Ramstein center provides a place to decompress post-deployment

By Karin Zeitvogel
Stars and Stripes

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — Leaving Bagram Airfield near Kabul last week after a five-month deployment was bittersweet for Tech. Sgt. Anthony Rescigno.

He was doing what he loves in Afghanistan as part of the 405th Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron — picking up critically wounded patients and “keeping them alive until we can get them to the higher echelon of care,” he said Friday at the Deployment Transition Center at Ramstein, where service members decompress after an overseas deployment and are given the tools they need to ease back into life at home.

Rescigno’s commander at Bagram had recommended that he pass through the DTC on the way home so that he could let go of some of the stress he and his unit were under in Afghanistan. Others, particularly security forces, have been referred to the program before deploying because their commanders know what they’re likely to go through.

SEE CENTER ON PAGE 4

Staff Sgt. Naomi Graham throws a right to the chin of Briana Che during a USA nationals bout at Salt Lake City, Utah, in December 2019.

Fighting for her country

Army Staff Sgt. Naomi Graham’s jab is the boxing equivalent of a Hellfire missile launched from an attack helicopter at a distant opponent.

The 32-year-old ammunition specialist from Fayetteville, N.C., is one of the United States’ best hopes for a medal at the Tokyo Olympics, which kick off July 23. Graham will be the first female active-duty U.S. service member to box for gold, according to Team USA.

Ranked No. 1 among U.S. middle-weights and eighth in the world, Graham has steadily climbed the international ladder, taking fifth at the 2016 World Boxing Championships before moving up to third in 2018. In 2019, she won gold at the Pan American Games.

But boxing was only a peripheral part of Graham’s life when she enlisted in February 2013. “I just wanted to serve my country,” she told Stars and Stripes during a telephone interview Friday.

Her first duty station was with the 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment at Fort Carson, Colo. In addition to issuing ammo for the...
J&J will pay $230M to settle NY opioid claim

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Johnson & Johnson has agreed to pay $230 million to New York state to settle claims that the pharmaceutical giant helped fuel the opioid crisis, Attorney General Letitia James said Saturday.

The drugmaker also agreed to permanently end the manufacturing and distribution of opioids across New York and the rest of the nation, James said in a statement announcing the settlement.

The company “helped fuel this fire, but today they’re committing to leaving the opioid business — not only in New York, but across the entire country,” she said.

The deal involving a lawsuit brought by James in 2019 removes Johnson & Johnson from a trial that is slated to begin this week on Long Island — part of a slew of litigation over an epidemic linked to painkillers — developed by a subsidiary and accounting for less than 1% of the market — that are already no longer sold in the United States.

The settlement was “not an admission of liability or wrongdoing by the company,” Johnson & Johnson said. It added that its actions were “appropriate and responsible.”

In its own statement on Saturday, Johnson & Johnson downplayed the attorney general’s announcement. It said the settlement involved two prescription painkillers — developed by a subsidiary and accounting for less than 1% of the market — that are already no longer sold in the United States.

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**BY ALISON BATH**  
Stars and Stripes  
NAPLES, Italy — Spoofing the location of NATO ships, spreading disinformation on social media and threatening military repercussions are typical ploys from a well-worn playbook, analysts said ahead of an international naval exercise in the Black Sea co-hosted by the United States and Ukraine.

The annual Exercise Sea Breeze comes ahead of Russian threats to potentially fire on participants if they intrude in their territorial waters, and following a heated debate over the passage of a British destroyer through the Black Sea on Wednesday.

Jorge Benitez, an expert on European security with the Atlantic Council think tank, said the incident amounted to a “dangerous escalation” by Moscow.

On Wednesday, the Russian military said it had fired warning shots at and dropped bombs in the path of HMS Defender, which sailed offshore of Sevastopol in Crimea.

Russia said the actions caused the destroyer to leave the area. London disputed that claim, denying that any shots were fired and saying the vessel was traveling through Ukrainian waters in accordance with international law.

“The combined harassment from several Russian fighter jets and ships proves that this aggression against the Royal Navy was not the decision of one zealous Russian officer, but required top-level approval,” Benitez said.

The Kremlin’s ultimate aim is to intimidate allies and frighten non-Russian commercial shipping away from Ukrainian ports, he said.

The U.S. and other allies taking part in Sea Breeze should continue as planned while expanding NATO ship patrols in the Black Sea in the future, Benitez said.

“U.S. strength will be more effective in decreasing Russia’s military aggression in the Black Sea, which it occupied and annexed in 2014,” he said.

Still, some analysts viewed Russia’s actions and threats as unlikely to be followed through.

“Sea Breeze always brings heightened Russian attention, naval and air activity,” said Michael Kofman, Russian studies program analyst for CNA, a national security-focused think tank based in Arlington, Va.

While there is some risk for a miscalculation as tensions rise and Russia continues to escalate, he described it as “low.”

“It can happen, especially when it comes to air encounters,” he said. “Much is left to the skill and judgment of pilots. However, wars do not start from accidents, and are instead driven by political causes.”

In addition to the incident with HMS Defender, Russia has stepped up efforts to spread confusion and fear of military conflict on social media in order to hamper Sea Breeze and protect its disputed claim to territorial waters around the Crimean Peninsula.

“Russians have put a premium on deception at least since Soviet days — they call it maskirovka — and they still excel at it,” said James R. Holmes, the J.C. Wylie Chair of Maritime Strategy at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, R.I. “Cellphones, social media, and on and on allow an opponent to reach directly into U.S. or allied military units to sow confusion or disinformation, much as people are always trying to trick you with spam calls or email.”

But so far, Moscow’s efforts seem to have had little effect, and the U.S. and its allies have continued preparations for Sea Breeze, one of whose aims is to send a firm message to Moscow that they won’t be intimidated.

“The message we will stand together in wartime and have enough military might to fulfill our goals—in this case upholding Ukrainian sovereignty—then Russia will be deterred,” Holmes said. “At the same time our allies, partners, and friends will take heart and feel confident enough to oppose Russian demands.”

This year’s Sea Breeze drills will include 32 countries from six continents. Thirty-two ships, 40 aircraft and 5,000 servicemen will take part,” the U.S. 6th Fleet announced.

“The continuation of this exercise program is a visible demonstration of our enduring commitment to work closely with our NATO allied and partner nations to enhance maritime security in the Black Sea,” said Lt. Cdr. Matthew Comer, 6th Fleet spokesman.

Kofman said he expects more Russian interference during the exercise, including “shadowing, intelligence collection, overflights and naval live-fire exercises.”

To be prepared, the U.S. and its allies will need to retain operational professionalism, discipline and readiness, he said.

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**By Wyatt Olson**  
Stars and Stripes  
HAINAN ISLAND, China — The USS Porter sails the Black Sea during the annual Sea Breeze exercise in July 2020.

The annual Exercise Sea Breeze comes ahead of Russian threats to potentially fire on participants if they intrude in their territorial waters, and following a heated debate over the passage of a British destroyer through the Black Sea on Wednesday.

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The USS Porter sails the Black Sea during the annual Sea Breeze exercise in July 2020.

The aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey and attack submarine USS Seawolf on June 22 sail in formation near Hawaii while Marine Corps aircraft fly overhead.

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US, UK find 50 drones violating base airspace

BY KYLE ALVAREZ

Lakenheath, England — New technology used in a collaboration between the U.S. military and British authorities has detected more than 50 small drones violating the airspace around two bases used by the U.S. Air Force in England over the past nine months, officials have said.

Since last October, when the technology was first used, the Air Force has tracked the small unmanned aircraft systems, or sUAS, flying in airspace surrounding RAF Mildenhall and Lakenheath, and notified British Defense Ministry police.

Mildenhall is home to the U.S. Air Force’s 100th Air Refueling Wing, and the Air Force’s only F-15 fighter wing in Europe is based at Lakenheath.

Of the 50 drones detected, five were recovered by police. They were piloted by hobbyists who “were found to not have malicious intent,” said Capt. Austin Grimmer, the 100th Security Forces Squadron non-commissioned officer in charge of counter-sUAS operations at Mildenhall.

But the growing number of violations of military and commercial airspace by drones have led the U.S. Defense Department to draft a strategy to counter sUAS and the British to pass legislation giving police more power to stop them.

Drones may impede flight operations and endanger personnel and equipment, military officials have said.

“It is evident that the potential for hazards or threats (from small drones) has the ability to impact the Joint Force,” then-acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller said in the plan, which calls for the U.S. military to work with partner countries — as the U.S. did with Britain — “to respond to the needs of a rapidly changing security environment.”

Integrating the U.S. and British counter-drone systems “provides a layered defense” to detect, track, identify and defeat unmanned aircraft, said Lt. Col. Charles Carabell, chief of police and security for the U.S. Air Forces Europe U.K. coordination cell.

Further details on the new technology were unavailable due to security reasons, Carabell said. The counter-drone effort brings together at least five different joint agencies, including the Air Force Research Laboratory, making it “one of the great coordination opportunities that we have with the U.K.,” Carabell said.

Beginning Tuesday, U.K. police will gain powers to ground drones, such as confiscate flying hazards under a new law passed by parliament. The law also allows police to search an operator or their property if there is suspicion of illegal activity.

British police may also use technology such as radio frequency jammers, to stop drones from flying.

Drones in the U.K. are barred from flying over crowds or built-up areas, and near aircraft, airports and airfields.

Pakistan to shut border if Taliban in Afghan rule

BY ASIM TANVEER

MULTAN, Pakistan — Pakistan’s foreign minister said Sunday that violence and lawlessness could reign in Afghanistan after the United States’ withdrawal, and that Pakistan would shut its border to the country if the Taliban takes control of it.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that Pakistan has already taken in 3.5 million Afghan refugees over the years, but would not accept any more.

He was speaking in a weekly media briefing held in the central city of Multan.

“We can’t take more, we will have to shut our border, we have to safeguard our national interest,” he said, adding that Pakistan will continue its diplomatic efforts for peace in the country, and welcome its democratically elected leadership.

Millions of Afghans fled to Pakistan from the fighting between mujahedeen groups after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. The Taliban ruled Afghanistan until they were ousted by a U.S.-led coalition after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in America. In recent weeks, Taliban fighters have overrun several districts in south and northern Afghanistan, convincing government security forces to surrender and seizing their weapons and military vehicles.
**History: Graham’s years of experience helped prepare her for Tokyo Olympics**

FROM PAGE 1

unit’s AH-64 Apaches, Graham said she spent time in the field helping to fuel the mighty attack helicopters.

Boxing is in Graham’s blood. The youngest of six siblings watched her older sister, Rachel, fight professionally and started to train on her own at Fort Carson. Her first fights were at amateur events where she showed up looking for someone in her weight class, she said.

In 2014, Graham won the All-Army title. She then joined the Army’s World Class Athlete Program, also at Fort Carson, letting her train fully for the Olympics. Graham has an incredible reach and a devastating jab, USA Boxing assistant Joe Guzman, a former Army heavyweight competitor, told Defense Media Activity in 2019. In her first competitive match at a Fort Carson gym, she won using only that punch, he said.

“I could tie her right hand behind her back and she just beat people with her jab, that’s how good it is,” Guzman said.

Servicing in the Army taught Graham skills such as patience, resilience and “getting the job done” that also apply to boxing, the 5-foot, 10-inch, 165-pound fighter told Stars and Stripes.

“I’m having fun, but I’m also there for business,” she said of her attitude in the ring.

Other troops have been giving her plenty of support and letting her know they will be cheering for her in Tokyo, Graham said.

Though her time in uniform has not taken her to combat zones, she has traveled extensively, boxing for the Army in places like Russia, India, Kazakhstan, Germany, France and Spain.

Graham said she hasn’t met many big-name boxers but stays in touch with Ann Wolfe, a former professional fighter who held titles in three weight divisions.

“She tells me that being nervous is normal and to care about winning and believe in myself,” she said.

Going professional after the Olympics is an option and a common path for fighters, Graham added.

“It’s something I’m thinking about,” she said.

Associated Press

**City to name streets after modern generals**

QUINCY, Mass. — The city of Quincy is naming two roads after modern-day military generals with strong ties to the city. The City Council recently voted to name two new roads being considered as part of a new bridge and park project under way downtown. The mayor and the park, we found it appropriate to honor two of the more modern day generals, Mayor Thomas Koch said. “It kind of has a nice touch to it. Both of them were sons of veterans and came from pretty amazing local families.”

The $35.6 million Generals Bridge project will ultimately honor seven generals from Quincy. A dedication is planned for Sept. 11.

**Luong transfers US Army Japan reins, ending long career**

BY ERICA EARL
Stars and Stripes


“To quote U.S. Army Pacific Commanding General Charles A. Flynn, it has been an honor to serve in the most consequential theater during the most consequential time in our history,” Luong said during a change-of-command ceremony at Camp Zama that was broadcast live on Facebook.

“I would say we are in crisis now and the situation remains highly urgent,” added Luong, who spent half of his three-year tenure tackling the coronavirus pandemic.

Vowell comes to Japan from Indo-Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii, where he served as deputy commander of the Strategic Planning and Policy Directorate.

He mentioned during the ceremony that he and Luong have crossed paths a few times in their careers, including serving together in the Middle East.

Vowell served three combat tours to Afghanistan and one to Iraq, according to his Army biography. He was a War College Fellow at Stanford University in 2012 an Army Chief of Staff’s Senior Fellow to the Brookings Institution in 2016.

“Our purpose is to work with our allies to make our collective deterrent and our defense during crisis robust and strong,” he said as he took command on Friday. “I pledge my best efforts to support the soldiers and families of U.S. Army Japan and our Japan Ground Self-Defense Force partners as we go forward together.”

Luong was 9 years old when he fled Vietnam with his family in 1975. He shared his story during a USAJF Facebook Live event on May 18 as part of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

In 1993, he became one of only 27 battalion commanders of Asian descent in the history of the 82nd Airborne Division. At the time, Luong said, he felt a need to outperform his white counterparts to earn equal recognition.

“Maybe I was too naive, but I thought if we all just do our jobs and do well, everything will work out,” he said during the May event. “But it doesn’t work like that. In order to be successful, you need a lot of support, you need mentorship and you need advocacy.”

Staff Sgt. Naomi Graham is crowned champion of the women’s 75 kg weight class at the U.S. Boxing Olympic trials in Lake Charles, La., on Dec. 17, 2019.
US Navy in Naples relaxes rules on wearing masks outdoors

MILITARY

USS Oklahoma remains return to Hawaii for burial

By Wyatt Olsson
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — The unidentifiable remains of 50 sailors and one Marine who died aboard the USS Oklahoma during the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor were flown to Hawaii on Thursday and will be buried in Honolulu later this year on the 80th anniversary of the raid.

During an honorable carry ceremony near the joint base's runway, Marine and sailor guards of honor carried 10 flag-draped coffins from a C-17 that had arrived from Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska where the enclosed remains had undergone DNA testing.

The return of the remains represents the near completion of the six-year project by the Defense Department to identify Oklahoma victims who had been long buried as unknowns at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, also called the Punchbowl Cemetery, in Honolulu.

The remains of 388 sailors and Marines that had been buried in the cemetery in 1950 were exhumed in 2015 and sent to Offutt.

To date, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has identified 337 of those remains.

"We still will make identifications," Carrie LeGarde, the USS Oklahoma project's lead anthropologist, told reporters before the ceremony began. "They are in progress, so it's not completely done at this point. That will continue over the next couple months."

DPA has been thus far unable to identify the SI remains flown to Hawaii on Thursday, partly because DNA samples from some next of kin could not be found.

The remains will be kept at DPA's identification laboratory on the joint base until their reburyal by the Navy on Dec. 7 at the Punchbowl.

"The Navy is not actively pursuing family reference samples anywhere for the Oklahoma project," LeGarde said. "We did a big push in the last year, and they got a lot of family reference samples actually in the last year. That has made a huge difference and why we're still making identifications now."

The USS Oklahoma was moored on Battleship Row on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, when Japanese torpedo bombers descended on Pearl Harbor. Several made direct hits on the ship, capsizing it and killing 429 crew members.

After being moved to several gravesites, the remains of 394 sailors and Marines who died that day — all too badly burned, disfigured or decayed to identify — were laid in 46 plots for the unknown in 1950. A few of those remains had been identified in the years leading up to 2015.

During brief remarks to a small group of people gathered for the ceremony, Adm. Sam Paparo, commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet, reflected on the military's ethos of striving to never leave a fallen comrade behind.

"These heroes that you see here have begun their final journey to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific," he said.

US Navy in Naples relaxes rules on wearing masks outdoors

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Starting Monday, Naval Support Activity Naples will no longer require masks outdoors if social distancing of at least six feet can be maintained, the base said Friday.

The rule change falls in line with Italy's eased coronavirus restrictions, which allow citizens in white zone regions to go without masks outside as long as social distancing of about 3 feet is maintained.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines recommend social distancing of at least 6 feet. NSA Naples adheres to more stringent policy, the installation Facebook page said.

Non-immunized individuals, ages 2 and up, must continue to follow Defense Department policy of wearing masks on all installations, the announcement said. Masks must be worn at all NSA Naples facilities before approaching or entering certain areas.

This includes the Capo Spine walkway from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. if social distancing can't be maintained, any commercial shopping area, customer service areas, along with corridors, hallways and stairwells, and while riding a bus, the base announcement said.

Masks may be taken off in spaces that are not open or accessible to the general public, such as office spaces and where 6 feet of separation can be maintained.

Individuals who desire to wear masks may continue to do so. Personnel should avoid asking questions about vaccination status or personal reasons for wearing a mask, the announcement stated.

Naval Academy midshipman who died on leave played for football team

By Kat Bouza
Stars and Stripes

A Naval Academy midshipman who died while on summer leave is being remembered as a kind-hearted jokester who once played linebacker for the school's football team.

James Myles James, 22, of Hiram, Ga., was found unresponsive at his uncle's home there on Wednesday morning, academy spokeswoman Cmdr. Alana Garcia told the Military Times.

The cause of death is under investigation and foul play is not suspected, according to a statement from the academy.

James was an English major who attended the Naval Academy Prep School before enrolling at the school in Annapolis, Md., as a member of the class of 2022, according to an academy news release.

"I'm not ashamed to say that I loved every moment I spent with him," James' academic adviser, Pamela Schmitt, said in the statement. "He was as kind-hearted a soul as I've ever met, and he will be missed by everyone who knew him."

James was also a member of the academy's football team and played linebacker his plebe year, according to a Navy Football roster.

"We are heartbroken to hear of Myles' passing," head coach Ken Niumatalolo said in a statement. "Myles was a great young man and was beloved by his brothers/teammates. He was fun to be around and was a real jokester."

Classmate Yenuel OrtizRodriguez said James "would remind you to celebrate every aspect of your life and to look good while you did it."

"Myles was your brother, someone who always had your back and made sure that you knew it," he said in the statement.

James is survived by his uncle, mother, brother and sister. Funeral arrangements are pending.
Bangkok, others restrict movements to curb cases

All “local area activities,” including visits to bars, nightclubs and karaoke rooms, are no longer off-limits to fully-vaccinated personnel at the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo.

However, unvaccinated personnel at Yokota Air Base remain barred from these and other nonessential activities that have a potential for crowds, close contact or closed spaces.

The update to Yokota’s COVID-19 public health emergency was announced Friday in a letter from 374th Airlift Wing commander Col. Andrew Campbell.

Yokota’s local area is now defined as the “country of Japan,” minus Okinawa prefecture, which is under a state of emergency until July 11. Fully vaccinated is defined as 14 days after a person’s final dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

“All limits on social gatherings and fitness activity group sizes have been removed” for fully vaccinated personnel, the base wrote in a Face-book post Friday.

The unvaccinated must continue to wear masks on and off base, according to the new policy, though fully vaccinated individuals have been granted some leeway regarding masks on base.

Yokota’s policy update follows a Tuesday decision at nearby Yokosuka Naval Base to relax many off-duty restrictions. Bars, nightclubs and tattoo parlors are no longer off-limits to most sailors in Japan, thanks to the decision by base commander Capt. Rich Jarrett.

U.S. military bases across the country have also updated off-limits area maps as infections number continue to fall in most parts of the country.

As of 7 p.m. Friday, the U.S. military in Japan had reported only one new coronavirus patient, an unvaccinated employee at Yokosuka Naval Base, 35 miles south of central Tokyo. That person tested positive after displaying symptoms of COVID-19, the base said in a statement Friday afternoon.

US, French artists use mural to revive hope

PARIS — A colorful human face emerges from waves like a call for hope above a Parisian street, in a giant message of optimism from artists working in mid-June on the 82-foot high mural in the French capital that’s slowly climbing out of its virus isolation.

Illustrator AJ Dungo, 29, who lives in California, and French graffiti artist Da Cruz, 44, started working in mid-June on the 82-foot high mural in the 19th arrondissement, in the northeast of Paris.

The project is a symbol of creative rebirth, and of both cultures reconnecting after lockdowns.

Da Cruz, who grew up in this Parisian neighborhood and used to travel regularly to different continents, said it was hard for him to see his projects stopped amid the pandemic.

“I’m working in the street because I like showing my message to lots of different people, and I miss hearing people speaking another language and being able to communicate with them through painting. There’s always a bridge that is created by colors,” he told The Associated Press.

The project is supported by the French American Mural Art (FA-MA) program, led by the U.S. Embassy, in association with local festival Ourcq Living Colors.

“AJ Dungo and Da Cruz have chosen to represent stylized waves at the bottom of the mural, and an explosion of colors above, surrounding a central human face, with inspirations from South America and Africa. “We wanted to make something really optimistic and something celebratory, because after the tragic year everyone went through, we thought it could help the community to lift their spirits a bit and give them some hope with a meaningful image,” AJ Dungo said.

By Matthew M. Burke

Stars and Stripes

Yokosuka has had 10 people test positive for COVID-19 this month. There were 10 infections in all of May.

Japan on Friday reported 1,245 new patients, 315 fewer than the same day last week, according to public broadcaster NHK and the World Health Organization. There were 22 deaths nationwide.

The government has counted just shy of 790,000 COVID-19 cases during the pandemic and more than 14,500 deaths, the WHO said.

Tokyo on Friday reported another 562 coronavirus infections and two deaths, according to NHK, which cited metropolitan government data. That’s 109 more than the same day last week.

Okinawa prefecture, home to most of the U.S. troops stationed in Japan, reported 82 new infections Friday, four fewer than the same day last week, according to NHK. There were four deaths.

From The Associated Press

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Firm said in ’18 building needed $9M in repairs

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Nearly three years before an oceanfront building collapsed near Miami, an engineering firm estimated that major repairs the building needed would cost more than $9 million, according to newly released emails.

The email from the firm of Morabito Consultants was among a series of documents released by the city of Surfside as rescue efforts continued at the site of the collapsed building, where more than 150 people remained unaccounted for. At least nine people were killed in the collapse.

The release of the 2018 cost estimate followed the earlier publication of another document from the firm showing the ground-floor pool deck of the building was resting on a concrete slab that had “major structural damage” and needed to be extensively repaired. That report also uncoupled “abundant cracking and spalling” of concrete columns, beams and walls in the parking garage.

The report did not warn of imminent danger from the damage, and it is unclear if any of the damage observed was responsible for the collapse of Champlain Towers South.

The cost estimate showed that repairs across the entire building would cost more than $9.1 million, with the cost of work at the garage, entrance and pool deck alone accounting for more than $3.8 million. The work had not been done by the time the building collapsed.

The earlier report said the waterproofing under the pool deck had failed and had been improperly laid flat instead of sloped, preventing water from draining off.

“The failed waterproofing is causing major structural damage to the concrete structural slab below these areas. Failure to replace the waterproofing in the near future will cause the extent of the concrete deterioration to expand exponentially,” the report said.

The firm recommended that the damaged slabs be replaced in what would be a major repair.

Some of the damage to the concrete in the parking garage was minor, while other columns had exposed and deteriorating rebar. It also noted that much of the building’s previous attempts to fix the columns and other damage with epoxy were marred by poor craftsmanship and were failing.

Beneath the pool deck “where the slab had been epoxy-injected, new cracks were radiating from the originally repaired cracks,” the report said.

In a statement Saturday, Morabito Consultants confirmed its report “detailed significant cracks and breaks in the concrete, which required repairs to ensure the safety of the residents and the public.”

Family finds hope as search continues

Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. — When Mike Noriega heard that part of the condominium tower where his grandmother lived had collapsed, he rushed with his father to the scene. They arrived at a nightmarish 30-foot pile of pancaked concrete and mangled metal, the remains of her 12-story building — and no sign of 92-year-old Hilda Noriega.

But among the flying debris, they stumbled across mementos that bore witness to Hilda’s life on the sixth floor in Champlain Towers South: an old picture of her with her late husband and their infant son, and a birthday card that friends from her prayer group sent two weeks earlier with the acronym “ESM,” Spanish for “hand-delivered,” scrawled across the yellow envelope with a butterfly etching.

“There was a message in the midst of all this,” Noriega said. “It means not to give up hope. To have faith.”

Days after Thursday’s collapse, Hilda remains among more than 150 people unaccounted for in Surfside, north of Miami Beach, with nine confirmed dead and authorities and loved ones fearing the toll will go much higher.

As scores of rescuers continue to use heavy machinery and power tools to clear the rubble from the top and tunnel in from below, the Noriega family still has hope she will be found alive.

“Some miracles are very big, others are small,” said Mike, 36, who last spoke to Hilda the day before the disaster.

Hot air balloon crashes in Albuquerque street killing all aboard

Associated Press

A hot air balloon hit a power line and crashed onto a busy street in Albuquerque on Saturday, killing all five people on board, including the parents of an Albuquerque police officer, police said.

The crash happened around 7 a.m. in the city’s west side, police spokesman Gilbert Gallegos said. Police identified two of the passengers as Martin Martinez, 59, and Mary Martinez, 62 — the parents of a prison transport officer with the Albuquerque Police Department.

Police did not immediately release the others’ names but said the male pilot, and a female and male passenger were from central New Mexico.

Martin Martinez also had worked for Albuquerque police on bicycle patrol but most recently was a sergeant with the local school district’s police force, authorities said. Some Albuquerque officers who responded to the crash had worked with him and were sent home because it took a toll on them, said police Chief Harrold Medina.

“It really emphasized the point that no matter how big we think we are, we’re still a tight-knit community and incidents like this affect us all,” Medina said.

The Albuquerque Public Schools District said Martin Martinez “will forever be remembered for his lifelong dedication, courage and selflessness to the profession of law enforcement.”

The intersection where the balloon crashed was still cordoned off late Saturday afternoon. The multi-colored balloon had skirted the flames and prayed aloud, video posted online showed.

The envelope of the balloon floated away, eventually landing on a residential rooftop, Gallegos said. The FAA did not immediately have registration details for the balloon but identified it as a Cameron 0-120.

Authorities haven’t determined what caused the crash. The National Transportation Safety Board sent two investigators to the scene Saturday who will look into the pilot, the balloon itself and the operating environment, said spokesman Peter Knudson. A preliminary report typically is available in a couple of weeks.

Gallegos said hot air balloons can be difficult to manage, particularly when the wind kicks up.

“Our balloonists tend to be very much experts at navigating, but sometimes we have these types of tragic accidents,” he said.
Biden walks back veto threat on infrastructure bill

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — In an effort to preserve a fragile bipartisan deal on infrastructure, President Joe Biden endorsed it “without hesitation” Saturday, walking back from a threat to veto it if Congress also didn’t pass an even larger package to expand the social safety net.

Biden said he didn’t mean to suggest in earlier remarks that he would veto the nearly $1 trillion infrastructure bill unless Congress also passed a broader package of investments that he and fellow Democrats aim to approve along party lines, the two together totaling some $4 trillion.

Speaking on Thursday moments after fulfilling his hopes of reaching a bipartisan accord, Biden appeared to put the deal in jeopardy with his comment that the infrastructure bill would have to move in “tandem” with the larger bill.

Though Biden had been clear he would pursue the massive new spending for child care, Medicare and other investments, Republicans balked at the president’s notion that he would not sign one without the other. “If this is the only thing that comes to me, I’m not signing it,” Biden said then of the infrastructure bill. “It’s in tandem.

By Saturday, Biden was seeking to clarify those comments, after his top negotiators Steve Ricchetti and Louisa Terrell worked to assure senators that Biden remained enthusiastic about the deal.

“My comments also created the impression that I was issuing a veto threat on the very plan I had just agreed to, which was certainly not my intent,” Biden said in a statement.

“I intend to pursue the passage of that plan, which Democrats and Republicans agreed to on Thursday, with vigor,” Biden added. “It would be good for the economy, good for our country, good for our people. I fully stand behind it without reservation or hesitation.”

Biden’s earlier remarks had drawn sharp criticism from some Republicans, including Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who tweeted on Friday, “No deal by extortion!”

Others felt “blindsided” by what they said was a shift in their understanding of his position.

Tensions appeared to calm afterward, when senators from the group of negotiators convened a conference call, according to a person who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

“My hope is that we’ll still get this done,” said Sen. Bob Portman of Ohio, the lead Republican negotiator, in an interview Friday with The Associated Press. “Our infrastructure is in bad shape.”

Biden was set to travel on Tuesday to Wisconsin for the first stop on a nationwide tour to promote the infrastructure package, the White House said.

The sudden swings point to the difficult path ahead for what promises to be a long process of turning Biden’s nearly $4 trillion infrastructure proposals into law.

The two measures were always expected to move together through Congress: the bipartisan plan and a second bill that would advance under special rules allowing for passage solely with majority Democrats votes and is now swelling to $6 trillion. Biden reiterated that was his plan on Saturday, but said he was not conditioning one on the other.

“So to be clear,” his statement said, “our bipartisan agreement does not preclude Republicans from attempting to defeat my Families Plan; likewise, they should have no objections to my devoted efforts to pass that Families Plan and other proposals in tandem.”

Before his clarification Saturday, not all senators were swayed by the White House outreach, which came after a tumultuous month of on-again, off-again negotiations over Biden’s top legislative priority.

The Democrats’ two-track strategy has been to consider both the bipartisan deal and their own more sweeping priorities side by side, as a way to assure liberals the smaller deal won’t be the only one. A bipartisan accord has been important for the White House as it tries to show centrist Democrats and others that it is working with Republicans before Biden tries to push the broader package through Congress.

Ten Republican senators would be needed to pass the bipartisan accord in the 50-50 Senate, where 60 votes are required to advance most bills.

While the senators in the bipartisan group are among some of the more independent-minded lawmakers, known for bucking their party’s leadership, it appears criticism by Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Biden’s approach could peel away GOP support.

Man jumps from moving plane at Los Angeles airport

Associated Press
LOS ANGELES — A passenger was taken to the hospital Friday night after jumping out of a moving plane at Los Angeles International Airport, authorities said.

United Express flight 5365, operated by SkyWest, was pulling away from a gate shortly after 7 p.m. when the man unsuccessfully tried to breach the cockpit by pounding on the door, then managed to open the service door and jumped down the emergency slide onto the tarmac, according to the airport, the FBI and SkyWest.

The man was taken into custody on the taxiway, treated for injuries that were not life-threatening and taken to the hospital, authorities said.

The FBI is investigating, spokeswoman Laura Eimiller said Saturday.

TSA will resume voluntary defense training for airline employees

Associated Press
DALLAS — Federal officials cited the surge of incidents involving disruptive and sometimes violent passengers in resuming self-defense training for airline flight attendants and pilots.

The classes, which are voluntary for airline flight crews, were halted last year because of COVID-19. The Transportation Security Administration said they will resume in early July.

The move was praised by leaders of major flight attendant unions, who lobbied to create the training programs after the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The terrorists who hijacked and crashed four planes attacked several flight attendants and passengers before storming the cockpits.

“Since a flight attendant was the first to perish, we wanted to make sure that we could protect ourselves from physical alterations, on and off the aircraft,” said Lyn Montgomery, president of the union that represents Southwest Airlines flight attendants.

“Right now it’s really needed, it’s incredibly valuable.”

The Federal Aviation Administration said last week that airlines have reported more than 3,000 incidents involving unruly passengers since Jan. 1, with many involving passengers who refuse to comply with a federal requirement to wear face masks. The agency did not track such reports in prior years, but a spokesman said it was safe to assume this year’s numbers are the highest ever.

Since announcing a “zero-tolerance policy” against unruly passengers in January, the FAA has publicized potential fines — some topping $30,000 — against dozens of passengers and has investigated more than 400 cases. That is about three times the full-year average number of cases over the past decade, according to FAA figures.

Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, who also advocated making the classes mandatory, nonetheless praised TSA for restarting voluntary ones now because of the surge in confrontations on flights.

“This should send a message to the public that these events are serious” and that flight attendants are there to ensure “the safety and security of everyone in the plane,” she said.
Impact of Chauvin case on policing is yet to be seen

By TAMMY WEBBER

Former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin's conviction and lengthy prison sentence in George Floyd's murder could lead to better police hiring and training, law enforcement experts say. It could spur more effort to build trust among officers and communities.

And it might have made the public — and future jurors — more receptive to long-standing complaints about police interactions with minorities.

Even so, the case was so unusual — from bystander video of Chauvin kneeling on Floyd's neck for 9½ minutes to police department brass testifying against him — that it's difficult to say it was a watershed moment for lasting change.

"The conviction was critically important, in part, because of how blatant the violence was and because of the way in which the video couldn't allow the lies that police often tell in these situations to dominate the narrative," said Sheila A. Bedi, a professor at Northwestern University's Pritzker School of Law and director of the school's Community Justice & Civil Rights Clinic.

But the outcome in Chauvin's case — including his 22½-year sentence for murder — doesn't address deep-rooted issues of race and violence affecting police interactions with minorities that don't result in charges or convictions against officers, said Bedi, who has been involved in numerous use-of-force lawsuits against the Chicago Police Department.

"And until we get at that, I caution anyone to celebrate the conviction and sentence as a victory," she said.

Officers accused of brutality or misconduct against Black people rarely go to trial, and among those who have, the list of acquittals and mistrials is longer than the list of sentences after conviction. That includes acquittals in recent years of officers tried in the deaths of Philando Castile in suburban Minneapolis and Terence Crutcher in Tulsa, Okla.

Eleven non-federal law officers, including Chauvin, have been convicted of murder for on-duty deaths since 2005. Of those, the nine who were sentenced before Chauvin received sentences ranging from six years, nine months, to life behind bars, with the median being 15 years, said Philip Stinson, a criminal justice professor at Bowling Green State University.

Still, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison said Friday that the outcome was a step toward accountability, even if not total justice. And he urged federal, state and local lawmakers to pass laws to improve policing, saying Chauvin's sentencing was "by itself not enough."

Chauvin's high-profile case likely led more people to believe longstanding complaints about police interactions with Black people, even if his actions were blatantly wrong, experts said. And that could make jurors less likely to simply believe police versions of events in the future.

"Extreme cases by their nature open up public awareness ... but it doesn't necessarily result in across-the-board reform because the situation was so unique," said former federal prosecutor Jeffrey Cramer, senior managing director of the consulting firm Guidepost Solutions. "What would be the reform? Don't put your knee on someone's neck for 9½ minutes?"

Still, the testimony of Minneapolis Police Department officers, including the chief, that Chauvin violated his training — though highly unusual — could make officers think twice about using force.

"And if it does, it's a good thing," Cramer said. "Anyone that's been in this game long enough knows that it comes down to hiring practices and training, but at the end of the day, it's a certain officer in a certain situation. And I don't see these situations ending anytime soon."

Knowing that their encounters could be captured on cellphone video also could give officers pause, experts said. Minneapolis police originally said Floyd died in a medical incident. But video shot by 17-year-old Darnella Frazier showed Chauvin ignoring Floyd's pleas that he couldn't breathe and continuing to press his knee into Floyd's neck even after the Black man was dead.

Ellison, the attorney general, said he hoped Chauvin's conviction and sentence was a "moment for change" when it comes to trust between minority communities and police officers.

"You can't heal a dirty wound, and when there's little trust, sadly there's little safety," Ellison said.

Court tosses lawsuits against store in Texas church killing

Associated Press

AUSTIN—The Texas Supreme Court says survivors and relatives of those killed in a 2017 mass killing at a church can't sue a sporting goods chain for selling the gunman the rifle used in the attack.

The court Friday threw out four lawsuits against Academy Sports and Outdoors that alleged a San Antonio-area store negligently sold the gun to Devin Kelley in 2016.

Kelley killed more than two dozen people when he opened fire at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs. The 26-year-old then killed himself during a chase after the shooting.

Academy Sports and Outdoors, where the shooter purchased a Ruger AR-556 semi-automatic rifle that included a 30-round magazine, had appealed after two lower courts declined to dismiss lawsuits.

The Supreme Court agreed with Academy, and ruled the petitions were prohibited by the U.S. Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. The act protects retailers from lawsuits arising from criminal acts by third parties.

The lawsuits said that Kelley provided store clerks with a Colorado ID, and the U.S. Gun Control Act required Academy to comply with Colorado gun laws before approving the purchase. Colorado, however, prohibits the sale of magazines holding more than 14 rounds, while Academy sold Kelley a rifle that came packaged with a 30-round magazine.

But the court said the sale was legal because the federal law applies only to the sale of firearms, not components.

Shooting survivors and relatives have also sued the U.S. Air Force, which failed to report a domestic violence conviction that would have prohibited Kelley from purchasing a firearm.

Kelley had been found guilty of assaulting his wife and stepson and was dishonorably discharged from the service in 2012, but Air Force officials failed to report the conviction to the FBI background check system despite a requirement to do so.

Trump airs old election grievances in return to the rally stage

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, Ohio — Former President Donald Trump reproposed his election grievances and baseless claims of fraud as he returned to the rally stage Saturday, holding his first campaign-style event since leaving the White House.

"This was the scam of the century and this was the crime of the century," Trump told a crowd of thousands at Ohio’s Lorain County Fairgrounds, not far from Cleveland, where he began making good on his pledge to exact revenge on those who voted for hishistoric second impeachment.

The event was held to support Senate Miller, a former White House aide who is challenging Republican Rep. Anthony Gonzalez for his congressional seat. Gonzalez was one of 10 GOP House members who voted to impeach Trump for his role in inciting the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol building. Trump has vowed to back those who ran against him.

And while he praised Miller as an "incredible patriot" and a "great guy" who "loves the people of Ohio," Trump spent much of the rally fixating on the 2020 election, which he insists he won, even though top state and local election officials, his own attorney general and numerous judges, including some he appointed, have said there is no evidence of the mass voter fraud he alleges took place.

Trump has been consumed with ongoing efforts to overturn the results in various states, and has even publicly entertained the idea that he could somehow be reinstated into office, even though no legal or constitutional basis for doing so exists.

"The 2020 presidential election was rigged," he told the crowd, which at one point broke into a "Trump won" chant. "We won that election in a landslide." In reality, President Joe Biden's victory was thoroughly validated by the officials who reported finding no systemic fraud.

President Joe Biden's victory was thoroughly validated by the officials who reported finding no systemic fraud.
AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Teens poured alcohol on nesting sea turtle

AL ORANGE BEACH — Police in coastal Alabama said a group of teenagers were arrested after pouring alcohol on a nesting sea turtle.

Officers responded to a call that juveniles were harassing a sea turtle on the beach.

Police said they found a group of teenagers near the nesting sea turtle and discovered that they had poured alcohol on the turtle. Officers made several arrests for underage possession of alcohol.

The Orange Beach Wildlife Center and Management Program wrote in a social media post that workers discovered signs of a false crawl, which is where a sea turtle comes to shore to nest but decides not to for one reason or another.

“This female turtle came ashore and did not nest because she was harassed by a group of teenagers. They poured alcohol on her while she was attempting to nest,” the group wrote.

Man charged after burning American flag

KS LARNED — Jason Wayne Cauble, 37, of Larned was charged with arson after a large U.S. flag was burned outside a business in Larned, Pawnee County Attorney Douglas McNett said.

Investigators said the 30-by-20 foot flag was burned at the Carr Auction and Realty Inc. building in Larned.

McNett said that people who burn their own flags are protected by First Amendment free expression, but that people who burn American flags are not.

Music manager says $200K in property stolen

MS SOUTHAVEN — A music manager said someone stole $200,000 in cash, jewelry, credit cards and other property from his north Mississippi home.

WREG-TV reported Southaven police are investigating after the robbery at the home of Michael Sykes. He was out of town at the time.

Sykes said burglars entered his gated subdivision, and then entered his house through a first-floor window, possibly disabling his alarm system.

There, he said they took credit cards, $36,000 in cash, Louis Vuitton luggage, watches, and custom jewelry with the logo of Sykes’ company, Palm Tree Entertainment.

The thieves have been making charges on the credit cards at various stores, said Sykes, who is a manager for rapper DeAndre Cortez Way, known as Soulja Boy.

Sykes said people could see from his social media accounts that he was out of town.

Rock ‘cairn’ vandalism found at national park

NM ALBUQUERQUE — Authorities at Petroglyph National Monument said visitors committed extensive vandalism by collecting rocks and stacking them in the form of cairns, sometimes used as a hiking trail marker.

The federally protected park was created to preserve rock designs scratched by Indigenous people starting at least 700 years ago, and Spanish settlers as far back as 400 years ago.

“Moving, stacking, or making shapes out of rocks is a form of vandalism and will impact every visitor who comes after,” said Park Superintendent Nancy Hendricks, asking visitors to “respect these sacred landscapes.”

National Park Service workers are dismantling the stacks of rocks, but can’t be sure they’ll return the rocks where they came from along the largely preserved desert landscape.

Woman arrested after newborn abandoned

CA LYNWOOD — A woman who said she was sexually assaulted in Guatemala was arrested and accused of leaving her newborn baby in a Los Angeles-area restroom, authorities said.

The 22-year-old woman was arrested on suspicion of cruelty to an animal, petty theft and abandoning a child likely to produce great bodily injury or death. The baby, found two days after she was abandoned, was treated at a hospital and will be put up for adoption, authorities said.

The woman acknowledged to investigators that she entered the country illegally, gave birth to the boy and left him in the trash can of a women’s restroom in a Lynwood park, according to a statement from the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department.

The woman said she “discarded the child out of fear” because she had only been in the United States for two months and nobody knew she was pregnant, the statement said.

Small earthquake shakes up city, surrounding area

MD WOODLAWN — A small earthquake shook the Baltimore area last week, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The quake had a preliminary magnitude of 2.6, according to Paul Caruso, a geophysicist at the USGS National Earthquake Information Center. It was centered in Woodlawn, just west of Baltimore, and was about 1.5 miles deep.

Fire department officials in Baltimore city and Baltimore County said they had no reports of injuries or damage from the quake more than an hour after it struck.

Forested wetland being restored after 200 years

MI DETROIT — Michigan Department of Natural Resources specialists are working to restore a 200-acre, forested wetland on Belle Isle in Detroit.

Efforts to restore natural water flow, retain surface water and enhance ecological integrity started this past spring and are expected to help reverse damage that has occurred over the past two centuries, according to the DNR.

Workers will remove fill that existing trails were built on and replace it with accessible boardwalks and primitive trails to restore surface drainage. Unused roads that impede water flow also will be removed.

Native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and wetland plants will be planted where infrastructure is removed or altered.

Work began in March and is expected to continue through December 2023.

State seeks to attract lifeguards with more pay

MA BOSTON — Massachusetts officials are offering pay and bonuses in a bid to attract more lifeguards at the state’s beaches.

The new incentives come amid a shortage of lifeguards in the state and across the country.

Pay for Department of Conservation and Recreation lifeguards is going up from $17 to $20 an hour. Head lifeguards will start making $21 an hour, up from $18. Lifeguards who remain on the job the entire season can earn a $500 bonus.

The state has seen a spate of drownings in recent weeks. Massachusetts State Police have investigated 24 drownings so far this year.

From The Associated Press
Disappearances rising on Mexico’s ‘highway of death’

BY MARK STEVENSON
Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — As many as 50 people are missing after setting out on three-hour car trips this year between Mexico’s industrial hub of Monterrey and the border city of Nuevo Laredo. They appear to be the latest victims of a border region in which cartels have no qualms about driving innocent passengers off buses and forcing them to fight each other to death with sledgehammers.

“Nothing remains: they disappear and are never heard from again,” said lawyer Sergio Leal.Ortiz, who represents the family of one of the disappeared.

The disappearances are just the latest in a string of kidnappings, beatings and killings that have marked a return to the worst days of the 2006-2012 drug war. But the government of Nuevo Leon state acknowledged 10 days later that it had re-ceived reports of 14 people who had disappeared on the highway so far in 2021, along with five more in neighboring Tamaulipas, where Nuevo Laredo is located.

Blinken, Israel’s Lapid meet amid relations reset

Associated Press

ROME — Hush-hush diplomacy. In-person visits. And a very public no-surprises agreement on Iran.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid met in Rome on Sunday as their new governments look to turn the page on former President Donald Trump and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose close alliance aggrivated partisan divisions within both countries.

Now, with Trump sidelined in Florida and Netanyahu leading the opposition, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett are focused on pragmatic diplomacy rather than dramatic initiatives that risk fomenting opposition at home or distracting from other priorities.

“In the past few years, mistakes were made,” said Lapid told Blinken as they sat down for talks in a Rome hotel. “Israel’s bipartisan standing was hurt. We will fix those mistakes together.”

Lapid said he had spoken with Democrats and Republicans since taking office and had “reminded them all that we share America’s most basic, basic values — freedom, democracy, free markets and constant search for peace.”

Blinken noted that even though the two governments are new, “the foundation that we’re working on is one of an enduring partnership, a relationship, friendship between the United States and Israel.”

The push means aiming for “quiet” diplomacy, when he privately urged Netanyahu to wind down the Israel-Hamas war ahead of a truce that took effect May 21.

“We believe the way to discuss those disagreements is through direct and professional conversation, not a press conference,” Lapid said.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, second from left, meets with members of the UN Food Security Agencies at the U.S. Embassy in Rome on Sunday. Blinken later met with Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid.
WORLD

WORLD

**Pride events: Arrests in Turkey; parties in Europe**

Associated Press

ROME — Police in riot gear on Saturday blocked streets to try to thwart gay Pride marchers in Istanbul, while thousands turned out joyfully in Paris and elsewhere in Europe after pandemic privations — although setbacks against LGBT rights tempered some of the celebratory air.

Authorities have banned Istanbul Pride events since 2015, citing public security, and more recently, COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The Cumhuriyet newspaper said at least 25 people were detained.

In Berlin, demonstrators set off on three routes toward the central Alexanderplatz in a format meant both to avoid bigger gatherings during the pandemic and to reflect the diversity of the LGBT community.

In Italy, thousands of Pride celebrants rallied in Rome and in some smaller cities.

With a proposed law to combat hate crimes against LGBTIQ people stalled in the Italian Senate for months, the Vatican and right-wing political leaders have been lobbying to eliminate some of the provisions, citing fears the legislation will crimp freedom of expression.

After it became public that the Vatican earlier this month had raised objections to Italy’s embassy to the Holy See over some of the bill’s aspects, the Holy See tried to defuse anger by insisting it doesn’t want to block passage. But its No. 2 official, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, expressed concern that the legislation could leave open to prosecution those expressing opinions about “any possible distinction between man and woman.”

A new Hungarian law prohibits sharing content on homosexuality or sex reassignment to people under 18 in school sex education programs, films or advertisements. The European Union nation’s government says the law aims to protect children and insists it doesn’t target gays.

The overarching mood among tens of thousands of participants at the Paris event was of celebration after nearly a year-and-a-half of pandemic-triggered restrictions on gatherings and socializing.

In North Macedonia, hundreds of people marched through the capital, Skopje, as the Balkan country hosted its second-ever Pride parade. The crowd carried a large rainbow banner, blew whistles and cheered and danced to music playing from a vehicle with loudspeakers.

Fire ravages 16 boats in Hong Kong

Associated Press

HONG KONG — A fire engulfed 16 vessels in a Hong Kong typhoon shelter early Sunday, resulting in at least 10 boats sinking and one person sent to a hospital.

The fire broke out at about 2:30 a.m. at the Aberdeen South typhoon shelter in Hong Kong, and was extinguished more than six hours later.

Firefighters rescued 35 people from vessels during the fire, according to public broadcaster RTHK.

There were no reports of any injuries, although one person who felt unwell was sent to the hospital.

The fire services department used 11 fire boat monitors, eight jets, and mobilized four breathing apparatus teams to fight the blaze, according to a statement.

It wasn’t immediately clear what caused the fire.
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**OPINION**

**BIDEN WILL PAY POLITICALLY FOR MAKING A DEAL WITH IRAN**

By Doyle McManus

Los Angeles Times

President Joe Biden’s negotiators are moving toward renewing former President Barack Obama’s 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, a deal renounced by former President Donald Trump. If the Biden team succeeds, it will be the biggest foreign policy decision of the presiden t’s first year—as well as a massive political headache.

Trump believed that by canceling the deal Obama had made with Iran to accept far tougher terms. So he walked away, slamming massive economic sanctions on Tehran, and waited for the regime to collapse.

But the mullahs didn’t buckle. Instead, freed from the agreement’s limits, they accelerated uranium enrichment and moved closer to the point at which they could build a bomb.

A renewed agreement would not only halt that progress, but reverse it. And it would reimpose international inspections that made it impossible for Iran to build a nuclear-weapon more rapidly than the United States could stop it.

So what’s the problem?

Like many international agreements—and an unprecedented one between Iran and the United States, but five other countries—the nuclear deal isn’t perfect.

For one thing, it isn’t permanent. Most of its major provisions expire in 2030, which seemed a long time away in 2015 but doesn’t now. After that date, in the absence of a new agreement, Iran could return to increasing its stockpile of enriched uranium.

For another, the deal leaves many other problems unsolved. Beyond nuclear weapons, Iran’s militant Islamist regime challenges U.S. interests across the entire Middle East, supporting anti-American factions in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. The closest U.S. ally in the region, Israel, considers Iran a mortal enemy.

And the Tehran government is a singularly unpleasant regime. It imprisons dissidents, funds organizations the U.S. labels as terrorist and chants “Death to America” on major holidays.

Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is as bitterly anti-American as ever, and the president whose election Khamenei dismissed as a “cancer,” Ebrahim Raisi, isn’t just a hard-liner; he’s guilty of crimes against humanity. In his earlier career as a judge, he presided over the summary execution of an estimated 5,000 political prisoners.

Any deal with a regime like that is an easy target for GOP attacks.

“Religious zealots run the place,” Sen. Lindsey Graham, of South Carolina, complained last week. “The idea of going back in to negotiations with the ayatollah and his henchmen is insane.”

Other critics have complained that the deal will require the United States to lift some economic sanctions, enabling Iran to resume exporting oil. That Iran’s reward for accepting renewed nuclear restrictions—but it’s not, as Sen. Ted Cruz, of Texas, suggested, a transfer of money from the U.S. Treasury.

The gaps in the deal have been criticized by Democrats, too. In March, 140 members of the House of Representatives, 70 from each party, joined a letter endorsing an amendment that extended the nuclear agreement beyond 2030 and address other U.S. concerns, including Iran’s ballistic missile program and its intervention in other countries.

Biden and his aides have promised to tackle those problems—but later. Adding them to the already difficult negotiation, they argue, would make the nuclear deal unachievable.

“We have to keep our eye on the ball,” Jake Sullivan, Biden’s national security adviser, said June 20, referring to the nuclear problem.

But the administration’s promise of future negotiations on non-nuclear concerns took a hit the next day from Raisi, Iran’s president-elect.

“Regional issues and missiles are not negotiable,” he said.

The promise of a continuing standoff with Iran over these issues offers Republicans a political prize as they look to force elections in 2022 and 2024—a revival of the ancient GOP theme that Democratic presidents are “soft” on U.S. adversaries.

Republicans have already accused Biden of being “soft on China,” even though the new president has been far tougher on Vladimir Putin than Trump, who often praised the Russian autocrat in effusive terms.

On Iran, though, the charge that Biden’s policies are soft may have a better chance of sticking—and for a good reason. His nuclear deal won’t constrain Iran’s behavior on other issues.

Republicans will say the deal was a bust because Iran will still be regarded as Khamenei’s regime. It will still be imprisoning dissidents, proclaiming enmity toward Israel and meddling in the affairs of its neighbors.

The Biden administration insists it will continue some economic restrictions on Iran, and reimpose more stringent ones if necessary. But the “soft on” charge has a long history for Republicans, who have denounced Democrats for being soft on everything from foreign policy and immigration to street crime.

Americans like neat, tidy and conclusive solutions to foreign policy problems, but Iran offers none of those. A new nuclear deal would clearly be better than no deal. But in the broader U.S.-Iranian standoff, no bright future is at hand—only choices among bad outcomes and less-bad ones, and that means political peril for Biden.

Doyle McManus is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times.
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Chaos and ‘The Good Fight’

Actress says show returns with relevance, madness in Season 5

By Katie Feldman

New York Daily News

Sarah Steele is almost convinces “The Good Fight” creators can predict the future.

The 32-year-old actress, who stars as investigator Marissa Gold on the legal series, marvels that for five years Robert and Michelle King seemingly have seen everything coming — from systemic racism to cartoonish villains like Milo Yiannopoulos.

“I was reading a script one day and I didn’t quite understand some aspect of the case we were working on, and then (a podcast) ... that day was all about what we were doing,” Steele told the Daily News. “We got that script weeks ago! How did they know? I think that’s what great artists do. They tap into something that’s simmering under the surface. That’s how they stay so relevant.”

After its fourth season was delayed, then hastily wrapped due to the COVID-19 shutdown last spring, the fifth season returned to Paramount+ on June 24 to tie up loose ends — particularly the planned departures of Cush Jumbo and Delroy Lindo — then launch into the typical chaos of “The Good Fight.”

Between COVID-inspired downsizing and the constant fight over the law firm’s identity, Reddick/Lockhart has plenty to deal with, leaving Marissa to use the pandemic to do what many promised and failed to do: She changed her life and started law school.

“She gets frustrated quickly with all the red tape and all of the grunt work,” Steele said. “But by happenstance — or fate — Marissa stumbles on what Steele described as an “alternative” courtroom: a makeshift tribunal in the back of a copy shop, with a makeshift judge (Mandy Patinkin) and makeshift rules. Against the wishes of Diane (Christine Baranski) and Liz (Audra McDonald), Marissa can’t seem to stay away from the sideshow, even as the chaos compounds.

“They found a way to make Marissa a lawyer in her own way. The very normal, straight courtroom scenes didn’t feel right for a character, as unconventional as she is,” Steele said. “It’s been so interesting to finally be practicing law on a law show but in a way that’s subverting the whole form.”

That’s how “The Good Fight” operates: Everything has a twist, not for some May sweeps or season finale cliffhanger, but because the show simply keeps getting bigger and weirder.

“I don’t think very much about how chaotic it is and how zany it is because you have to ground it in truth. I play everything really straight, as if it’s normal.”

Samuel L. Jackson among honorary Oscar recipients

From wire reports

The motion picture academy will present honorary Oscars to Samuel L. Jackson, Elaine May and Liv Ullmann, and the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award to Danny Glover at its 12th Governors Awards on Jan. 15, 2022.

The ceremony will mark a resumption of the Governors Awards which were canceled in 2020 because of the pandemic.

“We are thrilled to present this year’s Governors Awards to four honorees who have had a profound impact on both film and society,” Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences President David Rubin said in a statement.

Glover is best known for his pairing with Mel Gibson in the “Lethal Weapon” movie series and for work in films like “The Color Purple,” “Grand Canyon” and “The Royal Tenenbaums.” He has never been nominated for an Oscar.

Jackson’s career has encompassed his recurring role as Nick Fury in the Marvel Cinematic Universe and collaborations with directors Quentin Tarantino (“Pulp Fiction,” “Jackie Brown,” “Django Unchained”) and Spike Lee (“Do the Right Thing,” “School Daze”). He earned an Oscar nomination for his supporting turn as the Bible-paraphrasing hitman in “Pulp Fiction.”

May teamed with Mike Nichols as a groundbreaking comedy act in the 1960s and ’80s and went on to write and direct many notable films. She received Oscar nominations for writing adapted screenplays for “Heaven Can Wait” and “Primary Colors,” which Nichols directed.

Lions, tigers, bears, love? Netflix’s ‘Sexy Beasts’ trailer baffling

By Annabel Aguirar

Washington Post

A grasshopper and a dolphin walk into a bar. There’s no joke here, only romance: In Netflix’s newly announced reality show “Sexy Beasts,” which premieres July 21, hopeful daters don prosthetic-heavy disguises in search of a connection beyond physical attraction, a blind date by way of drugs and seeing things. Others — as seems to happen every time Netflix announces anything — listed all the shows that have been canceled to make way for whatever this is.

“All those people are thin and attractive achieving conscience and desperately trying to understand humanity, and failing miserably at it,” someone tweeted.

“Sex Beasts” is supposed to be about connection on a deeper level beyond physical attraction. But some might argue the contestants are not actually concealing much of anything.

“Those are not a set of characters that are designed to be like these people are not actually concealing much of anything.”

“None of the people are depicted as being attractive and much more is the [based on personality alone] thing is a bit of a stretch,” one person tweeted.
## Soccer

### MLS

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## Baseball

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### Deals

- **Saturday, June 26**:
  - No. 4 Vanderbilt at No. 7 Mississippi St., 6-3, 27K.
  - No. 4 Vanderbilt at No. 7 Mississippi St., 2K.

## Tennis

### NWSL

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## Golf

### PGA Tour

- **Saturday, June 26**:

### Major League Baseball

- **Saturday, June 26**:
  - A. Liem: 5-2, 15K.

### NWSL

- **Wednesday, June 23**:
  - No. 4 Vanderbilt at No. 7 Mississippi St., 6-3, 27K.
  - No. 4 Vanderbilt at No. 7 Mississippi St., 2K.

### NWSL

- **Saturday, June 26**:

## Race Car

### NASCAR

- **Sunday, June 27**:
  - Bubba Wallace: 130, 23.
  - Christopher Bell: 130, 20.
  - Daniel Suarez: 130, 14.
  - Ryan Preece: 130, 13.
  - Kyle Larson: 130, 45.
  - Joey Logano: 130, 45.

### NASCAR

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  - Bubba Wallace: 130, 23.
  - Christopher Bell: 130, 20.
  - Daniel Suarez: 130, 14.
  - Ryan Preece: 130, 13.
  - Kyle Larson: 130, 45.
  - Joey Logano: 130, 45.

## Women's Tennis

- **Saturday, June 26**:
  - A. Liem: 5-2, 15K.

## Auto Racing

### NASCAR

- **Sunday, June 27**:
  - Bubba Wallace: 130, 23.
  - Christopher Bell: 130, 20.
  - Daniel Suarez: 130, 14.
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Leggett’s hit sends Bulldogs to CWS finals

BY ERIC OLSON
Associated Press
OMAHA, Neb. — Tanner Leggett’s first hit in more than a month was the biggest of the season for Mississippi State.

Leggett’s single in the bottom of the ninth inning scored the tie-breaking run, and the Bulldogs advanced to the College World Series finals with a 4-3 victory over Texas on Saturday night.

“What an opportunity,” he said. “Some people get nervous for that situation, but I pray for that situation. Thank Coach for putting me in the game.”

The No. 9 national seed Bulldogs (48-17) reached the finals for the first time since 2013, when they were runners-up to UCLA. Mississippi State will play for its first national title against No. 4 Vanderbilt in an all-SEC, best-of-three series starting Monday night.

The Commodores (48-16) got their spot in the finals when the NCAA removed North Carolina State from the tournament because of COVID-19 protocols. Vanderbilt and NC State were supposed to play a bracket final on Saturday, but that game was declared a no-contest.

The Commodores won two of three against the Bulldogs in Nashville in the regular season. Vanderbilt is the reigning national champion, having won the CWS in 2019. There was no tournament last year because of the pandemic.

“We have to go against the best,” MSU coach Chris Lemonis said, “and that’s the way we want it.”

Leggett grew up 2½ hours from Starkville, rooted for the Bulldogs in all sports growing up, and said yes, with no hesitation, when MSU recruited him out of a junior college two years ago.

Leggett has appeared in 40 games and typically is a defensive replacement in the late innings. The .206 career hitter has only gotten starts when MSU declared a no-contest.

Leggett got his opportunity in the ninth after Cole Quintanilla hit a one-out double to right, and Cole Johnson grounded out to load the bases. The Commodores’ tricker pitch to Frank这就是一个机会。他祈祷有机会。感谢教练让我上场比赛。”

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Leggett has appeared in 40 games and typically is a defensive replacement in the late innings. The .206 career hitter has only gotten occasional chances to bat late in the season.

Leggett got his opportunity in the ninth after Cole Quintanilla hit Kellum Clark with a pitch. Brayland Skinner pinch ran for Clark and stole second to set the stage for Leggett, who drove a 1-1 pitch into left-center.

Skinner came around to score easily, and Leggett rounded first base and tossed his helmet into the grass as teammates rushed to mob him.

“You black out,” Leggett said. “It’s a great feeling, knowing we’ve worked so hard to get here. Just what a moment, what a moment.”
Road show: D-backs end record skid

Arizona routs San Diego 10-1 to halt its road slump after 24 games

BY BERNIE WILSON

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — It had been 62 days and 24 road games since the Arizona Diamondbacks had tasted victory. The road trip had been far from kind, but the Diamondbacks managed to turn their season around with a dominant win over the San Diego Padres on Saturday night.

The Diamondbacks (4-3) defeated the Padres (3-3) 10-1 at Petco Park, marking their first road win since May 22. The victory was especially significant as the Diamondbacks had lost eight consecutive road games prior to Saturday's contest.

Arizona's bats came alive after a long road trip, hitting for a team total of 17 hits and scoring 10 runs. The Diamondbacks took advantage of San Diego's mistakes, turning three double plays and four stolen bases.

The game started with a bang as Arizona's Ketel Marte hit a solo home run in the first inning to give the Diamondbacks an early lead. The team never looked back, scoring at least one run in each of the next six innings.

Arizona's usual pitching struggles were held at bay as the Diamondbacks' rotation combined for 13 strikeouts and just three earned runs in 7.2 innings. Arizona's Daniel Descalso pitched the final inning and allowed just one hit.

The Diamondbacks are now back on the road for a six-game trip, starting with a three-game series against the Cubs in Chicago. The Cubs currently have a record of 13-23 and are looking for a win to end their nine-game losing streak.

Arizona manager Torey Lovullo spoke about the team's turnaround after Saturday's win.

"It's a relief to get back on track," Lovullo said. "Our guys have been working hard and it feels really good to get this win."

Arizona Diamondbacks' Eduardo Escobar celebrates after hitting a two-run home run during the third inning of his team's 10-1 defeat of the San Diego Padres, Saturday in San Diego.

Tuesday's games

BOSTON — Playing against the New York Yankees seems to bring out the best in Nathan Eovaldi. His latest performance has the Boston Red Sox on the verge of a second straight sweep of their long-time rivals.

Eovaldi pitched neatly into the eighth inning, Adam Ottavino escaped a pair of late jams and the Red Sox held off New York for a 4-2 win on Saturday night. The Red Sox improved to 5-0 against the Yankees this season.

It was a bounce-back win for Eovaldi (8-4), who was coming off a rough start against Tampa Bay on April 16. Eovaldi gave up two runs for the first time in 15 starts this season.

Benintendi homered with two out in the ninth inning, and host Los Angeles beat Chicago Cubs 3, 10-2.

The Angels had a season-high 10 strikeouts, which were the first since 100% capacity was allowed under the state's reopening plan. Paul Goldschmidt and Paul DeJong hit solo home runs and host St. Louis ended a five-game losing streak.

Rangers 8, Royals 0: Kyle Gibson had a season-high 10 strikeouts over seven scoreless innings, Joey Gallo hit two massive homers and Texas beat visiting Kansas City, ending more than monthlong stretch without winning a series.

Reds 4, Braves 1: Luis Castillo pitched seven scoreless innings and Jesse Winker homered before departing with a hip injury, leading host Cincinnati past Atlanta. Red Sox win 5th in a row over Yankees

Boston Red Sox pitcher Nathan Eovaldi signals during a 5-0 win over the New York Yankees on Saturday in Boston.

Associated Press

Boston Red Sox pitcher Nathan Eovaldi pitched six efficient innings, Brett Phillips drove in three runs and host Tampa Bay beat Los Angeles for its fourth straight win.

Max Muncy and Justin Turner each drove in a run in the first inning, and the Dodgers then made 26 outs before Bellinger crushed a 422-foot solo shot to center off Keegan Thompson (3.2).

Rays 13, Angels 3: Shane McClanahan pitched seven effective innings, Brett Phillips drove in three runs and host Tampa Bay beat Los Angeles for its fourth straight win.

The Dodgers improved to 5-0 against the Yankees this season. The Diamondbacks' 12-1 victory at Arizona was the franchise's first leadoff home run in a series.

The game was part of a six-game series that started on Friday. The Diamondbacks led 3-1 after nine innings, and host Los Angeles won 10-4.

Giants 6, Athletics 5 (10): Curt Casali hit a game-ending double in the 10th inning at host San Francisco to edge Oakland.
Suns outlast Clippers, take 3-1 series lead

By Beth Harris

LOS ANGELES — Neither team could make a shot. The ball bounced crazily on and around the rim, but rarely went in.

In timeouts, the Suns only talked defense. The Clippers deliber- ately missed free throws in a des- perate attempt to retain posses- sion and send this series to a seventh game.

In the end, former Clipper Chris Paul made clutch free throws on a night when everyone was missing.

Devin Booker scored 25 points before fouling out in the final minute and Phoenix escaped with an 84-80 victory Saturday night to take a 3-1 lead in the Western Con- ference finals.

The Suns can advance to the NBA Finals for the first time since 1993 with a victory Monday night in Phoenix.

“We’re not looking too far ahead,” Booker said.

Los Angeles rallied from 0-2 de- ficits to win against Dallas and Utah and reach the West finals for the first time in franchise history.

“It’s going to be hard and tough, but it has to be one game at a time,” Paul George said.

The Clippers struggled with poor shooting in all but the third quarter, when they made 10 of 17 shots to pull within three points. They got within one four times in the fourth, but could never take the lead in front of a sellout crowd of 18,222 that hung on every ago- nizing miss.

“It was a crazy, emotional game,” Paul said.

LA shot 32% (27-for-83) for the game; Phoenix was barely better at 36% (31-for-86). The Clippers, who led the league in three-point shooting during the regular sea- son, made five; the Suns hit four.

“That was a slugfest,” Phoenix coach Monty Williams said. “It wasn’t Offense 101, for sure.”

Los Angeles coach Tyronn Lue said, “We had a chance to take the lead on 12 possessions and couldn’t do it. It just wouldn’t fall for us.”

Deandre Ayton added 19 points and a career playoff-high 22 reb- ounds, but Paul had 18 points and seven assists.

George had 23 points, 16 reb- ounds and six assists before fouling out with 1 second left. Reggie Jackson added 20 points for the Clippers. Ivica Zubac had 13 points and 14 rebounds.

Los Angeles successfully chal- lenged a call in the final minute that led to Booker’s sixth foul. Ter- ance Mann scored and they trailed 79-76. The final 13 seconds turned into a free-throw shooting contest, with the Suns fouling to try to keep the Clippers off the three-point line. Paul made 5 of 6. Los Angeles was 4 of 8.

With injured Kawhi Leonard again watching from a suite, the Clippers outscored Phoenix 30-19 in the third after trailing by 16 in the first half.

Both teams’ offense collapsed in the fourth, when the Suns out- scored the Clippers 15-14.

“It was tough because we fought all the way to get it to a one- point game, and we had looks that we normally make all season and they weren’t falling,” Mann said.

“The game could have easily went a whole different way if we were hitting those shots.”

Not so masked man

After missing a layup, Booker ditched the clear plastic mask he’d been wearing since getting his nose broken in a head-to-head collision with Patrick Beverley in Game 2.

“You don’t realize how much you get hit in the face until after you take it off,” he said, adding that he isn’t used to playing with it on.

Booker said he’s not sure whether he’ll wear it in Game 5.

Aytov showed up at the arena wearing a T-shirt of Booker and his bandaged nose.

“He said, ‘I was hiding it from you on the bus,’” Booker said.

Aytov said, “My boy got all banged up. Just sending a little message.”

Do as I do

Paul said he was thinking of his 12-year-old son, Chris, when he went to the line in the fourth.

“I talk to my son all the time about the importance of making free throws,” he said. “How the hell are you going to tell him to stay poised if I don’t?”

FROM PAGE 24

tic schedule might be finally taking a toll, especially against a Suns squad that had seven days of rest after sweeping the Den- ver Nuggets in the second round.

The lack of energy was especially telling in two areas that have been bedrocks of suc- cess for the Clippers this season: free throws and three-point shooting.

Los Angeles set an NBA record for free throw accuracy during the regular season (83.9%), but was 21 of 32 on Saturday night, including 8-for-13 in the fourth quarter.

They were far worse from beyond the arc, go- ing 5 of 31. According to Sportradar, that 16.1% shootout percentage is tied for sixth worst in an NBA playoff game where a team has tried 30 or more three-pointers.

“It could be. But it’s no excuses at this time of the season,” Lue said about the fa- tigue factor. “Guys could be a little tired. We’ve just got to fight through.”

The Clippers are the first team to lose the first two games in a series and come back to win twice in a postseason. They will attempt to become the fourth to be down 3-1 in a con- ference final and rally. The last time it hap- pened was in the 2016 West finals, when Golden State beat Oklahoma City.

“There’s no room for error. We’ve just got to take it a game at time now,” said Terance Mann, who had 12 points off the bench.

“Just got to try and get Game 5 and be ready to try to force a Game 7.”

It also remains to see if Kawhi Leon- ard might be back. The All-Star forward has missed six straight games due to a sprained right knee after he averaged 30.4 points in the postseason.

George said he wasn’t sure on Leonard’s status.

“If he’s not 100% we don’t want him out there. ... His health long term is more im- portant right now,” George said.

Fumes: Clippers have come back from 0-2 twice this postseason

Los Angeles Clippers guard Reggie Jackson, left, shoots as Phoenix Suns center Deandre Ayton defends during Game 4 of the Western Conference Finals on Saturday in Los Angeles.

The Clippers have come back from 0-2 twice this postseason.
Habs face biggest test in reigning champ Lightning

By John Wawrow and Stephen Whyno
Associated Press

MONTREAL — Artturi Lehkonen is keeping his composure after becoming part of the Montreal Canadiens' illustrious history by scoring the franchise's most important goal in nearly three decades.

If the upstart Canadiens' remarkable playoff run has been fueled, in part, by a desire to earn respect, then their journey is not yet complete. The team with the worst record of the NHL's 16 playoff qualifiers now has the daunting task of facing the defending champion Lightning in the Stanley Cup Final, which has the daunting task of facing the defending champs after their journey is not yet complete. The team with the worst record of the NHL's 16 playoff qualifiers now has the daunting task of facing the defending champion Lightning in the Stanley Cup Final, which now has the daunting task of facing the defending champs after their journey is not yet complete.

The Canadiens' Marc Bergevin, made with their only other loss coming by way of decision, at the hands of Lopez in 2019. “I realized (I was in control) after the third and fourth rounds because I was punching him with straight lefts and punching him with precision,” Lomachenko said. “I’m very happy because of the strategies that had been chosen, and also all the work, all the preparations, the trainings that had been done, all worked just fine and well, so I’m very happy. The result was as we planned.”

With the win, Lomachenko is hoping to land a rematch against Lopez, who was set for his first title defense in Miami on June 19 until he tested positive for COVID-19. His mandatory bout against George Kambosos, and the entire undercard, has been rescheduled for Aug. 14 in Miami, but could be moved to Sept. 11 in Las Vegas.

Lopez’s father, Teofimo Sr., who was in attendance, told ESPN during an interview after the fight his son’s camp is willing to grant the rematch, but with the caveat it must happen immediately after the Kambos- s bout.

“After this performance I think the public wants to see this fight,” Lopez Sr. said. “I think I can convince my son to fight him again. After Kambosos it can be made. It’s gonna be the biggest fight in the world. We can make it happen in December. We can make it happen in Madison Square Garden.”

Lomachenko tops Nakatani by TKO

By W.G. Ramirez
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Vasiliy Lomachenko is back, and in vintage form.

The former three-weight world champion was successful in his return to the ring, stopping Japanese veteran Masayoshi Nakatani in the ninth round Saturday night.

With Nakatani's left eye closed after eight devastating rounds, Lomachenko (19-2, 11 KOs) used a flurry of battering lefts in front of an announced sellout crowd of 2,072 inside Virgin Hotel’s The Theater, to finish off his much taller opponent in a statement return in his first bout since an upset loss to Teofimo Lopez in October.

“I’ve accomplished my goals and I’m back on track,” Lomachenko said through an interpreter.

Lomachenko landed 59% of his power punches, as he dominated from the opening bell, peppering Nakatani with a steady stream of hard, straight lefts. Lomachenko was only hit by 12% of Nakatani’s power punches.

Lomachenko's biggest round prior to the ninth was a destructive sixth, during which he landed a number of punches that caused Nakatani’s head to snap back several times, eventually blooding the Osaka native’s eye, nose and mouth.

Lomachenko also knocked down Nakatani in the fifth, using a three-punch combo near the end of the round.

In his last fight, Nakatani was knocked down twice by Felix Verdejo before responding with a ninth-round KO win. This time, Nakatani never stood a chance as he was outclassed by the former pound-for-pound Ukrainian great in every round.

It marked the first time Nakatani (19-2) was stopped in a fight, considering the NHL was limited to inter-division play only this year.

“You look up and down their lineup ... you can talk about them all day long,” Perry said.

“They added grit at the deadline last year, and kind of taken off,” he added. “We’re excited for this opportunity. We’re here for a reason. They’re here for a reason.”

The teams haven’t met since Tampa Bay completed a four-game season-series sweep of Montreal with a 4-0 win at home on March 5, 2020. The Canadiens are 2-8-2 in their past 12 meetings and 0-5-1 at Tampa since a 2-0 win in Game 6 of last year’s Final.

The Lightning are 13-0 when coming off a playoff win in revisiting what happened last year during his one Reigning champ Lightning in the Stanley Cup Final, which now has the daunting task of facing the defending champs after their journey is not yet complete. The team with the worst record of the NHL's 16 playoff qualifiers now has the daunting task of facing the defending champs after their journey is not yet complete.

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During a lightweight bout Saturday in Las Vegas.

Stanley Cup Finals/Boxing

Monday, June 28, 2021

By John Wawrow and Stephen Whyno
Associated Press

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Running on fumes?

Down 3-1, Clippers may be facing deficit they can’t come back from

By Joe Reedy
Associated Press

Paul George and the Los Angeles Clippers have pulled off their share of comebacks during this year’s postseason. They might have hit the wall during their marathon run.

Los Angeles — playing its 17th game in 36 days — lost 84-80 to the Phoenix Suns on Saturday night in Game 4 of the Western Conference finals. The Clippers have been down 2-0 in each of their series this postseason, but are staring at a 3-1 deficit for the first time with Game 5 set for Monday night in Phoenix.

“We’ve been down before. It’s tough. We’ve had our backs against the wall and we’ve been in elimination games,” said Reggie Jackson, who scored 20 points.

Los Angeles rallied from a 16-point deficit in the third quarter to get within one, but couldn’t complete the comeback. It went 0-for-12 from the floor with a chance to tie or take the lead, which is the worst shooting stretch over the past 25 postseasons, according to ESPN Stats & Information.

LA got within 71-70 with 10:11 remaining on George’s free throw, but neither team scored again for 3 minutes, 49 seconds until Chris Paul threw it to Deandre Ayton for an alley-oop to put Phoenix back up by three. The Clippers missed seven shots and committed two turnovers during that near four-minute stretch.

“We were just trying to play through it, get a breakthrough and play faster. It was tough to get it to go down,” said George, who scored 21 points but was 5 of 20 from the field and made only one of his nine three-point attempts.

For a team that hasn’t had any rest between series, the heck-