Palmieri said.

“One of the most difficult things that hardly anyone talks about is the itching,” she added. “It can continue no matter what medication we give for it.”

Koscinski’s experience is common, Palmieri said. A cook will get distracted and lose track of something on the stove. Loose, billowing clothing can catch fire. Or sometimes a pan of grease can ignite. The cook’s first instinct may be to grab the pan to take it outside, risking a spill of burning liquid on the way. Often people try to put out grease fires by throwing water on them, which can splatter hot oil.

“The last thing you want to do is throw water on it,” Johnson said. “We’re trying to encourage people to have something close at hand to smother the fire, like a lid, or baking soda.”

Palmieri and other U.S. burn doctors said older people and people who have been drinking have been overrepresented among their patients, although cooking fires can affect anyone.

“It’s been interesting to me how often the accidents with burns expose other problems,” said Johnson, at the MedStar Center, adding that a unit staff psychologist had been seeing many patients for anxiety.

In Melbourne, Australia, Heather Cleland, director of the Victorian Adult Burns Service at the Alfred, took to Facebook in April to warn of a “concerning” increase in patients with severe cooking-related burns.

“You don’t ever want to end up at The Alfred with a serious burns injury, but especially not



now,” wrote Cleland, who has worried that burn patients may take up intensive-care beds needed for coronavirus victims.

Josef Haik, director of the Sheba Medical Center’s burn unit near Tel Aviv, Israel, which treats about 300 people a year, said he has seen more children than adults being burned in kitchens, a problem also cited by European doctors he talks to regularly on WhatsApp.

“The adults have been working while the kids have been alone in the house, or the kids are cooking and not used to it,” he said.

A widely viewed video on Reddit posted in the early weeks of the pandemic shows a couple dancing while cooking and knocking a pot off the stove. This month, a Reddit user reported

that she had first-degree burns on her face after her hair caught on fire while cooking.

“I took my skin and my God-given features for granted,” she wrote.

Long before COVID-19, cooking has been the leading cause of reported home fires, in recent years causing an annual average of 172,900 such fires, with 550 deaths and 4,820 injuries. The National Fire Protection Association issued a prescient warning last March about the heightened danger of “distracted cooking” while more people are at home. This month, it publicized safety tips timed for Thanksgiving, including:

■ Never leave the kitchen while cooking on the stovetop.

■ When cooking items in the oven, stay home and check on them regularly.

■ Keep flammable objects such as oven mitts, wooden utensils, food wrappers and towels away from direct contact with the cooking area.

■ Avoid wearing long sleeves and loose clothes while cooking.

■ If your oven catches fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed. Only open the door once you are confident the fire is

completely out. Call the fire department if you are in doubt.

■ Keep children at least three feet away from the stove and areas where hot food or drink is being prepared or served.

Palmieri added her own warning to avoid using thin aluminum foil pans, which can crinkle and spill.

Johnson said anyone who has been seriously burned should seek care at a facility with burn expertise, even as she acknowledged that some may be trying to avoid trips to the doctor during the pandemic.

“Even small burns can have devastating implications if left untended,” she said.

Koscinski said she is cooking less often since her accident. Her eight-month-old wounds are still painful, and the sound of the clicking ignition on her stove makes her jumpy. In her small town and the school where she has worked for 17 years, most people know what happened to her, she said, adding that she will show the scars on her belly if asked.

“I’m telling everyone I know: Don’t get distracted while cooking,” she said, “or wherever there’s a fire. Period.”

**“This is a time of high stress, and cooking is one way to relieve it. Unfortunately it’s also a record year for burn injuries.”**

burn surgeon Tina Palmieri

Firefighters Burn Institute Regional Burn Center in Sacramento, Calif.

# WEEKEND: FAMILY



DAYNA SMITH/For The Washington Post

Rocio Caballero-Gill helps her son Giordon, 6, with his remote school assignments at their home in Ashburn, Va.

## Sharing the responsibilities

Virtual learning is straining parent-teacher relationships, students' success

By ASHLEY FETTERS  
*The Washington Post*

Renee Enyart, 28, was across the room from her sixth-grader when it happened. She glanced over and saw her daughter Emi, who was virtually attending science class at their home in Winter Haven, Fla., reaching for her laptop’s power cable. Suddenly, a sharp voice rang out from the speakers.

“It was just an instant scolding: ‘I told you to look at the screen. You know what you’re supposed to be doing. I shouldn’t have to tell you guys,’” Enyart recalled.

Tears sprang into Emi’s eyes. “I didn’t know she was unmuted, and I just told her, ‘Go ahead and let it die.’ Because it just annoyed me — she was still paying attention. She was grabbing our charger, trying to be present in the class,” Enyart said. “I was actually kind of glad that the teacher did hear it, because for a second it was like, ‘Oh, wow.’ She instantly apologized.”

In a normal year, a parent-teacher skirmish over discipline might unfold in slow motion through secondhand accounts and private conversations outside of school hours. But in 2020, this type of clash has become familiar to parents whose kids are learning remotely and teachers whose classrooms have gone virtual.

In September, a video of a parent angrily confronting a teacher over the teacher’s comments about George Floyd’s death went viral. Elsewhere online, parents are expressing alarm about what

they’ve overheard: that their teachers don’t seem to know how the electoral college works, how many countries are in North America, or whether plants are living things, for example.

Meanwhile, online forums such as the subreddit r/Teachers, where teachers often share stories, encouragement and strategies, have filled up with frustrated and incredulous posts about parents’ antics: asking a child to do chores during class, helping a kid on tests or asking a teacher to refrain from drinking beverages near their laptop so that their own child doesn’t attempt to do the same.

It’s no secret that everyone involved in distance learning is stressed out. Teachers are struggling to get to know students and families they’ve never met in real life. Students haven’t seen their school friends in months. And according to a Pew Research Center study released in October, 68% of parents whose kids are learning online reported being concerned about their children falling behind, 12% more than parents whose kids are learning in person. But one powerful determinant of a student’s success is the quality of the relationship between teacher and parent or guardian — and as that relationship has gone virtual, it has often been strained.

Teachers have had to adjust to class instruction being fully visible to parents at all times, and parents have had to shoulder more responsibility for the development of their children’s habits and behaviors, often while fulfilling their work responsibilities. As a result, par-

ents and teachers have had to learn new ways to collaborate for the sake of the kids in their shared care.

“The quality of the parent-teacher relationship is really a pretty significant driver of some of the outcomes that we hope to see in children as they progress through school,” said Susan Sheridan, director of the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families & Schools at the University of Nebraska, adding that a strong parent-teacher relationship creates a sense of security and stability for the child.

So how to alleviate some of the strain on the teacher-parent relationship? For starters, Sheridan advises parents who’ve overheard something they find objectionable to speak to the teacher one on one, away from students and outside of class time. She also advises teachers to set ground rules for onlooking parents: For example, parents are encouraged to stay nearby to make sure their kids are participating but shouldn’t butt in on the video feed unless there’s an emergency.

“That’s the kind of thing that I think needs to happen really early on,” she said, “not in the context of a parent acting out in the middle of a Zoom class.”

Above all, however, she advises teachers and parents to remember that they share responsibilities for remote learning but each have different roles in promoting it: Parents make sure their kids are present, awake and paying attention, and teachers plan and provide the instruction.

“The quality of the parent-teacher relationship is really a pretty significant driver of some of the outcomes that we hope to see in children as they progress through school.”

Susan Sheridan

director of the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families & Schools

## THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



# Fear the holiday shopping vortex

I’ve never understood the thrill of camping out, standing in long lines and elbowing fellow shoppers on Black Friday, just to get a few bucks off of an InstaPot or Nintendo Switch. Frankly, I’d rather stick a hot poker in my eye than fight the holiday crowds the day after Thanksgiving. I’d prefer to suck leftover turkey from my teeth and watch old movies.

So when the media reported that Black Friday had been rendered “irrelevant” by the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, I felt vindicated and relieved.

However, I soon learned that Black Friday had not been canceled after all — it was merely “reinvented.” Instead of one day of holiday shopping mania, the consumer mayhem formerly known as Black Friday had been stretched out over October, November and December. The prolonged agony now included online and in-store discounts, incentives for curbside pickup to avoid delivery delays, and “Health Ambassadors” to monitor occupancy limits and enforce safety protocols. Oh, joy.

As a woman with beefy upper arms and a habit of losing receipts, I am a firm believer in trying on and eyeballing items before buying. I would normally insist on shopping in store, but the pandemic restrictions have forced even me to bend my own rules. Against my better judgment, I reluctantly tried online shopping to buy my 2020 Christmas gifts.

Once on my laptop, I was sucked in by flashy digital ads promising “Forty percent off for a limited time!” and “Free shipping with coupon code!” For a moment, I thought that I might actually save money. After creating accounts and accepting cookies that will no doubt fill my inbox with countless junk emails for months to come, I filled various online shopping carts with gifts for my family.

“Who knew online shopping would be so easy and affordable!” I thought, just before keying in the first coupon code. I pressed the return key, excited to see my savings, when I suddenly found myself caught in a digital vortex.

An agonizing two hours later, I had discovered that one coupon was for in-store purchases only, three had expired, and although another WAS for online purchases, it only applied IF you used a store credit card, which we didn’t have. I tried to avail myself of the advertised military discount, but it only worked on Tuesdays, and then, only if I’d been pre-approved after scanning and uploading a copy of my husband’s form DD-214. Monday discounts were for first responders; Wednesdays were for seniors; Thursdays were for medical workers; Fridays were for left-handed dyslexics; Saturdays were for orphaned redheads and Sundays were for polka dancers. Or something like that.

In the end, only the free shipping discount worked, and after completing the transaction, I realized that the prices had been jacked up to compensate for the complicated Black Friday discount schemes. Feeling defeated, I longed for the pre-Internet holidays of my youth, when gift lists were shorter, shopping was limited to a couple of weeks in December and people gave simple items that were appreciated.

Back then, we made crafts like macrame owl wall hangings and pencil caddies made from mayonnaise jars. We crocheted sweater vests, made crooked cutting boards in shop class and fashioned ashtrays out of clay. And if we weren’t crafty, we went to department stores and bought our loved ones modestly-priced Avon perfumes, English Leather cologne, handkerchiefs, ties, tea towels, record albums, Nerf balls, Slinkys and mood rings. Ah, the good old days ...

On second thought, I hope this doesn’t give my family the wrong idea. Let’s be clear: I do NOT want to open a box on Christmas that contains anything made out of macaroni noodles and yarn. If you are looking for a gift for me, I recommend you search online and use a coupon code. Size 10, roomy in the sleeves.



## FACES

# Grammy history in the making

## Guyton first Black woman nominated for best country solo performance

BY NARDINE SAAD  
*Los Angeles Times*

After a year further inflamed by a nationwide reckoning with race, country music artist Mickey Guyton made Grammy Awards history Tuesday when she was nominated for best country solo performance.

The first-time nominee, who was recognized for her autobiographical song “Black Like Me,” became the first Black female solo artist to earn a Grammy nod in a country-music category. It’s a belated honor considering the genre’s debt to the Black banjo tradition and veteran stars such as Charley Pride.

“I am speechless,” Guyton said in a statement Tuesday. “This nomination is a testament to never give up and live your truth. I can’t think of a better song to make history with than ‘Black Like Me,’ and I hope that I can continue to

help open doors for other women and people who look like me.”

The Texas native co-wrote the summer song with Nathan Chapman, Fraser Churchill and Emma Davidson-Dillon at a cross-genre writing camp in 2019, according to Universal Music’s Capitol Records Nashville.

“Black Like Me” is featured on her “Bridges” EP.

The “polished country-pop singer has largely been ignored by radio and, as a Black woman, falls into a demographic vastly underrepresented in the format,” Jewly Hight wrote in *The Times* in April.

When the Grammys take place Jan. 31, Guyton, 37, will face off with Eric Church (“Stick That In Your Country Song”), Brandy Clark (“Who You Thought I Was”), Vince Gill (“When My Amy Prays”) and Miranda Lambert (“Bluebird”).

Guyton’s “Black Like Me,”



JASON KEMPIN/TNS

**Mickey Guyton is the first Black woman to get a Grammy nomination for Best country solo performance.**

which draws on the country tradition of resisting classist condescension and connects it to her life experience, is about how she struggled to fit in and how her father strived to provide middle-class stability for their family.

“It’s a hard life on easy street / Just white-painted picket fences far as you can see / If you think we live in the land of the free / You should try to be Black like me,” she sings.

Also for the first time in Gram-

mys history, the best country album category was filled with women — making a clear statement by the Recording Academy at a moment when female artists have struggled to get their music played on country radio.

## Wallen gets do-over from ‘SNL’

BY CHRISTIE D’ZURILLA  
*Los Angeles Times*

“Saturday Night Live” is giving country singer Morgan Wallen a do-over after booting him from its Oct. 10 lineup over COVID-19 safety concerns.

The “More Than My Hometown” singer will return to the sketch-comedy series for its Dec. 5 show. Wallen was replaced in October by Jack White after video clips surfaced on social media showing him partying mask-free amid tightly packed crowds in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

“Let’s try this again,” Wallen tweeted Wednesday, right after “SNL” tweeted out its planned hosts and guests for next month.

In an apology video on Instagram after his cancellation, a contrite Wallen — who recently won new artist of the year at the 2020 CMA Awards — said “SNL” honcho Lorne Michaels let him know they would find another time to make up the appearance.

“My actions this past weekend were pretty short-sighted, and they have obviously affected my long-term goals and my dreams,” the 27-year-old said in the Oct. 7



JASON KEMPIN/TNS

**Morgan Wallen will perform Dec. 5 on “Saturday Night Live.”**

video, adding that he respected the show’s decision regarding the COVID-19 transmission risk he would have presented.

“And on a more personal note,” he added, “I think I have some growing up to do.

“I think I’ve lost myself a little bit. I’m trying to find joy in the wrong places and it’s left me with less joy. ... I’m going to take a step back from the spotlight for a little while and go work on myself.”

## Duchess of Sussex reveals she had a miscarriage

BY JILL LAWLESS  
*Associated Press*

The Duchess of Sussex has revealed that she had a miscarriage in July, giving a personal account of the traumatic experience in hope of helping others.

Meghan described the miscarriage in an opinion piece in *The New York Times* on Wednesday, writing that “I knew, as I clutched my firstborn child, that I was losing my second.”

The duchess, 39, said she was sharing her story to help break the silence around an all-too-common tragedy. Britain’s National Health Service says about one in eight pregnancies in which a woman is aware she is pregnant ends in miscarriage.

“Losing a child means carrying an almost unbearable grief, experienced by many but talked about by few,” Meghan wrote. “In being invited to share our pain, together we take the first steps toward healing.”

In a startlingly intimate account of her experience, the duchess described how tragedy struck on a “morning that began as ordinarily as any other day: Make breakfast. Feed the dogs. Take vitamins. Find that missing sock. Pick up the rogue crayon that rolled under the table. Throw my hair in a ponytail before getting my son from his crib.”



KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/AP

**Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, shown March 5, shared this week that Meghan had a miscarriage in July.**

“After changing his diaper, I felt a sharp cramp. I dropped to the floor with him in my arms, humming a lullaby to keep us both calm, the cheerful tune a stark contrast to my sense that something was not right.”

Later, she said, she “lay in a hospital bed, holding my husband’s hand. I felt the clamminess of his palm and kissed his knuckles, wet from both our tears. Staring at the cold white walls, my eyes glazed over. I tried to imagine how we’d heal.”

Buckingham Palace said it was “a deeply personal matter we would not comment on.”

Sophie King, a midwife at U.K. child-loss charity Tommy’s, said miscarriage and stillbirth remained “a real taboo in society, so mothers like Meghan sharing their stories is a vital step in breaking down that stigma and shame. Her honesty and openness today send a powerful message to anyone who loses a baby: this may feel incredibly lonely, but you are not alone,” King said.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Lawyer accused of stealing from vets charity

**CT** NEW BRITAIN — A former Connecticut lawyer was charged by state authorities with embezzling nearly \$1 million from a charity for military veterans and their families, just two weeks after he was sentenced to more than three years in prison on a federal charge for the same crimes.

On Nov. 9, Kevin Creed, 69, of Litchfield, was sentenced on a federal fraud charge to the prison time and ordered to pay \$1.4 million restitution to Fisher House Foundation in Connecticut, a chapter of a national charity that builds homes near veterans medical centers where families can stay for free while their loved ones undergo treatment.

State prosecutors said Creed stole \$985,000 from the charity and used the money for his own purposes.

Creed, an Army veteran and former state trooper, gave up his right to practice law in Connecticut last year.

## Judge: Offensive vanity plates can't be banned

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — California can't enforce a ban on vanity license plates it considers "offensive to good taste and decency" because that violates freedom of speech, a federal judge ruled.

U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar ruled in a case against Department of Motor Vehicles Director Steve Gordon on behalf of five Californians who were denied permission to put their messages on personalized license plates.

They included an Army veteran who wanted to note his nickname and love of wolves with "OG-WOOLF" but was refused because the DMV said the OG might be construed as a reference to "original gangster."

The judge said the personalized messages were types of personal expression, not "government speech," and therefore regulations governing them "must be both viewpoint-neutral and reasonable."

## Church organization pays medical debts

**OK** OKLAHOMA CITY — Medical debts totaling more than \$5.2 million owed by more than 3,200 families in Kansas and Oklahoma were paid through a project of the United Church of Christ Kansas-Oklahoma Conference, church officials said.

The money was sent to New York-based RIP Medical Debt, a nonprofit organization that purchased the debt at a discount and forgave the amount owed.

The average amount forgiven per household was \$1,612.54, according to the church. The church does not know who the recipients



KRISTOPHER RADDER, THE BRATTLEBORO (Vt.) REFORMER/AP

# Turkey baster

**John Marston, co-owner of Leslie's Tavern in Rockingham, Vt., pours juices onto turkey legs that he is slow cooking to serve to people on Thanksgiving. Leslie's Tavern is preparing 120 meals and giving about 50 free to people in need in the community.**

are, said spokesperson Connie Larkman.

## Inmate captured more than a week after escape

**MI** EATON RAPIDS — A Lansing-area jail inmate who had escaped was captured after leading officers on two separate vehicle chases, police said.

Michael McKerchie, 32, was captured after he was first spotted at a convenience store before he fled, crashed his truck in a cemetery, fled on foot and stole another vehicle.

Officers who received a report that someone had stolen a truck in the area then located that vehicle, stopped it and arrested McKerchie, the Eaton County Sheriff's Department said.

McKerchie had escaped from the Ingham County jail Nov. 12, when he dismantled his cell window, sneaked out of the jail, stole a truck and fled the area, police said.

## Vandals try to pull down McKinley statue

**IL** CHICAGO — Vandals tried to topple a Chicago park's statue of President William McKinley using a rope tethered to a car, police said.

The attempt to pull down the statue at McKinley Park failed, but police said the statue was

## THE CENSUS

**188** The number of pairs of Air Jordan sneakers seized during a Long Island, N.Y., drug investigation that will be auctioned off. The Office of General Services said the sneakeres, along with Michael Jordan basketball jerseys and other sports memorabilia, will be auctioned at eBay's NYSSore.com over the next few weeks. Some items come with verified certificates of authenticity, the agency said.

spray-painted with graffiti that WGN-TV reported included the words "Land Back."

McKinley was president from 1897 to 1901 and his push for westward expansion is now widely criticized as racist, for pushing Indigenous people off their land, WBBM-TV reported.

Chicago police did not have a description of whomever targeted the McKinley statue.

## Animal shelter rescues 11 dogs from field

**IN** MUNCIE — Nearly a dozen dogs were rounded up and rescued from a field in eastern Indiana.

Some of the dogs had to be pulled from a Delaware County drainage pile, the Star Press of Muncie reported.

The Muncie Animal Shelter was called by someone who saw the dogs running in the field. Animal shelter director Ethan Browning said the dogs possibly were abandoned, appeared terrified and were behaving defensively.

Ten of the dogs were chihuahua-type mix breeds. One was a

mixed-breed terrier. The dogs were were receiving full medical checkups.

## Man convicted of pulling down religious monument

**MT** KALISPELL — A Montana man was convicted of using a chain and a pickup truck to topple a monument commemorating the Ten Commandments.

Anthony Craig Weimer, 30, was found guilty of felony criminal mischief in Flathead County District Court, The Flathead Beacon reported. His sentencing is scheduled for Jan. 21.

Weimer admitted to chaining the granite monument to his truck and pulling it into Main Street in Kalispell on June 27. He dragged the monument several feet before leaving it in the street in front of the Flathead County Justice Center in the northwest Montana city.

## Weather brings surge of cold-stunned turtles

**MA** QUINCY — The onset of cold weather in

New England led to a surge of cold-stunned turtles becoming stranded on Cape Cod beaches, marine scientists said.

The turtles — Kemp's ridleys, loggerheads, and leatherbacks — are treated at the New England Aquarium's sea turtle hospital for life-threatening medical conditions that are a result of weeks of hypothermia and the inability to feed. Once they're well enough, they are released back into the ocean.

## Cemetery, church among sites named to register

**TN** NASHVILLE — A cemetery, a church and an old post office were among six properties in Tennessee named to the National Register of Historic Places.

The six locations were placed on the national list of cultural resources worthy of preservation, The Tennessee Historical Commission said in a news release.

Three named to the register were Millennium Manor, a granite, concrete and marble home built between 1938 and 1946 in Alcoa; Mt. Olive Cemetery, a historic African American burial site dating back to 1817 in Clarksville; and First Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, a Gothic Revival-style church built in 1887 in Dayton.

# HEROES WORK HERE



If you're a Veteran looking for a challenging and rewarding career, the Army & Air Force Exchange Service wants you.

Committed to hiring 50,000 Veterans and military spouses, the Exchange offers unmatched employment benefits including an Associate Transfer Program, spousal hiring preferences, and benefits retention throughout your career.



LEARN MORE ABOUT EXCHANGE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AT [APPLYMYEXCHANGE.COM](https://applymyexchange.com)

# HEROES SHOP HERE

All honorably discharged Veterans are eligible to shop their military exchanges online, tax-free for life.

The Department of Defense expanded in-store military exchange and commissary shopping privileges as well as MWR resale facility use to all Veterans with service connected disabilities.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE BENEFITS AT [SHOPMYEXCHANGE.COM/VETS](https://shopmyexchange.com/vets)



PROUD PARTICIPATING PARTNER OF  
**AMERICA'S GAME**



3:00 p.m. ET on CBS

Stripes

SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating the European Business Market





Transportation

944

VEHICLE SHIPPING SERVICES

- International Shipping
- Import & Export
- Inland trucking (U.S. & Europe)
- Door to door pick-up/delivery service

- Customs clearance
- All Risk Marine Insurance
- Auto Insurance (Germany only)

For Further Information Please Contact

|                                        |                           |                           |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| GERMANY                                | UNITED KINGDOM            | U.S.A                     |
| Phone: +49-(0)6134-2592730             | +44-(0)1638-515714        | +1-972-602-1670 Ext. 1701 |
| Toll-free: 0800-CARSHIP (Germany only) |                           | +1-800-264-8167 (US only) |
| E-Mail: info@transglobal-logistics.de  | enquiries@carshipuk.co.uk | info@tgal.us              |
| WEB: www.transglobal-logistics.de      | www.carshipuk.co.uk       | www.tgal.us               |

For 2nd POV Shipments - Offices / Agencies near Military Installations




Are you in the picture?



Reading  
Stars and Stripes  
gives you a better  
handle on issues  
that affect you most.

*No one covers the  
bases the way we do.*

STARS AND STRIPES

Transportation

944

Ship Cars and Containers to and from the USA



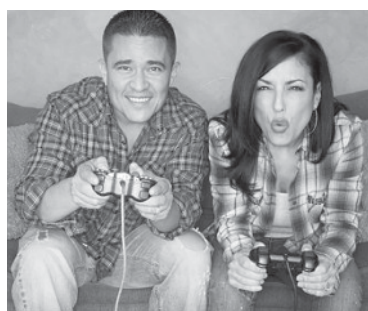
OPENING HOURS: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mon - Fri

0800-522-6274 or 800-WSA-SHIP (972-7447)

For a free rate request, please email: info@worldwide-ship.de

Visit our Website: www.worldwide-ship.de

Off Duty? Amuse Yourself!



Concert, events, TV,  
movies, music, video  
games, celebrity antics...

Get entertained with...

STARS AND STRIPES

Be the one who really knows what's going on!



Never miss a Stars and Stripes.

We report on issues that affect you the most,  
covering military news from  
Capitol Hill to Europe, Pacific, the  
Middle East and the Pentagon.

No one covers the bases the way we do.

Wherever you need us, however you read us:

*Stars and Stripes is always for you.*

STARS AND STRIPES

In print • Online at stripes.com • Mobile for Android, iPhone & iPad



Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher  
Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Europe commander  
Lt. Col. Richard McClintic, Pacific commander  
Caroline E. Miller, Europe Business Operations

EDITORIAL

Terry Leonard, Editor  
leonard.terry@stripes.com

Robert H. Reid, Senior Managing Editor  
reid.robert@stripes.com

Tina Croley, Managing Editor for Content  
croley.tina@stripes.com

Sean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation  
moores.sean@stripes.com

Joe Gromelski, Managing Editor for Digital  
gromelski.joe@stripes.com

BUREAU STAFF

**Europe/Mideast**  
Erik Slavin, Europe & Mideast Bureau Chief  
slavin.erik@stripes.com  
+49(0)631.3615.9350; DSN (314)583.9350

**Pacific**  
Aaron Kidd, Pacific Bureau Chief  
kidd.aaron@stripes.com  
+81.42.552.2511 ext. 88380; DSN (315)227.7380

**Washington**  
Joseph Cacchioli, Washington Bureau Chief  
cacchioli.joseph@stripes.com  
(+1)(202)886-0033  
Brian Bowers, Assistant Managing Editor, News  
bowers.brian@stripes.com

CIRCULATION

**Mideast**  
Robert Reismann, Mideast Circulation Manager  
robert.w.reismann.naf@mail.mil  
xsscirculation@stripes.com  
DSN (314)583-9111

**Europe**  
Karen Lewis, Community Engagement Manager  
lewis.karen@stripes.com  
memberservices@stripes.com  
+49(0)631.3615.9090; DSN (314)583.9090

**Pacific**  
Mari Mori, customerhelp@stripes.com  
+81-3 6385.3171; DSN (315)227.7333

CONTACT US

**Washington**  
tel: (+1)202.886.0003  
633 3rd St. NW, Suite 116, Washington, DC 20001-3050

**Reader letters**  
letters@stripes.com

**Additional contacts**  
stripes.com/contactus

OMBUDSMAN

Ernie Gates

The Stars and Stripes ombudsman protects the free flow of news and information, reporting any attempts by the military or other authorities to undermine the newspaper's independence. The ombudsman also responds to concerns and questions from readers, and monitors coverage for fairness, accuracy, timeliness and balance. The ombudsman welcomes comments from readers, and can be contacted by email at [ombudsman@stripes.com](mailto:ombudsman@stripes.com), or by phone at 202.886.0003.

Stars and Stripes (USPS 0417900) is published week-days (except Dec. 25 and Jan. 1) for 50 cents Monday through Thursday and for \$1 on Friday by Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit 45002, APO AP 96301-5002. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA. Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit 45002, APO AP 96301-5002. This newspaper is authorized by the Department of Defense for members of the military services overseas. However, the contents of Stars and Stripes are unofficial, and are not to be considered as the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government. As a DOD newspaper, Stars and Stripes may be distributed through official channels and use appropriated funds for distribution to remote locations where overseas DOD personnel are located. The appearance of advertising in this publication does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense or Stars and Stripes of the products or services advertised. Products or services advertised shall be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user or patron.

OPINION

The US can’t abandon Afghanistan

By KELLY AYOTTE,  
JOSEPH DUNFORD,  
AND NANCY LINDBORG  
*Special to The Washington Post*

Over the past four years, the Trump administration took bold actions to initiate negotiations between the Kabul government and the Taliban insurgency. For the first time since the Afghanistan conflict began more than 40 years ago, an Afghan government began talking to its main insurgent rival about creating a foundation for a stable future. Thanks to this diplomatic initiative, the pressing question about the U.S. presence in Afghanistan is no longer about winning an “endless war” but about brokering a lasting peace.

Congress called last year for the establishment of the Afghanistan Study Group, which we lead, to examine U.S. options in Afghanistan and to report in early 2021. In our eight months of consultations with U.S., Afghan and international leaders and experts, our 15-member bipartisan group believes it has emerged with a clear understanding of the current situation in Afghanistan — and what is necessary to protect U.S. national security interests.

Our study group has a strong and united position: An abrupt withdrawal of U.S. troops, as is now being contemplated by the Trump administration, would undermine the fragile but potentially transformational peace process. It would embolden the Taliban, destabilize the Kabul government and allow terrorist groups to reconsolidate. A civil war could result, provoking a wider regional conflict and a humanitarian crisis.

The U.S. military presence in Afghanistan underpins the negotiations, which offer

the likeliest path to peace in that country since 9/11. Getting U.S. troops out of Afghanistan is the Taliban’s main goal. During our consultations with more than 60 interlocutors, we have looked intensely at the question of whether a credible peace deal between the Afghan government and the Taliban is possible. There has been one clear and consistent response: No deal will emerge as long as the Taliban believes the United States is withdrawing troops without regard for the Taliban’s behavior.

If the United States takes that path before genuine progress is achieved, it will give up the leverage that could produce a sustainable political compromise. Doing so would also damage U.S. credibility with its allies and partners. At the same time, the greatly reduced U.S. presence over the past few years has signaled to the Afghan government that the United States’ patience and resources are limited, and that Kabul also must negotiate in good faith.

For the immediate future, the United States should embrace a peace-centered strategy that has the following elements:

First, we should make clear to all parties what the desired end state will be. In particular, a post-peace Afghanistan must be able to either sufficiently control its territory to prevent the harboring of terrorists or accept international assistance to do so.

Second, affirm the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan’s constitutional order and the country’s gains in human rights, including the rights of women. Having put severe pressure on the Afghan government to enter talks with the Taliban, the United States must now show that its support will continue as long as the Afghan government negotiates in good faith, fights corruption and re-

aches out to all elements of Afghan society. During the negotiations, our remaining troops will back Afghan security forces as they keep the Taliban from a battlefield victory and continue to lead the fight against terrorist groups.

Third, reemphasize to the Taliban that the full withdrawal of U.S. troops is strictly conditional on progress toward peace, including a genuine and broad reduction in violence — a reduction that at the moment is not in evidence. Our study group’s assessment is that the Taliban has instigated most of the recent violence and is undermining their claim that they can and will prevent the use of Afghan soil by al-Qaida, the Islamic State or other terrorists.

Fourth, establish a more robust and coordinated regional diplomatic strategy. Afghanistan’s neighbors can be spoilers in this process, but they can also be supporters of peace, united by their collective interest in a stable Afghanistan that would greatly expand regional trade and investment opportunities. Concerted, unified diplomatic action by the United States is critical to build this support and prevent regional spoilers.

Americans generally agree that it is time to end this war. But withdrawing U.S. troops irresponsibly would likely lead to a new civil war, inviting the reconstitution of anti-U.S. terrorist groups and providing them with a narrative of victory against the U.S. Supporting peace negotiations offers the U.S. the chance to honor U.S. sacrifices, secure core U.S. interests and show this nation’s enemies that they cannot prevail.

Ayotte is a former Republican U.S. senator from New Hampshire. Dunford is a retired U.S. Marine Corps general and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Lindborg is the former president and CEO of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Trump’s last efforts for a rough transition

By DAVID IGNATIUS  
*Washington Post Writers Group*

WASHINGTON

Let’s not celebrate the transfer of power to President-elect Joe Biden just yet, but instead look at two risks that could still allow President Donald Trump to obstruct a smooth transition: massive social unrest at home that Trump could argue represents a domestic insurrection, and a war abroad where he could invoke his extraordinary powers as commander in chief.

Thankfully, both explosive scenarios seem unlikely, now that Trump has accepted the start of a formal transition process. With Trump, it’s always wise to imagine worst-case possibilities and think carefully about how to prevent them. Forewarned is forearmed.

Trump’s behavior since he lost the Nov. 3 election has been chilling. Rather than concede defeat, he and his loyalists now control the “power ministries” of government: defense, the intelligence agencies, in addition to supporters who control justice and homeland security. If this were another country, we would worry that a leader who installed his lieutenants in these posts after losing an election might be preparing a coup.

America’s greatest moment of vulnerability will be from now to Dec. 14, when the electoral college meets to ratify the voters’ decisions. Analysts have imagined various scenarios for how Trump might evade the

electoral college process, but these strategies are unlikely to succeed without the pretext of an additional crisis. So, let’s look carefully at the twin dangers, domestic and foreign, and how they might be defused.

We know Trump considered invoking the Insurrection Act of 1807 against his domestic enemies before, in June, when racial justice protests were spreading after the death of George Floyd. He was talked out of it by Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Defense Secretary Mark Esper. Trump never forgave Esper and “terminated” him by tweet Nov. 9.

Over the past two weeks, Trump has been installing loyalists at the Pentagon, now headed by acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller. What’s their mission? We don’t know, but it’s safe to say they would be more likely to support a Trump call to use the military — either at home in response to social unrest or abroad in armed conflict.

Here’s where it gets scary: On Dec. 12, two days before the electoral college meets, Trump supporters plan to gather for a rally at the Lincoln Memorial. The last such rally, touted as a “Million MAGA March” on Nov. 14, drew only several thousand Trump supporters. They were confronted by a few hundred counterprotesters, and when night fell, the anti-Trump forces “triggered . . . mayhem as they harassed Trump’s advocates,” according to The Washington Post.

The Dec. 12 rally may draw a larger pro-Trump crowd, and if counterprotests be-

come violent, that could give Trump the excuse he may want to claim his opponents staged a rebellion. The Biden team should be thinking now how to convey a firm message: Keep cool. Don’t take the bait.

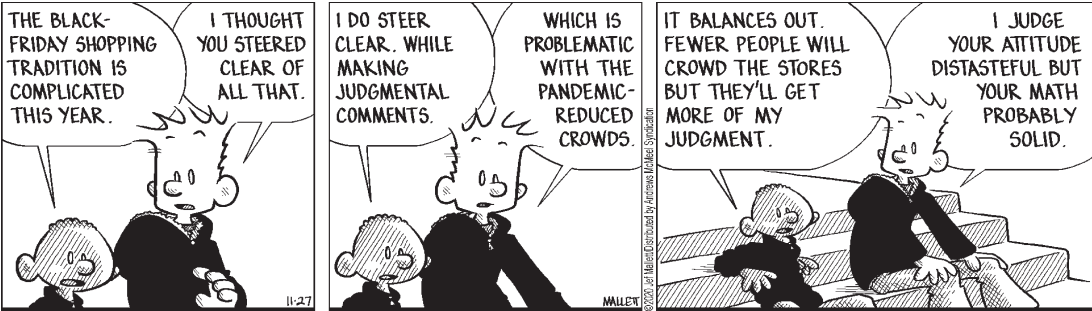
Imagine the grimmest scenario. Trump claims violent protests are “insurrection, or obstruction to the laws,” per the 1807 statute, and orders active-duty troops to intervene. Such an order would go first to Miller, then Air Force Gen. Glen VanHerck, who heads Northern Command. Milley might question the order, but his job is to communicate directives; he isn’t in the chain of command. Would Milley transmit or VanHerck obey such an order? Let’s hope not.

Now consider the other upheaval that could undermine an orderly transfer of power or leave a huge mess for Biden. According to The New York Times, Trump requested military options for attacking Iran at a White House meeting Nov. 12. Milley talked Trump out of any rash action, backed by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other senior officials.

But what if there’s a provocation? The president retaliates; war ensues; the president takes action against dissenters. It’s speculation, but it’s not impossible.

Trump wouldn’t succeed if he tried to cling to power. We know that because — well, because every responsible political leader, and, indeed, every citizen, will make sure it never happens. Still, thinking about the unthinkable can help us avoid it.

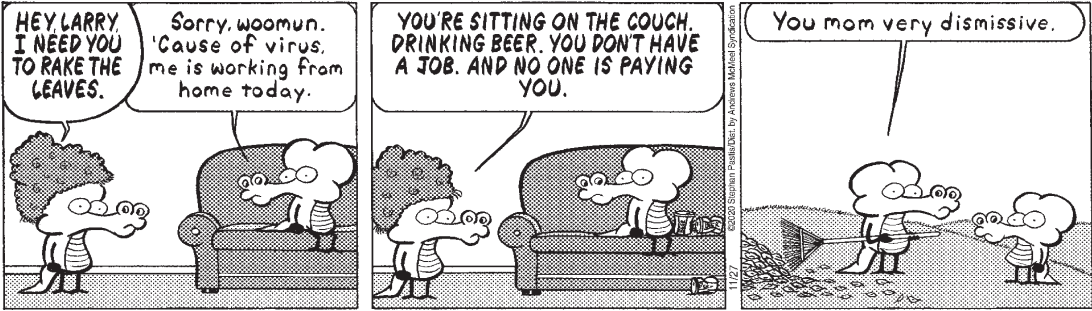
Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



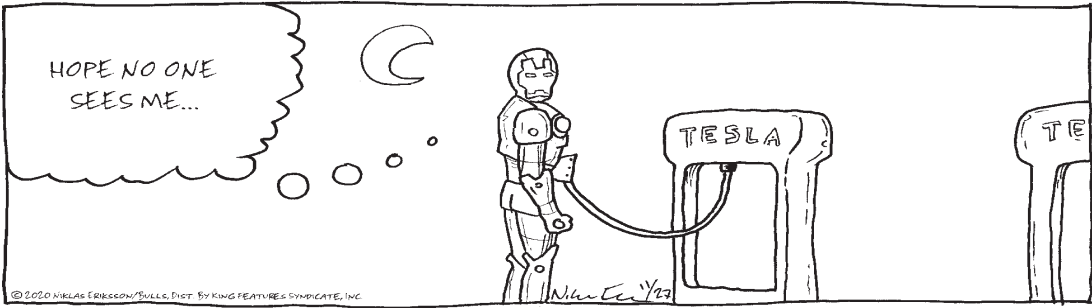
Non Sequitur



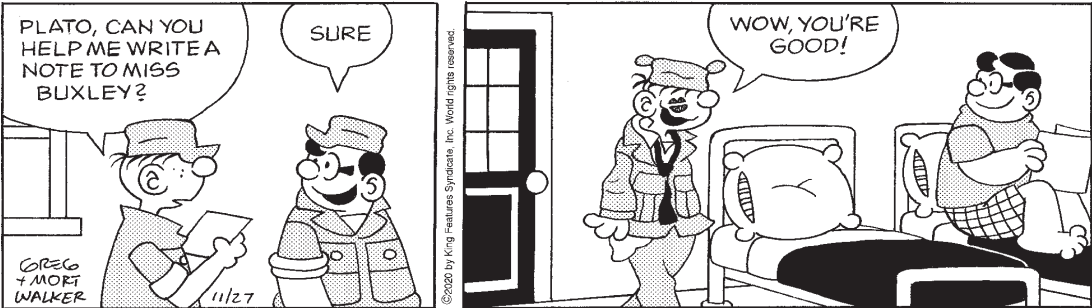
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  |    | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |    | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 |
| 12 |    |    |    | 13 |    |    |    |    | 14 |    |    |    |
| 15 |    |    |    | 16 |    |    |    |    | 17 |    |    |    |
| 18 |    |    |    |    |    |    | 19 | 20 |    |    |    |    |
|    |    |    | 21 |    |    |    | 22 |    |    | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 |    |    |    | 29 |    |    |    | 30 |    |    |
| 31 |    |    |    |    | 32 |    |    |    | 33 |    |    |    |
| 34 |    |    |    | 35 |    |    |    | 36 |    |    |    |    |
| 37 |    |    | 38 |    |    |    | 39 |    |    |    |    |    |
|    |    |    | 40 |    |    |    | 41 |    |    | 42 | 43 | 44 |
| 45 | 46 | 47 |    |    |    | 48 | 49 |    |    |    |    |    |
| 50 |    |    |    |    |    | 51 |    |    |    | 52 |    |    |
| 53 |    |    |    |    |    | 54 |    |    |    | 55 |    |    |

ACROSS

- 1 "Kapow!"  
4 Austen novel  
8 Slightly open  
12 Docs' bloc  
13 Use a rotary phone  
14 Piece of hardware  
15 Seeded players' concerns  
17 Actress Neuwirth  
18 Brief jobs  
19 Poetic tribute  
21 "A spider!"  
22 Kansas City team  
26 Was able to  
29 Trail the pack  
30 Big shot  
31 Sentry's cry  
32 Director Howard  
33 Half (Pref.)  
34 "Caught ya!"  
35 Cistern  
36 Tycoon  
37 Radio host's invitation  
39 — chi  
40 Paper Mate rival  
41 Teeing off  
45 Wrestling style  
48 Citizen of Puerto Castilla  
50 Blueprint  
51 Thus  
52 — loss  
53 ABA member

- 54 Dele undoer  
55 Drunkard

DOWN

- 1 Taverns  
2 Latin 101 word  
3 Gershwin's "The — Love"  
4 Redacted  
5 Capital of Belarus  
6 Periodical, for short  
7 Loser  
8 Westminster, e.g.  
9 Average guy  
10 Priestly garment  
11 GPS suggestion  
16 Prepared to propose  
20 Pooch  
23 Say it's so  
24 Long ride?
- 25 Whirl  
26 Converse  
27 Diamond  
Head locale  
28 — Bator  
29 Parking place  
32 Large cattle farms  
33 Japanese verse  
35 Half of XIV  
36 French film icon Brigitte  
38 Deep, lustrous black  
39 Hint of color  
42 401(k) relatives  
43 Peacekeeping org.  
44 Bitty biter  
45 Hotel amenity  
46 Last (Abbr.)  
47 Yoga pad  
49 Scrap

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

11-27

CRYPTOQUIP

ZCFBGNVH URCVB AYFCJNHB

JBTOJJNZX GNHBJYJQ HRBSB

UYV RBYHNZX YWWGNYZTBV:

A O J Z Y T B R B S N Z X U Y Q.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOMEBODY'S MOST-HATED RIVAL IN LIFE HAPPENS TO BE A POET, IS HE THEIR VERSED ENEMY?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals N

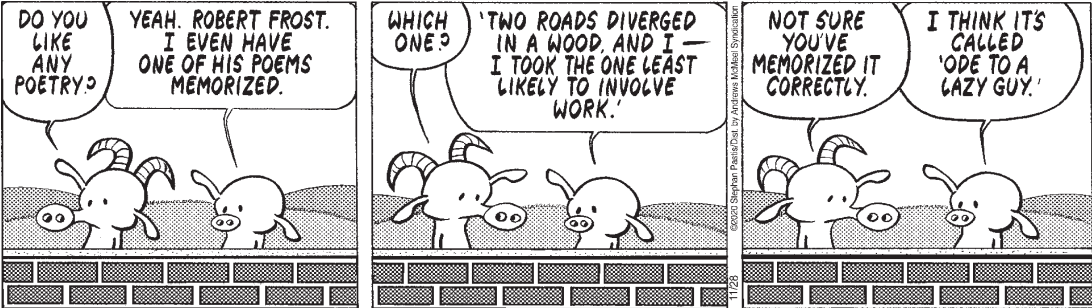
Frazz



Dilbert



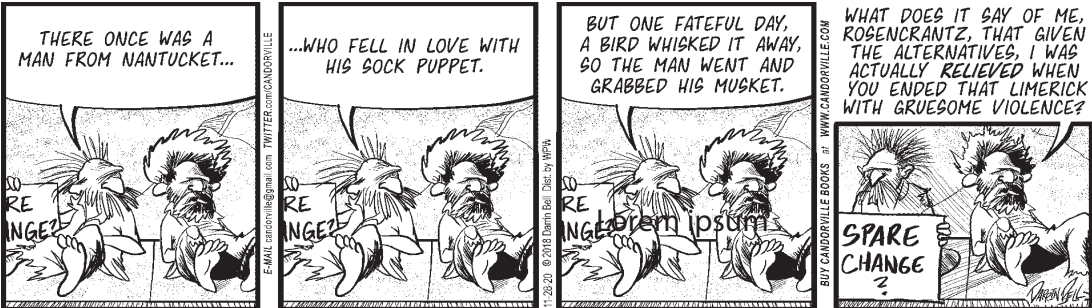
Pearls Before Swine



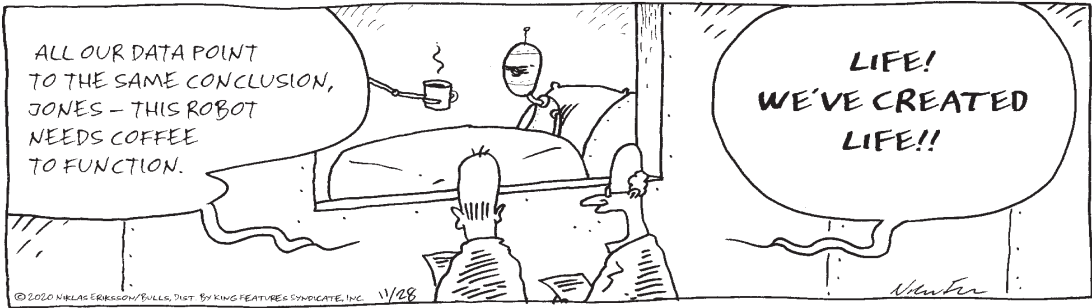
Non Sequitur



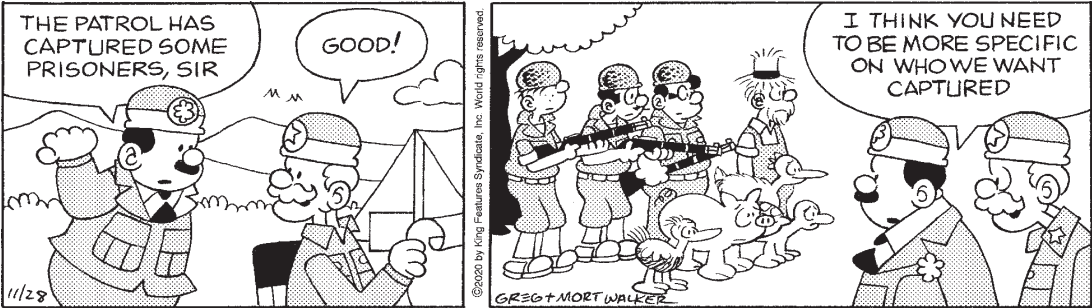
Candorville



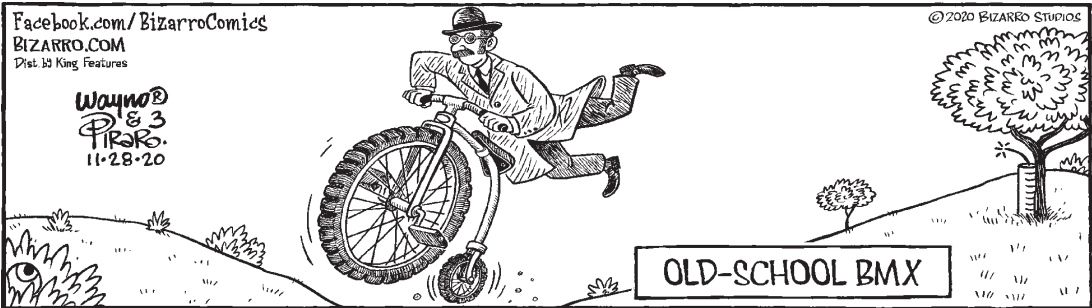
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |    | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 |
| 12 |    |    |    |    |    |    | 13 |    |    |    |    |    |
| 14 |    |    |    |    |    |    | 15 |    |    |    |    |    |
| 16 |    |    |    |    | 17 | 18 |    |    |    | 19 |    |    |
|    |    |    | 20 | 21 |    |    |    | 22 | 23 |    |    |    |
| 24 | 25 | 26 |    | 27 |    |    | 28 |    | 29 |    | 30 | 31 |
| 32 |    |    | 33 |    |    |    | 34 |    |    |    |    |    |
| 35 |    |    |    |    | 36 |    |    |    |    | 37 |    |    |
|    |    | 38 |    | 39 |    | 40 |    |    | 41 |    |    |    |
| 42 | 43 |    |    | 44 | 45 |    |    |    | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 |
| 50 |    |    | 51 |    |    |    | 52 | 53 |    |    |    |    |
| 54 |    |    |    |    |    |    | 55 |    |    |    |    |    |
| 56 |    |    |    |    |    |    | 57 |    |    |    |    |    |

- ACROSS
- 56 Furtive
- 57 Sales pitch
- 26 When lunch or dinner is eaten
- 28 Knockouts
- 30 Tax-collecting org.
- 31 Hit CBS series
- 33 — -Magnon
- 34 Donkey
- 39 Shape eyebrows
- 41 Part of Hispaniola
- 42 Grade-school basics
- 43 Drudge
- 45 Teeny
- 47 Tennis legend Arthur
- 48 Scoundrel
- 49 Old map letters
- 51 Estuary
- 53 Wardrobe malfunction
- DOWN
- 1 Lowly worker
- 2 Winged
- 3 Esau's brother
- 4 Part of NATO
- 5 Polish sausage
- 6 Concept
- 7 Social group
- 8 AOL, for one
- 9 Garbanzo bean
- 10 Lusty look
- 11 Whirlpool
- 12 — long way
- 18 Shore barrier
- 21 Request
- 23 Rent out
- 24 USMC rank
- 25 Reply (Abbr.)
- 6 Fortune" host
- 6 Frozen spike
- 12 Trattoria desserts
- 13 Sprinted
- 14 Delphi figure
- 15 Spotted
- 16 Roundish do
- 17 Aspiring atty.'s exam
- 19 Weep
- 20 Innocent one
- 22 Antlered animal
- 24 Actress Dawber
- 27 Swedish auto
- 29 Grand tale
- 32 Pullovers with letter-shaped features
- 35 Despot
- 36 Very small batteries
- 37 "— was saying ..."
- 38 Prune
- 40 Rife with foliage
- 42 Suitable
- 44 Joyful tune
- 46 Contented sounds
- 50 Lebanese capital
- 52 Van Gogh painting
- 54 Funny pages
- 55 Choice word

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

11-28 CRYPTOQUIP

D L Y M C W R Y Y M Q M X L Y

X L F Q M Y E K D E X L V L E T A

A R F E M P L Y F F R T Y, E K R Z Z Q K Y

E X ' K C F Y P M C M V H Z F Y P M C M V H.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NOVELIST WHOSE FAVORITE RECURRING LITERARY THEME WAS HEATING APPLIANCES: FURNACE HEMINGWAY.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: P equals G



## COLLEGE BASKETBALL



GREGORY BULL / AP

**UCLA forward Cody Riley, right, is fouled by San Diego State forward Joshua Tomai during the Aztecs' 73-58 defeat of the No. 22 Bruins on Wednesday in San Diego.**

## TOP 25 ROUNDUP

# San Diego State relies on threes to stun No. 22 UCLA

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Matt Mitchell and Jordan Schakel scored 15 points apiece and San Diego State used its disruptive defense and three-point shots to beat No. 22 UCLA 73-58 in the opener for both teams on Wednesday in San Diego.

Mitchell and Schakel hit threes early in the second half to open a 40-28 lead and the Aztecs dominated the rest of the way at empty Viejas Arena. Aguek Arop and Terrell Gomez scored 10 points each for SDSU, which was 30-2 last season and expecting its highest seed ever in the NCAA Tournament before it was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

**Villanova 76, Boston College 67:** Jeremiah Robinson-Earl had 18 points and 10 rebounds as the Wildcats overcame a nine-point second-half deficit to beat the Eagles in the first round of the Empire Classic in Uncasville, Conn.

Collin Gillespie added 15 points and Justin Moore and Caleb Daniels each had 14 for Villanova, which will play No. 18 Arizona State in the tournament championship game Thursday.

**No. 4 Virginia 89, Towson 54:** Trey Murphy III scored 21 points a day after learning he was cleared to play, and fellow transfer Sam Hauser added 19 as the Cavaliers opened the season with a rout in Uncasville, Conn.

Jay Huff added 14 points for Virginia, which never trailed and led by 23 points at halftime.

**No. 5 Iowa 97, North Carolina Central 67:** Luka Garza had 26 points and 10 rebounds and the

host Hawkeyes beat the Eagles.

Garza, the Big Ten player of the year last season and the lone unanimous selection on the pre-season AP All-America team, had his 17th consecutive game of 20 points or more.

**No. 7 Wisconsin 77, Eastern Illinois 67:** Nate Reuvers had 18 points and nine rebounds to lead the host Badgers.

Ben Carlson came off the bench to score 13 points for Wisconsin, and D'Mitrik Trice added 11. Josiah Wallace led the Panthers with 16 points.

**No. 8 Illinois 122, North Carolina AT&T 60:** Ayo Dosunmu scored a career-high 28 points, freshman Adam Miller also scored 28 and the host Illini rolled to an easy win.

**No. 10 Kentucky 81, Morehead State 45:** Brandon Boston Jr. had 15 points and seven rebounds, Devin Askew and Terrence Clarke each added 12 points and the host Wildcats cruised past the Eagles.

**No. 13 Michigan State 83, Eastern Michigan 67:** Foster Loyer made a career-high six three-pointers and scored a career-high 20 points to lead the host Spartans past the Eagles.

**No. 14 Texas Tech 101, Northwestern State 58:** Mac McClung scored 20 points in his debut, fellow transfer Marcus Santos-Silva had 10 points and 12 rebounds, and the host Red Raiders opened the season with a lopsided win.

**No. 15 West Virginia 79, South Dakota State 71:** Miles McBride scored a career-high 23 points and

the Mountaineers held off the Jackrabbits in the Bad Boys Mowers Crossover Classic in Sioux Falls, S.D.

**No. 16 North Carolina 79, College Of Charleston 60:** Freshman Caleb Love scored 17 points and the host Tar Heels ran off 17 straight second-half points to beat the Cougars.

**No. 17 Houston 89, Lamar 45:** Marcus Sasser scored 25 points, Tramon Mark added 22 points and eight rebounds and the host Cougars beat the Cardinals.

**No. 18 Arizona State 94, Rhode Island 88:** Remy Martin scored 26 points and freshman Marcus Bagley made three key free throws in the final minute to lead the Sun Devils to a win in the Empire Classic.

**No. 19 Texas 91, Texas-Rio Grande Valley 55:** Courtney Ramey had 20 points and six assists, and the host Longhorns opened the season with a victory over the Vaqueros.

**No. 23 Ohio State 94, Illinois State 67:** Justice Sueing scored 19 points and the host Buckeyes scored the first 22 points en route to a win over the Redbirds.

**No. 24 Rutgers 86, Sacred Heart 63:** Freshman center Cliff Omouryi had 14 points on 6-for-6 shooting and added 11 rebounds to help the host Scarlet Knights win their season opener.

**No. 25 Michigan 96, Bowling Green 82:** Chaundee Brown scored 18 of his 19 points in the second half of his debut, and the host Wolverines beat the Hilltoppers.

# Strange days indeed: Teams off to odd start

Cancellations, empty arenas abound on first day

BY JOHN MARSHALL  
Associated Press

The strangest anticipated season in college basketball history kicked off Wednesday with dozens of games at arenas across the country.

Like everything else in this pandemic world, it was odd and disjointed.

Cancellations, protests, quarantined players, piped-in crowd noise, masked cheerleaders, socially distanced bench seating — the start of the season matched the chaotic build up to it.

One day down, who knows how many more left?

"I'd like normalcy, I'd like a routine, but that's not what we have right now," North Carolina coach Roy Williams said. "You can do everything you can possibly do and still have a slip-up. But the process, you need to do everything you can possibly do and be prepared to handle everything as well."

The prelude to Wednesday's start followed the lead of a college football season filled with cancellations, shutdowns and last-minute replacement games.

Dozens of college basketball programs shut down for positive COVID-19 tests, big-name coaches like Tom Izzo, Scott Drew, Jim Boeheim among them. Games canceled almost hourly. Programs moved in and out of multi-team events like a game of whack-a-mole.

The first big event in Connecticut, dubbed Bubbleville, became more like Juggleville as teams dropped out, replacements moved

in and crafting a schedule became like sorting through AAU brackets.

While gamblers socially distanced inside the Mohegan Sun casino, no fans were allowed in the 10,000-seat arena for the opening game between Virginia and Towson, a late replacement for coronavirus-affected Maine.

"It's weird implemented crowd noise, just a bunch of cardboard cutouts staring at you and it's just 'this is different,'" Rutgers guard Ron Harper Jr. said.

North Carolina played its hype video before announcing the starting lineups and played House of Pain's "Jump Around" before playing College of Charleston — despite playing in front of a handful of player families and staff at the 21,750-seat Smith Center.

Georgia's opener against Columbus State was canceled just hours before tipoff due to positive COVID-19 tests within the Division II team. Lipscomb's game against Campbellsville Harrodsburg also was canceled due to coronavirus issues.

On the women's side, No. 9 UCLA had its game called off after an 80-minute wait for Cal State Fullerton to get COVID-19 test results and Rutgers' opener was called off due to a positive test in Monmouth's program.

"This is obviously a situation unlike any other I've had to deal with in my 31 seasons of coaching college basketball," Georgia coach Tom Crean said. "This season already was a surreal experience all around. This is truly that."



JESSICA HILL / AP

**Virginia and Towson players stand for the national anthem before their game Wednesday at the Empire Classic in Uncasville, Conn.**



NFL



RICK SCUTERI / AP

Buffalo Bills wide receiver Stefon Diggs, right, is second in the league with 73 catches for 906 yards.

# New Diggs: Bills receiver finds happiness in Buffalo

By JOHN WAWROW  
Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Stefon Diggs was preparing for the start of practice Wednesday when Buffalo Bills offensive line coach Bobby Johnson approached and asked how the receiver was doing. Diggs surprised even himself with his quick and genuine response. “I’m like, ‘I’m happy,’” Diggs said, recalling how a simple interaction grew into a personal revelation nine months into his first season in Buffalo. “I said it with a smile because I’ve been busting my (rear) for a long time,” he said. “But mentally,

being in the right place and pushing in the right direction: I’ve always been trying to be that guy, trying to have a positive energy. And I’m just happy to be where I am.” Characterized rightly or wrongly as one of the NFL’s many diva receivers for his several sideline outbursts during his first five seasons in Minnesota, Diggs has put his mercurial past behind by warming up to his new surroundings. His production has certainly helped smooth the transition, with Diggs ranking second in the NFL with 73 catches and 906 yards. But the receiver stresses his up-

beat mood goes beyond numbers. “Whether I was staying or whether I was leaving, I feel like my process after that year, I was going to handle things in a certain kind of way,” Diggs said, referring in part to last season, when he drew more than \$200,000 in fines for skipping two days of team activities. “I feel like I learned so much from my previous situation that I kind of carried it over in trying to turn over a new leaf and try to handle things a lot differently than I did before,” he said. “I went into this new year trying to be the best player, best teammate. And it’s been working out.”

# Raiders’ performance improves even if record hasn’t

By JOSH DUBOW  
Associated Press

Ten games into the 2020 season, the Las Vegas Raiders are in the same position they were a year ago. The manner in which they got to 6-4 this year compared to last year provides them confidence that they won’t falter down the stretch again and miss the playoffs for the 17th time in 18 seasons. Derek Carr has the offense performing at an extremely high level so the Raiders believe they can compete with anyone as evidenced by going toe to toe with in splitting two games with the defending Super Bow champion Kansas City Chiefs. “There’s just something about this team; the teams we’ve lost to, how we’ve lost and things like that,” Carr said Wednesday. “The teams that we’ve played with and beat and things like that. We’re definitely a better team this year, but

we right now have to, and I mean have to, finish this season better than we did last year. And I believe that we will. I’m hopeful and I believe that we will and I think that it’s different, I feel it’s different, but time will tell if it’s different.” The Raiders got to 6-4 a year ago thanks to a three-game home winning streak against Detroit, the Chargers and Cincinnati. But even the final game of that run showed some flaws as they only beat the lowly Bengals 17-10 in a sign that the offense might begin slipping. That started to happen the following week as they lost 34-3 on the road against the struggling New York Jets, followed by a 40-9 loss at Kansas City. The skid extended to four games with back-to-back losses to close out the Oakland Coliseum to Tennessee and Jacksonville before a Week 16 win at the Chargers. The Raiders went into the finale

needing a win and help, but got neither and wrapped up the season with a 1-5 stretch following a 16-15 loss at Denver. They ranked last in the NFL in scoring over the final six weeks with just 14.7 points per game. Las Vegas is a different team offensively this season as Carr has taken his game to another level with a willingness to throw deep more often and a better ability to turn bad plays into good ones by scrambling. He’s performing even better than he did in 2016, when the Raiders went 12-4 and he earned MVP votes. “We’ve improved the supporting cast honestly,” coach Jon Gruden said. “I don’t care who you are, what quarterback or what team you play for, the better you block, the better you run the ball, the better your receivers are, the better you’re going to perform.”

# Saints’ QB Hill treats his audition with seriousness

By BRETT MARTEL  
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Taysom Hill intends to treat the next couple of games on the New Orleans Saints’ schedule as if the trajectory of his career as an NFL quarterback is in the balance. “There are a lot of really great players that didn’t get an opportunity in the NFL and these opportunities are few and far between,” said Hill, who knows better after not getting his first NFL start at QB until last weekend — at age 30. “So my mindset is to do everything I can to take advantage of every single opportunity,” Hill continued. “I’m preparing as hard as I can ... and each game is a big game for me.”

In a 24-9 victory over Atlanta last weekend, Hill completed 78.3% of his passes for 233 yards without an interception and ran for two touchdowns. But one good game does not a career make, and Hill will have to show he can reliably and consistently keep the Saints offense moving, with the next test coming at Denver this Sunday. That Hill last week became the primary quarterback during Drew Brees’ absence because of rib injuries caught many NFL observers off guard for a few reasons. New Orleans also has former Tampa Bay starting quarterback, Heisman Trophy winner and 2015



TYLER KAUFMAN / AP

New Orleans Saints quarterback Taysom Hill got his first NFL start last week at 30.

first overall draft choice Jameis Winston on its roster. Before last weekend, Hill had never started and had thrown a grand total of 20 passes since his NFL career began in 2017. And Hill is still looking for his first touchdown pass. In addition, the 6-foot-2, 220-pound, fleet-footed Hill has emerged as one of the NFL’s most versatile and effective utility players. He’s done everything from blocking punts to converting fake punts as an upback, covering and returning kicks, playing tight end and, of course, substituting for Brees. “When we claimed him off film, it was as a quarterback,” Saints coach Sean Payton said. “Our vision was not as those other things. Those are end results after he was here.”



ISAAC BREKKEN / AP

Quarterback Derek Carr has helped the Raiders go from the worst-scoring team in the league last season to eighth this season.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



MARK HUMPHREY/AP  
**Florida quarterback Kyle Trask is the first SEC quarterback with 30 touchdown passes in seven games.**

Test: No. 2 Notre Dame only top-four team expected to be challenged this weekend

**FROM PAGE 48**  
the test against a North Carolina offense that's scored at least 56 points in three games.  
Notre Dame is allowing 16.6 points per game, fourth-best among Power Five teams. Under defensive coordinator Clark Lea, the Irish have held 31 of 34 opponents to 30 points or fewer.  
North Carolina (No. 19) features the prolific Sam Howell at quarterback and the 1-2 punch of Michael Carter and Javonte Williams at running back. The Tar Heels have gained 500 yards in six straight games for the first time in at least 50 years.  
**Best game**  
**No. 15 Iowa State at No. 20 Texas:** The Cyclones, who haven't won even a share of a conference title since 1912, will clinch a spot in the Big 12 championship game for the first time with a win. Iowa State fans could have only dreamed to be in this position when Matt Campbell was hired five years ago.  
Texas also controls its destiny. Beat the Cyclones and win out on the road against Kansas State and Kansas and the Longhorns will be back in Arlington, Texas, playing in the title game for the second time in three years.  
The Longhorns haven't had a game since Nov. 7 after an open date and a postponement due to COVID-19 at Kansas.  
The Cyclones won 23-21 in Ames last year on Connor Assal-ley's 36-yard field goal as time expired. They've lost four straight in Austin.  
**Heisman watch**  
**Kyle Trask, QB, Florida:** Trask threw for 383 yards and three touchdowns against Vanderbilt last week and is the first SEC

quarterback with 30 TD passes in seven games.  
The opponent Saturday is Ken-tucky. Last year Trask replaced an injured Feleipe Franks in the fourth quarter and led two TD drives that rallied the Gators from a double-digit deficit to a 29-21 win over the Wildcats. Trask has been the starter since.  
**Numbers to know**  
**2** — Notre Dame's Brian Kelly and North Carolina's Mack Brown are the top two FBS coaches based on career wins. Kelly has 271 in 30 years, Brown has 257 in 32.  
**5** — Iowa's win streak against border rival Nebraska.  
**6** — South Florida players who have attempted at least one pass.  
**7** — Buffalo's streak of games with no sacks allowed.  
**25** — Turnovers by Duke in eight games, most in the nation.  
**72** — Consecutive wins by Oklahoma State when holding opponents under 20 points, the longest such streak since at least 1980.  
**Under the radar**  
**Colorado at Southern California:** It's a Pac-12 South meeting of unbeatens. The No. 19 Trojans didn't need luck to win last week like they did their first two games. Their defense manhandled Utah. Colorado RB Jarek Broussard and WR Dimitri Stanley will challenge that defense this week.  
**Hot seat**  
Not much has gone right for Ari-zona's Kevin Sumlin since a 2018 win over a nationally ranked Ore-gon. He's 9-17 after ending last year on a seven-game losing streak and starting this season 0-2. Sumlin also is 0-2 against rival Arizona State. This week they're nine-point underdogs on the road against UCLA and its hot-seat coach Chip Kelly.

Defenses shining in Big 12

**By JOHN RABY**  
*Associated Press*  
Defenses are helping carve a path toward the Big 12 championship game.  
The two current frontrunners, No. 15 Iowa State and No. 14 Okla-homa, have stood out recently by what they've done to limit oppos-ing offenses.  
The first-place Cyclones held Kansas State to nine pass comple-tions and 149 total yards in a 45-0 victory over the Wildcats last week. Second-place Oklahoma has allowed a total of two touch-downs and registered 13 sacks in its last two games.  
And it's not just them. While the Big 12 historically is known for its high-scoring offenses, there is evidence that top to bottom the defenses are starting to push back.  
Big 12 defenses are holding op-posing offenses to 377 yards per game this season, the lowest among the Power 5 conferences,



BARRY REEGER/AP  
**Iowa defensive lineman Chauncey Golston tackles Penn State running back Devyn Ford on Saturday in State College, Pa.**

according to the league. And the Big 12's combined average of 28.3 points allowed is the second low-est.

In Big 12 games only, scoring has dropped from about 32 points on average in 2016 to 29.2 points both in 2019 and this season, while offensive production has dipped from 473 yards per game in 2016 to about 384 so far in 2020. Okla-homa led the league in each sea-son. The Sooners peaked at 612.8 yards of offense in 2018. That's down to 498.4 yards in 2020.  
"No doubt, it's been an impres-sive year for the league defensiv-ely," Oklahoma coach Lincoln Riley said. "There's a lot of really quality defenses, and I wouldn't disagree if you said maybe more than in some years past."  
TCU coach Gary Patterson said nowadays what works well on de-fense for one team tends to get co-pied by others.  
"Everybody mimics," he said. "If something's being successful, then they clone it, and there's a lot of people that have gotten where they're cloning things that are be-ing successful."



**NEW**  
**Years 9 + 10**  
**from August**  
**2021**

International School Westpfalz

- English speaking all-day school from kindergarden to year 8
- Internationally recognized and established programs
- Experienced, highly qualified learning facilitators
- Individualized learning in a respectful, stress-free and creative atmosphere
- Before and after school care available 8am until 5pm (for primary from 7am)

International School Westpfalz  
Tel. 06371 9994810  
info@is-westpfalz.de  
www.is-westpfalz.de



## COLLEGE FOOTBALL



DAVE MARTIN / AP

Auburn cornerback Chris Davis returns a field-goal attempt 109 yards to score the winning touchdown over Alabama in 2013. The Tigers played the spoiler to Alabama last season and in 2017 as well.

# Top-ranked Crimson Tide out for revenge on No. 22 Auburn

BY JOHN ZENOR  
Associated Press

Alabama left Jordan-Hare Stadium last season with its playoff hopes dashed and giddy Auburn fans filling the field.

It's a sobering memory for the top-ranked Crimson Tide going into Saturday's Iron Bowl with the 22nd-ranked Tigers at Bryant-Denny Stadium. What could go wrong, did go wrong in a 48-45 loss that kept 'Bama from the College Football Playoffs for the first time.

And the Tigers made them pay for just about every misstep.

Auburn (5-2 Southeastern Conference) returned two Mac Jones interceptions for touchdowns and Alabama (7-0) missed a potential tying field goal among other mishaps.

"We didn't play very well in the

game," Alabama coach Nick Saban said on Monday. "We made a lot of mental errors in the game. Taking nothing away from them, they played really well in the game and they deserved to win.

"We couldn't make plays when we needed to make them. Gave them a couple of pick-sixes for touchdowns. There's a lot of things to be learned in every game that you play. There's a lot of lessons to be learned in that game for us."

It was a back-and-forth affair.

Alabama led 31-27 at halftime after the teams combined for 17 points over the final 66 seconds. In what turned out to be the decisive points, Anders Carlson booted a 52-yard field goal after replay officials put one second back on the clock before the half.

A missed Alabama field goal

late helped seal the Auburn win. Before that setback, the Tide had appeared in the first five College Football Playoffs.

It's not the first time in recent seasons that Auburn has played the role of spoiler — and then some — against Alabama.

The Tide lost the Iron Bowl 26-14 in 2017 but still went on to win the national title as a No. 4 seed.

Both were top 5 teams in 2013, when Auburn won 34-28 with Chris Davis's 109-yard return of a missed field goal ending it. The Tigers reached the national title game that year.

This time, both teams have regular-season games remaining for a change because of the revamped schedule amid the COVID-19 pandemic. So it's far from a playoff elimination game for the Tide.

## Kickers crucial in Iron Bowl matchup

BY JOHN ZENOR  
Associated Press

Former Alabama coach Gene Stallings had a piece of advice for Nick Saban after last year's Iron Bowl: Get a great kicker.

Perhaps Saban already had one. Sophomore Will Reichard, who was out with a nagging hip injury for the 2019 Auburn game, has been perfect so far this season.

That's a huge deal for the top-ranked Crimson Tide heading into Saturday's game against the 22nd-ranked Tigers after some infamous past kicking woes in the Iron Bowl and other big games.

Kickers have been an Achilles Heel for some of Saban's Alabama teams, which were typically loaded on offense and defense.

"Last year, after the Auburn game, I called Coach Stallings to see how he was doing," Saban said recently on his weekly radio show. "He said, 'If I was you, I'd go recruit the best kicker in the country.'

"I said, 'We've got the best kicker in the country. He's just hurt.'"

Auburn has a pretty good kicker, too, in junior Anders Carlson. So both teams seem to be in good hands, or feet, this time around.

Reichard, who was considered the nation's top kicking prospect in 2019, has only attempted eight field goals with the Crimson Tide having such an explosive offense. But he has made all eight and is perfect on 46 extra-point attempts.

"He's always super even-keeled, you know, straight-line guy: he just goes out there, takes his steps, hits it through the uprights then goes off the field and celebrates with his teammates," said Alabama quarterback Mac Jones, who also holds on field goals.

"He's the definition of what a good kicker is and the reason he's a good kicker is because he prac-

tices really hard at it."

Carlson, who played a pivotal role in last season's 48-45 Tigers win, has made 11 of 12 field goals, including a 50-yarder last weekend against Tennessee. He has missed once in 20 PATs.

Few of the 13 Iron Bowls since Saban arrived in Tuscaloosa in 2007 have been decided partly by missed Tide field goals. It may just seem that way for national observers.

Since Saban's arrival, the games have actually been decided by an average of 17 points with about as many blowouts as down-to-the-wire affairs. But the kicking woes have been costly.

■ In 2013, Cade Foster missed three field goals to help set the stage for the Kick-Six, one of the more famous plays in college football history. Adam Griffith's 57-yard attempt at the end fell short and Auburn's Chris Davis returned it 109 yards on the final play for a 34-28 victory. It knocked Alabama out of the national title hunt and helped propel the Tigers to the championship game.

■ Last season, Joseph Bulovas' potential game-tying 30-yard attempt hit the left upright with 2 minutes left. The Crimson Tide still had a chance but an illegal substitution call on fourth down helped the Tigers run out the clock.

Then there was Carlson. He booted four field goals of 43 yards or more, including a 52-yarder to end the first half after replay officials put one second back on the clock.

Since then, the NCAA implemented a new rule that won't let officials put time back on the clock if time expires unless there's at least three seconds left in a half.

"They actually changed the rule after that play, that's how impactful that play was," Auburn coach Gus Malzahn said.

## No. 19 Heels offense in high gear ahead of showdown with Irish

BY JOHN FINERAN  
Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Brian Kelly has postponed No. 2 Notre Dame's Thanksgiving dinner for two days — perhaps for good reason.

His Fighting Irish (8-0, 7-0 Atlantic Coast Conference) need to be light on their feet when they take on the explosive offense of Mack Brown's 19th-ranked North Carolina Tar Heels (6-2, 6-2) on Friday afternoon.

"They're an extremely talented team," Kelly said. "We've played similar teams — Clemson comes to mind. (The Tar Heels) don't go away — they have come back in fourth quarters and won football games. They keep playing."

Led by 6-foot-1, 220-pound quarterback Sam Howell, the Tar Heels are averaging 563.4 yards (fourth among FBS schools) and 43.1 points (10th) per game. Their abundance of returning offensive talent in-

cludes running backs Javonte Williams and Michael Carter, wide receivers Dyami Brown and Dazz Newsome and tight end Garrett Walston.

Howell, who threw for 3,641 yards and 38 touchdowns to lead the Tar Heels to a 7-6 finish in 2019, is on pace to shatter those marks. He has already thrown for 2,631 yards and 23 touchdowns, averages 15.7 yard per completion and ranks ninth in passing efficiency (182.6).

Brown is seventh in receiving yards (829) and eighth in TD receptions (8) while Williams leads the nation in touchdowns (18).

The Irish defense, which limited All-America running back Travis Etienne to 28 yards in a 47-40 double-overtime victory over Clemson and held Boston College to 85 yards rushing in a 45-31 victory the following week, is fourth nationally against the run and ninth in total defense.



GERRY BROOME / AP

Running back Michael Carter (8) and the rest of the North Carolina offense are averaging 564.3 yards and 43.1 points per game.

# SPORTS



**Stunning start**  
San Diego State opens season with upset of No. 22 UCLA » College basketball, Page 43

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



MATT CASHORE/AP  
Notre Dame linebacker Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah, left, and safety Shaun Crawford — along with the rest of the second-ranked Fighting Irish defense — could have their hands full Friday against No. 25 North Carolina. The Tar Heels have scored at least 56 points three times this season.

## Irish ‘D’ has tough test against UNC

No. 25 Tar Heels’ prolific offense could be challenge for No. 2 Notre Dame

*Associated Press*  
The jockeying for position begins in earnest now that the first College Football Playoff rankings are out. Among the four teams at the top, only Notre Dame (No. 2 CFP) is expected to face a strong challenge this week. Alabama (No. 1) hosts Auburn

in the Iron Bowl rivalry, Clemson (No. 3) is at home against Pittsburgh and Ohio State (No. 4) visits Illinois. All three are favored by at least 24 points. Notre Dame, looking to make the playoff for the second time in three years, will put its defense to

SEE TEST ON PAGE 46

DID YOU KNOW?

Notre Dame allows 16.6 points per game, fourth-best among Power Five teams. Defensive coordinator Clark Lea’s Irish have held 31 of 34 opponents to 30 points or less. UNC has scored more than 30 points in six of its eight games this season.  
SOURCE: Associated Press



ROBERT WILLETT/AP  
North Carolina’s Javonte Williams scores on a 19-yard touchdown run during a 56-48 win over Virginia Tech on Oct. 10.

## QB Rivers’ start streak not over just yet » NFL, Page 44

