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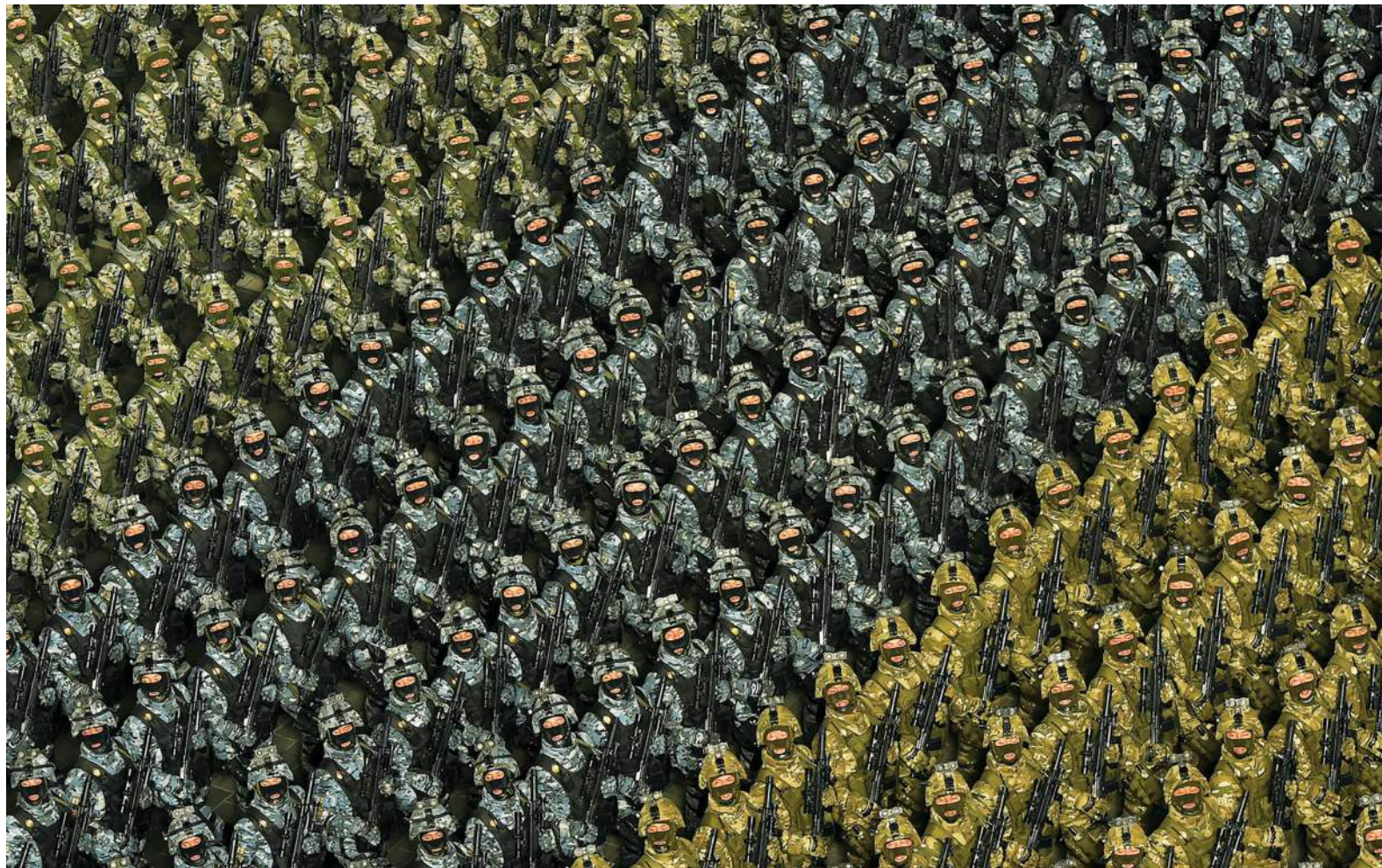
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CONTINGENCY EDITION

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2024

Free to Deployed Areas



Korea News Service via AP

North Korean soldiers march in a parade marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Korean People's Army on Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang, North Korea, last year.

Deadly duty or point of pride?

Inexperienced N. Korean troops in Russia will face ferocious fighting

By HYUNG-JIN KIM
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — The thousands of young soldiers North Korea has sent to Russia, reportedly to help fight against Ukraine, include many elite special forces, but that hasn't stopped speculation they'll be slaughtered because they have no combat experience, no familiarity with the terrain and will likely be dropped onto the most ferocious battlefields.

That may be true, and soon. Observers say some of the troops have already arrived at the front. From the North Korean perspective, however, these soldiers might not be as miserable as outsiders think. They may, in fact, view their Russian tour with pride and as a rare

chance to make good money, see a foreign country for the first time and win preferred treatment for their families back home, according to former North Korean soldiers.

"They are too young and won't understand exactly what it means. They'll just consider it an honor to be selected as the ones to go to Russia among the many North Korean soldiers," said Lee Woong-gil, a former member of the same special forces unit, the Storm Corps. He came to South Korea in 2007. "But I think most of them won't likely come back home alive."

■ **Troop deployment is Kim's 'big gamble.'**

Worries about North Korea's likely participation in the Russian-Ukraine war were highlighted this week when the Pentagon said North

Korea has sent about 10,000 troops to Russia, and that they will likely fight against Ukraine "over the next several weeks." South Korea's presidential office said Wednesday that more than 3,000 North Korean soldiers have been moved close to battlefronts in western Russia.

North Korea's troop deployment could mark a serious escalation of the almost three-year war. It caught many outside observers by surprise because North Korea has its own security headache, a festering standoff with the United States and South Korea over its nuclear program.

Large North Korean troop casualties would

SEE TROOPS ON PAGE 6

North Korean leader calls ICBM launch 'appropriate'

By DAVID CHOI
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korea carried out a rare intercontinental ballistic missile launch on Thursday, just hours after Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his South Korean counterpart condemned Pyongyang for supplying troops to Russia for its war against Ukraine.

The ICBM — the first fired by the North since Dec. 18 — lofted eastward from the Pyongyang area at 7:10 a.m., South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a message to reporters that morning.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was present at the launch site and described the launch as an "appropriate military action" in response to unnamed "rivals" who "intentionally intensified the regional situation," according to a report Thursday by the state-run Korean Central News Agency on Thursday.

Kim typically means the U.S., South Korea and Japan when he refers to rivals, whose actions he said underscore "the importance of strengthening our nuclear forces," according to KCNA.

The ICBM appeared to surpass previous North Korean rockets for altitude reached, Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani said at a televised news conference in Tokyo.

The missile apparently traveled about 620 miles and reached a maximum altitude of more than 4,350 miles, he said, adding that the ICBM's flight details are being analyzed by Japan, United States and South Korea.

The launch came several hours

SEE LAUNCH ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Meta’s profit surges 35% from ad revenue, AI push

Associated Press

Meta Platforms Inc. posted stronger-than-expected third-quarter results on Wednesday fueled by its advertising revenue growth and its push to incorporate artificial intelligence.

But the Instagram and Facebook parent company warned that it expects a “significant acceleration” in infrastructure spending next year as it continues to pour money into developing AI.

Nearly all of Meta’s revenue comes from advertising on its

platforms, so a slight shortfall in user numbers also put a dent in an otherwise strong quarter. Meta said it’s “family daily active people” — that is the number of users who signed into at least one of its apps (Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp and Threads) in a day — was 3.29 billion on average for September. Analysts had expected 3.31 billion.

“The miss in its user metric, daily active people, is concerning, as Meta will need to squeeze more revenue out of its existing users as

growth slows,” said Emarketer analyst Jasmine Enberg. She added, though, that the company is in a good position to do so “as its AI-powered tools are boosting engagement by helping show users more of what they like and making its ads, particularly on Reels, more effective.”

For the three months, the Menlo Park, Calif.-based company earned \$15.69 billion, or \$6.03 per share, up 35% from \$11.58 billion, or \$4.39 per share, in the same period a year earlier.

EXCHANGE RATES		
Military rates		
Euro costs (Nov. 1)	0.90	
British pound (Nov. 1)	\$1.27	
Japanese yen (Nov. 1)	149.00	
South Korean won (Nov. 1)	1344.00	
Commercial rates		
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769	
Britain (Pound)	1.2933	
Canada (Dollar)	1.3906	
China (Yuan)	7.1154	
Denmark (Krone)	6.8691	
Egypt (Pound)	48.9321	
Euro	0.9209	
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7740	
Hungary (Forint)	376.01	
Israel (Shekel)	3.7164	
Japan (Yen)	152.98	
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3066	
Norway (Krone)	11.0210	
Philippines (Peso)	58.37	
Poland (Zloty)	4.01	
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7558	
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3231	
South Korea (Won)	1380.26	
Switzerland (Franc)	0.8651	
Thailand (Baht)	33.82	
Turkey (NewLira)	34.2642	

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

INTEREST RATES		
Prime rate		8.00
Interest Rates Discount rate		5.00
Federal funds market rate		4.83
3-month bill		4.58
30-year bond		4.51

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MILITARY

Soldiers told to avoid poppy seeds, delta-8

By JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

The Army recently revised its 142 pages of regulations on substance abuse to remind soldiers to steer clear of poppy seeds and delta-8, a mild cannabinoid, both of which may cause a positive result on drug screening tests.

The regulations, revised Oct. 4, spell out details of the Army's program for curbing substance abuse in its ranks, including guides to "smart" drug testing, who has responsibility for carrying out testing and the protocol for carrying the test container to the toilet and delivering a sample.

For example, the person who must watch a soldier providing a urine sample must possess "unimpeachable moral character and sufficient maturity to preserve the dignity of the Soldier being tested," the regulations state.

Delta-8 was already off limits,

but the Oct. 4 revision restates its hazards and reminds troops that ingesting the drug is banned by the Army.

Delta-8 tetrahydrocannabinol is a weaker form of THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana. It is naturally occurring, but most delta-8 THC found in commercial products is made in a laboratory, according to the WebMD website. Delta-8 can be found in products like gummies, capsules, creams and vape cartridges.

It is sometimes called "marijuana lite" or "diet weed" because it causes a fuzzy, less-intense high than delta-9, the stronger form of THC, according to WebMD.

"Delta-8 usage is becoming increasingly problematic among military ranks," Michael Hicks, a drug test coordinator for the Army Substance Abuse Program at Fort Campbell, Ky., said in an April 2022 Army news release.

The Army acknowledged but did not immediately answer a request this week for more information.

The military has a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to illegal or illicit drugs. The Army has been testing for delta-8 since July 2021, but its popularity in designer drugs like spice and increasing availability prompted its inclusion in the Oct. 4 update.

These drugs are also available in states where marijuana is legal, but they are always prohibited in the Army.

Drugs like delta-8 "have no known application other than mimicking the effects of THC in the human body," according to the updated regulations. They are so closely related in their effects to THC that they will have the same potential for abuse as THC.

The Army warned its troops to steer clear of products containing

delta-8 two years ago, pointing out that because it's not as widely recognized as some other cannabinoids, it's still off limits.

"Less than 1% of the population that I talk to knows what Delta-8 is, or say they have heard of it," Byron Goode, a civilian Army Substance Abuse Program specialist based at Fort Sill, Okla., said in an October 2022 news release.

As for poppy seeds, their hazard lies not in untoward risks to physical or mental health, but in the simple fact they may cause a positive indication for codeine or morphine in a drug screening.

"Poppy seeds don't have nearly enough opiates to intoxicate you," the University of Florida College of Medicine website states. "But because drug tests are exquisitely sensitive, consuming certain poppy seed food products can lead to positive urine drug test results for

opiates — specifically for morphine, codeine or both."

Poppy seeds themselves don't contain opiates, but during harvesting they can become contaminated with opiates in the milky latex of the seed pod that covers them, according to the college.

The Army in July 2021 also warned soldiers of possible false positives caused by poppy seeds. Its updated warning added further detail.

"Soldiers are encouraged to avoid consuming foods containing poppy seeds, as newer seeds variety may contain elevated levels of codeine," the regulation states.

"Although drug testing laboratories have implemented additional measures to distinguish poppy seeds ingestion from codeine misuse, Soldiers should make every effort to avoid these food products," the regulation states.

Army mariners answer off-duty Navy sailors' distress call at sea

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Three off-duty Navy sailors stranded in a ramshackle sailboat off Hawaii's coast last month got help from an improbable source: three soldiers in an Army speed boat.

The flukey role-reversal came after the Army crew responded to a Coast Guard call for assistance to a distress call Sept. 26 from a vessel a few miles off Honolulu.

As it happened, Sgt. Daniel Koster, the vessel master, and his crew of two were training aboard a 30-foot high-speed boat that can be operated remotely while pulling targets during live-fire drills.

The Army crew had stopped to tinker with an engine problem when they heard the Coast Guard's radio message about a disabled vessel, Koster said by phone Monday.

"I decided to ask for the coordinates, and I put them into our GPS, and it turned out it was like three miles away," said Koster, who is assigned to the 8th Special Troops Battalion, 8th Theater Sustainment Command, and works out of

Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. The Army is not generally associated with seafaring, but the service has maintained fleets of various sizes since World War II. It now has about 70 watercraft for transporting equipment and troops for exercises and disaster relief.

Koster said he and his crew felt some initial hesitation to take on the distress call. He had only a week earlier completed the Army course qualifying him to command a small boat.

"So, it was my first time actually taking a crew out on the water on these boats," he said.

"We kind of looked at each other, like, yeah, I guess we're trained for this. You know, there's an impulse to think, oh, I can't help in a real emergency. I just do training stuff. But then we thought to ourselves, yeah, we can do things; we're capable. So, we answered the Coast Guard and said we would go and try to help," Koster said.

Arriving at the scene, the soldiers found a "rickety old sailboat with a torn sail," he said. Its engine had either failed or lacked the

power to handle the considerable sea chop that day.

Four men were aboard, one of whom was likely the owner, and "three Navy guys" in tight blue T-shirts, Koster said.

"That's the de facto uniform for off-duty Navy," he said with a laugh.

Exactly what the sailors were doing on the shaky sailboat wasn't clear, but Koster suspects the trio was considering a purchase.

The soldiers tethered a line to the disabled sailboat and headed for the harbor "nice and slow and easy," Koster said.

"The sea was quite rough — big waves — so we just took it real easy and dragged them into Ala Wai Harbor," he said. The harbor abuts Waikiki Beach and Magic Island.

Koster credits his crew for their finesse during the "tense situation" of guiding the sailboat hulk "right between two rows of million-dollar yachts" in the harbor.

Spc. Nathaniel Breaux, an Army watercraft operator with 8th Battalion, maneuvered the crippled boat into its berth.



U.S. Army

Army Spc. Jace Spivey, left, and Sgt. Daniel Koster tow a disabled sailboat to its pier off the coast of Honolulu, Hawaii, on Sept. 26.

"Coming through the marina with that much wind was nerve wracking," Breaux said in an Oct. 2 Army article about the rescue.

"The whole time it was just constant adjusting the throttle trying to tug them back in line with us to miss the boats on either side," he

said. As it turned out, the sailors were senior chief petty officers in the Navy, Koster said.

"You help because it's the right thing to do," Koster said. "But then, also, you never know who you might be helping."

Wasabi punishment nets Japanese army officer monthlong suspension

By HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A serving of wasabi can be its own punishment, but rarely for two.

A Japanese officer has been suspended for a month for forcing a subordinate soldier, who was caught dozing, to eat the strong Ja-

panese horseradish, according to a Japan Ground Self-Defense force spokesman.

The suspension came Tuesday, three years after the unnamed first lieutenant in his 30s forced wasabi, a member of the mustard family, into the soldier's mouth on Nov. 1, 2021, at Camp Omura in

Nagasaki prefecture, the spokesman said by phone Thursday.

The officer, assigned to the 16th Infantry Regiment at Omura, said he was trying to wake the soldier up during training, the spokesman said.

Wasabi is best in small amounts and for many is known as a condi-

ment served with sashimi and sushi.

The subordinate, who suffered acute gastritis as a result, reported the incident that day, said the spokesman, who declined to provide further details about the soldier.

The suspension came three

years later due to the investigation, the spokesman added.

"We take this matter very seriously and intend to implement thorough educational guidance," 16th Infantry Regiment commander Col. Takanori Doi said in a statement provided by the spokesman.

MILITARY

DOD to focus on remote barracks, add free Wi-Fi

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department’s effort to provide troops with free high-speed Wi-Fi is focusing increasingly on remote installations where internet access is difficult to obtain, a Pentagon official said Wednesday.

Brendan Owens, the assistant secretary for defense for energy, installations and environment, said more austere locations are a “priority” for the Pentagon as it embarks on a mission to install Wi-Fi in barracks at no cost to service members.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin directed all service branches in September to create pilot projects for Wi-Fi as part of a broader initiative to improve the quality of life for service members and their families.

Owens said research shows service members living in unaccompanied housing primarily use Wi-Fi to keep in touch with their family and friends and take advantage of mental health services.

Troops stationed at remote and isolated locations, such as Alaska, are more likely to struggle with mental health and lack access to care, according to studies.

It took years of legal wrangling for the Defense Department to designate Wi-Fi as something that is “mission critical” but there is now momentum and a recognized need to provide the service to troops, Owens said.

For some installations, it is a simple matter of ironing out contracts with service providers and plugging in a router, he said. For more austere locations, much more physical work will likely be required.

“Whether it’s a physical transformation of the building or whether it’s some type of retrofit — all those things are things that we’re going to have to get after to be able to provide these services,” Owens said during a discussion hosted by the Center for a New American Security, a Washington think tank.

He said he could not answer

whether the push for internet connectivity will extend to sailors serving on aircraft carriers and other ships who often go long periods without access to the outside world.

Internet access is routinely restricted during ship deployments to protect against cybersecurity threats and preserve bandwidth for military operations. A Navy chief was demoted earlier this year for secretly installing a private Wi-Fi network aboard a warship.

During meetings with military officials, junior troops living in barracks have repeatedly emphasized the need for Wi-Fi. The Pentagon spent more than three years gathering feedback from service members to draft a plan on how their quality of life could be improved.

“One of the questions that I ask our soldiers, our airmen, our Marines, our guardians, whoever is in those barracks is, ‘If you could have 10 more square feet in your barracks room or free Wi-Fi, what



VICTORIA NELSON/U.S. Air Force

Airman 1st Class Wesley Hodgman installs a new WiFi access point at Pease Air National Guard Base, N.H.

would it be?’ And no one is going to be surprised that a 19-year-old wants free Wi-Fi,” Owens said.

Military service branches have pursued their own efforts in recent years to provide Wi-Fi to their troops. The Navy in January announced a Wi-Fi pilot program for up to 4,000 sailors living at a dozen unaccompanied housing locations in Virginia.

The Pentagon is now pooling the experiences of individual services to create an overarching policy plan across the military, Owens said.

“We’ve got a lot more work to do on making sure that we are capable of providing the Wi-Fi services that are necessary to fully support what our service members need,” he said.

9 ex-Coast Guard cadets seek \$10M each in sexual assault claim

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

Another nine former cadets of the Coast Guard Academy are seeking \$10 million each from the service, claiming officials condoned and actively concealed the rampant nature of sexual assault and harassment of students, which knowingly placed them and others in danger, according to legal documents filed Wednesday.

They join 13 other former cadets who filed similar claims in September, all describing sexual misconduct that went unchecked at the campus in New London, Conn. Each claim is filed separately by 19 women, two men and one non-binary person.

“The Coast Guard has run the same playbook for decades: delay, deny, and wait for survivors to give up,” said Ryan Melogy, an attorney for the group. “But these brave individuals have found their collective voice, and they’re demanding real accountability. The old playbook of stonewalling and silencing won’t work against clients this determined to see real change.”

Service officials said they are aware of the additional claims but federal law prohibits the discussion of details and reiterated a statement offered in September.

“Sexual assault and sexual harassment have no place in our ser-



MATTHEW THIEME/U.S. Coast Guard Academy

A yearslong coverup of sexual assault and harassment at the Coast Guard Academy has led to nine former students filing legal complaints seeking \$10 million each from the service for knowingly placing them and others in danger.

vice,” the Coast Guard said in the statement. “The Coast Guard is committed to protecting our workforce and ensuring a safe and respectful environment that eliminates sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other harmful behaviors.”

The legal complaints follow a year of scrutiny for the Coast Guard Academy that began with the revelation that the service concealed a report that found academy officials had routinely mishandled reports of sexual assault

among cadets. The report, known as Operation Fouled Anchor, was the result of a six-year internal review of 102 reports of sexual assault and harassment cases at the academy between 1990 and 2006.

Fouled Anchor’s existence only became public after CNN learned of the report and the decision in 2020 by the Coast Guard not to release it. Only after the news network reported on Operation Fouled Anchor did Coast Guard officials go to Congress with it. Congressional committees and

the Department of Homeland Security inspector general have since opened investigations into the cover-up, and the Coast Guard Investigative Service has begun criminal investigations into the cases included in Fouled Anchor.

The legal filings by the former cadets were submitted through the Federal Tort Claims Act, the law that allows people to take legal action against the federal government for negligence to its employees. It is a required first step toward a lawsuit. Each \$10 million claim was filed against the Coast Guard, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Transportation, which oversaw the Coast Guard until 2003.

Attorneys released copies of the legal paperwork but redacted the names of the former cadets and other identifying information.

One woman described how investigators told her that they had uncovered enough evidence of her rape to court-martial her assailant but officials chose to discharge him from the academy instead. Afterward, other cadets and staff blamed her for ruining his career.

“My time at the academy was the worst four years of my life. I wanted to leave and tried to, but I could not afford it. I was shamed by my assailant’s classmates, who constantly spread rumors about me. The stigma followed me into

my professional career in the Coast Guard,” the woman wrote in the complaint.

Another woman described three separate assaults that she endured at the academy — the first when she was just 17 years old — and the bullying and harassment that followed, according to the legal documents. The Coast Guard then deemed the woman medically unfit for the service because of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and fainting related to military sexual trauma.

She was denied her diploma despite having completed all the requirements until her family hired an attorney.

While there are ongoing investigations regarding the cover-up of Fouled Anchor, the Coast Guard said it has begun enacting reforms. In July 2023, Adm. Linda Fagan, the service commandant, directed the Accountability and Transparency Review, which recommended the service devote significant resources to improving prevention, victim support and accountability.

“The Coast Guard is unwavering in our commitment to lasting institutional and cultural change, ensuring a safe and respectful environment that is intolerant of harm,” the service said in its statement.

MILITARY

How the military lost a \$250M war game

Formerly secret after-action report on exercise reveals US vulnerable to low-tech warfare

By NATE JONES
The Washington Post

As a U.S. Navy carrier battle group entered the Persian Gulf, it came under surprise attack by adversaries launching missiles from commercial ships and radio-silent aircraft that quickly overwhelmed its missile defense systems. Nineteen U.S. ships, including the aircraft carrier, were destroyed and sunk within 10 minutes.

ANALYSIS

Fortunately for U.S. forces, this scenario was only a simulation in a massive, \$250 million war game named Millennium Challenge 2002. After the unexpected and humbling “loss” in July 2002, military officials at Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, Va., paused the war game, “refloated” the ships and restarted the exercise.

They also imposed limits on enemy tactics. After the restart, the U.S. forces defeated their adversaries in a more conventionally fought simulation.

An after-action report of the exercise — which has remained secret for over 20 years — reveals that the surprise defeat triggered internal warnings that the U.S. military was vulnerable to low-tech warfare, foreshadowing the very challenges the United States would face in the 2003 invasion of Iraq and other conflicts since then.

The Post recently obtained the report in response to a Mandatory Declassification Review request.

The after-action report was written by retired Marine Lt. Gen. Paul Van Riper, who commanded the enemy forces during the war game.

“We looked for their weakness and put our strength against it,” Van Riper told The Post.

Van Riper’s write-up contradicts portions of an official 752-page final report on Millennium Challenge 2002 released by the military more than a decade ago that called the war game a “major milestone” and described the loss of an entire carrier group as only “moderately unsuccessful.”

It also reveals the restrictions the U.S. military eventually imposed on the enemy and Van Riper’s conclusion that by limiting his tactics, the U.S. military ensured victory and de-emphasized the critical vulnerabilities he had identified.

Millennium Challenge 2002 was touted at the time by the Defense Department as “the largest-ever joint military experiment conducted by the United States.”

It took two years to develop, involved more than 13,500 partici-



JOSHUA PETROSINO/U.S. Navy

In a war game named Millennium Challenge 2002, opposing forces wiped out a U.S. carrier strike group using low-tech tactics, foreshadowing the very challenges the United States would face in the 2003 invasion of Iraq and other conflicts since then.

“It was just quiet. ... I don’t think [Joint Forces Command] knew what to do.”

Retired Marine Lt. Gen. Paul Van Riper
on his surprise attack destroying a U.S. carrier group during a war game

pants and unfolded over three weeks in July and August 2002.

Millennium Challenge 2002 resembled a much more complicated version of recreational, tabletop war games: Participants simulated the conflict at 17 sites as wargamers conducted maneuvers against each other on a military computer network.

Adjudicators used computer models to determine the outcome of their attacks and other operations.

The simulated conflict also was combined with live training of troops and equipment at nine locations in the United States. Joint Forces Command Cmdr. Gen. Buck Kernan, who oversaw the war game, in public remarks at the time described the opposing forces as “very very, determined ... this is free play. [Van Riper] has the opportunity to win here.”

In many ways, Millennium Challenge 2002 was a rehearsal for the 2003 Iraq War. After the game was conducted, then-Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld sent a note to Kernan asking him to write a report explaining “what you think you learned from Millennium Challenge that we ought to apply to Iraq.”

Kernan did not respond to requests for comment. But the official report released in 2012 by Joint Forces Command about Mil-

lennium Challenge 2002 said that the exercise “provided an analogous complex situation” to the Iraq War.

In the exercise, Van Riper played the “Major General” of a country resembling Iraq or Iran that “possessed natural resources critical to the world community.”

His report notes that he used a strategy of ambiguity, asymmetry and denial of territory to have his forces, known as “Red,” defeat the superior U.S. military.

He wrote that because the U.S. forces, designated “Blue,” appeared determined to go to war, he “saw no option except to strike Blue first.”

To plan his attack, Van Riper wrote that he “employed a command and control methodology specifically designed to thwart” American technological advantages, including the ability to intercept electronic and phone communications. He relied on couriers to relay sensitive messages and communicated to aircraft with lanterns to avoid radio chatter.

After his surprise attack simulated the destruction of the carrier group, the atmosphere at Norfolk command, where Van Riper led his team, was “shock,” he told The Post in an interview. “It was just quiet. It never happened in an exercise before. ... I don’t think

[Joint Forces Command] knew what to do.”

Van Riper wanted to continue to attack U.S. forces, pressing forward with his asymmetric advantage, his report notes.

Instead, a war game adjudicator determined Van Riper’s successful attack “wouldn’t have happened” in real warfare and ruled that all but four of the virtual U.S. ships would be “refloated” and the war game would continue, according to his report.

In an interview, Micah Zenko, an expert on war games and author of the book “Red Team: How to Succeed By Thinking Like the Enemy,” said that Van Riper may not have taken into account the full picture in his desire to keep playing. He said that U.S. Joint Forces Command was charged with “scoping, designing, and running, an extremely complex and elaborate war game ... if ‘refloating’ the Blue’s maritime forces is required to do that, they will do so.”

Zenko noted that the war game also involved real activity. Of the forces participating, 20% were practicing live-fire exercises on U.S. bases, including Nellis Air Force base, Nev., and Fort Irwin,

Calif. If the U.S. carrier group was not refloated, these live exercises could not have been realistically conducted.

Still, Zenko praised Van Riper’s report for being “devastating in the specific critiques he witnessed.”

Van Riper, in his report, noted that the ultimate significance of the elimination of realistic war gaming in Millennium Challenge 2002 was that it created an exercise for which the “result was preordained.” As such, he believed the exercise was not a useful test of the U.S. military’s ability to invade a hostile nation.

After the U.S. carrier group was “refloated,” other restrictions were imposed on Van Riper, he noted in his report. His forces could not initiate combat, but U.S. forces could. Van Riper’s forces were also forbidden from using chemical weapons against the United States, which he considered his country’s “most significant” asymmetric military strength.

Having lost the independence he believed was integral to the war game, Van Riper stepped down as commander of opposition forces but continued to monitor the war game as an adviser, he told The Post.

At the conclusion of the war game, he wrote that the results of Millennium Challenge 2002 “need to be considered in light of the fact that the [United States] commander did not operate against a ‘thinking and adaptive’ enemy who ‘could win’” after the American fleet was refloated. “Not having a ‘thinking and adaptive’ enemy operating against [United States forces] will have a very significant impact on the assessment” of U.S. warfighting concepts, he wrote.

Van Riper believes that the public should “absolutely” have been able to read this report decades ago. He says that with the report’s current redactions, “they could have declassified it the next day,” in 2002.

“The real sad thing,” he said, “is some of the things that we learned were never shared.”

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PACIFIC

Launch: Missile flies higher, goes longer than previous tests

FROM PAGE 1
after Austin and South Korean Minister of National Defense Kim Yong Hyun denounced North Korea's deployment of approximately 10,000 troops in support of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
There is a "pretty high" likelihood that those troops will be seeing combat toward the Ukrainian border, Austin said during Wednesday's joint press conference at the Pentagon.
The South Korean minister said he does not yet believe the presence of North Korean troops in Russia increases the chance of war on the Korean Peninsula, but it could "result in the escalation of the security threats" there.

"This is because there is a high possibility that North Korea, in exchange for their troops' deployment, would ask for cutting-edge technology" from Russia, Kim Yong Hyun said in translated remarks. "There is a high chance that ... North Korea is very likely to ask for technology transfers in diverse areas."
The missile traveled about 86 minutes and fell at 8:37 a.m. into the Sea of Japan, also known as the East Sea, about 125 miles west of Okushiri Island, outside of Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone, the Japanese defense minister said.
No damage to ships or aircraft downrange of the launch was reported, Nakatani added.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea could have tested a new, solid-fueled long-range ballistic missile on a steep angle, an attempt to avoid neighboring countries, The Associated Press reported. Missiles with built-in solid propellants are easier to move and hide and can be launched quicker than liquid-propellant weapons.
Having a missile fly higher and for a longer duration than before means its engine thrust has improved. Given that previous ICBM tests by North Korea have already proved they can theoretically reach the U.S. mainland, the latest launch was likely related to an effort to examine whether a missile can carry a

bigger warhead, experts told AP.
Jung Chang Wook, head of the Korea Defense Study Forum think tank in Seoul, told AP that it's fair to say the missile involved in Thursday's launch could carry North Korea's biggest and most destructive warhead. He said the launch was also likely designed to test other technological aspects that North Korea needs to master to further advance its ICBM program.
Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin pledged during a June summit in Pyongyang to provide mutual military assistance if either were attacked.
South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol described the North Korea-Russia military cooperation as

a significant escalation in the Ukraine war and said his office is reviewing its stance on sending only nonlethal aid to Kyiv.
North Korea did not confirm or deny deploying troops to Russia but said the notion complies with "international law and norms," according to an Oct. 25 report by KCNA.
The communist regime has launched more than 40 ballistic missiles so far this year. It last fired a short-range ballistic missile and a cruise missile on Sept. 18.
The ICBM launched in December flew eastward approximately 620 miles before splashing down in the Sea of Japan, the South's military said at the time.

Troops: Kim gambles on deployment

FROM PAGE 1
be a major political blow for the country's 40-year-old ruler, Kim Jong Un, whose government hasn't formally confirmed the deployment. But experts say Kim may see this as a way to get much needed foreign currency and security support from Russia in return for joining Russia's war against Ukraine.
"Kim Jong Un is taking a big gamble. If there are no large casualty numbers, he will get what he wants to some extent. But things will change a lot if many of his soldiers die in battle," said Ahn Chan-il, a former North Korean army first lieutenant who is now head of the World Institute for North Korean Studies think tank in Seoul.
■ **Ordinary soldier's wage is less than \$1, defectors say.**
The Storm Corps, also known as the 11th Corps, is one of Kim's top units. Its main missions would be infiltrating agents into South Korea, blowing up important facilities in the South and assassinating key figures in the event of war on the Korean Peninsula.
Lee, who served in the Storm Corps in 1998-2003, recalled that his unit received better food and supplies than other units, but many members still suffered from malnutrition and tuberculosis.
Despite a gradual economic recovery in North Korea over the

past 30 years, defectors say the average monthly wage for ordinary North Korean workers and soldiers is less than \$1. They say many people engage in capitalist market activities to make a living because the country's state rationing system remains largely broken.
Russia is expected to pay all the costs related to the deployment of North Korean troops, including their wages, which observers estimate will be at least \$2,000 per month for each person. About 90% to 95% of their stipends will likely go to Kim's coffers, and the rest to the soldiers. This means one year of service in Russia would earn a North Korean soldier \$1,200 to \$2,400. That's big enough to prompt many young soldiers to volunteer for risky Russian tours, former soldiers say.
Ahn said North Korea will likely offer other incentives meant to elevate the social standings of soldiers, such as membership in the ruling Workers' Party and the right to move to Pyongyang, the country's showcase capital. Kang Mi-Jin, a defector who runs a company analyzing North Korea's economy, said even family members of soldiers sent to Russia could be given benefits such as good houses or entrance to good universities.
Choi Jung-hoon, a former first

lieutenant in North Korea's army, said serving on foreign soil will attract many soldiers who are eager to see other countries for the first time.
North Koreans are barred from accessing foreign news and need state approval to move from one province to another within the country. North Korean construction, logging and other workers sent abroad to bring in foreign currency have often been called "slaves" by international human rights groups. But defectors testify that such overseas jobs are often better than staying in North Korea, and many used bribery and family connections to get them.
"North Korean soldiers would see going to Russia as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Ahn said.
Ahn and other observers say such views could change if the soldiers see colleagues dying in large numbers. They say many North Korean soldiers could surrender to Ukraine forces and ask for resettlement in South Korea.
■ **North Korean soldiers lack familiarity of the terrain.**
North Korean soldiers have been trained on the Korean Peninsula's mountainous terrain and are not familiar with the largely flat plain battlefields in the Russian-Ukraine war. They also don't understand modern warfare, including drone use, because North



Ng Han Guan/AP
Soldiers march in a parade for the 70th anniversary of North Korea's founding day in Pyongyang, North Korea, on Sept. 9, 2018.

Korea hasn't fought a big battle since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, experts say.
"My heart ached," said Choi, now leader of an activist group in Seoul, when he saw a Ukraine-released video purportedly showing undersized North Korean soldiers believed to be in their late teens or early 20s.
"None would think they are going to Russia to die," Choi said. "But I think they're cannon fodder because they will be sent to the most dangerous sites and will surely be killed."
Leader Kim Jong Un may also be hoping that his troop offer will push Russia to share sophisticated and highly sensitive technology that he needs to perfect his nuclear-capable missiles. That transfer

could depend on how long the war continues and how many more troops Kim will send.
Nam Sung-wook, a former director of a think tank run by South Korea's spy agency, said North Korea will likely get hundreds of millions of dollars because of the soldiers' wages. The soldiers will get direct experience of modern warfare but will likely die in large numbers, and Russia will be reluctant to hand over its high-tech missile technology, he said.
"North Korea will continue to hide its troop dispatches from its own people because the public will be agitated if they know their soldiers are being sent abroad to be killed," said Nam, who is now a professor at Korea University in South Korea.

US: N. Korean troops on Ukraine border to see combat in days

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — The United States expects some 8,000 North Korean troops that are now on Ukraine's border to be sent into combat in the coming days, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Thursday.
"We've not yet seen these troops deploy into combat against Ukrainian forces but we

would expect that to happen in the coming days," Blinken said at a news conference with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and their South Korean counterparts.
He said Russia has been training North Korean soldiers in artillery, drones and "basic infantry operations, including trench clearing, indicating that they fully intend to use these forces in

front line operations."
Blinken spoke shortly after a dramatic moment during a U.N. Security Council meeting, when the deputy U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Robert Wood, asked for more time to add to earlier comments condemning the increasing military cooperation between Russia and North Korea.

"We just received some information, just coming in now, that right now there are some 8,000 DPRK soldiers in Kursk Oblast," Wood said, using the acronym for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or North Korea. Kursk is a region that Ukrainian forces took by surprise in August.
"And I have a very respectful

question for my Russian colleague: does Russia still maintain that there are no DPRK troops in Russia? That's my only question and final point," he said.
The Russian representative at the council meeting, which Russia called to discuss international peace and security, did not respond to the comment and the session was adjourned.

PACIFIC

Former USFK leader warns of threats from China

Abrams says country can weaponize economic influence over South Korea

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The former commander of U.S. troops in South Korea delivered a stark warning this week about China’s ability to weaponize its economic influence over South Korea.

Beijing is the “principal driver of instability” within the region, retired Army Gen. Robert Abrams, the former commander of U.S. Forces Korea, U.N. Command and Combined Forces Command, said Wednesday at a roundtable discussion.

He was joined by two of his predecessors, retired Army Gens. Walter Sharp and Curtis Scaparrotti, and three retired South Korean generals.

Abrams warned of threats

posed by China during the event hosted by the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs, Korea-U.S. Alliance Foundation and the Korea Defense Veterans Association.

“It’s my assessment that a lot of people just aren’t paying attention or are sort of numb to what’s going on,” he told an audience of about 350 U.S. and South Korean service members. “You don’t have to look any further than the Korean Peninsula to see signs of this strategic competition.”

The former four-star general commanded approximately 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea from 2018 to 2021 before retiring after 39 years of service.

A year before Abrams took command on the peninsula, South



Abrams

Korea’s government approved a U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, or THAAD, for a South Korean military base in Seongju, about 130 miles south of Seoul.

U.S. and South Korea publicly assured China, one of North Korea’s closest allies, that stationing the defensive system was a response to the threat posed by the North’s ballistic missiles. China opposed the deployment as a threat to its regional interest.

In response, Beijing imposed a broad, state-sanctioned boycott against South Korean businesses following the THAAD’s arrival in 2017, leading to revenue losses of approximately \$7 billion, South Korean lawmakers alleged at the time.

The \$800 million system developed by Lockheed Martin fires missiles to intercept and destroy incoming ballistic missiles up to 125 miles away by colliding with them rather than exploding near them.

North Korea has fired more than 40 ballistic missiles in 11 separate days of testing so far this year. On Thursday, it launched an intercontinental ballistic missile that flew approximately 620 miles before splashing down in the Sea of Japan, or East Sea, according to the South’s military.

“For six years, China punished and issued many veiled threats to [South Korea] because they approved the deployment ... despite numerous explanations of the defensive nature of THAAD and its radar,” Abrams said. “What should be most upsetting to the Koreans that are in the room is that deploying THAAD, that was not a U.S. decision.”

Abrams described China’s boycott as an “economic chokehold” and warned Beijing could re-impose it.

“That’s what should bother you,” he said. “[China] can do it again at their will.”

China is South Korea’s largest trading partner with nearly \$270 billion in trade last year, followed by the U.S. with almost \$190 billion, according to a Korea International Trade Association report in February.

A separate trade association study published in February reported South Korea’s exports to China last year dropped to the lowest levels since 1992.

“Anyone who thinks that Korea is somehow immune to Chinese subterfuge — their misbehavior, their designs — they need to pay much closer attention to what’s been happening here in Northeast Asia for the last five years,” Abrams said.

School’s anti-bullying walk encourages students to stand up

By JEREMY STILLWAGNER
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Sporting orange clothing and carrying signs, more than 100 middle-schoolers, staff and community members gathered this week to deliver an anti-bullying message at this airlift hub in western Tokyo.

Some signs were whimsical: “Donut bully,” read one with the image of an orange doughnut covered in white sprinkles. Others, more serious: “Let’s stand in unity.”

“The anti-bullying walk was something we started last year in October because it’s anti-bullying month, and we wanted to bring everybody together and wear orange, which is the color that signifies anti-bullying,” Yokota Middle School principal Hilary Simmons told Stars and Stripes during the half-hour event on the track at nearby Yokota High.

“We want to bring awareness to the importance of being in a place that feels safe and that the kids feel valued,” she added.

Bullying is not very common at Yokota Middle School, said Simmons, who attributes that to being part of a military community.

But bullying is a recognized problem in U.S. schools.

“You never know where our students are going to go next, so it’s important that the month’s events make it very apparent and bring a lot of awareness, so the kids can feel empowered to take a stance against bullying,” she said.

One in five U.S. students re-

ported being bullied in some way during the 2016-17 school year, according to survey results released two years later by the Department of Education.

One in four eighth-graders reported being bullied, the most of any grade between sixth and 12th, the report states.

In the Midwest one in four of all students reported being bullied, the highest percentage among four regions in the report.

Bullying can range from being excluded from activities to texted insults to being pushed or spit on, according to the report’s data.

Yokota Middle is one of many Department of Defense Education Activity schools that hosted events for Bullying Awareness Month.

The message is not lost on the students.

“Anti-Bullying Month is important for our school because whenever new students are coming in and out, they need to feel welcome,” seventh-grader Macy Hawkins told Stars and Stripes after the walk.

Fellow seventh-grader Lelle Avellan said she’s happy to show support for such an important message.

“This makes me feel like my school actually cares and accepts people, and participating is actually really fun,” she said.

Several DODEA schools across the Pacific observed the World Day of Bullying Prevention on Oct. 7, Unity Day Against Bullying on Oct. 16 and held assemblies and spirit weeks throughout the month.

“I think it’s significantly im-



PHOTOS BY AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

Yokota Middle School students march against bullying at Yokota Air Base, Japan, on Wednesday.

portant, especially at the middle and high school level, because sometimes students aren’t totally aware of what bullying looks and sounds like, so teaching them that can encourage the kids to really be advocates against bullying,” Simmons said.

National Bullying Awareness month was originally a weeklong event started in 2006 by the National Bullying Prevention Center.

It was expanded in 2010 to include the entire month of October.



Teachers and staff joined the march on Wednesday.

EUROPE

Helo diagnostic tool returns to base in Germany

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

MANNHEIM, Germany — When the U.S. Army was poised to shutter its barracks here a decade ago, one of the casualties was an aviation system that helped ensure helicopter fleets of Apaches, Black Hawks and Chinooks were fit for flight.

Now, the high-tech digital engine diagnostic tool is back at its old home at Coleman Barracks for the first time since 2014, a move Army officials say amounts to a combat aviation game changer in Europe.



JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army in Europe in October added a new digital engine diagnostic system that is expected to improve flight safety for pilots and its fleet of helicopters.

The arrival of the Digital Flexible Engine Diagnostic System in late October means engines for Army helicopters will no longer need to be returned to the United States for maintenance and safety testing.

Engines will now be back in service in a matter of days rather than being sidelined for over a month, with repair times reduced by about 80% overall, Army aviation officials in Europe said.

The diagnostic tool measures the performance of million-dollar helicopter engines, which are mounted on the system for a series of performance tests. If a problem is detected, technicians on site can make the necessary fixes, said Brian Wright of U.S. Army Europe and Africa's aviation office.

Back in 2014, the Army in Europe didn't want to part with the capability, but closure plans for Coleman Barracks had officials looking for a new location, Wright said.

The hope was to position the system in Illesheim, where Army aviators operate. But there were problems with getting approvals from German authorities because of local concern about the noise of the testing apparatus, Wright said.

And by the time the Army reversed course in 2015 and decided to hold on to Coleman Barracks rather than turn the keys over to the Germans, it was too late.

In the years since, sending engines back to the U.S. for servicing has been inconvenient and costly, Wright said.

USAREUR-AF's pitch for getting the system back meant competing against other regions for an asset that's in limited supply. Wright estimated there were only around a dozen such systems across the Army.

A change in the security environment in Europe brought on by



BRAD HAYS/Edelweiss Lodge and Resort

Brian Borda, general manager of Edelweiss Lodge and Resort in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, speaks at the U.S. Army-owned resort's 20th anniversary celebration Wednesday.

Bavarian resort owned by Army toasts 20-year run amid upgrade

By BRADLEY LATHAM
Stars and Stripes

WIESBADEN, Germany — The U.S. Army's Bavarian Alps resort hotel in Garmisch-Partenkirchen is undergoing a \$30 million facelift in the midst of celebrating a milestone.

The renovations at Edelweiss Lodge and Resort, which marked its 20th anniversary in a celebration Wednesday, aim to improve dining, recreation and accommodations for Defense Department personnel and their families vacationing there.



U.S. ARMY

The U.S. Army's Edelweiss Lodge and Resort in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, is marking its 20th anniversary.

"These investments will enable us to serve the next generation of service members with even greater dedication and comfort," marketing manager Brad Hays said.

Zuggy's Base Camp, a restaurant with a rustic hunting lodge theme, was the first Edelweiss facility to be spruced up. It was renovated in the spring, and the work wrapped up in July.

It now boasts a more modern and upscale interior along with an upgraded kitchen and expanded menu. Patrons can also take in drone footage of the surrounding landscape or watch sports on the new 30-foot-wide high-definition screen in the restaurant.

The resort's other eateries, Market Station and Pullman Cafe, will see upgrades starting next spring, Hays said.

As of December, guests will be able to soak in the enhanced outdoor hot tub, which will feature new jets, lounge beds and an entryway "optimized for ultimate relaxation and comfort," accord-

ing to the resort's website.

From furniture to fixtures, all 258 guest rooms are set for a makeover beginning late next year. That project will happen in phases to minimize disruption to guest services, Hays said.

Standard rooms with two queen beds at Edelweiss run between \$120 and \$220 per night, and the three price tiers are based on rank.

The price is \$15 for each additional adult, with a maximum of four people in a room plus a crib. There is no additional charge for children.

The resort also has suites and offers various packages that include hotel accommodations, recreational activities and excursions. In addition to the luxury lodgings, there are cabins for rent and an on-site campground.

Opened in September 2004, the \$80 million Edelweiss consolidated various hotels and recreation

areas used by service members in southern Germany dating back to the end of World War II.

Since then, the resort has accommodated approximately 3 million guests, Hays said, ranging from families desiring a destination vacation spot in Europe to service members seeking rest and relaxation during deployment to Middle East war zones.

Edelweiss is one of four Armed Forces Recreation Center resorts. The others are in Florida, Hawaii and South Korea.

On Wednesday, resort general manager Brian Borda said Edelweiss has been a cornerstone of U.S. Army Installation Management Command's mission in Europe.

"This commitment is our way of ensuring that Edelweiss Lodge and Resort remains not only a premier destination but a home away from home for those who serve," Borda said.

MILITARY

IG: USAF overpaid for C-17 soap dispensers

Federal watchdog finds \$1 million in wasteful spending

By PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force paid over 80 times more than it should have for lavatory soap dispensers on one of its most versatile cargo planes, a significant part of nearly \$1 million in wasteful spending, a watchdog agency concluded in a new audit.

The findings by the Defense Department Inspector General reveal a series of procurement missteps that allowed defense giant Boeing to overcharge for various components of the C-17 Globemaster III.

While the price of each dispenser and the number bought were redacted in the report, the service paid nearly \$150,000 more than the market value of the collective purchase, according to the findings released in a report Tuesday.

Of the 46 parts auditors examined, over a quarter were purchased at prices deemed not fair or reasonable, the report said.



ROLAND BALIK/U.S. Air Force

A C-17 Globemaster III prepares to land at Dover Air Force Base, Del.

The IG couldn't determine whether the Air Force paid fair and reasonable prices for 25 of the parts examined, with a combined valuation of over \$22 million, the report added.

In response, Boeing said it was reviewing the findings.

The report "appears to be based on an inapt comparison of the prices paid for parts that meet military specifications and designs versus basic commercial items that would not be qualified or approved for use on the C-17," company spokeswoman Deborah

VanNierop said in a statement published Tuesday by Bloomberg.

The audit, which looked at spending between 2018 and 2022, was conducted after a whistleblower contacted the DOD with concerns related to the expensive soap dispensers.

Overall, the Air Force wasted at least \$992,000 on parts purchased under its contract with Boeing, including overpaying more than \$142,000 for pressure transmitters, which measure the pressure of a gas or liquid and convert it in-



(U) Figure 3. C-17 Soap Dispenser (Left) and Commercially Similar Soap Dispenser (Right)
(U) Source: The DCMA CIG.

Defense Contract Management Agency

An image from the Defense Department Inspector General's audit shows a C-17 Globemaster III soap dispenser, left, and a similar commercial dispenser. The Air Force overpaid by more than 80 times for soap dispensers in the bathroom of the airplane, the IG said.

to an electrical signal, the IG said.

It spent nearly \$300,000 more than it should have on retaining bands for the C-17, the report added.

"Significant overpayments for spare parts may reduce the number of spare parts that Boeing can purchase on the contract, potentially reducing C-17 readiness worldwide," Inspector General Robert Storch said in a statement.

He noted that the contract continues through 2031. It lets Boeing purchase needed spare parts for

the C-17, and the Air Force reimburses the company for those expenditures, according to the audit.

The IG blamed the overpayment on a lack of oversight and made several recommendations. They include Air Force use of enhanced billing analysis, forecasting tools and invoice reviews.

About 220 C-17s are used by the U.S. Air Force, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Command for transport operations worldwide.

Apaches take center stage during live-fire drills near DMZ

By LUIS GARCIA
Stars and Stripes

RODRIGUEZ LIVE FIRE COMPLEX, South Korea — Choking clouds of dust and debris swirled this week as two Apache helicopter gunships, armed and ready, circled above this firing range 16 miles from the Demilitarized Zone.

One gunship moved into a firing position Wednesday and fired short bursts from its chin-mounted, 30 mm automatic chain gun, the rounds piercing simple targets below. It followed with longer bursts, let fly some 27.5-inch folding fin missiles and then looped around for a final gun run before departing the range.

"The primary objective of our training here is to qualify our Apache crews for aerial gunnery," Lt. Col. Brian Silva, commander of 5th Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry Regiment, said Wednesday at the range. "We're focusing on the skills of our individual pilots to identify, engage and destroy targets."

U.S. and South Korean attack helicopters were letting loose two weeks after an agreement over live-fire exercises at the Rodriguez Live Fire Complex was reached by the South Korean Ministry of National Defense, the South Korean army and a local citizens group unhappy with the

"This range brings a lot of value not only to the U.S. forces but to the Korean forces. The readiness of the peninsula — this is like the No. 1 spot."

Col. Juan Martinez
8th Army

noise of live-fire training.

The Apaches resumed live-fire training last year following a six-year ban on those drills because of noise concerns. The August agreement "normalized" the live-fire training schedule, according to the ministry at the time.

Hundreds of troops from both countries took part in drills this week focused on tactical teamwork and readiness, Col. Juan Martinez, a spokesman for 8th Army, said Wednesday at the range. Training on the ground and in the air allowed the two militaries to



LUIS GARCIA/Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Army AH-64 Apache flies over the Rodriguez Live Fire Complex near Pocheon, South Korea, on Wednesday.

work together near the DMZ, he said.

The Apaches took center stage Wednesday. The AH-60 Apache Longbow is the U.S. Army's go-to weapon in the air. The twin-engine, multi-mission helicopter carries a pilot and gunner and can haul 27.5-inch folding fin and Hellfire missiles to the battlefield, along with a 30 mm automatic chain gun mounted on its chin.

Its suite of avionics can link the gunship with Bradley and Stryker fighting vehicles and other battle-

field partners for information sharing and targeting.

The exercise served also to certify U.S. platoons to operate alongside South Korean troops.

Working directly with South Korean forces provides essential insights for U.S. soldiers, Spc. Augustus Baumann, a fire support specialist with the 2nd Infantry Division, said Wednesday at the Rodriguez complex.

"Seeing how the Koreans conduct business ... if an actual war happens, those are the people

we're going to be working with," he said.

The hands-on experience of a live-fire exercise opens a new understanding of joint operations, Baumann said.

"It's no longer something you're seeing on a slideshow; no one's telling you how it's supposed to happen," he said.

The Rodriguez Live Fire Complex has been more active recently, thanks to new agreements like the one reached Oct. 15 that allow broader live-fire drills, Martinez said. The complex is a key spot for joint military training.

The South Korean and the U.S. armies both fly Apaches, for example.

"We both use the same equipment, so it makes us very good teammates," Silva said.

Armored U.S. Strykers and South Korean K1A2 tanks are also running joint ground operations, he said.

In addition to air support from the Apaches and A-10 Warthog fixed-wing attack aircraft came artillery fire from U.S. M777 and South Korean K-9 howitzers.

"Sometimes people misunderstand or misrepresent the value of the range," Martinez said. "This range brings a lot of value not only to the U.S. forces but to the Korean forces. The readiness of the peninsula — this is like the No. 1 spot."

Senate control brings massive spending efforts

BY MARC LEVY
Associated Press
HARRISBURG, Pa. — Billions of dollars in advertising are raining down on voters across the Rust Belt, Rocky Mountains and American southwest as the two major political parties portray their opponent's candidates as extreme in a struggle for control of the U.S. Senate.

In three races alone — Ohio, Pennsylvania and Montana — more than \$1 billion is projected to be spent by Nov. 5.
The race in Ohio could break the spending record for Senate races. The race in Montana will go down as the most expensive Senate race ever on a per-vote basis. And, late in the game, Democrats are sending millions more dollars to Texas, a GOP stronghold where the party has new hopes of knocking off two-term conservative stalwart Sen. Ted Cruz, an upset that could help them protect their majority.
Republicans need to pick up two seats to capture a surefire majority, and one of those — West Virginia — is all but in the bag for the GOP.
Other races are more volatile and less predictable.
For Democrats, the brutal math of this year's election cycle is forcing them to defend eight seats in tough

states. Losses by established incumbents could amount to an extinction-level event for Democrats who represent reliably Republican states.
The election also will test the down-ballot strength of both parties in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, the premier presidential battleground states known as the Blue Wall for their relatively reliable Democratic voting history. Wins there by Republicans would dramatically alter the Senate playing field.
All told, data from political ad tracking firm AdImpact projects that more than \$2.5 billion will be spent on advertising in Senate races in this two-year campaign cycle, slightly more than the 2022 total.
That includes a half-billion dollars in Ohio alone, another \$340 million in Pennsylvania and \$280 million in Montana, population 1.1 million, or less than one-tenth of the population of either Ohio or Pennsylvania. The most expensive Senate race ever was Democrat John Ossoff's victory in a Georgia contest



Casey



LUCY SCHALY, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE/AP

Dave McCormick, Republican candidate for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania, greets supporters before he voted early at the Allegheny County Office Building in Pittsburgh, on Monday.

that went to a runoff in 2021 and decided Senate control, according to data from the campaign finance-tracking organization Open Secrets.
Generally, campaign strategists say Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump is polling ahead of his party's Senate candidates in Senate battleground states, while Democratic candidates in those states are polling ahead of their presidential nominee, Kamala Harris. That means there is a slice of voters who could vote for Trump but not back Republicans in Senate races — or who could split their tickets with Democratic Senate candidates.
Such splits have been rare. In Maine, in 2020 voters backed Democrat Joe Biden for president and re-elected Republican Sen. Susan Collins, for instance.
Republican strategists said they expect the party's major super

PACs to spend until Election Day in seven states where Democrats are defending Senate seats: Michigan, Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, where polls show competitive races, but also Nevada and Arizona, where Republicans are encouraged by strong early voting numbers.
Republicans are most confident about flipping the seat in deep-red Montana, where Republican Tim Sheehy is challenging third-term Democratic Sen. Jon Tester. They are also optimistic about reliably red Ohio, where Republican Bernie Moreno is challenging third-term Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown.
Torunn Sinclair, a spokesperson for a pair of Republican-aligned super PACs, said one — American Crossroads — is pulling \$2.8 million out of Montana, while the pair are plunging several million more into Pennsylvania.

There, Republican David McCormick is trying to knock off three-term Democratic Sen. Bob Casey in a presidential battleground undercard that both sides say is close.
McCormick, a former CEO of the world's largest hedge fund, has hammered the message in two debates that Casey is a "sure thing" to back the Biden-Harris administration's agenda. In recent days, Casey began running an ad in conservative areas that touts his "greedflation" legislation to pursue price-gouging. The ad says "Casey bucked Biden to protect fracking" and "sided with Trump" on trade and tariffs.
In Texas, U.S. Rep. Colin Allred, a former professional football player, has proven adept at raising small-dollar donations in his challenge to incumbent Republican Cruz. Allred has outraised every Senate candidate nationally, except Tester and Brown.

Trump campaigns with Packers legend Favre in Green Bay

Associated Press
GREEN BAY, Wis. — Donald Trump showered former NFL star Brett Favre with praise on Wednesday at a rally in Green Bay, Wis., where the former Packers quarterback campaigned for the Republican presidential nominee in the final week before Election Day.
"Thank you, Brett. What a great honor. What a great champion," Trump said shortly after taking the stage at the Resch Center. Describing Favre's fingers as "like sausages," he said, "No wonder he could throw the ball."
"I'm a little upset because I think he got bigger applause than me, and I'm not happy," the former president went on, joking about the ovation Favre received in a county that Trump narrowly won in 2020.
Trump appeared onstage in a orange safety vest after riding in a garbage truck to draw attention to an offensive comment by President Joe Biden. But he reignited a different controversy by revisiting his promise to "protect the women of our country."



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON/AP

Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump talks to reporters as he sits in a truck Wednesday, in Green Bay, Wis.

After complaining about his own staffers telling him it was "inappropriate," Trump insisted, "I'm gonna do it whether the women like it or not."
Trump rallied alongside Favre in the critical battleground state with just six days until the election. In a sign of the importance of the state,

Trump's Democratic opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris, was campaigning simultaneously in overwhelmingly Democratic-voting Madison, a 2½-hour drive away.
Favre, who won three NFL Most Valuable Player awards and a Super Bowl for Green Bay in the 1990s, praised Trump before the former

president arrived, telling the crowd, "Much like the Packer organization, Donald Trump and his organization was a winner."
"The United States of America won with his leadership," Favre said.
In relying on Favre, Trump is tapping into the state's deep and loyal support for the Packers and the team's onetime star quarterback. But Favre also comes with increased baggage after becoming enmeshed in Mississippi's welfare spending scandal.
Favre, 55, is not facing any criminal charges, but he is among more than three dozen people or groups being sued as the state tries to recover misspent money. Favre has repaid just over \$1 million he received in speaking fees funded by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. Mississippi Auditor Shad White, a Republican, has said Favre never showed up for the speaking engagements. White also said Favre still owes nearly \$730,000 in interest.
Mississippi has ranked among the

poorest states for decades, but only a fraction of its federal welfare money has been going to families. Instead, the Mississippi Department of Human Services allowed well-connected people to waste tens of millions of welfare dollars from 2016 to 2019, according to White and state and federal prosecutors.
A nonprofit group called the Mississippi Community Education Center made two payments of welfare money to Favre Enterprises, the athlete's business: \$500,000 in December 2017 and \$600,000 in June 2018. The TANF money was to go toward a volleyball arena at the University of Southern Mississippi. Favre agreed to lead fundraising efforts for the facility at his alma mater, where his daughter started playing on the volleyball team in 2017.
Favre appeared in September before a Republican-led congressional committee that was examining how states are falling short on using welfare to help families in need.
Favre told the congressional committee that he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in January.

NATION

Inflation gauge falls to lowest since early 2021

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As a presidential race profoundly shaped by Americans’ frustration with high prices nears its end, the government said Thursday that an inflation gauge closely watched by the Federal Reserve has dropped to near pre-pandemic levels.

The Commerce Department reported that prices rose just 2.1% in September from a year earlier, down from a 2.3% rise in August. That is barely above the Fed’s 2% inflation target and in line with

readings in 2018, well before prices began surging after the pandemic recession.

Yet some signs of inflation pressures remained. Excluding volatile food and energy costs, so-called core prices rose 2.7% in September from a year earlier for the third straight month.

On a monthly basis, core prices rose 0.3% from August to September, up from just 0.1% from July to August. The increase in the core rate is higher than the Fed would prefer.

Still, for the past six months,

core inflation has declined to a 2.3% annual rate, down from 2.5% in August. And economists still expect the Fed to cut its key rate by a quarter-point when it meets next week.

“It’s essentially the soft landing that many of us dreamed of,” said Gregory Daco, chief economist at the tax and accounting firm EY, referring to a scenario in which high interest rates manage to tame inflation without causing a recession. “You really have the best of both worlds, with consumer spending growth remaining resi-

lient and inflation moving within striking distance of the Fed’s 2% target.”

A separate measure of worker pay that the government issued Thursday — the employment cost index — showed that wages and benefits grew just 0.8% in the July-September quarter, the slowest such pace in three years. Measured from the same quarter a year earlier, workers’ paychecks, excluding government employees, rose 3.8%, a pace consistent with the Fed’s inflation target, Daco said.

Post reports subscriber loss after no endorsement

Associated Press

The Washington Post has lost at least 250,000 subscribers since announcing last Friday that it would not endorse a candidate for president — roughly 10% of its digital following, the newspaper reported Wednesday.

The Post would not officially confirm that figure, saying it was a private company, but it was reported in a story in the newspaper that cited documents and two unnamed sources who were familiar with the figures. Another non-endorsement last week has caused thousands of Los Angeles Times readers to cancel subscriptions, although not nearly at the Post’s level.

The Post’s owner, Jeff Bezos, said presidential endorsements create a perception of bias at the newspaper while having little real influence on how readers vote.

McDonald’s E. coli cases rise; officials inspect onion grower

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal officials on Wednesday reported more cases of E. coli poisoning among people who ate at McDonald’s, as government investigators seeking the outbreak’s source identified an “onion grower of interest” in Washington state.

The Food and Drug Adminis-

tration said 90 people across 13 states have fallen ill in the outbreak, up from 75 at the end of last week. The number of people hospitalized increased by five, to 27 people. One death has been tied to the outbreak.

Officials have said raw, sliced onions on McDonald’s Quarter Pounder hamburgers are the likely source of the E. coli.

McDonald’s said the onions came from a single supplier, the California-based Taylor Farms.

The company has since recalled the yellow onions it sent to McDonald’s and other restaurant chains.

The FDA said Wednesday it has begun inspecting Taylor Farm’s processing center in Colorado Springs as well as an “onion

grower of interest” in Washington state. It did not name the grower.

FDA officials said Wednesday the current risk of illness “is low because the onions have been recalled and should no longer be available.” They noted that all of the reported cases occurred before Taylor Farms and McDonald’s removed the onions from the market.

Mobile

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STARS AND STRIPES

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WORLD



MANU FERNANDEZ/AP

A man cleans his house affected by floods in Utiel, Spain, on Wednesday.

Spain searches for bodies after unprecedented flash flooding

Associated Press

BARRIO DE LA TORRE, Spain — Crews searched for bodies in stranded cars and sodden buildings Thursday as people tried to salvage what they could from their ruined homes following monstrous flash floods in Spain that claimed at least 158 lives.

Spain's worst natural disaster this century left a trail of destruction and fears that more horrors will be uncovered from the ubiquitous layers of mud that walls of water left in their wake late Tuesday and early Wednesday.

An unknown number of people remain missing.

"Unfortunately, there are dead people inside some vehicles," said Spain's Transport Minister Óscar Puente.

The widespread damage recalled the aftermath of a hurricane or tsunami.

Cars piled on one another like fallen dominoes, uprooted trees, downed power lines and household items all mired in mud that covered streets in dozens of communities in the hardest-hit region of Valencia, where at least 155 people died.

Rushing water turned narrow streets into death traps and

spawned rivers that tore through homes and businesses, sweeping away cars, people and everything else in its path. The floods demolished bridges and left roads unrecognizable.

Luís Sánchez, a welder, was one of the lucky ones when the storm turned the V-31 highway south of Valencia city into a floating graveyard strewn with hundreds of vehicles. He said he saved several people.

"I saw bodies floating past. I called out but nothing," Sánchez said. "The firefighters took the elderly first, when they could get in. I am from nearby so I tried to help and rescue people. People were crying all over, they were trapped."

Regional authorities said late Wednesday it seemed no one was left stranded on rooftops or in cars in need of rescue after helicopters had saved some 70 people.

"Our priority is to find the victims and the missing so we can help end the suffering of their families," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said after meeting with regional officials and emergency services in Valencia on Thursday, the first of three official days of mourn-

ing.

Spain's Mediterranean coast is used to autumn storms that can cause flooding, but this was the most powerful flash flood event in recent memory. Scientists link it to climate change, which is also behind increasingly high temperatures and droughts in Spain and the heating up of the Mediterranean Sea.

The greatest pain was concentrated in Paiporta, a community of 25,000 next to Valencia city where mayor Maribel Albalat said Thursday that 62 people had perished.

"(Paiporta) never has floods, we never have this kind of problem. And we found a lot of elderly people in the town center," Albalat told national broadcaster RTVE. "There were also a lot of people who came to get their cars out of their garages ... it was a real trap."

While the most suffering was inflicted on municipalities near the city of Valencia, the storms unleashed their fury over huge swaths of the south and eastern coast of the Iberian peninsula. Two fatalities were reported in the neighboring Castilla La Mancha region and one in southern Andalusia.

Kharkiv hit with deadly attack by a Russian bomb

By ILLIA NOVIKOV
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces struck a residential building in Ukraine's second-largest city of Kharkiv on Thursday, killing three, including two teenage boys, and injuring scores of others, and launched scores of other attacks as they continued their grinding onslaught in the country's east.

Regional head Oleh Syniehubov said one of the boys, aged 12, was fatally injured when the building was hit by a Russian 1,100-pound glide bomb.

"He was freed from under the rubble with severe head injuries and fractures," Syniehubov wrote on social media. "Doctors performed resuscitation measures for more than half an hour. Unfortunately, it was not possible to save the child."

Syniehubov said later that rescuers also retrieved the bodies of a 15-year-old boy and an unidentified man from the debris.

Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said at least 35 people were injured in the attack and others could still be trapped under the rubble.

Russia has increasingly used powerful glide bombs to pummel Ukrainian positions along the 600-miles line of contact and strike cities dozens of miles from the front line. Kharkiv, a city of 1.1 million, is less than 20 miles from the border.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has repeatedly urged the United States to allow Ukraine to use long-range American missiles to strike air bases deeper in Russia that are used by warplanes carrying glide bombs. Washington so far has only allowed some strikes close to the border.

Zelenskyy repeated his request Thursday, publishing a video showing the ravaged nine-story

building, at least three of its floors destroyed and the rest of it seriously damaged.

"Partners see what is happening every day," Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram. "And under these conditions, each of their delayed decisions means at least dozens, if not hundreds of such Russian bombs against Ukraine. Their decisions are the lives of our people. Therefore, we must together stop Russia and do it with all possible force."

Early Thursday, Russia also fired 10 missiles of various types at the Dniester Estuary bridge that connects the northern and southern parts of the Odesa region, Ukraine's air force said, adding that only two of them were intercepted. It didn't say whether the bridge was hit.

Russian forces also sent 43 exploding drones over at least nine Ukrainian regions, the air force said. It said 17 were shot down, 23 jammed and three flew back to Russian-controlled territories.

The head of Kyiv city administration, Serhii Popko, said debris from some of the drones that were intercepted over the capital fell in the Podil district just north of downtown, causing minor damage. According to Popko, there was only one day in October in which Kyiv residents did not hear an air alert. During the month, Kyiv experienced two air alerts per day on average, repelling 20 actual aerial attacks targeting the city.

In the country's east, Russian forces continued their slow but steady assault, trying to capitalize on Ukrainian shortages of manpower and ammunition. In Moscow, the Defense Ministry reported the capture of the village of Yasna Polyana in the Donetsk region that lies on the way to the well-fortified Ukrainian stronghold of Kurakhove.

Israel says another rocket barrage from Lebanon kills more in north

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel's rescue service said projectiles fired from Lebanon on Thursday killed two more people in northern Israel, raising the death toll there to seven in what's been the deadliest rocket barrage since the Israeli military's invasion of southern Lebanon.

Magen David Adom, Israel's main emergency medical organization, said its medics confirmed the

deaths of a 30-year-old man and 60-year-old woman in a suburb of the northern city of Haifa. They also treated two other people who suffered mild injuries and were hospitalized.

The Israeli military said that roughly 25 rockets crossed into Israel from Lebanon as part of the volley that struck an olive grove where people had gathered for the harvest.

The deadly attack came just

hours after officials in Metula, in northern Israel, said that five people were killed, including four foreign workers, in a rocket barrage Thursday that struck an Israeli agricultural area.

The back-to-back attacks made Thursday one of the deadliest days for civilians in Israel since the Israeli military invaded southern Lebanon on Oct. 1 as part of a widening campaign against the Lebanon-

based Hezbollah militant group.

The attacks came as senior U.S. diplomats were in the region to push for cease-fires in Lebanon and Gaza, hoping to wind down the wars in the Middle East in the Biden administration's final months.

The Hezbollah militant group has been firing rockets, drones and missiles into Israel, and drawing retaliatory strikes, since Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack out of the Gaza Strip

triggered the war there. Hezbollah and Hamas are allies backed by Iran.

The conflict along the border escalated into a full-blown war last month, when Israel launched a wave of heavy airstrikes across Lebanon and killed Hezbollah's top leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and most of his deputies. Israeli ground forces pushed into Lebanon at the start of October.

MOVIES



CLAIRE FOLGER, WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT/AP

Nicholas Hoult and director Clint Eastwood behind the scenes during production of “Juror #2,” a courtroom thriller about an impossible conundrum.

‘I’ve always dreamed of working with you’

‘Juror #2’ cast members Hoult, Sutherland and Collette still can’t believe they got to be in a Clint Eastwood film

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

Nicholas Hoult was certain someone had made a mistake.

Clint Eastwood wanted to talk to him about starring in his new film, a slow-burn legal thriller about a normal guy faced with an extraordinary moral dilemma. Surely Eastwood meant someone else, he thought. But soon enough they were chatting on the phone about “Juror #2,” now in theaters.

“I was so nervous,” the British actor said. “I remember saying to him, ‘I really like the script.’ I was so eager to please.”

For Eastwood’s comeback, Hoult slipped into a pitch-perfect impersonation of his gravelly voice: “If you like it so much, I guess I’ll have to read it.”

Suddenly Hoult was laughing. The tension was broken.

“I was like, wow this guy’s cool,” he said. “He’s got a great sense of humor and we’re going to get along.”

Though there may be a healthy amount of English self-deprecation in the story, the spirit of it isn’t unique to Hoult. Eastwood, 94, is the kind of living legend that has even the most seasoned veterans a little starstruck. “Juror #2,” his 42nd film behind the camera, is getting strong reviews for being a smart, original courtroom thriller about an impossible conundrum.

In the original script by Jonathan Abrams, Hoult’s character, a recovering alcoholic with his first child about to be born, gets selected for jury duty on a murder case. But when the facts start to emerge, so do his memories, and he’s forced to confront the possibility that he might have been unknowingly responsible.

“After the first read, it had me,” Eastwood wrote in an email. “It made me think about what would you do if you were put in this situation? What is right? What is wrong? Who would you protect? A true moral dilemma. That’s something I’d want to watch.”

And he started rounding out his cast, led by Hoult, whom he called a true “movie star,” with supporting turns from Toni Collette as the ambitious prosecutor, Chris Messina as the public defender, J.K. Simmons as a fellow juror as well as Zoey Deutch and Kiefer Sutherland, who wrote a letter asking if there might be a role for him.

Sutherland had long imagined he’d cross paths with Eastwood. A lifelong Western fan, Sutherland’s late father Donald Sutherland had even worked with Eastwood a few times (“Kelly’s Heroes,” “Space Cowboys”). But when he read about the plans for “Juror #2,” he felt a new sense of urgency.

“I always thought one day I would arrive at Mr. Eastwood’s doorstep. Then I realized that that time was maybe kind of going away,” Sutherland said. “I just said, ‘I’ve always dreamed of working with you and if there is a part, any part, I would just like to be able to have the experience of watching you direct.’”

He was ultimately cast to play a lawyer and an Alcoholics Anonymous sponsor to Hoult’s character. The screen time was relatively small, but the experience was exactly what he hoped: A master class in the truest sense.

“I’ve worked with people that shout and get angry and they’re very demonstrative,” Sutherland said. “He was so amazingly quiet and calm and soft-spoken. That’s someone who has power, when they can be that and get everything they need.”

On one of his first days, an assistant director was explaining to Sutherland how to navigate a doorway in a scene. Eastwood stepped in to stop the tutorial, telling the AD, “He knows what he’s doing.” Despite his 40-plus years in the business, Sutherland said he walked a little taller that day.

“It made my life,” Sutherland said. “I’m very glad I didn’t work with him when I was 18 years old, because I

would have tied myself in knots.”

Collette similarly said she’s never felt so trusted.

“He’s so confident as a director, but not in a negative way. He’s just so present and allows it all to unfold,” she said. “I’ve never worked with anyone who’s so easygoing, to be honest.”

The film would also be the first time she and Hoult would share the screen since they played mother and son in “About a Boy” 23 years ago, when he was only 11. They’d texted a bit prior, but Collette was not prepared for the swell of emotion seeing Hoult, now 34, again. Then came their first scene together, and it wasn’t going to be an easy one: In fact, it’s the last shot of the film.

But that’s the Eastwood way. His efficiency on set is the stuff of legend. Sometimes you get two takes, but three is almost unheard of. Hoult said he and the actors on the jury even rehearsed in secret to make sure they would nail the lengthier scenes. No one wanted to be the squeaky wheel.

“He’s not efficient for the sake of being efficient,” Sutherland said. “I think Sydney Pollack, for instance, was really efficient and kind of when he became known for being efficient, started trying to show off his efficiency. ... I think Mr. Eastwood just kind of looks at a set and looks at a scene and just finds the straightest way to shoot it.”

Much has been made about whether “Juror #2” is going to be Eastwood’s last film. But he’s not saying that, publicly or privately. In fact, when production went on hiatus during the actors strike, he didn’t even use that time as a break.

“I remember when we did come back from the strike, I was like, ‘What did you do? And he was like, ‘Well, I was looking for new material,’” Collette said. “It’s nobody’s position to say this is his last movie.”

Sutherland added: “His parking spot at the Warner Bros. lot isn’t going anywhere.”

MOVIES



WORLD OF WARCRAFT AND BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT, NETFLIX/AP

Custom characters from World of Warcraft in a scene from the documentary “The Remarkable Life of Ibelin.” Using his avatar, Ibelin Redmoore, Norwegian gamer Mats Steen, who played from a wheelchair because he had Duchenne muscular dystrophy (he died in 2014), lived a vibrant life: coming of age and experiencing friendships and love. The documentary illustrates Steen’s life through the game.

Bridging the gap between virtual, cinematic

‘Ibelin,’ ‘Grand Theft Hamlet’ filmmakers enter the rich landscapes of video games to shoot their newest movies

BY JAKE COYLE
 Associated Press

Film productions often wrestle with shifts in the weather, the threat of the crew going into overtime or the fading of a day’s light. Less common are concerns over the cast slipping off the top of a blimp.

But that was one of the quirks of making “Grand Theft Hamlet,” a documentary about a pair of British actors, Sam Crane and Mark Oosterveen, who, while idled by the pandemic, decided to stage “Hamlet” within the violent virtual world of Grand Theft Auto. When Shakespeare wrote of the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” he may not have imagined the threat of a python loose in a bar or Hamlet wrestling with whether “to be” on a helipad. Yet Grand Theft Auto might be an oddly appropriate venue for a play where nearly everyone dies.

“The first time Sam did a bit of Shakespeare in that space, he said, ‘I imagine this is what it was like in Shakespeare’s time at the Globe when people would throw apples at you if you were rubbish,’” says Pinny Grylls, who wrote and directed the film with Crane, her husband. “No one’s really watching you but they’re occasionally looking around and listening to the poetry.”

“Grand Theft Hamlet,” which Mubi will release in theaters in January, opens with Crane and Oosterveen’s avatars, fleeing

police and careening into an outdoor amphitheater. One says aloud, “I wonder if you could stage something here?”

They aren’t the only ones who have drifted into virtual spaces and wondered if it might be a rich landscape for a movie. In the “The Remarkable Life of Ibelin,” which debuted Oct. 25 on Netflix, director Benjamin Ree plunges into World of Warcraft to tell both the life and virtual life story of Mats Steen, a Norwegian gamer who died from Duchenne muscular dystrophy at age 25.

“Knit’s Island,” streaming on Metrograph at Home, takes place almost entirely within the survivalist role-playing game DayZ. The filmmakers wore “PRESS” badges across the chests of their avatars and sought interviews with high-kill-count players. “Don’t shoot!” one yells during one approach. “I’m a documentarist!”

All three documentaries enter video game realms with curiosity at what might be discovered within. For them, the surreal life inside these virtual spaces, and the possibilities there for real human connection, are just as worthy as they would be anywhere else.

“Filmmakers want to make films about the world we live in. And more and more people are living in these virtual gaming spaces online,” Grylls says. “As filmmakers we’re just putting a mirror to the world and saying, ‘Look what’s happening here.’”

As the gaming industry has emerged as the dominant entertainment medium (by some estimates it dwarfs film, television and music combined), the lines between movies and video games have increasingly blurred. That’s not just in big box-office films like “The Super Mario Bros. Movie” but in the smaller films known as machinima (a combination of “machine” and “cinema”) that use gaming engines to make narratives of their own.

But “The Remarkable Life of Ibelin,” “Grand Theft Hamlet” and “Knit’s Island” are first-of-their-kind feature forays in bridging the gap between virtual and cinema.

“This is only the beginning,” Grylls says. “We’re right at the foothills of it. It’s nice to think we’re part of that evolution of cinema.”

Reconstructing Mats Steen’s life

When Ree first read about Steen’s story, he was tremendously moved. When Steen died in 2014, his parents, Robert and Trude, had the impression that their son had missed out on most of life. As his Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a rare disease without a cure, progressed, Steen’s life was increasingly relegated to playing video games from a wheelchair in their basement.

But after Steen’s parents posted news of their son’s death on his blog, they were stunned by the response. Messages

poured in, eulogizing Steen, known to most as the strapping Ibelin Redmoore of World of Warcraft. Ree rewinds his film to start over, retelling Steen’s story using thousands of pages of archived texts to animate Ibelin/Steen’s vibrant life within the game. In the game, Steen, as Ibelin, experienced his first kiss.

“I thought: Is it possible to translate that enormous archive and reconstruct actual events with real dialogue and real characters but also invite everyone in?” Ree says. “He actually came of age inside of a game. And I was so curious: What was that like? He experienced friendships, love — all the things I can recognize in my own life growing up.”

Ree knew that to make a film about Steen’s life, he needed to illustrate it through World of Warcraft. Though he, himself, wasn’t a player, Ree sought out gamers who posted fan videos on YouTube. Rasmus Tukia, a 28-year-old, self-taught 3D animator, led two other animators in rendering the game environment with the same models used for gameplay videos.

“They were all YouTubers and this was their first job,” Ree says. “We’re doing something totally new here. If this works, it’s a lot of credit to these YouTubers.”

Ree’s goal wasn’t to exactly mimic the game — that can come off as clunky or too

SEE VIRTUAL ON PAGE 15

MOVIES

Living his best life on screen

New Netflix documentary explores how gaming provided escape for boy with severe disease

By ADAM GRAHAM
The Detroit News

In “The Remarkable Life of Ibelin,” gaming is not just gaming. It’s a portal into a life lived, and the real-life human experience inside a virtual world.

This touching, eye-opening documentary is a look at the life of Mats Steen, a Norwegian boy who early on in his life was diagnosed with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a severe form of MD that causes progressive degeneration of the body’s muscles. As Mats’ mobility became limited, he turned to gaming, and increasingly lived his life inside the popular role-playing game World of Warcraft.

There, he was no longer in a wheelchair. He could run and jump through the game’s wide-open expanses, and even catch flight on the wings of a magical creature. He was not Mats, he was Ibelin — pronounced “Ee-

blin” — a hulking figure with long, flowing hair, huge muscles and kind, inviting eyes. Ibelin was a famed detective and nobleman, and the deeper Mats got into the game, the more his virtual persona overtook his own.

At home, Mats was quiet and reserved. But Ibelin was a hub of his virtual community, a sounding board for a whole group of people, and he developed friendships inside the WOW world that had real-world implications on the people behind those characters. He had a heartfelt relationship with one woman, and helped another mother and son work out their real-life differences through the machinations of the game.

None of his fellow players knew about the reality of Mats’ condition, and when a group of them got together for a real-life meetup, Mats declined the invitation. He died in 2014 at age



BJORG ENGBAHL/MEDIEOP/AP

Mats Steen in a scene from the documentary “The Remarkable Life of Ibelin.” The Norwegian gamer lived his life inside the popular role-playing game World of Warcraft, building a community and making connections that had real-world implications on the people behind the characters he interacted with.

25, but following his death, his family followed the digital footprint he left behind and learned about the wealth of people he touched in the game.

Where they thought he was withdrawing by spending all his time playing video games — his father estimated Mats spent around 20,000 hours playing WOW over a 10-year period — he was building a community,

the way he knew how and the way he was comfortable.

Director Benjamin Ree (“The Painter and the Thief”) handles Mats’ story with empathy and care, and re-creates Ibelin’s virtual world so we see the way he experienced life through in-character play. It’s a tricky balance, but Ree pays tribute to Mats and the lives of those he touched, and shows the way his

parents were able to see the breadth of Mats’ life after his death.

For many, video games are just an escape. For some, they’re much more, and “The Remarkable Life of Ibelin” is a window into a fascinating world and a surprisingly rich life.

“The Remarkable Life of Ibelin” is rated PG-13 for brief strong language. Running time: 106 minutes. Now streaming on Netflix.

Virtual: Without much of a precedent, creators had to learn by doing

FROM PAGE 14

herky-jerky. So for three years, without permission from the game’s maker, Blizzard Entertainment, they animated Steen’s/Ibelin’s experiences in World of Warcraft, but with a slightly more cinematic touch. Along the way, they showed drafts to Steen’s online friends for feedback.

“When I showed them the film after working on it for three-and-a-half years, the response after the screening was: ‘This is exactly how we remember Ibelin,’” Ree says. “Then they said, ‘But you’ve made one mistake. Ibelin liked women with more leathery clothes.’”

Only after the film — a small, independent Norwegian production before Netflix acquired it — was nearing completion did Ree reach out to Blizzard. He traveled to its offices in California to screen it for executives.

“I was so nervous. I hadn’t slept for days. We didn’t have a plan B. I had to take some extra doses of asthma medication in order to breathe before the meeting,” Ree says. “We showed them the film and right after we saw they were crying. The boss turned around and said, ‘This film is fantastic. You will get the rights.’”

Shakespeare with a cargo plane

Crane, an experienced stage and screen actor, had initially started what became “Grand Theft Hamlet” as more of a lark, a way to keep busy while theaters were shuttered during the pandemic. As he



MUBI/AP

“Grand Theft Hamlet” is a documentary about a pair of British actors who staged “Hamlet” within the violent virtual world of Grand Theft Auto.

posted videos, though, people responded enthusiastically, as did the game’s maker, Rockstar Games.

“They spoke to us about how they designed the game to be used like this, as a sandbox, as a creative space,” Crane says.

But little about how to make “Grand Theft Hamlet,” which won best documentary at SXSW in March, was established. For starters, nearly every audition or rehearsal in the game ended in bloodshed. Someone with a gun typically turned up and chaos ensued.

The filmmakers had a few touchstones, like Joe Hunting’s 2022 documentary “We Met in Virtual Reality” and the work of the artist Jacky Connolly, who used Grand Theft Auto to make the nightmarish, existential short film “Descent into Hell.” But little about how to make a movie set entirely within a game world was prescribed.

“We were kind of working out every aspect of it — putting on a play inside this world, learning how to capture the images in this world, then how do we edit all this

footage,” Crane says. “We were learning as we went.”

That also meant freedom. At one point, they realized they could essentially perform Shakespeare “on a billion-dollar budget.” Theirs is the first “Hamlet” to feature the car from “Back to the Future” or a cargo plane.

Meanwhile, Grylls, an experienced filmmaker, experimented with how to position the camera.

“I realized: OK, let’s try to make things a bit stiller and more cinematic,” she says. “When I discovered there was a phone inside the game with a camera on it, I was able to make close-ups and wide shots and a cinematic language of sorts.”

Game not over

As “Grand Theft Hamlet” has screened at various film festivals, Crane and Grylls find themselves in the surprising position of being celebrated for a movie they made mostly in their bedroom on a PlayStation. Like their virtual-world forays, something done in physical isolation has found an ever-growing community.

Ree, who spoke from a festival stop in San Francisco, has been traveling with “Ibelin” with Steen’s parents. A life that had once seemed quiet and lonely has reached around the world.

“They’ve watched the film every screening,” he says. “In a way for them, the film is a part of their healing but also their grieving process. They’ve seen it now over 150 times.”

MUSIC



EMILIO MADRID, DKC O&M/AP

Scott Avett, left, and his brother, Seth, pose outside the Longacre Theater in New York, where the Broadway musical “Swept Away,” which uses their music, began previews this week. The Avett Brothers are the latest example of alternative rock music to invade the world of the stage musical.

New wave of show tunes

Guster, Avett Brothers and Florence Welch are helping bring alt-rock to the musical theater stage

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Ryan Miller, the lead singer of alternative rock band Guster, has a new gig that even he’s a little surprised about: Musical theater songwriter. He laughs that he’s gone all Broadway.

“I just went full-into the ballpit — just, like, face-first, take-me-whenever-this-is-going,” he said before a recent rehearsal of his bright new musical “Safety Not Guaranteed” at Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Miller is part of a growing trend of alt-rockers bringing a new sound to the space carved out by giants like Stephen Sondheim and Andrew Lloyd Webber.

The Avett Brothers are about to have “Swept Away” land on Broadway, Florence + The Machine frontwoman Florence Welch is working on a musical about “The Great Gatsby” and Jack Antonoff is scoring “Romeo & Juliet.” Radiohead frontman Thom Yorke is laboring on “Hamlet Hail to the Thief,” a mashup of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” and his band’s music.

Arcade Fire’s Will Butler is fresh off the success of the Tony-winning play “Stereophonic,” Sufjan Stevens songs found a place on Broadway last season with “Illinois” and the folk-rock band Jamestown Revival is fueling the reigning best new musical, “The Outsiders.”

“There seems to be a wave and we’re kind of catching it at a good time,” says Miller. “It felt like there was already some soil that was being laid that I wouldn’t have to break down.”

Tony Award-winning producer John Johnson, who is helping create that wave

by backing the musicals “Swept Away,” “Stereophonic” and “Safety Not Guaranteed,” says the change reflects the rise of tastes of millennials and Gen X.

Changing audience

If, before the pandemic, the standard theatergoer was a suburban woman in her 60s, she’s being replaced by folks in their 30s to 50s from chic neighborhoods in Manhattan and Brooklyn, as well as bedroom communities in New Jersey like

SEE SHOW ON PAGE 17

MUSIC REVIEW



CHARLES SYKES, INVISION/AP

Ryan Miller, from alt-rock band Guster, was initially uninterested in musical theater because of the huge time commitment. But he eventually was drawn to it and wrote the show “Safety Not Guaranteed.”

Show: Shift follows generational tastes

FROM PAGE 16

Maplewood and South Orange.

“We’re kind of following the path of the generational shift in the audience that’s happening right now,” Johnson says, adding that these new theater-goers “are open to new stories, new voices, as well as the voices that they grew up with.”

Alt-rock has been heard on Broadway before, of course, in shows like Duncan Sheik’s “Spring Awakening,” and Alanis Morissette’s “Jagged Little Pill,” but rare is a cluster like theater is enjoying now.

Scott Avett, lead vocalist and multi-instrumentalist for the Avett Brothers, has watched as his 2004 album “Mignonette” — based on a book about men adrift for days in the middle of the ocean — finds a new life on stage.

“It’s surreal, for sure,” he says. “The blooming of the story with the songs and the concept has been very surreal,” adding: “It feels, like, quite flattering and affirming.”

The songs have been wedded to a story by John Logan, and the Avetts wrote one song specifically for the show, “Lord Lay Your Hand On My Shoulder.”

The leap to Broadway, in one way, isn’t that strange for the Americana band, which has always written narrative-driven and character-based songs.

“Show tunes are like the long-ing coming from somebody that then is exaggerated to the stage,” says Avett. “We grew up project-ing that from a smaller place.”

An unusual path

If “Swept Away” began as a book that became an album, “Safety Not Guaranteed” started life as a 2012 sci-fi comedy star-

ring Aubrey Plaza, who played one of a trio of journalists hunt-ing whoever placed an intriguing classified ad: “Wanted: Someone to go back in time with me. This is not a joke,” it reads. “Must bring your own weapons. Safety not guaranteed.”

Aside from the time-travel silliness, the film and musical is about the fading dreams of aspir-ing professionals in their 20s and 30s who see diminished opportu-nities and want to go back to the comfort of the past.

Miller initially had no inten-tions of making musical theater. When not touring with his four-piece band, he scores films, ap-pears on podcasts and even starred in his own PBS series. Broadway or Broadway-adjacent didn’t appeal.

Miller, who lives in Vermont, was simply turned off by the sheer amount of time it usually took: Fellow Vermont creators Anaïs Mitchell’s “Hadestown” took 14 years, and Trey Anasta-sio’s “Hands on a Hardbody” took 10 years and closed after less than a month.

But Miller found himself grad-ually sucked in and enjoying a timeline that was accelerated. He was originally asked just to at-tend a workshop performance of “Safety Not Guaranteed” studded with Guster songs — basically, a Guster jukebox — and loved it. “Have I just been, like, a closeted theater kid my whole life?” he asked himself.

Soon he was writing original songs for it. He was a natural, since he had scored the film, knew the characters and the emotional beats. He wrote five new stage songs in a month and sent them to book writer Nick Blaemire.

“I remember after I finished that fifth song, I sent it to Nick, I was like, ‘Man, I really fell in love with this.’ Like, something happened, and I’m going to be really bummed if I don’t get to just see it once.”

Miller then went on a writing tear, offering some 15 new songs in place of the Guster ones. “This was the rule: I was like, ‘Just let me beat it. If I don’t beat it, we’ll all know and that’s it.’”

Only three Guster songs — including “One Man Wrecking Machine” — made the cut. The rest are from Miller, who relished the storytellers’ task of creating songs specifically tai-lored for the characters and moments.

“It’s been like, one of the great-est thrills, I think, of my artistic career to have been brought/ stumbled/actively weaseled my way into this world. And I’m totally smitten,” he says.

More and more alt-rockers may follow, attracted by the chance to show their multi-hyph-enate-ness and the constancy. No matter how successful a rock band is, life on the road means one or two nights in a city; a stage show, on the other hand, is more like a residency.

Miller says he’s also embraced the narrowness of the role. When he’s writing for Guster, the song can be about anything. When he wrote for “Safety Not Guar-an-teed,” the songs had clear guide-lines.

“Having limitations actually really is a very compelling, very inspirational way because it can’t just be everything. It’s got to be within,” he says.

“I call them sandboxes. I love a sandbox to play in and I love limitations.”



AP photos

Playwright Eisa Davis and songwriter-actor Lin-Manuel Miranda created a concept album based on the cult classic film “The Warriors.”

Lin-Manuel Miranda and Eisa Davis

Warriors (Atlantic)

The perilous journey home — it’s a tale as old as “The Iliad.” Now it’s a dynamic concept album starring hip-hop legends, Broadway belters and, of all things, the New York subway system.

“Warriors,” built on the 1979 cult classic movie, is an inventive song cycle by “Hamilton” mastermind Lin-Manuel Miranda and Pulitzer finalist Eisa Davis, an album that has deployed musical talent brilliantly to tell another story of going home, at the intersection of musical theater and popular music.

The movie — born from a book by Sol Yurick — follows the street gang the Warriors as they make their way from The Bronx to their home turf of Coney Island in Brooklyn while being hunted by rival gangs and cops. (Check out the lyric book to have a richer experi-ence). The subway is almost a character, the main mode of transport, acting as the city’s artery.

Miranda and Davis have kept the bones of the story but made strategic changes in genders, like making the Warriors all women, played by theater vets Kenita Miller, Sasha Hutchings, Phillipa Soo, Aneesa Folds, Amber Gray, Gizel Jiménez, Jasmine Cephas Jones and Julia Harriman. They all give it an extra buzz, beautifully emotional in just a few words.

Surrounding them is an astonishing list of artists playing various parts — Ms. Lauryn Hill, Nas, Busta Rhymes, Billy Porter, Ghostface Killah, RZA, Marc Anthony, Colman Domingo, Cam’ron, Shenseea and Joshua Henry among them. In some inspired casting, James Remar and David Patrick Kelly — both veterans of the movie — are recast here as cops.

“This is the sound of something being born,” Chris Rivers thrillingly raps at the top of the album, and he has the honor of representing The Bronx. Don’t you want to hear Nas repping Queens and Busta Rhymes as Brooklyn? The album is worth streaming alone just for that. Or for the chance to hear Hill sing “Can you dig it?”

Miranda and Davis offer a musical journey along with their narra-tive one — the sounds of salsa, ska, agro-rock, boy band, pop, old-school rap and even K-pop. Spanish and Korean mixes with the Eng-lish. It’s a diverse buffet, reflecting New York.

Some of the 26 tracks are fragments, some hushed, others fully formed and some hysterical, as with “We Got You,” a seductive love song delivered by a male gang wearing cardigans. “Quiet Girls” — featuring a fierce Porter — is a feminist anthem and “A Light or So-methin” is a gorgeous love song for our times. The three-part finale is a gloriously messy, eight-minute ride through a eulogy, a struggle and then grace.

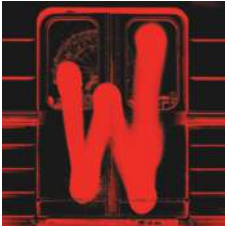
“Warriors” is a portrait of a mean, tough city with determined resi-dents bound together by frustration with their transit system. “Takin’ a train to a boat to another train?!” the gangs sing in unison and aston-ishment on “I Survive the Night,” an electric opening number that’s a theatrical setting of the table.

Trains rattle, doors close — we even hear underground announce-ments from Bernie Wagenblast, who voices the city’s real subway system — across a rich soundscape that includes the rattling of spray paint cans and the crackling of fire.

It shares with Miranda’s previous stage works — “In the Heights” and “Hamilton” — an unabashed love of New York (There’s even mentions of hot dog joint Gray’s Papaya). The creators have said they have no plans for a stage version, and you can hear why: It’s all on the album already.

The Warriors — don’t get too attached to anyone in particular, just sayin’ — are in many ways a metaphor for us as a nation: “All we got is us / The people who ride with us, side by side with us / We’re all on the same train home.”

Take a trip with them — it’s a great ride. Watch the closing doors!
— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press



BOOKS

More spycraft for George Smiley

John le Carré's son follows his father's lead, writes Cold War spy thriller 'Karla's Choice'

By JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

George Smiley, the subtle fictional spy-master navigating treacherous Cold War currents, is back.

And so, somewhat surprisingly, is his creator, John le Carré.

Four years after the spy writer's death at the age of 89, comes a new thriller, "Karla's Choice." Billed as "a John le Carré novel," it was written by Nick Harkaway, whose qualifications for the job include seven published novels, a lifetime of reading le Carré — and the fact he is the late author's son.

After decades avoiding his famous father's shadow, like Smiley trying to leave the intelligence agency known as the Circus, he was drawn back in.

Le Carré left a note asking his family, as custodians of his estate, to help his works live on and find new readers. They took that as permission to write new books. But Harkaway, who made his name with sci-fi thrillers including "The Gone-Away World," "Angelmaker" and "Titanium Noir," was apprehensive about being the one to do it.

"I would go so far as to say terrified," said Harkaway, 51, whose real name is Nicholas Cornwell. Le Carré was the pen name of his father, David Cornwell.

"It's this piece of 20th-century literature that defines a genre and potentially a historical period. This body of work is immense. And it's my father's universe," he said. "There's every reason for people to be skeptical."

Sitting in his spacious north London home — in the "very uncomfortable" writing chair that once belonged to his father — Harkaway has relaxed a bit now that the book has been published (by Viking) to largely glowing reviews. The Daily Telegraph said Harkaway's "re-creation of the Smiley milieu is note-perfect," while The Guardian declared the novel "a treat."

"Karla's Choice" is set in 1963, months after the end of le Carré's breakthrough novel, "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold." It opens with a hitman, dispatched by Moscow to assassinate a Hungarian publisher in London, having a last-minute crisis of conscience.

A recently retired Smiley is pulled in for one last job. He's assured it will be short and simple. Famous last words.

The peril-filled saga that follows fleshes out the early relationship between Smiley and the Soviet spymaster Karla, who becomes his nemesis in later works like "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy" and "Smiley's People."

Harkaway says that once he got over his terror, capturing Smiley's voice came easily — he had literally grown up with it. Some of his earliest memories involve his father reading aloud draft pages of his works in progress.

"The formative moment in my life where I was actually learning to speak, was learning to use language, I was getting 90 minutes or more of George Smiley in my ear every day," he said. "And so when I came to sit down to do this, I found that I did not have to turn the dial very far to find a voice that is absolutely my own, but which reads to people as being sufficiently of the le Carré mood."

That mood is often dark. Le Carré had been a real-life Cold War intelligence agent, and his thrillers are steeped in the moral murk of the spy world. But bespectacled, understated Smiley — antithesis of that other famous fictional spy, James Bond — offers decency and hope.

Harkaway sees Smiley as "this compassionate, anonymous little everyman who can turn up and see the broken pieces of life on the floor and put them back together."

There is more humor in "Karla's Choice" than in many of his father's books, and female characters, including Smiley's wife Ann, get more space and voice.

"I had a flat-out ambition that the Circus and the Circus universe should not just be elderly, straight white men," Harkaway said.

He acknowledges that women were often on the sidelines in his father's work — a reflection of the male-dominated era, and of a complicated life. David Cornwell's mother left when he was 5 years old, leaving him with his father, a charismatic con man. He didn't see her again until he was 21. As an adult, he had two marriages — the second to Harkaway's mother, Valerie Jane Eustace — and multiple affairs.

"On a fundamental level for him, his relationships with women were about absence and pain," Harkaway said. "That got better over time. But when he was writing Smiley, that's what came through. And that's not my life."



British author Nick Harkaway, son of the author whose pen name is John le Carré, poses Oct. 24 with copies of his new book, "Karla's Choice," at his home in London.

'Karla's Choice' creates a mostly credible Smiley

In "Karla's Choice," which is set in 1963, Nick Harkaway seeks to fill a portion of the 10-year gap between "The Spy Who Came in from the Cold" — the book that turned his father into an international sensation — and the masterful "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy."

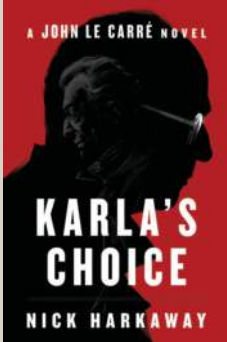
Familiarly, beloved character George Smiley, the schlumpy, brilliant spy, enters the narrative of "Karla's Choice" after being called out of retirement to complete a special job — "new business," as he's told.

Smiley has been enjoying the "simple pleasures" of life, freed from the spy's persistent need to discreetly observe and catalog everything while drawing no attention to himself. During this period, which he calls his "hibernation," Smiley has discovered a form of domestic harmony with his wife, Lady Ann, a serial adulterer who is now trying to occupy him with activities such as art shows.

To his surprise, Smiley has discovered that "mirth isn't fatal."

Returning to the world of spying is irresistible to Smiley, who is drawn back without much convincing. Still, he is tortured by the events that preceded his retirement — his role, along with the mysterious Control, who oversees the Circus (a stand-in for the U.K.'s Secret Intelligence) — in a botched operation that led to the death of fellow agent Alec Leamas.

"I tell myself the Circus must triumph because the other side is monstrous; that London



and Washington must defeat Moscow because we understand the obligation of the ruler to the ruled, and they do not," Smiley opines. "But, come to it, we abandoned our obligations and chose to be every bit as monstrous ourselves in quest of victory, and I said nothing."

Smiley eventually becomes enmeshed in the search for a Soviet spy, Ferencz Róka.

Looming over the pursuit is the shadow of Smiley's nemesis, the Soviet spymaster known as Karla, who factors into the narrative while essentially remaining offstage, and whose spectral presence is a source of both frustration for Smiley and an almost grudging admiration.

While on the hunt for Róka, Smiley's disillusionment deepens — for him, the spy game has never been one of glory — though in Harkaway's hands, the inner dialogue can feel overwrought.

It's all a bit much. It gets worse when Harkaway puts Smiley — whose true appeal has always lain in his scheming and perceptive mind, rather than in derring-do — at the wheel of a getaway car in a chase scene right out of an airport paperback. I found myself pleading, "No! No!" but, alas, it goes on for pages.

— Manuel Roig-Franzia/The Washington Post

Harkaway says working on the book didn't bring "an Obi-Wan Kenobi moment" in which an apparition of his father appeared to offer writing advice. But he found the experience "very moving."

"Despite the fact that it's ... slightly a project that has grief attached to it, it's still a joyful process," he said.

It seems inevitable that more

le Carré thrillers will follow. Harkaway also plans to continue writing under his own name and in his own style, with a sequel to "Titanium Noir" due to be published in April.

"Karla's Choice" carries a double dedication: To David John Moore Cornwell, "father, husband, brother, son," and to "John le Carré, novelist."

"John le Carré was, among

other things, a shield that my father created, because he was quite a shy guy," Harkaway said. "John le Carré was kind of the suit that he put on to be able to do it all. And then David Cornwell was my dad. He was a terrible cook, he was a Ping-Pong player of enormous aggression and flair ... he was the person I lived with."

"I wanted with that dedication to thank them both."

CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

TRIPLE FEATURES
BY JERRY MICCOLIS / EDITED BY JOEL FAGLIANO

Jerry Miccolis is a retired actuary and financial executive who splits his time between the Garden State (Basking Ridge, N.J.) and the Garden Isle (Kauai, Hawaii). He spends his days as a playwright, math tutor, softball player and volunteer with NASA's Solar System Ambassador program. This puzzle's theme riffs on the same idea as his New York Times debut of July 17, 2016, which was titled "Double Features."

- ACROSS
- 1 "Yikes!"

5 Italian sauce whose name sounds like a French stew

9 Last word

14 It can bust one's bracket

19 Island west of Komodo National Park

20 Privy to

21 Call to mind

22 10th of 24

23 Marquee at the Tri-Plex mistaken as a promo for ... "Godzilla"?

26 ____ Island, designated historic site for both New York and New Jersey

27 Fantasy-football fodder

28 Something seen framed in a Zoom background, perhaps

29 Honors for David Beckham and Leona Lewis: Abbr.

31 Bandmate of Keith for 60-plus years

32 Hasten, old-style

34 Rival of Forbes

35 Futuristic microscopic machine

37 ... "E.T., the Extra-Terrestrial"?

43 Essen exclamations

45 Bile

46 Band whose name is sometimes rendered with a backward B

47 Grave words?

48 "While I nodded nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping" poet

49 ____ alai

50 Sam who directed "Spider-Man"

52 D-Day craft: Abbr.

53 With 112-Down, a small laugh

54 ... "Independence Day"?

59 Having had a few bites, say

60 What this is

61 Mediterranean condiment

62 "Mon ____!"

63 Liturgical vestment

65 Center

67 At sea

71 Suitor of Christine in "The Phantom of the Opera"

73 Kind of shell that's easily broken

74 Novelist whose name is synonymous with nightmarish absurdity

75 ... "Rush Hour"?

81 "Devilish" cartoon character

82 Publishing V.I.P.s

83 Like golden eagles vis-à-vis bald eagles, in the United States

84 Unsafe?

85 Modern H.R. initiative

86 Bryn Mawr grad, e.g.

88 Nag

89 Connections

90 One in a line at a grocery store

91 ... "Insomnia"?

96 Person with attachment issues, perhaps

97 "The Strife Is ____ the Battle Done" (hymn)

98 Detergent brand

99 Baja resort town, familiarly

101 ____ Sidle, longtime role on "C.S.I."

102 Moving-day leftovers

104 Overseas refusals

108 Holding nothing back

110 ... "Sex and the City"?

113 "Welcome" introduction?

114 Texas A&M athlete

115 Girl's name that sounds like two adjacent letters

116 Singer Horne

117 Mount

118 Detritus at the bottom of a bag of bagels

119 Variety

120 Novelist Johnson who won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for fiction

DOWN

1 Subsidies

2 Walk way?

3 Aquarium growth

4 "Check it out, man!"

5 Narrow inlet

6 Antonio López de Santa ____, three-time president of Mexico

7 Finally saw through a deception

8 Emasculates

9 Ward (off)

10 E.R. lines

11 0%

12 Japanese art of flower arrangement

13 Star in Venus's orbit?

14 Island strings

15 Ingredient in some lipsticks, pizza dough and biodiesel

16 Cause of a hung jury

17 Larger-than-life

18 Assignment

24 "Really?"

25 Marine menace

30 Sensitive subject

33 Pioneering computer

36 Harsh

37 From what place

38 Actor-turned-policeman Estrada

39 Jazz singer Cleo

40 Some PCs

41 Ending with teen

42 "That's a ____!" (chemist's punny observation)

43 Garden invader

44 Raccoon relative

49 Partner of pride

50 Small brook

51 Illness with chills

52 Island rings

55 Roil

56 Give a lecture, say

57 Sported

58 Seasoned rice dish

63 Listing agent's condition

64 Voting day: Abbr.

65 Feature of some English gardens

66 "Happy Birthday" writer, sometimes

68 Athlete's out-of-character performance, say

69 Lift-ticket purchaser

70 Unspoken

72 Word after hidden or political

73 Calorie-rich cake

74 Apt name for a veterinarian

75 Ankle bones

76 Sky shade

77 Claim on an egg carton

78 Woodworking tool

79 Tennille of Captain & Tennille

80 Charlotte ____ (dessert)

81 Shooting marble

87 Aide-____ (mnemonic device)

88 Nobility

89 "Let's do this thing!"

90 Creator of colorful crafts

92 Woolly pack animals

93 Origin

94 Hexad

95 Rubik of puzzle-cube fame

99 Coral islets

100 Quite often

102 Sweeties, informally

103 Barbershop sound

105 Barely made, with "out"

106 Poke-bowl ingredient

107 Overcommunicate, say

109 ____ Low, famed English pirate

111 Secreted

112 See 53-Across
-
- GUNSTON STREET
-
- "Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.
- RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE
-
-
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FACES

An embrace of the slightly off

Songwriter Amy Allen has a knack of helping pop stars write lyrics that reflect themselves

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

As a songwriting student at Boston’s Berklee College of Music in the mid-2010s, Amy Allen had a teacher whose ideas about lyrics included the conviction that words must not be improperly stressed. Among the instructor’s object lessons: Katy Perry’s 2013 single “Unconditionally,” in which Perry puts the emphasis on that word’s fourth syllable — “un-con-di-tion-al-ly” — in order to ride the song’s throbbing groove.

“This teacher said, ‘You should never do that,’” Allen recalls. “But I was like, I think people love when you do that because it’s weird and funny and hooky. It makes you remember the song more because it’s not correct.”

Turns out Allen was right about being wrong: Nine years after she graduated from Berklee to become a professional songwriter in Los Angeles, Allen, 32, has built a career penning idiosyncratic pop hits that people — many millions of them — can’t stop listening to.

Since 2018, she’s helped create half a dozen top 10 singles for the likes of Harry Styles (“Adore You”), Tate McRae (“Greedy”) and Halsey (“Without Me”); recently, three separate songs she cowrote for Sabrina Carpenter’s “Short n’ Sweet” album have been lodged near the top of Billboard’s Hot 100, including “Espresso,” which has racked up more than 1.4 billion streams on Spotify, and “Please Please Please,” which reached No. 1 in just its second week on the chart.

Allen’s writerly eccentricities vary from song to song. Sometimes it’s a daffy, hard-to-parse turn of phrase like “That’s that me espresso”; sometimes it’s an unexpected burst of profanity like the “motherf—” Carpenter drops in “Please Please Please.” In “Lie to Girls,” another song from “Short n’ Sweet” — Allen is credited on all 12 of the LP’s tracks — it’s the jolting honesty of a painful romantic confession: “You don’t have to lie to girls,” Carpenter tells a guy she knows is no good for her, “If they like you, they’ll just lie to themselves.” (So much resignation, so few words.)

Stylistically, too, the songs Allen writes can end up all over the place, from “Espresso’s” fizzy disco to “Adore You’s” humid soul-rock to whatever it is that’s hap-

pening in the twangy and twinkling “Please Please Please.” In September, she released a self-titled album of her own, with her breathy vocals against atmospheric indie-folk arrangements a la Boygenius or Lizzy McAlpine. She can even do country music, as in the handful of tunes she cowrote for the latest album by Texas singer Koe Wetzel.

What connects all of her work is an embrace of the just slightly off that gives the music an intimate sense of personality — Allen’s, yes, but more so that of the artist performing the song. To listen to a tune she helped compose is to believe that the singer in question is the only person who could have sung it.

“‘Espresso’ and ‘Please Please Please’ and ‘Slim Pickins,’ they’re so authentic to who Sabrina is,” Allen says. “She talks exactly the way she writes.”

Now, following a month atop the Billboard 200, “Short n’ Sweet” is expected to land high on the Grammy Awards ballot when nominations are announced Nov. 8; Allen herself could score a nod for songwriter of the year — her second time in that category after her work with Styles, Lizzo and Charli XCX earned her a nomination in 2023.

“Amy’s the first ask for anybody in pop right now,” says Julian Bunetta, who produced “Espresso” and has also crafted hits for One Direction and Teddy Swims. “When you go on a run like the one she’s been on, it’s like there’s a cosmic alignment between whatever she’s doing and whatever the world is looking for.”

Indeed, Allen’s success is part of a larger shift in pop music away from perfect polish and toward lifelike mess.

“The days of a pop song that could go to 10 different artists are gone,” Allen says. “It used to be that you’d write something generic enough that it could fit for A, B, C or D. Now each song has to be tailored specifically to the artist — it has to really come from them.”

Allen figures the pandemic led many stars to become more involved in songwriting after their touring plans were called off; she says social media plays a role too in that artists are “always talking to their fans in real time” about their lives. “Your music has to mirror that, or else what are you doing?”



Amy Allen, shown at the Grammy Awards in 2023, helped write the lyrics of some of the hits currently on Billboard’s Hot 100 chart.

Reynolds, McElhenney buy Wrexham brewery

Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney have bought another piece of Wrexham — its brewery.

Four years after their out-of-the-blue purchase of Wrexham’s struggling soccer team, the Hollywood celebrities have further invested in the city in north Wales by becoming co-owners of Wrexham Lager. The brewery, which is one of the soccer team’s sponsors, was founded in 1882 and says it is the oldest British lager brewery still in existence.

The presence of Reynolds and McElhenney will boost Wrexham Lager’s efforts to expand its international production and distribution.

“As co-chairmen of Wrexham AFC, we have learned a lot,” Reynolds and McElhenney said in a statement. “The connection between club and community, the intricacies of the offside rule and the occasional need for beer — especially after finance meetings.

“Wrexham Lager has a 140-year-old recipe and a storied history, and we’re excited to help write its next chapter.”

The brewery didn’t disclose financial details, but said Reynolds and McElhenney have a majority stake.

Wrexham Lager said the acquisition was made by Red Dragon Ventures, a joint venture formed by Reynolds and McElhenney and the New York-based Allyn family — which on Wednesday became a minority investor in Wrexham’s soccer team.

Since taking charge of the club following a \$2.5 million purchase in late 2020, Reynolds and McElhenney have overseen Wrexham’s rise up English soccer’s league system. Wrexham has achieved back-to-back promotions and now plays in third-tier League One.

Wrexham has been further thrust into the global consciousness by Reynolds and McElhenney launching a fly-on-the-wall TV series — “Welcome to Wrexham.” It has helped to boost tourism and trade in the city, with Wrexham Lager among the businesses gaining visibility through the show.

The Roberts family, which revived Wrexham Lager in 2011 after production stopped in 2000, will remain a co-owner of the brewery alongside Reynolds and McElhenney.

Other news

■ **The Grammys** will have a new broadcast home on ABC starting in 2027. The network and the Recording Academy announced Wednesday that they had signed a 10-year deal to broadcast the Grammys beginning in 2027. CBS has aired the Grammys since 1973. The deal also calls for the Grammys to be streamed on Hulu and Disney+.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Judge accused of killing wife released on bail

CA LOS ANGELES — A California judge charged with murder in the death of his wife has been released from jail on \$2 million bail.

Orange County Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Ferguson was released last Friday from the custody of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, online jail records show.

Ferguson, 74, was taken back into custody in September after the judge overseeing his case determined that he lied about drinking alcohol while he was out on bail.

Ferguson pleaded not guilty last year to murder in the shooting death of his wife, Sheryl Ferguson, which his lawyer at the time said was accidental. Authorities said the couple had been arguing in August 2023 and Ferguson had been drinking when he pulled a pistol from an ankle holster and shot her in the chest.

State reassures after putting passwords online

CO DENVER — Voting system passwords were mistakenly put on the Colorado Secretary of State's website for several months before being spotted and taken down, but the lapse did not pose an immediate threat to the upcoming election, said state election officials Tuesday.

The passwords were only one of two that are needed to access any component of Colorado's voting systems, and are just one part of a layered security system, said Jack Todd, spokesperson for the Secretary of State's office, in a statement. The two passwords are "kept in separate places and held by different parties," he said.

"This is not a security threat," said Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold in an interview on 9News on Tuesday evening. She said her office is investigating, that not all of the passwords in the spreadsheet were active and there is no reason to believe there's been a security breach.

Griswold said workers are changing passwords, looking at access logs and chain of custody books.

The error has brought criticism from the chairman of the Colorado Republican Party at a time of heightened scrutiny of the country's election systems.

Pot enforcement law is ruled unconstitutional

NY NEW YORK — A law that New York City has relied on to padlock scores of suspected unlicensed marijuana shops is unconstitutional because it violates the rights of store owners, a judge ruled Tuesday.

Mayor Eric Adams' administration moved immediately to appeal, saying the city had successfully shut down more than 1,200 illegal



CHARLIE RIEDEL/AP

Perspective on the water

A man kayaks in Shawnee, Kan., a Kansas City suburb that branches of the Oregon and Santa Fe trails traveled through in the mid 19th century.

shops in a crackdown on the thousands of stores that opened without a license after the state legalized recreational use of the drug.

The ruling was made in the case of a Queens business padlocked in September following an inspection by the sheriff's office that found suspected cannabis and cannabis products for sale without a license.

New powers passed in the state budget earlier this year gave local authorities the ability to inspect and immediately shut down suspected illegal stores while administrative hearings play out. But the final decision remains with the sheriff's office, meaning it can keep a store closed even if a hearing officer recommends otherwise.

That's what happened in the Queens case.

Musk wins court victory in a dispute over '18 post

LA NEW ORLEANS — A federal agency was wrong to order that Tesla CEO Elon Musk delete a 2018 social media post that union leaders saw as a threat to employee stock options, a sharply divided federal appeals court has ruled.

The case involved a post made on what was then known as Twitter during United Auto Workers organizing efforts at a Tesla facility in Fremont, Calif. The post was made years before Musk bought the platform, now known as X, in 2022.

On May 20, 2018, Musk tweeted: "Nothing stopping Tesla team at our car plant from voting union. Could do so tmrw if they wanted. But why pay union dues and give up stock options for nothing? Our safety record is 2X better than when plant was UAW & everybody already gets healthcare."

The National Labor Relations Board said it was an illegal threat. After Tesla appealed, three judges on the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans upheld that decision, as well as a related NLRB order that Tesla rehire a fired employee, with back pay.

But Tesla sought a rehearing, and the full 5th Circuit later threw out the earlier decision and voted to hear the matter again. In an opinion dated Oct. 25, the judges split 9-8 in favor of Tesla and Musk.

\$607M not available to students with disabilities

TX AUSTIN — Texas is clawing back more than \$607 million per year in federal funding for special education services, a move local school district officials say will likely worsen already strained budgets for students with disabilities.

The School Health and Related Services (SHARS) program provides hundreds of school districts critical funding for special education services, reimbursing them for counseling, nursing, therapy and transportation services provided to Medicaid-eligible chil-

dren.

More than 775,000 students receive special education services in Texas, according to the Texas Education Agency. It is not as clear how many of them are eligible for Medicaid, though school district officials say many of the kids who directly benefit from SHARS come from low-income families.

But in the last year, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, which manages the program at the state level, began imposing strict limitations on the types of services for which school districts are able to request federal reimbursement. The changes have accumulated into a \$607 million slashing to the money school districts typically expect to receive under SHARS per year, according to health agency estimates.

Mistrial in case of man accused of killing sheriff

AL TUSKEGEE — The capital murder trial of a man accused of killing an Alabama sheriff ended in a mistrial Tuesday after jurors told a judge that they were unable to reach a verdict.

Jurors, who previously indicated they were at an impasse, told the judge that they remained deadlocked Tuesday morning, WSFA-TV reported. Judge Bert Rice declared a mistrial. A new trial will be held at a later date.

William Chase Johnson is charged with capital murder for the Nov. 23, 2019, shooting death of Lowndes County Sheriff John Williams.

Williams had gone to a gas station in Hayneville to disperse a crowd. It is not disputed that Johnson shot the sheriff. But defense lawyers maintain that Johnson acted in self-defense and did not know that Williams, who was not in uniform, was the sheriff.

Jurors had the option of returning a verdict on charges of murder or manslaughter.

'Halloween comet' breaks apart after trip near sun

DC WASHINGTON — A recently discovered comet that some stargazers had hoped to see during Halloween week has disintegrated before the day of ghosts and ghouls.

NASA confirmed Tuesday its sun-observing spacecraft captured the moment when the comet Atlas broke into chunks this week as it passed close to the sun.

Astronomers have been tracking the so-called Halloween comet, also known as C/2024 S1, since it was discovered in September by a telescope in Hawaii. As it raced toward the sun, a space observatory operated by NASA and the European Space Agency spied its demise.

The comet is thought to be part of a family of comets that pass incredibly close to the sun.

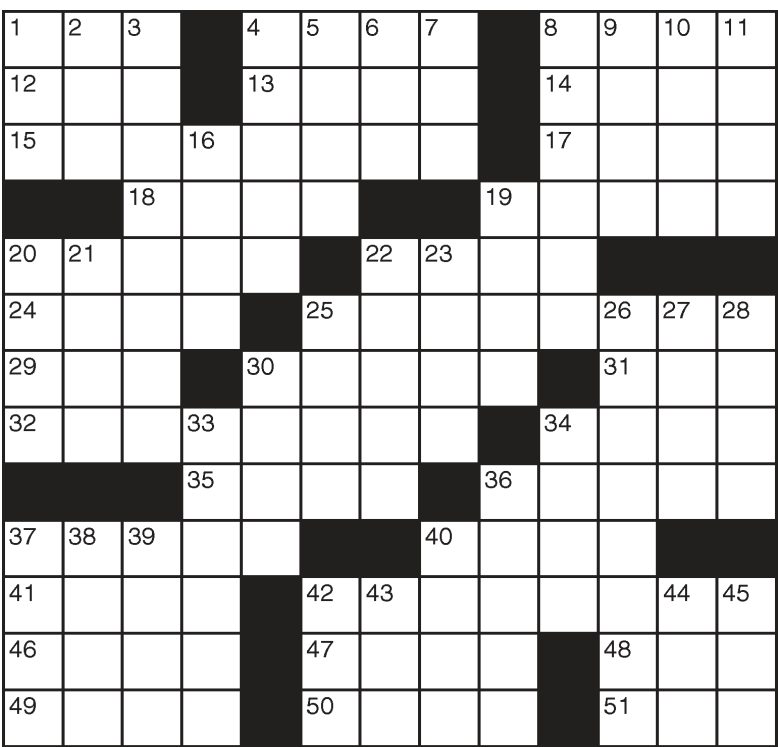
Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

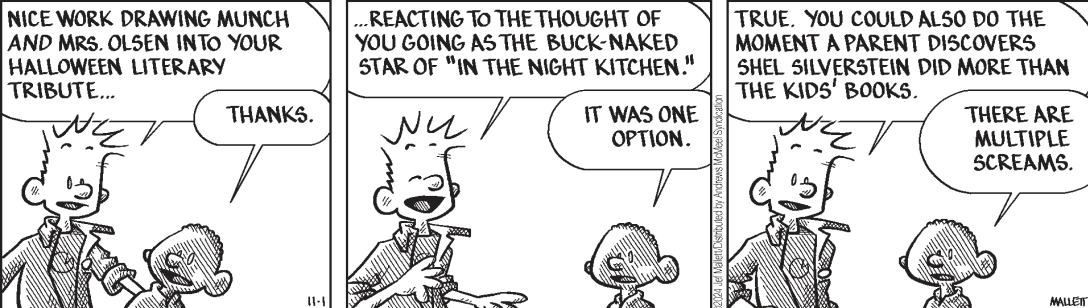


- ACROSS**
- 1 Existed
4 Bitty biter
8 Sprint
12 Crime lab evidence
13 Yuri Zhivago's love
14 Aware of
15 Rescued
17 Singles
18 Broadcasts
19 Dutch exports
20 Travesty
22 Greek salad cheese
24 Theater award
25 Pop's pop
29 Rushmore face
30 Knightley of "Atonement"
31 Wall St. debut
32 Barkeep's cry
34 "Hey!"
35 Throw hard
36 Moist towelettes
37 Bo Peep's charges
40 Twistable treat
41 Swindles
42 Flip-flop
46 Shoppe description
47 Holiday lead-ins
48 "I love," to Livy
49 Art colony in New Mexico
50 Scurry
51 Remiss
- DOWN**
- 1 OED entries
2 Literary collection
3 Job interview topics
4 Blinding light
5 Kvetches
6 "— you there?"
7 Wee bit
8 Gizmo
9 "The King and I" role
10 Flower part
11 "Bonanza" son
16 The "V" of VP
19 Sicilian peak
20 Young horse
21 "Fernando" group
22 Fringe benefit
- 23 James — Jones, voice of Mufasa in "The Lion King"
25 Hiker's equipment
26 Sink fixture
27 Church area
28 Specks
30 Coffee pod
33 School papers
34 Docking spot
36 Take forcibly
37 Highlander
38 Spanish greeting
39 Within (Pref.)
40 Done with
42 Roulette bet
43 Hollywood's Gabor
44 "I — Rock"
45 Bagel topper

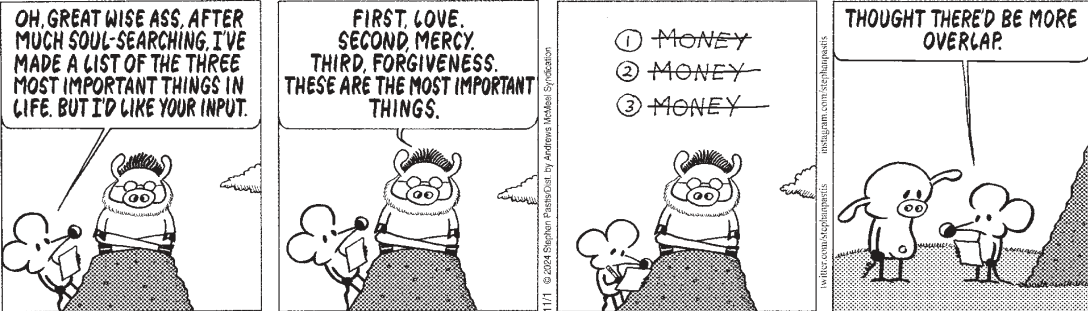
Answer to Previous Puzzle



Frazz



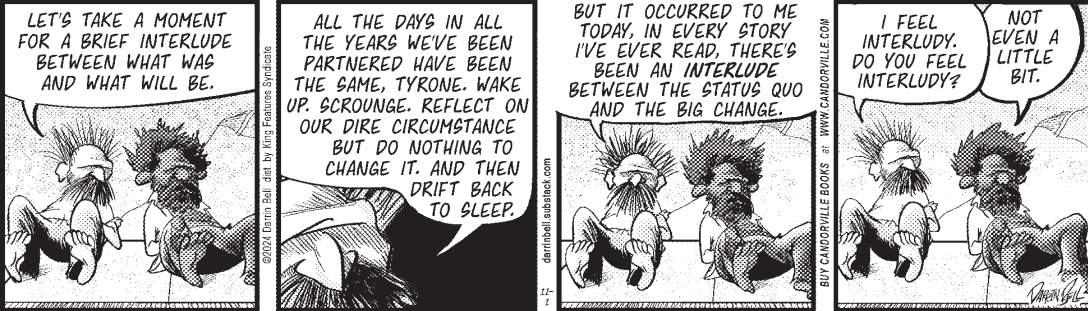
Pearls Before Swine



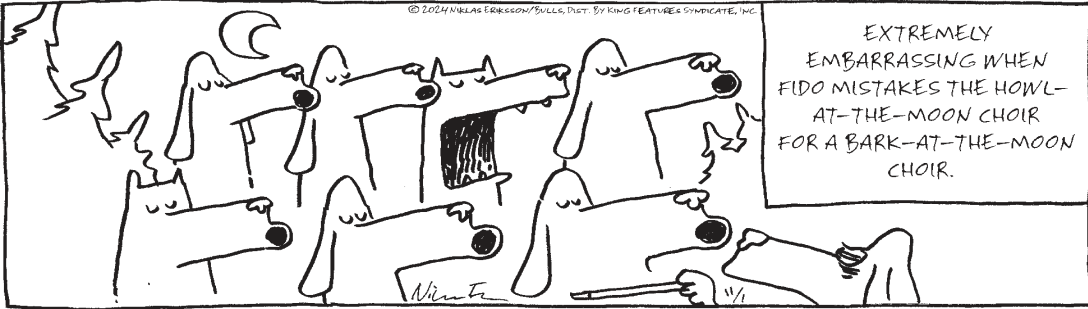
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



11-1 CRYPTOQUIP

BTSD ETS QYDXVSYXSM'J EBGD

RGMVJ BSMS QZMD, BTYE XGX

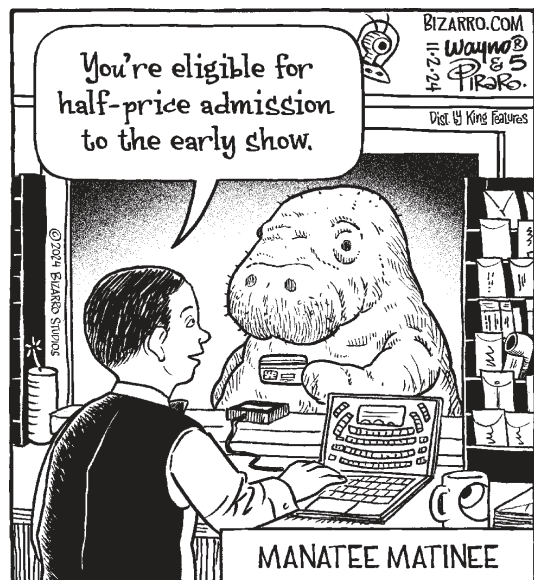
TS DYOS ETso? YDDY ZDS,

YDDY EBZ.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THAT GUY IS GOOD AT CRACKING UP TRICK-OR-TREATERS WITH WORDPLAY. HE'S THE HALLOWEEN PUN-KING.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals W

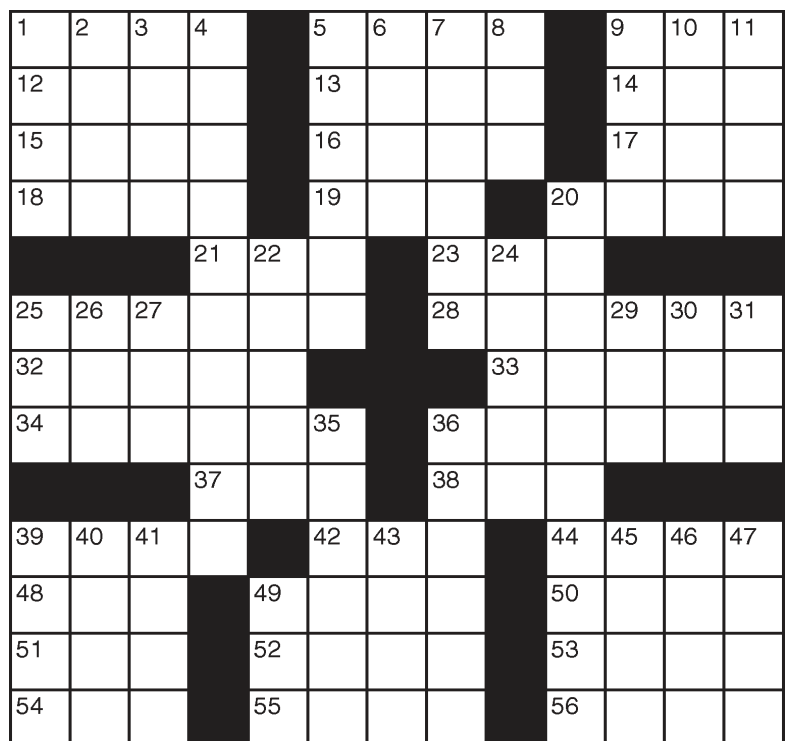
Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

1 Pitch in
5 Chest muscles, briefly
9 Lass
12 Mine, to Henri
13 Needing a massage
14 “Born in the —”
15 Test tube
16 Molt
17 Tatter
18 Designer Gucci
19 Plant seeds
20 Dines
21 FDR project
23 Select, with “for
25 Tiny village
28 Mal de mer
32 Iberian nation
33 Golf great Sam
34 Shoe part
36 Will subject
37 Haw’s partner
38 “Uh-huh”
39 “SNL” segment
42 “Ulalume” writer
44 Currier’s partner
48 Humorist
49 Use a rotary phone
50 Wife of Jacob
51 Shock partner
52 “Laugh-In” comic Johnson
53 Folklore monster

54 Country star McGraw	22 Event location
55 Optimum	24 Old hat
56 Faucets	25 White House monogram
	26 Mil. address
DOWN	27 "Sheesh!"
1 "— Nagila"	29 Salty expanse
2 Pianist Gilels	30 Chow down
3 Laundry unit	31 Citric beverage
4 Gas stove flame	35 Realm
5 Volkswagen model	36 Shoelace hole
6 Canyon comeback	39 Smack a baseball
7 Mull over	40 Fuzzy fruit
8 Pink Floyd's Barrett	41 Thing
9 Mentor	43 Stable diet
10 Now, in a memo	45 Star in Lyra
11 Trails	46 Virgil or Wyatt
20 Air show daredevil	47 "— Gotta Have It"
	49 Bit of eye cream

Answer to Previous Puzzle

W	A	S		G	N	A	T		D	A	S	H	
D	N	A		L	A	R	A		O	N	T	O	
S	A	L	V	A	G	E	D		O	N	E	S	
		A	I	R	S				E	D	A	M	S
F	A	R	C	E		F	E	T	A				
O	B	I	E		G	R	A	N	D	D	A	D	
A	B	E		K	E	I	R	A		I	P	O	
L	A	S	T	C	A	L	L		P	S	S	T	
			H	U	R	L			W	I	P	E	S
S	H	E	E	P				O	R	E	O		
C	O	N	S			R	E	V	E	R	S	A	L
O	L	D	E			E	V	E	S		A	M	O
T	A	O	S			D	A	R	T		L	A	X

11-2

CRYPTOQUIP

Z G M Z S L K R I J M Z R I J M I N G Y D

Y N D M Y L Z R K M A I Y P G Z

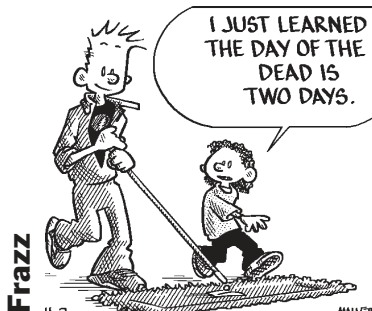
HYPGZ-PIRRL TVHVI. FVS

BYPGZ NMF YZ'N NSA-HYBR.

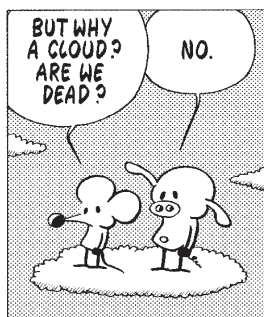
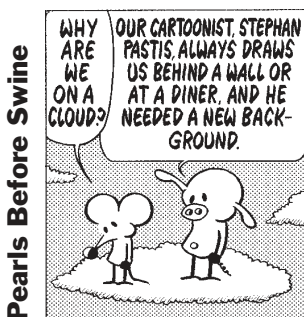
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN THE
BANDLEADER'S TWIN GIRLS WERE BORN, WHAT
DID HE NAME THEM? ANNA ONE. ANNA TWO.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals H

Frazz



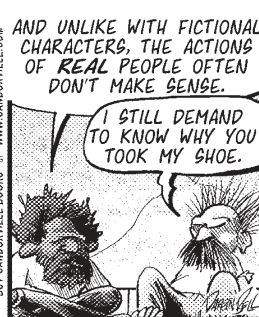
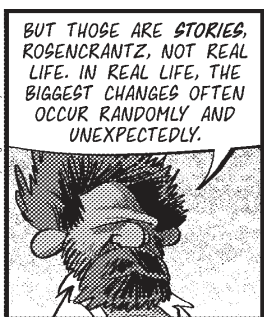
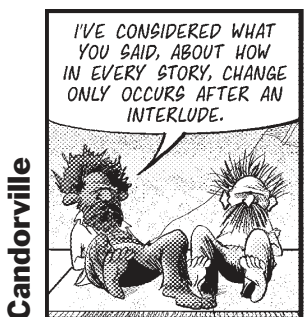
Pearls Before Swine



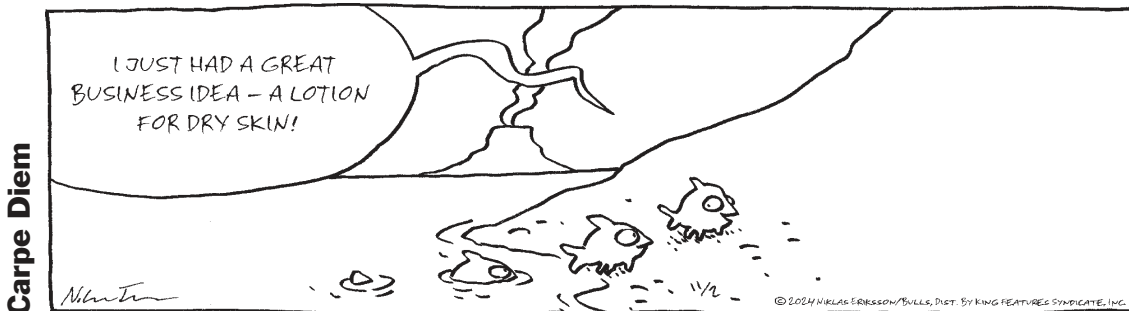
Non Sequitur



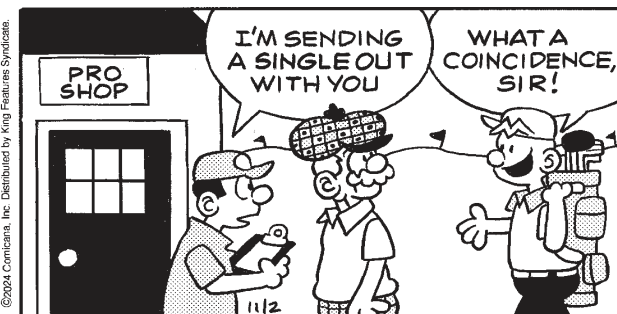
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey





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OPINION

North Korea troop deal exposes Putin’s weakness

BY JAMES STAVRIDIS
 Bloomberg Opinion

Vladimir Putin is suffering grievous manpower losses as a result of his illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. He has lost around 200,000 killed, double that number wounded, and at least 500,000 young men fleeing the Russian Federation to avoid the draft: a butcher’s bill of over a million.

As a result, he is turning to international sources of additional manpower — Chechens, Cubans, and, most recently and dramatically, North Koreans. At least 10,000 North Korean foot soldiers are headed to the battlefields of Ukraine to fight and die in a cause that must be utterly bewildering for them. They will be strangers in a strange land indeed, and you can bet Kim Jong Un is holding their families hostage to prevent desertions. Many North Korean soldiers will die and some will desert despite the consequences, but their military impact will likely be insignificant.

In exchange, Kim will probably receive new advanced technology: better satellites, more precise ballistic missile guidance systems, nuclear weapons advice and more refined cyber tools. This will threaten South Korea — which is objecting vociferously. Of course, the U.S. agrees with that assessment and will condemn both Russia and North Korea. But we should understand that this transaction is clearly an indication of Russian weakness, not strength. Putin has been essentially forced to solicit a bargain with his fellow dictator in the isolated Hermit Kingdom. What does it mean for global geopolitics?

Stepping back from the tactical impact, which will become clear as the winter unfolds, there is a larger strategic point to be made about Russia’s declining place in the international world. As John McCain said a decade ago, “Russia is a gas station masquerading as a

country.” Meaning its economy is a one-trick pony, or perhaps a two-trick pony if you count oil and gas.

Russia is now expending over 30% of gross domestic product on military spending (hardly an investment in a diversified economy); it’s under major sanctions from nations representing over half of the world’s GDP and has around \$300 billion in assets frozen in western banks, which will likely end up reconstructing Ukraine. With a major brain drain as the smart young males and their partners flee the draft, it has a demographic problem of the first order as the population continues to age and decline.

And despite Putin’s apparent iron grip on power, consider this: A hundred years ago, another Russian autocrat thought he had an iron grip on power — control of the diplomatic corps, all branches of the military, the secret service, the elites of the nobility, everything that mattered. That was Nicholas II, the last czar. He and his family were executed in a dirty basement in the Urals. Just a summer ago, Yevgeny Prigozhin, leader of the feared and powerful Wagner Group and former Putin chef, staged a rebellion that led his forces to the outskirts of Moscow before it became clear that the Russian Air Force wouldn’t support him. He was ultimately executed by a “mysterious” explosion of his private jet between Moscow and St. Petersburg. The lesson of his rebellion is clear: While Putin appears to have control, the forces of opposition — on both the liberal and conservative fronts — are always on a slow boil. Such is Russia.

For the West, the real concern, of course, is a nuclear arsenal of roughly 5,600 warheads. During the turbulent period following the fall of the Berlin Wall, there were serious worries about the centrifugal forces pulling apart the Russian Federation — the core of the old Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The best course of action for the West

Read my lips: Don’t make promises you can’t keep

BY GARRETT M. GRAFF
 Special to The Washington Post

Don’t be fooled by the inflatable lawn ornaments — it might look like Halloween, but this is actually an ever-scarier time of year: It’s promise-making season, when candidates are making all sorts of crazy, unkeepable vows about what they’ll do — and won’t do — if elected. Inevitably, though, when the winners settle into their new job, some will realize they’ve made promises they can’t keep.

That’s a dangerous moment for any leader. Once trust is lost in public life, it’s hard to win it back.

There is surely no more infamous broken promise than President George H.W. Bush’s pledge, “Read my lips: No new taxes.” The pledge came in Bush’s 1988 nomination acceptance speech, but it had been long controversial inside Bush’s team.

John Sununu, Bush’s first White House chief of staff, recently told me the pledge was too specific from the start. Even though Bush’s first budget in 1989 upheld the pledge, Democrats controlled Congress and were eager to raise taxes and fees amid the spiraling budget deficits of the late 1980s. In 1990, Bush announced his reversal.

Then, in 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and Bush felt enormous pressure to seal a budget deal as the nation headed to war. Ultimately, Bush and congressional Democrats settled on a plan that raised the top in-

come tax rate to 31%, boosted the gas tax and eliminated some deductions for upper income households. Most Americans saw little change in their tax burdens.

But Bush’s pledge had been unequivocal; the New York Post’s headline was brutal: “Read my Lips... I Lied!” The broken promise helped propel populist Pat Buchanan into the 1992 GOP primary race — a challenge from which Bush never really recovered.

The risks of course correction are hardly limited to politics — when corporate leaders need to own up to poor choices, it pays to do it fast. Both Delta Air Lines and American Airlines reversed course after facing withering criticism for making changes to frequent-flier programs, but how they responded made a huge difference in the damage. Delta began reversing course in about a month; its business weathered the customer backlash well and its stock is up about 35% since the changes were announced last year. American stuck by its decision for months, even as customer protests mounted. The airline cut its earnings projection by hundreds of millions of dollars; its second quarter net income this year fell by nearly half. “We’ve dug ourselves a hole,” chief executive Robert Isom said in May.

Chip Wade found himself in one such hole when he was president of Danny Meyer’s restaurant empire, Union Square Hospitality Group. Meyer had announced that his restaurants would implement a “no tipping” policy in 2015, hoping to balance the wages between

should include remaining deeply mindful of Putin’s nuclear arsenal. It should also include concern about where those weapons end up in a chaotic endgame following a messy regime change in Moscow. That means we need to be doing a deep dive on prospective replacements for the current czar, requiring good signals and human intelligence as close as we can get to the court of Putin. Our ability to track nuclear weapons in the case of Russian chaos is important — something we developed at the end of the Cold War but has atrophied now.

It also means strengthening the NATO alliance, which collectively remains the best bulwark to further Russian decline and chaos. Ensuring that Ukraine has a path to full NATO membership, probably with a “halfway house” of strong security guarantees, is important in the face of potential Russian collapse. All of this, of course, will be dependent on the next occupant of the White House. If Team Trump takes power, their well-known skepticism over NATO and affinity for Putin will make this more difficult.

All of this is deeply unsettling and full of bad choices. Is it better to see Russia collapse and Putin be overthrown, but with a chaotic landscape and loose nukes? Or to see Putin remain in control to continue to threaten Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Estonia and other European countries? No good answers, but it clearly makes sense to prepare for the full spectrum of outcomes, especially as we watch Russia flail in Ukraine and recruit North Koreans for their fight. Not a good sign of a stable regime, to say the least. We should be prepared for a wide range of endgames, including a rapid collapse of a rotten regime in Moscow.

James Stavridis is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist, a retired U.S. Navy admiral, former supreme allied commander of NATO, and dean emeritus of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

the kitchen staff and the waitstaff. Meyer started a program that raised prices on menus but aimed to keep the overall cost of a meal the same. It was a groundbreaking move, but by the time Wade came aboard in 2019, it wasn’t working for the staff or for the customers.

Wade saw that some of the Meyer chain’s most experienced servers had left after no-tipping began, and that guests still balked at menu prices that appeared to be 20% higher than similar restaurants that still ran on tips.

In 2020, Union Square didn’t so much as pull a U-turn as it made an adjustment. To Wade, the original pledge was about fairly compensating the employees who contributed to a restaurant’s success. So, when it ended the “no tipping” plan, the company started a revenue sharing program based on such factors as how many hours someone worked, that paid out weekly and helped ensure kitchen staffs didn’t feel left behind. Four years in, Wade says, “that revenue sharing program is working extremely well.”

Looking back at Bush’s impossible 1988 vow, Sununu, 85, offered this advice: When leaders make a promise or a pledge, it’s best to be specific — and still leave some room for maneuvering. That way, the ambiguity is clear — and no one has to read, much less interpret, anyone’s lips.

Garrett M. Graff, a Post contributing columnist writing about leadership, is a journalist, historian and author of nine books, including “Watergate: A New History.”

SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Wednesday's scores	
SOUTH	
Jacksonville St. 31, Liberty 21	
W. Kentucky 31, Kennesaw St. 14	
Schedule	
Friday's games	
EAST	
Yale (4-2) at Columbia (4-2)	
Georgia St. (2-5) at Uconn (5-3)	
SOUTH	
South Florida (3-4) at FAU (2-5)	
FAR WEST	
San Diego St. (3-4) at Boise St. (6-1)	
Saturday's games	
EAST	
Mercyhurst (2-6) at Duquesne (5-2)	
Wagner (4-5) at CCSU (3-5)	
Merrimack (4-4) at Robert Morris (5-3)	
Ohio St. (6-1) at Penn St. (7-0)	
Virginia Tech (5-3) at Syracuse (5-2)	
Air Force (1-6) at Army (7-0)	
Penn (2-4) at Brown (3-3)	
Lehigh (4-3) at Georgetown (5-3)	
Delaware St. (1-7) at Howard (3-5)	
Monmouth (NJ) (4-4) at Rhode Island (7-1)	
Norfolk St. (3-6) at Morgan St. (3-5)	
Lafayette (4-4) at Bucknell (3-5)	
Stonehill (1-6) at St. Francis (Pa.) (2-6)	
New Hampshire (4-4) at Albany (NY) (3-5)	
Stony Brook (6-2) at Bryant (2-6)	
Cornell (2-4) at Princeton (2-4)	
Colgate (2-6) at Fordham (0-8)	
Harvard (5-1) at Dartmouth (6-0)	
Louisiana-Monroe (5-2) at Marshall (4-3)	
SOUTH	
Stanford (2-6) at NC State (4-4)	
Duke (6-2) at Miami (8-0)	
Vanderbilt (5-3) at Auburn (3-5)	
Villanova (6-2) at Hampton (5-3)	
Dayton (5-2) at Presbyterian (3-6)	
St. Thomas (Minn.) (5-3) at Morehead St. (5-3)	
William & Mary (5-3) at NC A&T (1-7)	
Furman (2-5) at VMI (0-8)	
Lincoln University (CA) (0-1) at West Georgia (2-6)	
Campbell (3-5) at Elon (2-6)	
Towson (4-4) at Richmond (6-2)	
Gardner-Webb (2-6) at Charleston Southern (1-7)	
Tulsa (3-5) at UAB (1-6)	
Old Dominion (4-4) at Appalachian St. (3-4)	
Lindenwood (Mo.) (4-5) at Tennessee Tech (3-5)	
Chattanooga (5-3) at W. Carolina (4-4)	
Wofford (3-5) at Samford (3-4)	
Southern U. (4-4) at Alabama A&M (3-4)	
ETSU (5-3) at Mercer (7-1)	
Prairie View (3-5) at MVSU (0-8)	
Grambling St. (4-4) at Bethune-Cookman (1-7)	
Ark.-Pine Bluff (3-5) at Jackson St. (6-2)	
Georgia (6-1) vs. Florida (4-3) at Jacksonville, Fla.	
North Carolina (4-4) at Florida St. (1-7)	
Arizona (3-5) at UCF (3-5)	
Stephen F. Austin (5-3) at Nicholls (4-4)	
Coastal Carolina (4-3) at Troy (1-7)	
Texas Southern (3-4) at Alabama A&M (4-3)	
Umass (2-6) at Mississippi St. (1-7)	
Austin Peay (3-5) at North Alabama (3-6)	
Alabama St. (4-3) vs. Alcorn St. (4-4) at Mobile, Ala.	
UT Martin (5-3) at Tennessee St. (6-2)	
Louisville (5-3) at Clemson (6-1)	
Texas A&M (7-1) at South Carolina (4-3)	
Georgia Southern (5-3) at South Alabama (4-4)	
Kentucky (3-5) at Tennessee (6-1)	
Texas A&M Commerce (1-7) at McNeese St. (4-5)	
MIDWEST	
Toledo (5-3) at E. Michigan (5-3)	
Northwestern (3-5) at Purdue (1-6)	
Buffalo (4-4) at Akron (2-6)	
Minnesota (5-3) at Illinois (6-2)	
Stetson (2-5) at Butler (6-2)	
North Dakota (5-3) at Indiana St. (3-5)	
Marist (0-8) at Drake (5-1)	
Murray St. (1-7) at S. Dakota St. (6-2)	
W. Illinois (3-5) at E. Illinois (1-7)	
S. Illinois (2-6) at Missouri St. (6-2)	
Youngstown St. (3-6) at Illinois St. (5-3)	
Texas Tech (5-3) at Iowa St. (7-0)	
N. Iowa (2-6) at N. Dakota St. (8-1)	
Oregon (8-0) at Michigan (5-3)	
UCLA (2-5) at Nebraska (5-3)	
Indiana (8-0) at Michigan St. (4-4)	
Wisconsin (5-3) at Iowa (5-3)	
SOUTHWEST	
Memphis (7-1) at UTSA (3-5)	
Mississippi (6-2) at Arkansas (5-3)	
Maine (4-4) at Oklahoma (4-4)	
Houston Christian (3-5) at Incarnate Word (6-2)	
Middle Tennessee (2-6) at UTEP (1-7)	
Kansas St. (7-1) at Houston (3-5)	
S. Utah (4-4) at Abilene Christian (5-3)	
SE Louisiana (4-5) at Lamar (5-3)	
Navy (6-1) at Rice (2-6)	
Arizona St. (5-2) at Oklahoma St. (3-5)	
E. Kentucky (4-4) at Tarleton St. (7-1)	
Pittsburgh (7-0) at SMU (7-1)	
TCU (5-3) at Baylor (4-4)	
FAR WEST	
Weber St. (3-5) at N. Arizona (4-4)	
Montana St. (8-0) at E. Washington (2-6)	
Davidson (5-3) at San Diego (4-3)	
Wyoming (1-7) at New Mexico (3-5)	
N. Colorado (1-7) at UC Davis (7-1)	
Cent. Arkansas (6-2) at Utah Tech (0-9)	
Montana (6-2) at Cal Poly (2-5)	
Hawaii (3-5) at Fresno St. (5-3)	
Southern Cal (4-4) at Washington (4-4)	
Colorado St. (5-3) at Nevada (3-6)	
Portland St. (1-6) at Sacramento St. (3-5)	

PRO BASKETBALL

NBA	
EASTERN CONFERENCE	
Atlantic Division	
W	L Pct GB
Boston	4 1 .800 —
New York	2 2 .500 1½
Brooklyn	2 3 .400 2
Philadelphia	1 3 .250 2½
Toronto	1 4 .200 3
Southeast Division	
W	L Pct GB
Orlando	3 2 .600 —
Miami	2 2 .500 ½
Charlotte	2 2 .500 ½
Washington	2 2 .500 1½
Atlanta	2 3 .400 1
Central Division	
W	L Pct GB
Cleveland	5 01.000 —
Chicago	3 2 .600 2
Indiana	2 3 .400 3
Milwaukee	1 3 .250 3½
Detroit	1 4 .200 4
WESTERN CONFERENCE	
Southwest Division	
W	L Pct GB
Dallas	3 1 .750 —
Houston	2 2 .500 1
Memphis	2 3 .400 1½
New Orleans	2 3 .400 1½
San Antonio	1 3 .250 2
Northwest Division	
W	L Pct GB
Oklahoma City	4 01.000 —
Denver	2 2 .500 2
Minnesota	2 2 .500 2
Portland	2 3 .400 2½
Utah	0 4 .000 4
Pacific Division	
W	L Pct GB
Golden State	4 1 .800 —
Phoenix	3 1 .750 ½
L.A. Lakers	3 2 .600 1
L.A. Clippers	2 2 .500 1½
Sacramento	2 2 .500 1½
Tuesday's games	
Dallas 120, Minnesota 114	
Denver 144, Brooklyn 139, OT	
Sacramento 113, Utah 96	
Golden State 124, New Orleans 106	
Wednesday's games	
Cleveland 134, L.A. Lakers 110	
Detroit 105, Philadelphia 95	
Charlotte 138, Toronto 133	
Washington 133, Atlanta 120	
Indiana 135, Boston 132, OT	
New York 116, Miami 107	
Chicago 102, Orlando 99	
Brooklyn 119, Memphis 106	
Oklahoma City 105, San Antonio 93	
Golden State 104, New Orleans 89	
Portland 106, L.A. Clippers 105	
Thursday's games	
Milwaukee at Memphis	
Houston at Dallas	
San Antonio at Utah	
Phoenix at L.A. Clippers	
Friday's games	
Boston at Charlotte	
New York at Detroit	
Orlando at Cleveland	
Chicago at Brooklyn	
L.A. Lakers at Toronto	
Sacramento at Atlanta	
Indiana at New Orleans	
Denver at Minnesota	
Oklahoma City at Portland	
Saturday's games	
Boston at Charlotte	
Memphis at Philadelphia	
Sacramento at Toronto	
Cleveland at Milwaukee	
Golden State at Houston	
Minnesota at San Antonio	
Washington vs Miami	
Portland at Phoenix	
Utah at Denver	
Oklahoma City at L.A. Clippers	
Sunday's games	
Detroit at Brooklyn	
Atlanta at New Orleans	
Orlando at Dallas	

Toto Japan Classic	
LPGA Tour	
Thursday	
At Seta Golf Club	
Otsu, Japan	
Purse: \$2 million	
Yardage: 6,616; Par: 72	
First Round	
Hana Wakimoto	30-33—63 -9
Jin Young Ko	34-31—65 -7
Ayaka Furue	33-33—66 -6

PRO HOCKEY

NHL	
EASTERN CONFERENCE	
Atlantic Division	
GP W L OT Pts GF GA	
Florida	11 7 3 1 15 38 35
Tampa Bay	10 7 3 0 14 39 28
Toronto	10 5 4 1 11 32 32
Ottawa	9 5 4 0 10 38 31
Buffalo	10 4 5 1 9 32 36
Detroit	10 4 5 1 9 27 34
Montreal	10 4 5 1 9 29 41
Boston	10 4 5 1 9 27 34
Metropolitan Division	
GP W L OT Pts GF GA	
New Jersey	13 7 4 2 16 50 39
N.Y. Rangers	9 6 2 1 13 37 21
Washington	8 6 2 0 12 31 24
Carolina	8 6 2 0 12 27 19
Columbus	9 5 3 1 11 35 25
N.Y. Islanders	10 3 5 2 8 22 29
Philadelphia	10 3 6 1 7 29 40
Pittsburgh	11 3 7 1 7 33 48
WESTERN CONFERENCE	
Central Division	
GP W L OT Pts GF GA	
Winnipeg	10 9 1 0 18 46 24
Dallas	9 7 2 0 14 29 17
Minnesota	9 6 1 2 14 34 24
Utah	11 5 4 2 12 34 38
St. Louis	10 5 5 0 10 27 34
Colorado	11 5 6 0 10 38 46
Nashville	9 3 5 1 7 23 31
Chicago	10 3 6 1 7 27 33
Pacific Division	
GP W L OT Pts GF GA	
Vegas	11 7 3 1 15 50 34
Los Angeles	11 6 3 2 14 36 36
Vancouver	9 4 2 3 11 27 31
Seattle	10 5 4 1 11 36 30
Calgary	10 5 4 1 11 30 34
Anaheim	9 4 4 1 9 21 25
Edmonton	10 4 5 1 9 22 35
San Jose	11 2 7 2 6 27 45
Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.	
Tuesday's games	
Anaheim 3, N.Y. Islanders 1	
Minnesota 5, Pittsburgh 3	
Philadelphia 2, Boston 0	
Seattle 8, Montreal 2	
Ottawa 8, St. Louis 1	
Washington 5, N.Y. Rangers 3	
San Jose 4, Los Angeles 2	
Wednesday's games	
Columbus 2, N.Y. Islanders 0	
Winnipeg 6, Detroit 2	
Tampa Bay 5, Colorado 2	
Utah 5, Calgary 1	
Los Angeles 6, Vegas 3	
New Jersey 6, Vancouver 0	
Thursday's games	
Anaheim at Pittsburgh	
Boston at Carolina	
Montreal at Washington	
Seattle at Toronto	
St. Louis at Philadelphia	
Edmonton at Nashville	
Chicago at San Jose	
Friday's games	
Florida vs. Dallas atTampere, Finland	
N.Y. Islanders at Buffalo	
Ottawa at N.Y. Rangers	
Winnipeg at Columbus	
Tampa Bay at Minnesota	
New Jersey at Calgary	
Saturday's games	
Dallas vs. Florida at Tampere, Finland	
Boston at Philadelphia	
Chicago at Los Angeles	
Columbus at Washington	
Buffalo at Detroit	
Montreal at Pittsburgh	
Seattle at Ottawa	
Toronto at St. Louis	
Colorado at Nashville	
Utah at Vegas	
Vancouver at San Jose	
Sunday's games	
N.Y. Islanders at N.Y. Rangers	
Tampa Bay at Winnipeg	
Seattle at Boston	
Washington at Carolina	
Toronto at Minnesota	
Edmonton at Calgary	
Chicago at Anaheim	

GOLF	
Linn Grant	34-32—66 -6
Hyo Joo Kim	31-35—66 -6
Jenny Shin	31-35—66 -6
Ariya Jutanugarn	33-34—67 -5
Minjee Lee	34-33—67 -5
Hae-Ran Ryu	33-34—67 -5
Marina Alex	33-35—68 -4
Erika Hara	35-33—68 -4
Chisato Iwai	34-34—68 -4
Ayako Kimura	34-34—68 -4
Yealimi Noh	34-34—68 -4

PRO SOCCER

MLS playoffs

First Round

Best-of-three
x-if necessary

Eastern Conference

Cincinnati 1 New York City 0

Cincinnati 1, New York City 0

Saturday: at New York City

x-Sunday, Nov. 9: at Cincinnati

Orlando 1, Charlotte FC 0

Orlando 2, Charlotte FC 0

Friday: at Charlotte FC

x-Saturday, Nov. 9: at Orlando

New York 1, Columbus 0

New York 1, Columbus 0

Sunday: at New York

x-Sunday, Nov. 10: at Columbus

Miami 1, Atlanta 0

Miami 2, Atlanta 1

Saturday: at Atlanta

x-Saturday, Nov. 9: at Miami

Western Conference

Seattle 1, Houston 0

Houston 0, Seattle 0, Seattle wins 5-4 on penalty kicks

Sunday: at Houston

x-Sunday, Nov. 10: at Seattle

Los Angeles FC 1, Vancouver 0

Los Angeles FC 2, Vancouver 1

Sunday: at Vancouver

x-Friday, Nov. 8: at Los Angeles FC

Minnesota 1, Real Salt Lake 0

Minnesota 0, Real Salt Lake 0, Minnesota wins 5-4 on penalty kicks

Saturday: at Minnesota

x-Friday, Nov. 8: at Real Salt Lake

LA Galaxy 1, Colorado 0

LA Galaxy 5, Colorado 0

Friday: at Colorado

x-Saturday, Nov. 9: at LA Galaxy

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Orlando	17	2	6	57	43	18
Washington	17	6	2	53	50	28
Gotham FC	16	4	5	53	37	19
Kansas City	15	3	7	52	54	30
North Carolina	12	10	3	39	34	27
Chicago	10	13	2	32	30	35
Portland	9	12	4	31	34	35
Bay FC	10	14	1	31	28	39
Louisville	7	11	7	28	32	36
Utah Royals FC	7	14	4	25	21	36
Angel City	7	12	6	24	29	39
Seattle	6	14	5	23	25	41
San Diego	5	13	7	22	21	34
Houston	5	15	5	20	18	39

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday's games

Gotham FC at Utah Royals FC

Angel City at Portland

Saturday's games

Seattle at Orlando

Washington at North Carolina

Bay FC at Houston

Sunday's games

Kansas City at Chicago

Louisville at San Diego

End of regular season

D

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Top transfers ready to go at new schools

BY STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

After Dusty May left Florida Atlantic to take over Michigan's program, plenty of the top remaining players from the Owls' 2023 Final Four team departed as well.

But they didn't all follow their former coach to Ann Arbor. They scattered to various programs.

Florida Atlantic's top four scorers from last season — all of whom had vital roles during the Owls' Final Four run a year earlier — are now playing elsewhere. They're among the most notable of the hundreds of transfers on college basketball rosters across the country.

In the era of the transfer portal, Florida Atlantic's ability to keep the nucleus of its Final Four team together for one more year was remarkable. The team's eventual breakup after its 2024 NCAA Tournament first-round overtime loss to Northwestern seemed inevitable.

May's first Michigan team will include Vladislav Goldin, a 7-foot-1 center who made 106 starts at Florida Atlantic and posted double-figure scoring averages each of the last two seasons. After playing in the NCAA Tournament the last two years at FAU, Goldin believes he's capable of getting back there at Michigan.

"This team is probably the most talented I have ever played on, so many talented guys," Goldin told reporters this offseason. "It's insane talent. I've never seen it before."

Some of Goldin's other Florida Atlantic teammates opted to go on their own.

Johnell Davis, who led Florida Atlantic in scoring each of the last two seasons, will be playing for John Calipari at No. 16 Arkansas.

"He's a Hall of Fame coach and he wins everywhere he goes," Davis told reporters. "I'm excited to play for him."

Nick Boyd transferred to San Diego State, the team that ended Florida Atlantic's 2023 Cinderella national title hopes with a Lamont Butler buzzer beater in the NCAA semifinals. Alijah Martin, who scored 26 points in that Final Four

loss to San Diego State, transferred to Florida.

Here's a look at some of the other most notable transfers in college basketball this season. Their former schools are in parentheses:

Oumar Ballou, C, Indiana (Arizona): The 7-footer arrives at No. 17 Indiana after playing four seasons at Arizona. Ballou earned first-team all-Pac-12 honors each of the last two seasons. He averaged 12.9 points and 10.1 rebounds last season after collecting 14.2 points and 8.6 rebounds per game in 2022-23. Ballou has averaged 1.3 blocks per game each of the last two seasons.

Tucker DeVries, G/F, West Virginia (Drake): When West Virginia hired coach Darian DeVries away from Drake, his son followed him to Morgantown. DeVries, who is 6-foot-7, was named the Larry Bird Missouri Valley Conference player of the year and was the league tournament's most outstanding player each of the last two seasons. He ranked 10th in Division I in scoring (21.6) last season and was the only Division I player to average at least 20 points, 6 rebounds, 3 assists and 1.5 steals per game.

Coleman Hawkins, F, Kansas State (Illinois): Hawkins was an Associated Press all-Big Ten second-team selection last season in his fourth year at Illinois. He averaged 12.1 points, 6.1 rebounds, 2.7 assists, 1.5 steals and 1.1 blocks. Big 12 coaches have selected him as the league's preseason co-newcomer of the year.

Great Osobor, F, Washington (Utah State): Osobor comes to Washington after playing two seasons at Montana State and one at Utah State. He earned an honorable mention on the AP All-America team last season and was named the Mountain West Conference's player of the year and newcomer of the year. The 6-8 forward collected 17.7 points per game and 9 rebounds per game while shooting 57.7% from the floor at Utah State.

Kadary Richmond, G, St. John's (Seton Hall): After earning first-team all-Big East honors from the league's coaches and second-team honors from the AP while playing for Seton Hall last year, Richmond stayed in the conference but switched schools. The 6-6 guard played one season at Syracuse before spending three seasons at Seton Hall. Richmond had 15.7 points, 7 rebounds, 5.1 assists and 2.2 steals per game last season.



SAM CRAFT/AP

New Arkansas head coach John Calipari will start the season with a roster almost completely assembled from scratch, with only one Razorbacks player remaining from last season.

NIL money, portal have led to plenty of roster chaos

BY DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — KJ Adams Jr. was sitting in a corner of Hadl Auditorium, just down the hallway from Allen Fieldhouse, the historic home of the top-ranked Kansas basketball team, and the place the senior forward has called home for the past four years.

He is a rarity these days, when players are allowed to transfer freely, often in the pursuit of lucrative name, image and likeness contracts that could make a handful of them instant millionaires. Adams joined the Jayhawks out of high school, played important minutes on a national championship team as a freshman and has never wavered in his commitment to the program.

"I think it would be cool if more guys stayed four years," Adams says, glancing around the room at eight newcomers — including six transfers — that form the backbone of this year's team. "You miss all the guys that have come and gone."

Even at Kansas, a destination school for so many, Adams has played with 32 scholarship teammates during his career.

Yet such roster change is a fact of life in major college basketball, perhaps more than in football or any other sport. Entire teams can change almost overnight, and players that started for them one season can be starting against them the next.

To wit: There were roughly 700 players who elected to transfer from Division I programs five years ago. That number nearly tripled this past

offseason, a gargantuan number made even larger by upperclassmen who were granted an extra year of eligibility because their careers collided with the pandemic.

There might have been no better example than Arkansas, where John Calipari is taking over after 15 years with Kentucky.

The Hall of Fame coach arrived in Fayetteville in April to find that 13 players had transferred, graduated or quit in the days after Eric Musselman left for Southern California. Calipari was fortunate that Trevon Brazile ultimately withdrew from the NBA Draft and returned to the Razorbacks, otherwise he would have been starting entirely from scratch.

"I met with the team," Calipari said upon his hiring, "and there is no team."

There is now, of course. Calipari simply did what every coach has been forced to do: He mined the transfer portal. Three of his new players were relatively easy sells, given they came along from Kentucky, and three more transfers — including coveted guard Johnell Davis from FAU and forward Jonas Aidoo from Tennessee — eventually joined the Razorbacks.

That new-look team, incidentally, beat the top-ranked Jayhawks in a charity exhibition game last Friday night.

"It is easier to build a roster. It is infinitely harder to build a program," Colorado coach Tad Boyle said, perhaps most succinctly summing up the thoughts of college basketball coaches everywhere, from the pow-

er conferences to the low-majors.

It's also really stressful, and for some coaches, not what they signed up for. That was the case for Virginia coach Tony Bennett, who decided two weeks before the start of the season to retire, explaining he was better suited for the old days when he would build a program around freshmen who might stay their entire careers.

Remember those relationships that coaches began with high school kids and their families, carefully nurtured over several years of recruiting? They've taken a backseat to the portal, and what Iowa State women's coach Bill Fennelly called "speed-dating."

"I mean, you've got to get moving," he said. "They go in the portal and you better get ready, get organized and have a plan."

Some schools, such as Cincinnati and Iowa State, returned most of their players from last season, and they used the transfer portal to merely supplement that core. But whereas in the past they represented the majority, they now are the minority, and it has created a college basketball season full of teams that look nothing like they did a year ago.

With so few rules in place, it might be that way next year — and the year after that, too.

"Really everyone is trying to do things year-to-year," said Baylor coach Scott Drew, who had three players transfer out and four in since last season. "I don't think anyone has a long-term plan until someone knows what the long-term rules will be."



REBECCA BLACKWELL/AP

After Michigan head coach Dusty May left Florida Atlantic, Johnell Davis and Nick Boyd were among the top Owls players to also depart.

Scoreboard

American Conference							
East							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Buffalo	6	2	0	.750	230	146	
Miami	2	5	0	.286	97	157	
N.Y. Jets	2	6	0	.250	150	170	
New England	2	6	0	.250	124	197	
South							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Houston	6	2	0	.750	188	179	
Indianapolis	4	4	0	.500	175	172	
Jacksonville	2	6	0	.250	172	224	
Tennessee	1	6	0	.143	120	196	
North							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Pittsburgh	6	2	0	.750	187	119	
Baltimore	5	3	0	.625	242	209	
Cincinnati	3	5	0	.375	195	203	
Cleveland	2	6	0	.250	138	186	
West							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Kansas City	7	0	0	1.000	173	123	
Denver	5	3	0	.625	173	120	
L.A. Chargers	4	3	0	.571	132	91	
Las Vegas	2	6	0	.250	144	210	
National Conference							
East							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Washington	6	2	0	.750	236	167	
Philadelphia	5	2	0	.714	171	132	
Dallas	3	4	0	.429	150	198	
N.Y. Giants	2	6	0	.250	117	175	
South							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Atlanta	5	3	0	.625	194	193	
Tampa Bay	4	4	0	.500	235	213	
New Orleans	2	6	0	.250	185	206	
Carolina	1	7	0	.125	124	271	
North							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Detroit	6	1	0	.857	234	134	
Green Bay	6	2	0	.750	216	170	
Minnesota	5	2	0	.714	188	137	
Chicago	4	3	0	.571	163	119	
West							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Arizona	4	4	0	.500	178	205	
San Francisco	4	4	0	.500	210	182	
Seattle	4	4	0	.500	190	195	
L.A. Rams	3	4	0	.429	144	174	

Thursday, Oct. 24	
L.A. Rams	30, Minnesota 20
Sunday, Oct. 27	
Arizona 28, Miami 27	
Atlanta 31, Tampa Bay 26	
Cleveland 29, Baltimore 24	
Detroit 52, Tennessee 14	
Green Bay 30, Jacksonville 27	
Houston 23, Indianapolis 20	
New England 25, N.Y. Jets 22	
Philadelphia 37, Cincinnati 17	
Buffalo 31, Seattle 10	
L.A. Chargers 26, New Orleans 8	
Denver 28, Carolina 14	
Kansas City 27, Las Vegas 20	
Washington 18, Chicago 15	
San Francisco 30, Dallas 24	
Monday, Oct. 28	
Pittsburgh 26, N.Y. Giants 18	
Thursday's game	
Houston at N.Y. Jets	
Sunday's games	
Dallas at Atlanta	
Denver at Baltimore	
L.A. Chargers at Cleveland	
Las Vegas at Cincinnati	
Miami at Buffalo	
New England at Tennessee	
New Orleans at Carolina	
Washington at N.Y. Giants	
Chicago at Arizona	
Jacksonville at Philadelphia	
Detroit at Green Bay	
L.A. Rams at Seattle	
Indianapolis at Minnesota	
Open: Pittsburgh, San Francisco	
Monday's game	
Tampa Bay at Kansas City	
Thursday, Nov. 7	
Cincinnati at Baltimore	
Sunday, Nov. 10	
N.Y. Giants at Carolina	
New England at Chicago	
Buffalo at Indianapolis	
Minnesota at Jacksonville	
Denver at Kansas City	
Atlanta at New Orleans	
San Francisco at Tampa Bay	
Pittsburgh at Washington	
Tennessee at L.A. Chargers	
N.Y. Jets at Arizona	
Philadelphia at Dallas	
Detroit at Houston	
Open: Cleveland, Green Bay, Las Vegas, Seattle	

Rams prepare for ex-teammate Jones

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES—Less than two weeks before the regular season began, the Los Angeles Rams abruptly traded linebacker Ernest Jones, their leading tackler and defensive signal-caller, to Tennessee for a minor late-round draft pick upgrade in 2026.

Coach Sean McVay curiously called the trade a “football decision” when it happened. Two months later, with the Rams still lacking a linebacker of Jones’ caliber, McVay is a bit more frank about the surprising deal and how it affected his team.

“I think all the decisions that we make in the moment, we feel like are in the best interest,” McVay said Wednesday. “I’m not going to pretend to act like every decision is accurate, and you try to be able to learn from it and apply it moving forward. But you know that you’re playing against a really well-respected player. Mentally, physically tough. Seems like he’s always around the football. So I wish him well. It’s going to be a great challenge going against him.”

Jones meets up with the Rams (3-4) this weekend in Seattle, where he has landed after another trade. The struggling Titans got a much better return for Jones than Los Angeles did when it moved one of its key defensive players after the sides failed to agree to an extension, rather than allowing him to play out the final year of his rookie contract.

A third-round pick who contributed immediately as a rookie in 2021, Jones studied one year under



JOHN FROSCHAUER/AP

LB Ernest Jones IV, traded by the Rams before the season, meets his former team this week in Seattle, where he landed after another trade.

Bobby Wagner in 2022 and quickly became one of the top volume tacklers in the NFL while usually holding his own in pass coverage. Jones made 145 tackles last season, leading the Rams by far and ranking 11th in the NFL.

The Rams’ decision to part ways was surprising for several reasons, but it particularly stood out because they had no obvious, comparable replacement for Jones, a member of their Super Bowl championship team.

Jones’ responsibilities have been filled by Troy Reeder and Christian Rozeboom, who both

played their way off the practice squad and into every-down defensive roles over the past half-decade. While both are dependable, neither has Jones’ abilities — and savvy offensive coordinators and quarterbacks have appeared to have success this season in targeting the duo.

McVay has backed Reeder, who replaced Jones as the defensive signal-caller before going on injured reserve earlier this month, but the coach basically acknowledged Jones is at a different level.

“I’ve been pleased with some of the things that guys have done,”



**Los Angeles Rams (3-4)
at Seattle Seahawks (4-4)**
AFN-Atlantic
10 p.m. Sunday CET
6 a.m. Monday JKT

McVay said of Jones’ replacements. “It’d be hard to deny the production that (Jones) has had, when you look at what he’s done at Tennessee and even just in his first week there last week (with Seattle). He’s a great player, and he did a lot of good things for us.”

Jones made a whopping 15 tackles while playing every snap for the Seahawks in his debut last week. He’ll have big responsibilities again when Seattle (4-4) faces the Rams in a key NFC West matchup.

Jones became a leader in his three years on the Rams’ defense, and former coordinator Raheem Morris relied on him to keep his defense lined up and organized on the field. He also appeared to be popular in the locker room.

“I know who he is as a player,” Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford said. “Physically, really talented. Mentally and emotionally, really gifted. Loved being a teammate with him. Have a ton of respect for who he is as a person and as a player. I don’t think there’s any disadvantage or advantage. I just know it’s a challenge going against him.”

Bills’ Miller looks ahead, mum on suspension

By JOHN WAWROW
Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — The last thing Von Miller wanted to discuss upon returning to practice on Wednesday was the reason behind his absence — a four-game NFL suspension for violating the league’s personal conduct policy.

Except to say he carried no grudge against the NFL, Miller declined to say whether he was surprised by the discipline or considered appealing it.

“I’m in a great spot. I’m just happy all of that stuff is behind me,” said Miller, who joined the

AFC East-leading Bills for their preparations for Sunday’s matchup with the Dolphins. “I really don’t even have to touch on any of that stuff any more.”

Miller was referring to what happened 11 months ago when he turned himself in to police in suburban Dallas after being accused of assaulting his pregnant girlfriend, who is also the mother of two of his children.

Miller previously disputed the allegations by calling them false and blown out of proportion. With no charges filed, Miller opened training camp in July by saying he considered the case

closed based on feedback from his attorneys.

The lack of charges didn’t prevent the NFL from disciplining Miller based on its own investigation. A person with direct knowledge of the decision told The Associated Press the suspension was directly connected to the complaint made against the player.

The 35-year-old is eager to pick up where he left off in building on the self-confidence he generated with three sacks in four games to increase his NFL active-leading total to 126½. The production was encouraging after he failed to get a sack in 14 games last year.

On AFN



**Denver Broncos (5-3)
at Baltimore Ravens (5-3)**
AFN-Sports2
7 p.m. Sunday CET
3 a.m. Monday JKT



**Dallas Cowboys (3-4)
at Atlanta Falcons (5-3)**
AFN-Sports
7 p.m. Sunday CET
3 a.m. Monday JKT



**Chicago Bears (4-3)
at Arizona Cardinals (4-4)**
AFN-Sports
10 p.m. Sunday CET
6 a.m. Monday JKT



**Detroit Lions (6-1)
at Green Bay Packers (6-2)**
AFN-Sports
10:25 Sunday CET
6:25 Monday JKT

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



Quarterback Bryson Daily, right, and the Army Black Knights go into their annual rivalry game against Air Force with a clear advantage at 7-0 and ranked 21st in the nation, compared to the struggling 1-6 Falcons.

Army, Air Force renew service academy rivalry

By SAL INTERDONATO
Associated Press

WEST POINT, N.Y. — Army linebacker Kalib Fortner senses a different vibe whenever the Black Knights' schedule turns to facing a service academy rival.

The junior remembers the nerves lasting through kickoff and into the first defensive series of last year's meeting against the then-No. 17-ranked Air Force, in an outing the Black Knights were heavy underdogs against the 7-0 Falcons at Empower Field in Denver.

That's when Fortner and Army's defense stuffed the Falcons at their own 34 on fourth down of their opening drive and rolled to a 23-3 victory, spoiling Air Force's perfect season.

"The butterflies were still going within that first or second play," Fortner recalled. "It was probably the biggest stage that I've played as a football player. Emotions were high and I wanted to do my job for the guys."

Army and Air Force have gone their different ways since, as the rivals prepare to meet at West Point on Saturday. The No. 21 Black Knights (7-0) have yet to taste defeat, going nearly a full calendar year without a loss in riding a nation-best 11-game winning streak.

Air Force (1-6), meantime has spiraled to 1-10 in its past 11 against FBS opponents since. The Falcons have lost six straight, with their only win of the season coming against transitioning FCS Merrimack.



**Air Force (1-6)
at No. 21 Army (7-0)**
AFN-Sports2
5 p.m. Saturday CET
1 a.m. Sunday JKT

Records and favored by 22½ points aside, Army coach Jeff Monken believes Air Force will provide the Black Knights their best test of the season so far.

"These games are always unbelievable battles," Monken said. "They are hard games to win. They are hard games to prepare for. We go down a lot of rabbit holes in these games, knowing what the other team can do defensively, offensively and special teams."

Before Army's 20-point win last season, the previous five meetings were decided by a combined 23 points, and came down to a final play.

"To one degree, it's just another game," Air Force offensive lineman Alex Moore said. "You want to take every game seriously, obviously. But at the same rate, everyone knows this is a big rivalry between the service academies. So we're definitely super excited for this game."

Daily record breaker

Army senior quarterback Bry-

son Daily's 19 rushing touchdowns are an academy season record with at least six games to play. Daily and the Black Knights are 6-0 in the American Athletic Conference and in contention for a berth in the conference championship. The co-captain is within reach of the FBS single-season record among quarterbacks of 31, set by Navy's Keenan Reynolds in 2013. Daily opened the win against Air Force last year with a 62-yard touchdown run and finished with 170 rushing yards and two TDs.

The Woody Way

Army has limited Air Force to 37 points in four games with Nate Woody as defensive coordinator. Woody has created schemes to slow triple-option offenses like Air Force dating to his days at Appalachian State and Wofford.

Business as usual

Air Force coach Troy Calhoun didn't make any drastic changes to the practice schedule to get ready for what will be an early kickoff for the Colorado-based Falcons. He said academy life is preparation enough.

As proof, he shared a typical day for junior fullback Dylan Carson, who's up at 6 a.m. for formation at 6:30, followed by breakfast at 7:45. He then attends four classes before lunch at 12:30 p.m., followed by two team meetings and practice at 3:50.

"You're up and rolling pretty bright and early," Calhoun said.

Unbeaten Miami sees increased benefits as alums flood sidelines

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — The Miami sideline was loaded with talent this past weekend. Michael Irvin was there, just like he's been all season no matter where the game is. Ray Lewis did his trademark dance. Edgerrin James, Jessie Armstead, Bryant McKinnie, Rohan Marley, Bernie Kosar and Clinton Portis all showed up, as well.

Today's Hurricanes clearly have the attention of the program's best from yesteryear.

When the big names show up at Miami games, it tends to be a pretty good indicator of what's happening on the field. Getting the alumni — particularly the Miami greats — more involved was a priority for Hurricanes coach Mario Cristobal when he came home in 2021, and he's seeing the payoff.

"Some of those guys look like they can still play, and probably can," said Cristobal, a Miami alum and national champion as a player himself. "Look at the old games, back in the '80s and '90s, look at that sideline and how littered it was with real-deal dudes. Like, into it, passionate, love Miami, bleed orange and green, dudes and how much of an attraction it was. I used to kill to get over here to watch these guys go at it."

Some are expected back on the sideline this weekend, when No. 5 Miami (8-0, 4-0 Atlantic Coast Conference) plays host to Duke (6-2, 2-2) and former Hurricanes coach Manny Diaz on Saturday.

There were well over 100 recruits at this past weekend's 36-14 win over rival Florida State, and they all got to see the big names from the past. Time will tell if it left an impact on their upcoming decisions.

But for the current players, having the alumni back is a big deal as well.

"I always talk to those guys, and those guys are all saying they wish they could be in our shoes on the



**Duke (6-2)
at No. 5 Miami (8-0)**
AFN-Atlantic
5 p.m. Saturday CET
1 a.m. Sunday JKT

team that we have," wide receiver Xavier Restrepo said. "So that really means a lot, coming from those guys who have done so much in the game of football. I have unlimited respect for those guys and any time I can get a word with those guys, it's just amazing and I really pay attention."

If there's a sideline alumni MVP this season, Irvin would seem to be the frontrunner by a wide margin.

He's been in huddles on the sideline, yelling his head off in some cases. Irvin went viral forgetting on his hands and knees during Miami's wild 25-point comeback to beat Cal 39-38. He slapped Restrepo — who has passed Irvin on Miami's all-time catch and receiving yardage lists this season — on the sides of the helmet in celebration after one of those catches.

And when Miami held on to beat Virginia Tech 38-34 — a game where the Hurricanes prevailed when a Hail Mary touchdown by the Hokies was overturned by replay on the game's final play — Irvin was absolutely drenched in sweat on the sideline, the white shirt that he wore emblazoned with Miami's famed orange and green "U" logo stuck to his skin.

"I've never worked so hard in all of my life for a victory," Irvin said in a video he posted online that night, "even when I was playing football. ... Every guy in that locker room came to me and said, 'Michael, way to bring that energy. Way to pull it out of us.'"



Miami head coach Mario Cristobal acknowledges the crowd after beating Florida State 36-14 on Oct. 26 in Miami Gardens, Fla.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



JAY LAPRETE/AP

Ohio State quarterback Will Howard grew up dreaming of playing for Penn State, but the Nittany Lions never offered him a scholarship. He started his career at Kansas State before transferring to Ohio State.

Buckeyes, Nittany Lions have different motivation

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

Will Howard has a score to settle. The Ohio State quarterback is hardly the only one.

Howard grew up in the Philadelphia suburbs waiting for Penn State coach James Franklin to recruit him. Only the Nittany Lions never offered him a scholarship.

Four years and two schools later, the Kansas State transfer admitted he's still not over it.

"I wanted to go there my whole life," he said. "They didn't think I was good enough. I guess we'll see (on Saturday)."

About Howard, and the school that spurned him, too.

While Howard is searching for vindication when the fourth-ranked Buckeyes (6-1, 3-1 Big Ten) visit Beaver Stadium, the third-ranked Nittany Lions (7-0, 4-0) are seeking validation.

Ohio State has spent the better part of a decade serving as a roadblock between Penn State and a legit shot at the College Football Playoff. While the CFP field expanding from four teams to 12 opens up more pathways to a destination that's eluded the Nittany Lions in head coach James Franklin's decade on the job, nudging the Buckeyes out of the way provides the most direct route.

While Franklin declined to play up the stakes, repeating his mantra of simply trying to go 1-0 this week to anyone who will listen, his players understand the opportunity at hand.



No. 4 Ohio State (6-1)
at No. 3 Penn State (7-0)
AFN-Sports
5 p.m. Saturday CET
1 a.m. Sunday JKT

Nittany Lions tackle Drew Shelton played alongside Howard in high school. Unlike Howard, Shelton received the opportunity to pull on Penn State's iconic blue-and-white uniform. Shelton, like his teammates, is still waiting to be on the right side of a rivalry that's felt and looked one-sided.

"In past years, it's been close," Shelton said. "Obviously it's a play here, a play there. It's 10 guys doing it right, one guy doing it wrong. That's how planes crash, small things."

It's the same for Ohio State.

Small things — like Howard sliding as time ran out — cost the Buckeyes in a loss at Oregon three weeks ago. Another setback would dash any hopes of reaching the Big Ten title game and perhaps jeopardize Ohio State's CFP chances.

"A chance to go to Indianapolis (and the Big Ten championship) is on the line," Buckeyes head coach Ryan Day said.

It's likely the same for the Nittany Lions, who will have an opportunity to fell a longtime nemesis

and put a large dent in Ohio State's CFP hopes in the process. It's a tantalizing idea for a program eager to put the narrative that Penn State has been good but not quite elite to rest.

Ailing Allar

Penn State quarterback Drew Allar exited last week's victory at Wisconsin late in the first half with a left leg injury. Backup Beau Pribula came on and performed well in relief as the Nittany Lions pulled away late.

Allar was healthy enough to suit up for practice on Wednesday and Thursday, though Franklin said Allar's availability would be a game-time decision. The junior struggled against the Buckeyes a year ago, completing just 18 of 42 passes for 191 yards but has thrived this fall in first-year offensive coordinator Andy Kotelnicki's more progressive attack.

Battle ready

Penn State is unbeaten but not untested. The Nittany Lions' season includes a three-plus hour weather delay on the road at West Virginia in the opener, overcoming a halftime deficit at home against Bowling Green and a massive second-half rally fueled by tight end Tyler Warren at Southern Cal.

"I feel like this team, it just shows like we never give up," running back Nick Singleton said.

AP sports writer Mitch Stacy and Associated Press writer Travis Johnson contributed to this report.

Sun Devils' Skattebo turns contact into art

By JOHN MARSHALL
Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Cam Skattebo puts Newton's second law of motion into practice every time he touches the ball.

The law is an equation stating, in layman's terms, that the acceleration of an object is dependent on its mass and the force acting upon it. If something gets in the way, the severity of the collision hinges on the amount of mass and amount of force — the higher the speed or larger the mass, the bigger the crash.

Skattebo has the mass with a low center of gravity, tree-trunk legs and the split-second ability to calculate the angles that will create more force. The Arizona State senior running back's speed comes naturally, accentuated by an unrelenting need to initiate contact.

"If a car gets T-boned, the person getting T-boned is going to feel it more than the person expecting it," Skattebo said. "So I always like to initiate the pain, initiate the hit, because I don't want to feel the pain."

Skattebo has been dishing out pain since charging full speed into his kneeling older brother Leo in the family's Northern California living room. He continued to punish at Rio Linda High School and during two seasons at Sacramento State before transferring to Arizona State in 2023.

Skattebo — pronounced Skate-BOO — has been a jackhammer

during his two seasons in the desert, bludgeoning anyone who dares to try to tackle him. He ran for 788 yards last season while filling in at numerous positions and has 848 yards with 10 touchdowns through seven games this season.

Skattebo's 695 yards after contact rushing and receiving is seventh in the FBS, according to Sportradar.

"Vicious, aggressive," said Arizona State running backs coach Shaun Aguano, describing Skattebo's running style. "His contact balance is elite. He finishes his runs and I like his positive body lean."

Skattebo's father, Leo, taught his sons to be versatile at a young age, which Cam has leaned on.

When Arizona State was beset by injuries last season, Skattebo became the Swiss Army Sun Devil. His main role was naturally at running back, but he also took 50 snaps at quarterback, lined up at slot and wide receiver, took two snaps at tight end and occasionally jumped in on kick return and punt coverage teams.

Skattebo also showed some punch as a pooch punter, averaging 42.3 yards on eight kicks, including three over 50. He was one of three punters nationally with at least eight punts to not have a kick returned.

"His biggest strength is his football IQ," Aguano said. "He understands everything from blocking schemes, to protection schemes to route schemes."



Skattebo

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WORLD SERIES

Wrap: Dodgers' Ohtani goes 2-for-19 with no RBIs

FROM PAGE 32
over second base.
Ohtani, the Dodgers' record-setting \$700 million signing and baseball's first 50-homer, 50-steal player, went 2-for-19 with no RBIs and had one single after separating his left shoulder during a stolen base attempt in Game 2. Ohtani went through the clubhouse pouring champagne on teammates and having it sprayed on him.

"We were able to get through the regular season, I think, because of the strength of this team, this organization," he said through a translator. "The success of the postseason is very similar."

Freeman hit a two-run single to tie the Series record of 12 RBIs, set by Bobby Richardson over seven games in 1960, and was voted Series MVP. With the Dodgers one out from losing Friday's opener, Freeman hit a game-ending grand slam reminiscent of Kirk Gibson's homer off Oakland's Dennis Eckersley in 1988's Game 1 that sparked Los Angeles to the title.

The Dodgers earned their eighth championship and seventh since leaving Brooklyn for Los Angeles — their first in a non-shortened season since 1988.

They won a neutral-site World Series against Tampa Bay in 2020 after a 60-game regular season and couldn't have a parade because of the coronavirus pandemic.

These Dodgers of Ohtani, Freeman and Betts joined the 1955 Duke Snider and Roy Campanella Boys of Summer, the Sandy Koufax and Don Drysdale era that spanned the three titles from 1959-65, the Tommy Lasorda-led groups in 1981 and '88, and the Betts and Clayton Kershaw champions of 2020.

Ending a season that started with a gambling scandal involving Ohtani's interpreter during the opening series in South Korea, Roberts won his second championship in nine years as Dodgers manager, matching Lasorda and trailing the four of Walter Alston. The Dodgers won for the fourth time in 12 Series meetings with the Yankees.

New York remains without a title since its record 27th in 2009. The Yankees acquired Juan Soto from San Diego in December knowing he would be eligible for free agency after the 2024 Series. The 26-year-old star went 5-for-16 with one RBI in the Series heading into what will be intensely followed bidding on the open market.

"I'll be open to listen to every single team," Soto said. "I don't have any doors closed or anything like that, so I'm going to be available to all 30 teams."

Judge finished 4-for-18 with three RBIs.

"You can't give a good team like that extra outs," Judge said. "It



SETH WENIG/AP

The Los Angeles Dodgers' Kiké Hernández, right, is safe at third as Yankees third baseman Jazz Chisholm Jr. reaches for an errant throw from shortstop Anthony Volpe during the fifth inning Wednesday in New York. Volpe was charged with a throwing error.

Scoreboard

World Series
(Best-of-seven)
L.A. Dodgers 4, N.Y. Yankees 1
Los Angeles Dodgers 6, New York Yankees 3, 10 innings
Los Angeles Dodgers 4, New York Yankees 2
Los Angeles Dodgers 4, New York Yankees 2
New York Yankees 11, Los Angeles Dodgers 4
Wednesday: Los Angeles Dodgers 7, New York Yankees 6

starts with me there in the line drive coming in, misplay that. So that doesn't happen then I think we got a different story tonight."

Cole didn't allow a hit until Kiké Hernández singled leading off the fifth. Judge, who an inning earlier made a leaping catch at the left-center wall to deny Freeman an extra-base hit, dropped Tommy Edman's fly to center. Volpe then bounced a throw to third on Will Smith's grounder, allowing the Dodgers to load the bases with no outs.

Cole struck out Lux and Ohtani, and Betts hit a grounder to Rizzo — a slow grounder by a Mookie turned the 1986 World Series, by the Mets' Mookie Wilson against Boston.

Cole didn't cover first, pointing at Rizzo, who didn't charge because he was afraid the spinning ball might get past him. Betts outraced Rizzo to the bag.

"I took a bad angle to the ball," Cole said. "I wasn't sure really off the bat how hard he hit it. ... By the



GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ/AP

Mookie Betts celebrates hitting a sacrifice fly during the eighth inning which gave the Dodgers the winning run that wrapped up the title.

time the ball got by me, I was not in a position to cover first."

Freeman followed with a two-run single and Teoscar Hernández hit a tying two-run double.

"When you're given extra outs and you capitalize in that kind of game, that's huge," Freeman said. "For us to get it back to even, you could just feel the momentum just

coming along."

Stanton's sixth-inning sacrifice fly off Brusdar Graterol put the Yankees ahead 6-5, but the Dodgers rallied one last time in the eighth after Kiké Hernández singled off Kahnle leading off, Edman followed with an infield hit, and Smith walked on four pitches.

"We faced every adversity pos-

sible and we overcame every single one," Freeman said, who won his second title after 2021 with Atlanta, and rebounded from a sprained ankle to homer in each of the first four Series games.

Purchased by Guggenheim Baseball Management in 2012, the Dodgers hired Andrew Friedman from Tampa Bay to head their baseball operations two years later. He boosted the front office with a multitude of analytics and performance science staff, and ownership supplied the cash.

Los Angeles went on an unprecedented \$1.25 billion spending spree last offseason on deals with Ohtani, pitchers Yoshinobu Yamamoto, Tyler Glasnow and James Paxton, and outfielder Teoscar Hernández. Much of the money was future obligations that raised the Dodgers' deferred compensation to \$915.5 million owed from 2028-44.

Faced with injuries, the Dodgers acquired Flaherty, Edman and reliever Michael Kopech ahead of the trade deadline, and all became important cogs in the title run. The additions boosted payroll to \$266 million, third behind the Mets and the Yankees, plus a projected \$43 million luxury tax.

Los Angeles will celebrate with a parade Friday on what would have been the 64th birthday for Dodgers great Fernando Valenzuela, who died three days before the Series opener.

"It's going to be emotional for all of us," Roberts said.

WORLD SERIES



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

The Los Angeles Dodgers' Freddie Freeman celebrates with the World Series MVP trophy after their win over the Yankees in Game 5 to clinch the championship Wednesday in New York.

Freeman wins MVP after tying record with 12 RBIs

By MIKE FITZPATRICK
Associated Press

NEW YORK — When the World Series started, it was hard to figure what, if anything, Freddie Freeman would be able to provide for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

He left no doubt about the MVP winner.

Freeman broke records by homering in the first four games and matched a Fall Classic mark with 12 RBIs to power the Dodgers past the New York Yankees for their second championship in five years.

“That means there was a lot of my teammates on base,” Freeman said after being presented with the World Series MVP award, named in honor of Willie Mays. “I’m glad I was able to get hot at the right time.”

The popular slugger delivered yet again Wednesday night with a two-run single off Yankees ace Gerrit Cole in a five-run fifth inning that helped rally Los Angeles to a clinching 7-6 victory in Game 5.

Yankees second baseman Bobby Richardson also drove in 12 runs in 1960 against the Pittsburgh Pirates, who won the championship that year on Bill Mazeroski’s famous homer that ended Game 7.

Freeman compiled his total in just five games against New York, setting several World Series standards along the way.

The 35-year-old first baseman homered in each of the first four games, becoming the first player to accomplish that feat. The streak

began when he launched the first game-ending grand slam in World Series history to win a dramatic opener in Los Angeles.

Freeman’s two-run drive in the first inning Tuesday night at Yankee Stadium made him the only player to go deep in six consecutive Series games, dating to the 2021 title he won with Atlanta.

He was robbed of an extra-base hit in the fourth inning of Game 5 when Aaron Judge made a sensational catch of his long drive while crashing hard into the fence.

But the MVP award put a joyous cap on a scary and trying season for the Freeman family. Freeman missed eight games in July and August after his 3-year-old son, Maximus, fell ill while watching his father at the All-Star Game festivities in Texas.

When the family returned home, Max was hospitalized and put on a ventilator after he experienced partial paralysis and breathing difficulty. He was diagnosed with Guillain-Barré, the rare neurological condition that affects the immune system, nerves and muscles.

Max’s condition gradually improved, and Freeman returned to work Aug. 5. He was welcomed back by a huge ovation from Dodgers fans that prompted tears from Freeman.

“I wish I’d never had to go through what we did as a family. But ultimately Maximus is doing really, really well right now. He’s a special boy, but it has been a grind for three months. It really has. It’s been a lot,” Freeman said.

“Then obviously with the injuries at the end, it makes it all worth it kind of in the end. I’ll never compare Maximus to baseball. I won’t. It’s just two separate things, but with him doing really well now, it does mean a little bit extra.”

Freeman batted .282 this season with 22 homers and 89 RBIs. An eight-time All-Star and the 2020 NL MVP with Atlanta, he is a .300 career hitter with 343 homers, 1,232 RBIs and an .899 OPS in 15 major league seasons. He has hit .300 or better eight times.

Freeman sprained his right ankle Sept. 26 against San Diego while trying to avoid a tag at first base by Luis Arráez and missed the Dodgers’ last three regular-season games. He didn’t have any RBIs in the NL Division Series against the Padres and only one in the National League Championship Series against the New York Mets.

Freeman missed three games during the NL playoffs because of his ailing ankle. He didn’t play in the NLCS finale against the Mets and had six days off entering the World Series, allowing time for the ankle to feel better.

“I did a lot of work in between the NLCS and the World Series. Thankfully, my ankle got into a good spot where I could work on my swing, and I found a cue that really worked for me,” he said. “I was able to slow things down. All you’re trying to do is swing at strikes, take balls, and hit the mistakes. Thankfully, I was able to do that for five games.”

Judge finally homers, but makes costly error to spark Dodgers rally

By MIKE FITZPATRICK
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Game 5 of the World Series was quite a roller coaster for Aaron Judge.

The star slugger busted out of a postseason slump with his first Series home run Wednesday night, connecting for a two-run shot in the first inning that put the New York Yankees ahead against the Los Angeles Dodgers.

He also made a spectacular catch while banging hard into the outfield fence — and then dropped an easy fly for an embarrassing error that helped Los Angeles rally for five runs to tie the score at 5 in the fifth.

New York’s bullpen squandered a one-run lead in the eighth, and the Dodgers held on for a 7-6 victory that clinched their eighth championship and second in five years.

“You can’t give a good team like that extra outs,” Judge said. “It starts with me there on the line drive coming in. I misplayed that. So that doesn’t happen, then I think we’ve got a different story tonight.”

Judge was batting just .152 in October and .133 during his first Fall Classic before sending a 403-foot shot to right-center on the first pitch he saw from starter Jack Flaherty.

Three innings later, Judge made an outstanding grab to rob Freddie Freeman of extra bases.

Freeman sent a drive to deep left-center that Judge ran down as he crashed into the fence with his right hand and shoulder near the 399-foot sign. From his knees, the 6-foot-7 center fielder flipped the ball to teammate Alex Verdugo to throw back into the infield.

Judge then smiled and winked at Verdugo as the Yankee Stadium crowd chanted “MVP! MVP!”

In the fifth, however, Judge took his eye off Tommy Edman’s soft liner at the last moment and flubbed it for his first error all year, putting two runners on with nobody

out. “I just didn’t make the play,” he said.

After two more defensive miscues by New York, the Dodgers tied the score when Freeman hit a two-run single and Teoscar Hernández followed with a two-run double off Gerrit Cole with two outs.

The 6-foot-7 Judge also walked twice and doubled in Game 5, but his costly error in center field loomed large.

“We just didn’t get the job done,” the Yankees captain said. “Just a couple of mistakes along the way that hurt us.”

Juan Soto was aboard on a one-out walk when Judge homered. It was the 16th postseason homer and third this year for Judge, expected to win his second AL MVP award in three years next month.

He hadn’t gone deep in 29 plate appearances since a tying drive at Cleveland late in Game 3 of the American League Championship Series on Oct. 17. Judge also homered in Game 2 of that series.

Jazz Chisholm Jr. followed with another home run off Flaherty, giving the Yankees back-to-back homers in a World Series for the fifth time and first since Thurman Munson and Reggie Jackson connected in Game 5 at Dodger Stadium in 1977.

It was the 14th set of back-to-back homers in Yankees postseason history. Judge and Giancarlo Stanton launched successive shots in the eighth inning during Game 3 of the ALCS.

In the end, Judge batted .184 over 14 postseason games with nine RBIs, a .752 OPS and 20 strikeouts in 49 at-bats. That leaves him with a .205 average, 34 RBIs, a .768 OPS and 86 strikeouts in 58 career postseason games.

“We didn’t finish it,” Judge said. “It was fun playing with this group of guys. They really came together.”



GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ/AP

The New York Yankees' Aaron Judge celebrates after hitting a two-run home run against the Los Angeles Dodgers during the first inning in Game 5 of the World Series on Wednesday in New York.

SPORTS



Big Ten showdown
No. 4 Ohio State hits road to battle
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FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

The Los Angeles Dodgers celebrate their World Series-clinching victory Wednesday over the Yankees in New York. It's the franchise's eighth championship and first since 2020.

Dodgers wrap up World Series

Los Angeles overcomes 5-run deficit with help from Yankees to take title in 5 games

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — You gotta hand it to Freddie Freeman, Shohei Ohtani and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

And not just because the Yankees certainly did.

When New York let LA back into World Series Game 5, the Dodgers did what they've done all year — kept on going.

After taking advantage of three miscues to erase a five-run, fifth-inning deficit during one of the most memorable midgame meltdowns in baseball history, the Dodgers used eighth-inning sacrifice flies from Gavin Lux and Mookie Betts to beat New York 7-6 on Wednesday night.

"In spring training this is what we said we were going to do and we did it," Betts proclaimed, champagne stinging his eyes.

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Aaron Judge and Jazz Chisholm Jr. hit back-to-back home runs in the first inning for New York. Alex Verdugo's RBI single chased Jack Flaherty in the second, and Giancarlo Stanton's third-inning homer against Ryan Brasier built a 5-0 lead.

In the dugout, the Dodgers remained focused.

"We were like just get one, chip away, chip away," Freeman said.

Errors by Judge in center and Anthony Volpe at shortstop, combined with pitcher Gerrit Cole failing to cover first on Betts' grounder, helped Los Angeles score five unearned runs in the fifth.

Of the 234 teams to trail by five or more runs in a Series game, the Dodgers became just the seventh to win.

"This is going to sting forever," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "I'm heartbroken."

After Stanton's sixth-inning sacrifice fly put the Yankees back ahead 6-5, the Dodgers loaded the bases against losing pitcher Tommy Kahnle in the eighth before the sacrifice flies off Luke Weaver.

Judge doubled off winner Blake Treinen with one out in the bottom half and Chisholm walked. Manager Dave Roberts walked to the mound with Treinen at 37 pitches.

"I looked in his eyes. I said how you feeling? How much more you got?" Roberts recalled. "He said: 'I want it.' I trust him."

Treinen retired Stanton on a flyout and struck out Anthony Rizzo.

Walker Buehler, making his first relief appearance since his rookie season in 2018, pitched a perfect ninth for his first major league save.

When Buehler struck out Verdugo to end the game, the Dodgers poured onto the field to celebrate between the mound and first base, capping a season in which they led the big leagues with 98 wins.

With several thousand Dodgers fans remaining in a mostly empty stadium, baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred presented the trophy on a platform quickly erected

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