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# STARS AND STRIPES<sup>®</sup>

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CONTINGENCY EDITION

SATURDAY, JULY 2, 2022

Free to Deployed Areas

## Putin's rough week

Russian president facing NATO expansion, West's unity on Ukraine

Associated Press

**I**t has not been an easy week for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

He took his first foreign trip since the invasion of Ukraine to shore up relations with troublesome Central Asian allies. He watched as NATO declared Moscow its main enemy and invited Russia's neighbors Sweden and Finland to join the alliance. And he was forced to deny that his troops had yet again attacked a civilian target in Ukraine.

Countering a show of Western unity over Ukraine at a series of summits in Europe this week, Putin has sought to cast the moves by the U.S. and its allies as a proof of their hostile designs, and he vowed to press the offensive against Russia's neighbor, now in its fifth month.

Putin long has described NATO's expansion to Russia's borders as the top security threat to his country. When he sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24, he cited increasingly close military ties between Kyiv and the West as a key reason behind his action.

Russia's aggression against its

**SEE WEEK ON PAGE 5**



**Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a joint news conference with Indonesian President Joko Widodo after their meeting in the Kremlin in Moscow on Thursday.**

ALEXANDER ZEMLIANICHENKO/AP

## Air National Guard troops doing space missions face an identity crisis

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — About 1,000 Air National Guard troops who are assigned to space missions are mired in an identity crisis.

Torn between the Air Force,

where they have historically been assigned, and the military's shiny new Space Force where they now work, their units have become orphans, according to commanders, as state and federal leaders wrangle over whether to create a Space

National Guard.

For federal authorities, the issue is mainly about the money. A Space Guard, they say, will create unneeded bureaucracy and cost up to \$500 million a year. They argue it's too high a price to slap a

new name on a patch for an airman doing the same job at the same desk as a year ago.

But state Guard leaders say what's at stake is more than just uniform patches. They say the split has caused budgeting gaps,

training delays and recruiting problems, and if unresolved will lead to bigger divisions, eroding units' readiness in some of the nation's critical space warfighting

**SEE SPACE ON PAGE 3**

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Bitcoin power plant denied renewed permit in NY

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York officials denied required air permit renewals Thursday to a bitcoin-mining power plant on the grounds that it was a threat to the state's climate goals.

The permitting decision was another example of New York putting the brakes on a cryptocurrency bonanza that has alarmed environmentalists. It also comes at a time when cryptocurrency prices have plunged, wiping out fortunes, fueling skepticism and

sparking calls for tighter scrutiny.

The state's permitting decision involved Greenidge Generation, an old coal-fired plant by the shore of Seneca Lake which had once been shut down, but was converted from coal to natural gas several years ago and began bitcoin mining in earnest in 2020.

A majority of the electricity produced by the plant is now used to run more than 15,000 computer servers for bitcoin mining, which guzzles massive amounts of elec-

tricity.

In rejecting the renewals, the state Department of Environmental Conservation said in a letter to the company the plant's conversion to a cryptocurrency mining operation meant it was creating a significant new demand for energy "for a wholly new purpose unrelated to its original permit."

The company said it would continue operating under its current permit while it challenged the decision. It said there was "no credible legal basis" for the denial.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates			
Euro costs (July 4)	\$1.02	South Korea (Won)	1301.24
Dollar buys (July 4)	0.9333	Switzerland (Franc)	0.9604
British pound (July 4)	\$1.18	Thailand (Baht)	35.70
Japanese yen (July 4)	133.00	Turkey (NewLira)	16.7593
South Korean won (July 4)	1262.00	(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.)	
Commercial rates		INTEREST RATES	
Bahrain(Dinar)	0.3770	Prime rate	4.75
Britain (Pound)	1.2019	Interest Rates Discount rate	2.25
Canada (Dollar)	1.2933	Federal funds market rate	0.08
China (Yuan)	6.7075	3-month bill	1.69
Denmark (Krone)	7.1439	30-year bond	3.12
Egypt (Pound)	18.8002		
Euro	0.9604		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8474		
Hungary (Forint)	384.91		
Israel (Shekel)	3.5242		
Japan (Yen)	135.50		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3071		
Norway (Krone)	9.9423		
Philippines (Peso)	55.11		
Poland (Zloty)	4.52		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7517		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3964		

WEATHER OUTLOOK

SATURDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



SATURDAY IN EUROPE



SUNDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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MILITARY

# Space: Leaders want Guard but told too expensive

FROM PAGE 1

and nuclear command and control jobs.

The state leaders don't buy the money argument. They say a Space Guard will be needed in only seven states and Guam, where the Air Guard members who support space missions already reside. The cost, they say, will only be about \$250,000, for new signs, tags and other administrative changes.

"When they removed all the space operators out of the Air Force, the Air Force no longer really does space," said Air Guard Lt. Col. Jeremiah Hitchner, commander of the 109th Space Electromagnetic Warfare Squadron in Guam.

Hitchner was referring to the decision to shift active-duty Air Force troops doing space missions into the new Space Force. "They left us in the Air Force. So we were — for lack of a better term — orphaned. We were left on our own to survive."

Across the country, there are 1,008 Air National Guard citizen-airmen performing space jobs in Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, New York, Ohio and Guam.

Unlike the Army, Navy and Air Force, the Space Force is not its own military department. Instead, it's administered by the Air Force secretary, is led by a four-star general and provides forces for U.S. Space Command, which oversees the military's space operations.

To limit costs and avoid estab-



NOAH BERGER, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE/AP

**An Air Force specialist salutes in a U.S. Space Force uniform during a ceremony for U.S. Air Force airmen transitioning to U.S. Space Force guardian designations Feb. 12, 2021, at Travis Air Force Base, Calif.**

lishing a vast space bureaucracy, only a few military career fields were created for the Space Force: mainly space operations, cyber and intelligence jobs. Active-duty airmen who were doing those missions became Space Force Guardians.

There are about 7,000 active-duty Guardians, and a similar number of civilians, with a budget of about \$18 billion for this fiscal year. Other duties — including legal, medical, public affairs and some administrative posts — continue to be carried out by Air Force staff.

The opposition to creating a small Space Guard appears to be centered at the White House and Office of Management and Budget. Last September, the budget office said it strongly opposed a Space National Guard, citing Con-

gressional Budget Office estimates that it could cost about \$500 million a year.

"Establishing a Space National Guard would not deliver new capabilities — it would instead create new government bureaucracy," OMB said. "The Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve units with space missions have effectively performed their roles with no adverse effect on DOD's space mission since the establishment of the Space Force." DOD refers to the Department of Defense.

While having a Space Guard was part of the initial Air Force plan, the funding limits have become the overriding issue. There are worries that creating a Guard structure would mean more overhead costs, including the need for a Space Guard commander and

## "When they removed all the space operators out of the Air Force, the Air Force no longer really does space."

Air Guard Lt. Col. Jeremiah Hitchner,  
109th Space Electromagnetic Warfare Squadron

other senior staff. Also, there is a distant fear that once that structure was in place, other states could lobby for their own units, again expanding the costs.

In the states, Guard members say they are struggling with increased bureaucracy and that it's becoming harder to get training slots for new recruits.

Sitting alongside the active-duty Space Guardians, the Air Guard members say they're doing their same jobs, but without a formal link to the Space Force. As the Space Force develops its own job descriptions and requirements, Air Guard troops complain it's more difficult to be promoted in space mission jobs.

"We need to be aligned with people that understand the space mission, have responsibility for the space mission, and have all the authorities and alignment in the space mission," said Senior Master Sgt. Harry Smith, flight chief for the 137th Space Warning Squadron in Colorado. "The Air Force should be focused on air power."

Commanders said that over time, the disconnect will worsen. Already, they said, funding is be-

coming a problem because they are requesting money from the Air Force for a Space Force mission or equipment.

"The Space Force and Air Force now have their own fund lines. They're appropriated completely different," Hitchner said. "That makes an issue for me because I'm in the air side trying to spend Space Force money. It's sometimes legally not possible."

Some members of Congress are pushing for a Space Guard, citing many of the same efficiency and bureaucracy reasons. Legislation has been proposed but has not passed.

In a letter to President Joe Biden, the National Guard Association of the U.S. argued that OMB incorrectly inflated the price tag and ignored Air Force studies that concluded creating a Guard would be more efficient.

"The personnel are already on the payroll and the equipment and facilities are in place," said retired Brig. Gen. J. Roy Robinson, the association's president. "A Space National Guard could grow in the future, but only to meet requirements specified by the Space Force."

# Ukraine scattering arsenal to protect weapons from attacks

By JOHN HUDSON,  
ALEX HORTON  
AND DAN LAMOTHE  
*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — The Russian military is increasing attacks on Ukrainian arms depots to deprive the country of Western weapons critical to prevailing in the war.

But in response, the Ukrainian military is dispersing and decentralizing its weapons arsenal across an array of warehouses in an effort to lessen the potential losses caused by any one Russian strike, said U.S. officials familiar with the strategy.

The wider distribution of weapons has attracted more Russian cruise missile strikes in recent weeks, officials said, but has resulted in fewer strikes eliminating large supplies of arms and ammunition.

"This is consistent with how one would go about increasing the survivability of the weapons and ammo you need to bring to the front," said George Barros, a geospatial analyst at the Institute for the

Study of War, a think tank that analyzes Russia's invasion of Ukraine using open source data. "Wars are won by logistics. Those weapons systems are going to be decisive, especially as the Ukrainians attempt to create a counteroffensive, likely later this summer."

Ukrainians are also taking special precautions while the weapons are in transit, U.S. officials said. When moving weapons by rail, Ukrainians have left some train cars empty. When transporting by road, convoys have included trucks with no cargo, limiting the potential losses of a successful Russian attack.

The game of cat-and-mouse comes as fighting intensifies in the eastern Donbas region, where an outgunned Ukrainian military is exchanging near-constant artillery fire with Russian counterparts in a highly lethal and grinding phase of the war, which began Feb. 24.

U.S. and Ukrainian officials spoke on the condition of anonym-

ity to discuss sensitive military operations.

Todd Breasseale, a Pentagon spokesman, declined to comment on Kyiv's distribution of weapons but said Ukrainian forces have displayed "remarkable battlefield nimbleness, creativity, tenacity, and courage as they defend themselves and their land from Russia's reckless, unlawful, and deeply inhumane prosecution of [Russian President Vladimir] Putin's war."

Sergey Nikiforov, a spokesman for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said he would not discuss "military strategy."

U.S. officials recently briefed Congress on Ukraine's sleight-of-hand tactics amid questions from lawmakers about whether the billions of dollars in U.S. military aid was surviving Russia's airstrikes.

President Joe Biden signed a \$40 billion security assistance package to Ukraine into law in May. He has since added to that with \$450 million in military aid announced last week, including

multiple launch rocket systems and artillery ammunition, on top of a \$1 billion package last month including howitzers and coastal defense systems.

The administration is expected to soon announce its purchase of an advanced medium-to-long range surface-to-air missile defense system for Ukraine, as well as other items of "urgent need, including ammunition for artillery and counter-battery radar systems," the president's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said Monday.

Without the massive influx of weaponry, Ukrainian forces would be quickly overwhelmed by the Russian military, which fires more than 60,000 shells per day, 10 times more than the Ukrainians, officials in Kyiv told The Washington Post.

Determining Russia's success in hitting Ukrainian arms depots remains difficult amid the fog of war.

Nearly every day, Russia's defense ministry announces new

strikes on Ukrainian depots, though its claims often come under scrutiny. On Monday, Ukraine said Russia bombed a shopping mall in the city of Kremenchuk, killing at least 18 people and injuring dozens of others. Russian officials denied the claim, saying they hit a nearby arms depot that caused an explosion that ignited a fire at the mall.

The Group of Seven nations, consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, called the attack a Russian war crime, while Zelenskyy described it as "one of the most defiant terrorist attacks in European history."

"You never know whether they're just lying," said Rob Lee, an analyst of the Russian military at the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

Ukraine's efforts to decentralize its weapons depots began in earnest in May and June after significant weapons stocks were lost in Russian missile strikes in the spring, U.S. officials said.



## EUROPE

# Russian missiles strike Odesa region

BY FRANCESCA EBEL

Associated Press

POKROVSK, Ukraine — Russian missile attacks on residential areas killed at least 21 people early Friday near the Ukrainian port of Odesa, authorities reported, a day after the withdrawal of Moscow's forces from an island in the Black Sea seemed to ease the threat to the city.

Video of the attack before day-break showed the charred ruins of buildings in the small town of Serhiivka, about 31 miles from Odesa. The Ukrainian president's office said three Kh-22 missiles fired by warplanes struck an apartment building and a campsite.

Ukrainian authorities interpreted the attack as payback for Russian troops being forced from Snake Island a day earlier, though Moscow portrayed their departure as a "goodwill gesture" to help unblock exports of grain from the country.

Russian forces took control of the island in the opening days of the war in the apparent hope of using it as a staging ground for an assault on Odesa, Ukraine's biggest port and the headquarters of its navy.

"The occupiers cannot win on the battlefield, so they resort to vile killing of civilians," said Ivan Bakanov, head of Ukraine's security service, the SBU. "After the enemy was dislodged from Snake Island, he decided to respond with the cynical shelling of civilian targets."

Large numbers of civilians died in Russian airstrikes and shelling earlier in the war, including at a hospital, a theater used as a bomb shelter and a train station. Until this week, mass casualties involving residents appeared to become less frequent as Moscow concentrated on capturing eastern Ukraine's Donbas region.

But Russian missiles struck the Kyiv region last weekend after weeks of relative calm around the capital, and an airstrike Monday on a shopping mall in the central city of Kremenchuk killed at least 19 people.

After Friday's attack, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov reiterated that Moscow is not targeting residential areas.

Ukrainian media reported said 21 people were killed, including children. It said 38 others, including six children and a pregnant woman, were hospitalized. Most of the victims were in the apartment building, Ukrainian emergency officials said.

Oleh Zhdanov, an independent Ukrainian military analyst, said that the Russian pullback from Snake Island has "colossal psychological significance" for Ukraine.

"Snake Island is key for con-



PHOTOS BY EFREM LUKATSKY/AP

A man salvages belongings from an apartment destroyed in a Russian rocket attack in Bakhmut, Donetsk region, Ukraine, on Friday.



NINA LYASHONOK/AP

Local residents stand next to damaged residential building in the town of Serhiivka, located about 31 miles southwest of Odesa, Ukraine.

trolling the Black Sea and could help cover the Russian attack if the Kremlin opted for an amphibious landing operation in Odesa or elsewhere in the region," he said. "Now those plans are pushed back."

Ukraine's military claimed a barrage of its artillery and missiles forced the Russians to flee the island in two small speedboats. The exact number of withdrawing troops was not disclosed.

The island took on significance early in the war as a symbol of Ukrainian defiance. When a Russian warship demanded the island's defenders surrender, they supposedly replied: "Go (expletive) your-

self."

Zelenskyy said that although the pullout did not guarantee the Black Sea region's safety, it would "significantly limit" Russian activities there.

"Step by step, we will push (Russia) out of our sea, our land, our sky," he said in his nightly address.

In eastern Ukraine, Russian forces kept up their push to encircle the city of Lysychansk, the last stronghold of resistance in Luhansk, one of two provinces that make up the Donbas region.

"The shelling of the city is very intensive," Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai said. "The occupiers are destroying one house after another



People look at a huge crater left by a Russian rocket attack in the city centre of Bakhmut, Donetsk region, Ukraine.

with heavy artillery and other weapons. Residents of Lysychansk are hiding in basements almost round the clock."

Haidai said the Russians were fighting for control of an oil refinery on the city's edge. But Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said Russian and Luhansk separatist forces had taken control of the refinery as well as a mine and a gelatin factory in Lysychansk.

Ukraine's presidential office said a series of Russian strikes in the past 24 hours also killed civilians in eastern Ukraine — four in the northeastern Kharkiv region and another four in Donetsk prov-

ince.

In other developments, Zelenskyy asked Ukrainian lawmakers to fast-track the legislation needed for the country to join the European Union. His government applied for EU membership after Russia's Feb. 24 invasion. EU leaders made Ukraine a candidate last week, acting with unusual speed and unity.

The process could take years or even decades, but Zelenskyy said in a speech to lawmakers that Ukraine can't wait.

"Such decisions are necessary for Ukraine to advance on its path forward, and you must make them," he said.



## EUROPE

# Week: Putin and Iran's leader tout 'strategic' alliance

## FROM PAGE 1

neighbor has helped cement Western unity, with allies offering billions of dollars in weapons and aid to Kyiv and slamming Russia with unprecedented sanctions that froze its hard currency reserves, targeted oil and other key exports, and barred its planes from European skies.

The invasion also prompted NATO to deploy more troops and weapons into the territories of its members in Eastern Europe and encouraged Sweden and Finland to abandon their neutrality and seek NATO membership.

At its summit in Madrid on Wednesday, the alliance formally invited the two nations to join and declared Russia the "most significant and direct threat" to its members' peace and security.

Putin, who visited Turkmenistan Wednesday to attend a Caspian Sea summit with three former Soviet nations and Iran, responded by saying that NATO's actions proved its anti-Russian focus while admitting his action helped Western allies cement their ranks.

At the summit in Ashgabat, Putin and other participants didn't mention the war in Ukraine in their public comments. In a communique after the talks, they emphasized their agreement to bar any foreign militaries from the Caspian and underlined a pledge not to offer their territories for aggression against another country on its shores.

During a meeting with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on the sidelines of the summit, Putin emphasized "strategic" ties between Moscow and Tehran.

Speaking to reporters in Turkmenistan, Putin charged that the U.S. has "long been looking for an external enemy, for a threat that would help rally allies," adding

that "Iran wasn't good enough for that role, and Russia fit much better."

"We have given them a chance to unite all allies," Putin said, noting that the NATO summit's decisions offer fresh proof that the Western group "is a relic of the Cold War intended to serve as an instrument of the U.S. foreign policy to keep its satellites in rein."

Before the war, Russia insisted on binding guarantees precluding NATO's expansion to Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations and demanded a rollback of the military alliance's deployments in Eastern Europe. The U.S. and its allies firmly rejected the demands, emphasizing that a key alliance principle is that membership is open to any qualifying country and no outsiders have veto power.

At the same time, Washington and NATO offered to discuss arms control, confidence-building measures, greater transparency and risk reduction — issues that Moscow shrugged off as secondary to its main security demands.

Until the invasion, the Kremlin denied having plans to attack but warned the West that NATO's expansion to Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations is a "red line" that must not be crossed.

Putin alleged the West had "swindled, blatantly cheated" Moscow by offering verbal pledges in the 1990s not to expand NATO eastward and then enlarged it to incorporate former Soviet bloc countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet republics in the Baltics.

On Thursday, he spoke with his usual rancor about what he described as Western efforts to discourage Ukraine from sitting down for talks with Russia to negotiate an end to hostilities.

"The calls to Ukraine to continue fighting and to abandon any



GRIGORY SYSOYEV, SPUTNIK, KREMLIN POOL/AP

**Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, speaks to Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi, back to a camera, on the sideline of the summit of Caspian Sea littoral states in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on Wednesday.**

further negotiations confirm our belief that the united West and NATO do not care for Ukraine or the interests of the Ukrainian people, and that their goal is to protect their own interests," Putin said. "The leading NATO members are using the Ukrainian people to reinforce their positions and their role in the world, reaffirm their hegemony and their imperial ambitions."

Commenting on NATO's invitation to Finland and Sweden, Putin rejected the Western description of the move as a major defeat for Russia.

"As for the assumption that we were fighting against NATO expansion to Ukraine but now have Sweden and Finland to deal with, there is no substance behind it at all, because for us Finland and Sweden joining NATO is not at all the same as the potential membership of Ukraine," he said.

Sweden and Finland are free to do what they want, he said, but noted that "we will have to respond quid pro quo if military contingents and infrastructure are deployed there and create the same threats for the territories where they are created for us."

He said Russia doesn't have ter-



SUSAN WALSH/AP

**President Joe Biden speaks during a news conference on the final day of the NATO summit in Madrid, on Thursday.**

ritorial disputes with those countries, unlike Ukraine, which has declared an intention to win back Crimea that Russia annexed in 2014 and regain control over the Moscow-backed separatist regions in the east, known as the Donbas..

"Ukraine is a totally different matter," Putin said. "They were turning Ukraine into an anti-Russia, a bridgehead for trying to destabilize Russia."

He hailed his forces in Ukraine as "heroes" protecting Russia's

security and said that the "special military operation" will continue until its goals of "liberating Donbas, protecting its people and creating conditions that will guarantee the security of Russia itself" are achieved.

Putin also denied that Russian forces targeted a busy shopping mall in the central Ukrainian city of Kremenchuk, saying that his country doesn't hit civilian facilities and alleging the airstrike was directed at a nearby weapons depot, echoing the remarks of his military officials.

But that was disputed by Ukrainian officials and witnesses, who said a Russian missile directly struck the mall, killing at least 18 people, injuring dozens and leaving 20 others missing. Earlier in the war, Russia hit a hospital, theater, residential buildings and a railway station crowded with fleeing civilians.

Putin said the actions in Ukraine "are proceeding according to plan" and "our forces are moving forward and attaining the objectives that have been set for the particular period of the engagement," adding that he wouldn't rush the operation to minimize losses.

# Germany sees likely Russian 'blockade' of key gas pipeline

Associated Press

BERLIN — Germany's vice-chancellor said Thursday he suspects that Russia may not resume natural gas deliveries to Europe through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline after planned maintenance work in July, complicating the outlook for this winter.

Russia reduced gas flows to Germany, Italy, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia this month, just as European Union countries scramble to refill storage facilities with the fuel used to generate electricity, power industry and heat homes in

the winter.

Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom has blamed a technical problem for the reduction in gas flowing through Nord Stream 1, which runs under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany. The company said equipment being refurbished in Canada was stuck there because of Western sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

German leaders have rejected that explanation and called the reductions a political move.

Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck, who is

also Germany's economy and climate minister and responsible for energy, said a "blockade" of the pipeline is possible starting July 11, when regular maintenance work is due to start. In previous summers, the work has entailed shutting them for about 10 days, he said.

"But given the pattern we have seen, it wouldn't be so super-surprising if some little technical detail is found and then they say, 'We can't switch it on again; now we found something during maintenance and that's it,'" Habeck told a forum organized by the Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper.

"So the situation is certainly tight," he said, stressing the importance of filling storage and getting liquefied natural gas terminals up and running. At present, Germany is continuing to store gas, albeit at about half the rate it was before deliveries through Nord Stream 1 were reduced, the vice-chancellor said.

A week ago, Habeck activated the second phase of Germany's three-stage emergency plan for natural gas supplies, warning that Europe's biggest economy faced a "crisis" and storage targets for the winter were at risk.

# NATION

## Alabama cites abortion ruling in trans case

By **KIM CHANDLER**  
*Associated Press*

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Days after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states can prohibit abortion, Alabama has seized on the decision to argue that the state should also be able to ban gender-affirming medical treatments for transgender youths.

The case marks one of the first known instances in which a conservative state has tried to apply the abortion ruling to other realms, just as LGBTQ advocates and others were afraid would happen.

Critics have expressed fear that the legal reasoning behind the high court ruling could lead to a rollback of decisions involving such matters as gay marriage, birth control and parental rights.

The state is asking a federal appeals court to lift an injunction and let it enforce an Alabama law that would make it a felony to give puberty blockers or hormones to transgender minors to help affirm their gender identity.

In its historic ruling last Friday, the U.S. Supreme Court said terminating a pregnancy is not a fundamental constitutional right because abortion is not mentioned in the Constitution and is not “deeply rooted in this nation’s history and tradition.”

In a brief filed Monday, the Alabama attorney general’s office argued similarly that gender transition treatments are not “deeply rooted in our history or traditions,” and thus the state has the authority to ban them. Alabama contends such treatments are dangerous and experimental, a view disputed by medical organi-

zations.

Shannon Minter, legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said this is the first case he is aware of in which a state cited the abortion ruling on another issue, but added, “It won’t be the last.”

Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito said in the majority opinion that the abortion ruling should not cast “doubt on precedents that do not concern abortion.” But Justice Clarence Thomas wrote that the same legal reasoning should be used to reconsider high court rulings protecting same-sex marriage, gay sex and contraceptives.

“It is no surprise that Alabama and other extremely conservative states are going to take up that invitation as forcefully as they can,” Minter said. “Justice Thomas’ concurrence was a declaration of war on groups already under attack, and we expect the hostility to be escalated.”

The Alabama case could become an early test of where judges stand on the scope of the abortion ruling. The appeals court granted the state’s request for an expedited schedule for submitting briefs, and a decision could come as early as this fall.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey this spring signed the law making it a crime punishable by up to 10 years in prison to dispense certain medication to minors to help with their gender transition.

A federal judge in May issued a preliminary injunction blocking the measure, siding with parents who said the law violates their children’s rights and their own rights to direct their youngsters’ medical care.



JAY REEVES/AP

**Sydney Duncan, an attorney who specializes in representing LGBTQ people, speaks during an interview in Birmingham, Ala., on Monday.**

## Same-sex couples updating their legal status after abortion ruling

By **JAY REEVES**  
*Associated Press*

The ruling last week didn’t directly affect the 2015 decision that paved the way for same-sex marriage. But, Sydney Duncan said, it was still a warning shot for families headed by same-sex parents who fear their rights could evaporate like those of people seeking to end a pregnancy.

“That has a lot of people scared and, I think, rightfully so,” said Duncan, who specializes in representing members of the LGBTQ community at the Magic City Legal Center in Birmingham.

Overtaking a nearly 50-year-old precedent, the Supreme Court ruled in a Mississippi case that abortion wasn’t protected by the Constitution, a decision likely to lead to bans in about half the states. Justice Samuel Alito said the ruling involved only the medical procedure, writing: “Nothing in this opinion should be under-

stood to cast doubt on precedents that do not concern abortion.”

But conservative Justice Clarence Thomas called on his colleagues to reconsider cases that allowed same-sex marriage, gay sex and contraception.

The court’s three most liberal members warn in their dissent that the ruling could be used to challenge other personal freedoms: “Either the mass of the majority’s opinion is hypocrisy, or additional constitutional rights are under threat. It is one or the other.”

That prospect alarms some LGBTQ couples, who worry about a return to a time when they lacked equal rights to married heterosexual couples under the law. Many, fearful that their marital status is in danger, are moving now to square away potential medical, parental and estate issues.

Dawn Betts-Green and wife Anna Green didn’t waste time shor-

ing up their legal paperwork after the decision. They’ve already visited a legal clinic for same-sex families to start the process of making a will.

“That way, if they blast us back to the Dark Ages again, we have legal protections for our relationship,” said Betts-Green, who works with an Alabama-based nonprofit that documents the history of LGBTQ people in the South.

Any attempt to undo gay marriage would begin with a lawsuit, and any possible rollback is years away since no major legal threat is on the horizon, said Cathryn Oakley, senior counsel and state legislative director with the Washington-based Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ advocacy organization.

“This is definitely a scary moment and people are nervous, but peoples’ marriages are still safe,” Oakley said.

## Judge to temporarily block Florida’s 15-week abortion ban

*Associated Press*

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — A Florida judge said Thursday that he will temporarily block a 15-week ban on abortions in his state, but his bench ruling won’t take effect before the ban becomes law Friday — an issue that could cause confusion for patients as well as abortion providers.

The case in Florida reflects battles being waged in courts across the country after the Supreme Court said abortion was

no longer protected under the federal constitution. The high court left it up to states to decide whether abortion is legal within their borders — forcing attorneys on both sides of the debate to turn to their state constitutions.

Some of the legal disputes involve trigger laws that were specifically designed to take effect if Roe were to fall. Some involve bans that have been on the books, unenforced, for generations. Others entail prohibitions on

abortion that were held up pending the ruling on Roe and are now moving forward.

The legal wrangling is creating chaos for patients. The owner of North Dakota’s only abortion clinic — which is operating until July 28 — said one patient wrote on a form: “Will I be prosecuted for having an abortion today?”

In Florida, Judge John C. Cooper said Thursday that he will temporarily block the 15-week abortion ban from taking effect after reproductive health

providers argued the state constitution guarantees a right to the procedure. Cooper said Florida’s ban was “unconstitutional in that it violates the privacy provision of the Florida Constitution.”

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis said the state would appeal.

Cooper’s decision, issued from the bench, will not be binding until he signs a written order — which appeared would not happen before Tuesday. That means the 15-week ban will take effect Friday, as scheduled, and the gap

in timing raises questions about whether some patients will be affected. Florida’s current law allows abortion up to 24 weeks.

Laura Goodhue, executive director of the Florida Alliance of Planned Parenthood Affiliates, said clinics were still seeing patients and would operate under the law but the situation was challenging for doctors.

“It’s a lot of unnecessary delays and patients are at the whims of the legal system right now,” she said.



## NATION

# Court says Biden can end asylum policy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court said Thursday the Biden administration can scrap a Trump-era immigration policy to make asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration courts, a victory for a White House that still must address the growing number of people seeking refuge at America's southern border.

The ruling will have little immediate impact because the policy has been seldom applied under President Joe Biden, who reinstated it under a court order in December. It was his predecessor, Donald Trump, who launched the "Remain in Mexico" policy and fully embraced it.

Two conservative justices joined their three liberal colleagues in siding with the White House.

Under Trump, the program enrolled about 70,000 people after it was launched in 2019. Biden sus-



GREGORY BULL/AP

**Two men from Nicaragua wait to apply for asylum in the United States Thursday at a shelter for migrants in Tijuana, Mexico.**

pending the policy, formally known as Migrant Protection Protocols on his first day in office in January 2021. But lower courts ordered it reinstated in response to a lawsuit from Republican-led Texas and Missouri.

Dynamics at the border have changed considerably since "Remain in Mexico" was a center-

piece of Trump's border policies.

Another Trump-era policy that remains in effect and was not a part of Thursday's ruling allows the government to quickly expel migrants without a chance to ask for asylum, casting aside U.S. law and an international treaty on grounds of containing the spread of COVID-19. There have been

more than 2 million expulsions since the pandemic-era rule, known as Title 42 authority, was introduced in March 2020.

In May, a federal judge in Louisiana prevented the Biden administration from halting Title 42, in a case that may ultimately reach the Supreme Court.

The heart of the legal fight in the immigration case was about whether U.S. immigration authorities, with far less detention capacity than needed, had to send people to Mexico or whether those authorities had the discretion under federal law to release asylum-seekers into the United States while they awaited their hearings.

After Biden's suspension of the program, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas ended it in June 2021. In October, the department produced additional justifications for the policy's demise, but that was to no avail in the courts.

Chief Justice John Roberts

wrote that an appeals court "erred in holding that the" federal Immigration and Nationality Act "required the Government to continue implementing MPP." Joining the majority opinion was fellow conservative Brett Kavanaugh, a Trump appointee, as well as liberal justices Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan.

Kavanaugh also wrote separately and noted that in general, when there is insufficient detention capacity, both releasing asylum-seekers into the United States and sending them back to Mexico "are legally permissible options under the immigration statutes."

The Department of Homeland Security said it welcomed the ruling and that it will "continue our efforts to terminate the program as soon as legally permissible." It added in a statement that it continues to enforce Title 42 and "our immigration laws at the border and administer consequences for those who enter unlawfully."

## Supreme Court leaves dwindling paths for Biden's climate mission

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than 500 days into his presidency, Joe Biden's hope for saving the Earth from the most devastating effects of climate change may not quite be dead.

But it's not far from it.

A Supreme Court ruling Thursday not only limited the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to regulate climate pollution by power plants, but also suggests the court is poised to block other efforts by Biden and federal agencies to limit the climate-wrecking fumes emitted by oil, gas and coal.

It's a blow to Biden's commitment to slash emissions in the few years scientists say are left to stave off worse and deadlier levels of global warming. And it's a sign, to Democrats at home and allies abroad, of the dwindling options remaining for Biden to reverse the legacy of President Donald Trump, who mocked the science of climate change. Trump's three Supreme

Court appointees provided half of the affirmative votes in Thursday's 6-3 ruling.

After the ruling, a veteran Democratic lawmaker acknowledged he saw little hope of Congress producing any meaningful climate legislation, either. "There's no easy fix from Congress from this mess," Rhode Island Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse said. The foreign allies whom Biden once spoke of leading to a global clean-power transformation are wondering if the United States can even lead itself.

The climate decision in some ways "may have broader impacts at least on the European populace that this is a country that, A: can't get things done and B: is going in a really bizarre direction domestically," said Max Bergmann, director of the Europe program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

And in a Houston neighborhood entering hurricane season, a man who had spent four decades advo-

cating for the Black communities and other communities of color and poorer communities hit hardest by pollution and the record heat, cold, floods and storms of climate change reacted to the ruling like many others did — saying salvaging climate efforts depends on Biden now, and his willingness to act and lead.

"This is real," said Robert Bullard, an academic who became a pioneer in what became the U.S. environmental justice movement, of the multiplying natural disasters — the kind scientists say are influenced by the heating atmosphere — wrecking cities on America's vulnerable Gulf of Mexico.

"Those communities that have been flooded out ... some of those communities still have blue tarps on their houses," Bullard said. "So I don't think the Supreme Court and some of our elected officials are speaking about the urgency of where we are when it comes to our climate."



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

**Erin Tinerella protests against climate change after the Supreme Court's EPA decision Thursday at the Supreme Court in Washington.**

Biden's EPA still has meaningful moves left to make, but must move quickly, Eric Schaeffer, a former director of civil enforcement at the agency, said in a statement. Among them: speed up setting of new carbon limits for carbon pollution from power plants, make long overdue updates to standards on toxic discharges from the plants and move faster to crack down on leaks of climate-damaging methane in

natural gas as the Biden administration has already promised.

Biden has pledged to cut the nation's greenhouse gas emissions in half by the end of the decade and to have an emissions-free power sector by 2035.

"Our fight against climate change must carry forward, and it will," Biden said in a statement after the ruling that offered no guarantees of success.

## GOP leader McConnell warns Dems of fallout for reviving Biden bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell threatened Thursday to derail a bill designed to boost semiconductor manufacturing in the United States if Democrats revive their stalled package of energy and economic initiatives.

The rejuvenation of the Demo-

cratic reconciliation package, central to President Joe Biden's agenda is far from certain. But with some signs of progress in the negotiations, McConnell is moving to complicate Democratic plans. He's warning that Republicans would react by stopping separate semiconductor legislation from moving over the finish line in

the coming weeks, despite its bipartisan support.

"Let me be perfectly clear: there will be no bipartisan USICA as long as Democrats are pursuing a partisan reconciliation bill," McConnell tweeted, referring to the shorthand name for the computer chips bill that passed the Senate last year.

Both chambers of Congress have passed their versions of the legislation, which would include \$52 billion in incentives for companies to locate chip manufacturing plants in the U.S. Lawmakers are now trying to reconcile the considerable differences between the two bills, but at a pace that has many supporters worried the job

won't get done before lawmakers break for their August recess.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said McConnell was "holding hostage" a bipartisan package that would lower the cost of countless products that rely on semiconductors and would yield hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs.



## NATION

# Testimony makes Trump more vulnerable for '24

BY STEVE PEOPLES  
AND THOMAS BEAUMONT  
*Associated Press*

SIoux CENTER, Iowa — Stunning new revelations about former President Donald Trump's fight to overturn the 2020 election have exposed growing political vulnerabilities just as he eyes another presidential bid.

A former White House aide this week described

## ANALYSIS

Trump as an unhinged leader with no regard for the safety of elected officials in either party as he clung to power on Jan. 6, 2021. The testimony from the congressional panel investigating the Capitol attack provided a road map for prosecutors to potentially charge Trump with a crime, some legal experts say.

Republican voters — and Trump's would-be rivals in the 2024 presidential race — took notice.

In Iowa, the state expected to host the first presidential nominating contest in roughly 18 months, several voters signaled Thursday that they were open to another presidential candidate even if Trump were to run again. At the same time, some conservative media outlets issued scathing rebukes of the former president. Aides for multiple GOP presidential prospects also indicated, publicly and privately, that they felt increasingly emboldened to challenge Trump in 2024 following the explosive new testimony.

Nikki Haley, Trump's ambassador to the United Nations, drew roughly 350 conservative activists to a congressional fundraising barbecue on Thursday in Sioux County, where Trump won 82% of the vote in 2020. There was ample evidence of Trump fatigue. Interviews with a dozen attendees revealed strong interest in a 2024 alternative, even if Trump is on the ballot.

"You'd be hard-pressed to find people in this area who support the idea that people aren't looking for someone else," said Dave Van



SEAN THEW, POOL/AP

**A video of former President Donald Trump from his Jan. 6 Rose Garden statement is played while Cassidy Hutchinson testifies Tuesday before the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.**

Wyk, a transportation company owner. "To presume that conservative America is 100% behind Donald Trump is simply not the case."

For some Republican voters, that was the feeling even before this week's stunning new testimony.

Former White House staffer Cassidy Hutchinson on Tuesday offered previously unknown details about the extent of Trump's rage in his final weeks of office, his awareness that some supporters had brought weapons to the city on Jan. 6 and his ambivalence as rioters later laid siege to the Capitol.

The conservative Washington Examiner's editorial board said Hutchinson's testimony "ought to ring the death knell" for Trump's political career. "Trump is unfit to be anywhere near power ever again."

The often Trump-friendly New York Post blasted the headline: "Tyrant Trump." And the conservative editorial page of the Wall Street Journal wrote, "Just when it seems as if Donald Trump's behavior after his 2020 loss couldn't possibly look worse, a new piece of



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

**Hutchinson**

wild testimony arrives."

To be sure, conservatives have shared serious concerns about Trump repeatedly in recent years. And in every case, the former president has emerged largely unscathed, sometimes stronger. He has been caught on video bragging about sexual assault; he instigated a violent attack on the Capitol; and he has been twice impeached.

Yet Trump is sitting on campaign funds that exceed \$101 million and remains deeply popular with many Republican voters. Lest there be any question, Republican candidates from Arizona to Pennsylvania to Georgia have been battling one another this

midterm season for his support.

"The American people remain hungry for his leadership," Trump spokesperson Taylor Budowich said, citing Trump's strong endorsement record and fundraising success. "And as another witch hunt is blowing up in the faces of Democrats, President Trump is in a stronger position now than at anytime before."

But even before this week's revelations, a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 48% of U.S. adults say Trump should be charged with a crime for his role in the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

Views on Trump's criminal liability break down predictably along party lines, with 86% of Democrats and 10% of Republicans saying Trump should be charged.

Still, the fact that nearly half the country believes he should be prosecuted is a remarkable position for the former president, pointing to the difficulties he could face if he makes another run at the White House.

Meanwhile, Trump's fundrais-

ing has fallen off dramatically over the last two months. He reported raising just over \$19,000 in May and June combined after taking in nearly \$9 million in March and April.

Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, eyeing a presidential bid in 2024, says he was hearing concerns about Trump from donors and voters alike before this week's testimony, which adds to the "cumulative weight" of the former president's political shortcomings.

"People are concerned that we could lose the election in '24 and want to make sure that we don't nominate someone who would be seriously flawed," Christie said.

Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, who is also considering a 2024 run, said he considers Trump beatable in a GOP primary even if Republican voters aren't paying close attention to the congressional hearings, as he suspects.

"His approval among Republican primary voters has already been somewhat diminished," Hogan said in an interview. "Trump was the least popular president in American history until Joe Biden."

Aides for other Republican presidential prospects said privately this week that Trump may still be the overwhelming favorite to win the next GOP presidential nomination, but they believe his standing with Republican voters has been in steady decline.

There was a broad sense — or at least a hope — that Hutchinson's testimony would accelerate that decline among voters and donors in a way that would open opportunities for others.

Marc Short, a senior adviser to former Vice President Mike Pence, another likely 2024 presidential contender, was blunt when asked about Trump's political strength.

"Republican activists believed Donald Trump was the only candidate who could beat Hillary," Short said. "Now, the dynamic is reversed. He is the only one who has lost to Joe Biden."

## DOJ to investigate NYPD sex crimes unit after complaints

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — The U.S. Justice Department has launched a sweeping inquiry into the New York Police Department's famed sex crimes investigators following years of complaints about the way they treat crime victims.

The civil rights investigation, announced Thursday and spurred by a letter last year from appalled victims, will examine whether the NYPD's Special Victims Division engages in a pattern of gender-biased policing, offi-

cials said.

"Survivors of sexual assault should expect effective, trauma-informed and victim-centered investigations by police departments," said Kristen Clarke, assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. New York City's two U.S. attorneys joined her in announcing the inquiry.

The police unit inspired TV's "Law & Order: SVU," and the real-life version has tackled such major cases as the prosecution of

former movie mogul Harvey Weinstein. But the division also has faced a decade of complaints about thin staffing and superficial investigations.

In a 2019 lawsuit, a woman alleged detectives shrugged off her report of being raped by someone she'd been involved with, logging it as a "dispute" instead of a sex crime. Another woman said in the suit that her account of being kidnapped and gang-raped was grossly mishandled for months before she was told the case was

"too complex" to investigate.

After the lawsuit and a leadership shake-up, the NYPD promised change. But victims' advocates say it hasn't happened.

"We hope the Justice Department's investigation and our lawsuit will finally result in real change for victims and survivors of sexual assault in New York City," said the women's lawyer, Mariann Wang.

The NYPD said it welcomes the review and is committed to improving its investigations.

Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell said she believed any "constructive" review would "show that the NYPD has been evolving and improving in this area, but we will be transparent and open to criticism as well as ideas."

Mayor Eric Adams, a retired police captain who took office in January and appointed Sewell, said she immediately took steps to make sure the unit was "professional."

"We were not sitting on our hands," the Democrat said.



NATION

# Calif. sets toughest plastics reduction rules

**By KATHLEEN RONAYNE**  
*Associated Press*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Companies selling shampoo, food and other products wrapped in plastic have a decade to cut down on their use of the polluting material if they want their wares on California store shelves.

Major legislation passed and signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday aims to significantly reduce single-use plastic packaging in the state and drastically boost recycling rates for what remains.

It sets the nation's most stringent requirements for the use of plastic packaging, with lawmakers saying they hope it sets a precedent for other states to follow.

"We're ruining the planet and we've got to change it," Sen. Bob Hertzberg, a Democrat, said before voting on the bill.

Under the bill, plastic producers would have to reduce plastics in single-use products 10% by 2027, increasing to 25% by 2032. That reduction in plastic packaging can be met through a combina-

tion of reducing package sizing, switching to a different material or making the product easily reusable or refillable. Also by 2032, plastic would have to be recycled at a rate of 65%, a massive jump from today's rates. It wouldn't apply to plastic beverage bottles, which have their own recycling rules.

Efforts to limit plastic packaging have failed in the Legislature for years, but the threat of a similar ballot measure going before voters in November prompted

business groups to come to the negotiating table. The measure's three main backers withdrew it from the ballot after the bill passed, though they expressed concern the plastics industry will try to weaken the requirements.

Plastic makers would form their own industry group tasked with developing a plan to meet the requirements, which would need approval from the state's recycling department. They'll be required to collect \$500 million annually from producers for a fund

aimed at cleaning up plastic pollution. Maine, Oregon and Colorado have similar producer responsibility systems.

Sen. Ben Allen, a Santa Monica Democrat who led negotiations on the bill, said it represented an example of two groups that are often at odds — environmentalists and industry — coming together to make positive change.

He called it a "strong, meaningful compromise that will put California at the forefront of addressing a major global problem."



**Rural North San Juan resident Mark Burton holds his cat Jak outside of the Madelyn Helling Library where he, his family, and many pets remained evacuated from the Rice's Fire on Thursday, in Nevada City, Calif.**

## Improving weather helps with fight against Sierra Nevada fire

*Associate Press*

BRIDGEPORT, Calif. — Improving weather helped firefighters stop the spread of a Sierra Nevada wildfire that forced evacuation of several hundred people from their homes and injured 13 firefighters and a civilian, authorities said Thursday.

The Rices Fire remained at 904 acres while containment increased

to 20%, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said.

Firefighters were aided by cooler weather and an increase in humidity, Cal Fire said.

Injuries from the fire were heat-related problems, such as dehydration, fire officials said.

The wildfire began with a building fire Tuesday in Nevada County near the Yuba River. It burned that

structure and three nearby outbuildings, fire officials said.

Some evacuation orders were lifted Thursday as firefighters made progress but Cal Fire said 250 homes and other structures in small nearby communities remained under threat.

The fire burned down to the Yuba River but did not cross over into neighboring Yuba County.

## Official: Truck with 53 migrants who died cleared checkpoint

*Associated Press*

SAN ANTONIO — The tractor-trailer at the center of a human-smuggling attempt that left 53 people dead had passed through an inland U.S. Border Patrol checkpoint with migrants inside the sweltering rig earlier in its journey, a U.S. official said Thursday.

The truck went through the checkpoint on Interstate 35 located 26 miles northeast of the border city of Laredo, Texas.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation, said there were 73 people in the truck when it was discovered Monday in San Antonio, including the 53 who died. It was unclear if agents stopped the driver for questioning at the inland checkpoint or if the truck went through unimpeded.

The disclosure brings new attention to an old policy question of whether the roughly 110 inland highway checkpoints along the Mexican and Canadian borders are sufficiently effective at spotting people in cars and trucks who enter the United States illegally. They are generally located up to 100 miles from the border.

Texas state police also announced they would operate their own inland checkpoints for trac-

tor-trailers on the orders of Gov. Greg Abbott, who considers the Biden administration's efforts insufficient. It was unclear how many trucks they would be stopping.

Also Thursday, Homero Zamorano Jr., 45, the alleged driver of the tractor-trailer, made his initial appearance in San Antonio federal court. During a hearing that lasted about five minutes, Zamorano, wearing a white T-shirt and gray sweatpants, said very little, giving yes and no answers to questions from U.S. Magistrate Judge Elizabeth Chestney about his rights and the charges against him.

The judge appointed a federal public defender for Zamorano as well as a second attorney since the smuggling charge he faces carries a possible death sentence. She scheduled a hearing next week to determine if he is eligible for bail.

It remained unclear just how long the migrants were in the trailer on the sweltering day and whether having their cell phones confiscated by the smugglers before being placed inside contributed to the extremely high death toll. Emergency calls from trapped migrants have not emerged in this case as they have in earlier incidents.

## Some medical debt is being removed from US credit reports

*Associated Press*

Help is coming for many people with medical debt on their credit reports.

Starting Friday, the three major U.S. credit reporting companies will stop counting paid medical debt on the reports that banks, potential landlords and others use to judge creditworthiness. The companies also will start giving people a year to re-

solve delinquent medical debt that has been sent to collections before reporting it — up from six months previously.

Next year, the companies also will stop counting unpaid medical debt under at least \$500.

The companies say these moves will wipe out nearly 70% of the medical debt listed on consumer credit reports.

Patient advocates call that a

huge advance. But they question whether medical debt should be on credit reports at all, given that many see it as a poor indicator of whether someone is trustworthy for a loan or rent.

"These aren't people who bought shoes they couldn't afford," said Amanda Dunker, of the nonprofit Community Service Society of New York. "They went to a doctor because they were sick

or needed help with an injury."

The federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has said its research shows mortgages and credit cards are better predictors than medical bills of whether someone will repay a debt.

The agency, which monitors banks, lenders and other financial institutions, has noted that people often don't have time to shop for the best price when they

seek care and may have little control over the progress of a serious illness.

Medical billing errors can wind up on credit reports. And patients are sometimes unsure about what they owe or whether an insurer will eventually pay it.

The bureau is trying to determine whether unpaid medical bills should be included on credit reports.



## WORLD

## Inflation hits record 8.6% for 19 countries

Associated Press

LONDON — Inflation in countries using the euro set another eye-watering record, pushed higher by a huge increase in energy costs fueled partly by Russia's war in Ukraine.

Annual inflation in the eurozone's 19 countries hit 8.6% in June, surging past the 8.1% recorded in May, according to the latest numbers published Friday by the European Union statistics agency, Eurostat. Inflation is at its highest level since

recordkeeping for the euro began in 1997.

Energy prices rocketed 41.9%, and prices for food, alcohol and tobacco were up 8.9%, both faster than the increases recorded the previous month.

Demand for energy has risen as the global economy bounced back from the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine made things worse.

European Union leaders agreed to ban most Russian oil imports by

the year's end, driving a price spike. The 27-nation bloc wants to punish Moscow and reduce its reliance on Russian energy, but it's also adding to financial pain for people and businesses as utility bills and prices at the pump soar.

Russia also reduced deliveries of natural gas used to power industry and generate electricity last month to several EU countries like Germany, Italy and Austria, on top of cutting off gas to France, Poland, Bulgaria and others.

"Importantly, the oil embargo and gas supply squeeze that unfolded over the month of June have caused energy prices to soar," ING Bank's senior eurozone economist, Bert Colijn, wrote in a commentary.

Rising consumer prices are a problem worldwide, with the U.S. and Britain seeing inflation hit 40-year highs of 8.6% and 9.1%, respectively. That has led the U.S. Federal Reserve, Bank of England and other central banks worldwide to approve a series of interest rate hikes

to combat inflation.

Colijn said the eurozone's latest "ugly inflation reading" adds pressure on the European Central Bank to act quickly.

The ECB is planning its first interest rate hike in 11 years this month, followed by another increase in September. Bank President Christine Lagarde said this week that she wants to move gradually to tackle soaring consumer prices, to avoid stifling the economic recovery.

## European task force battling extremists withdraws from Mali

Associated Press

PARIS — A European military task force that helped Mali's government fight Islamic extremists has formally withdrawn from the West African country amid tensions with its ruling military junta.

The French military, which spearheaded the Takuba task force, announced Friday that it officially ended its work Thursday. The move was tied to France's decision earlier this year to withdraw troops from Mali after nine years helping Malian forces fight violent extremists who had threatened to seize power.

The Takuba force was composed of several hundred special forces troops from 10 countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden. It aimed at training and protecting Malian combat forces.

Despite the withdrawal, the French military called the force a "strategic and tactical success" and an example of "what Europeans are able to achieve together in complex security environments," saying

that lessons learned from Takuba could be used in future joint operations.

In announcing its pullout, France accused Mali's authorities of neglecting the fight against Islamic extremists. France is maintaining a military presence in neighboring West African nations facing threats from extremist violence.

The departure of the European force comes after the U.N. Security Council voted Wednesday to maintain the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Mali, while condemning its military rulers for using mercenaries who are accused of committing human rights and humanitarian violations.

Russia and China abstained from the French-drafted resolution, which extends the mandate of the mission until June 30, 2023, with its current ceiling of 13,289 military personnel and 1,920 international police.

Mali's junta, which seized power in August 2020, has grown closer to Russia as Moscow has looked to build alliances and gain sway in Africa.

## Mudslide leaves at least 19 dead, 50 missing in India

Associated Press

GAUHATI, India — Rescuers found five more bodies as they resumed clearing operations after an overnight halt looking for dozens of missing people after a mudslide triggered by weeks of heavy downpours killed at least 19 people at a railroad construction site in India's northeast, officials said Friday.

Soldiers joined more than 200 disaster response workers and police using earth-clearing equipment like bulldozers to rescue those buried under the debris in Noney, a town near Imphal, the

capital of Manipur state. But the terrain is making it difficult to move heavy equipment, said H. Guite, district magistrate, adding that he has asked for reinforcements.

Intermittent rain continues in the region where 19 bodies have been recovered so far after a hillside caved in and buried the railroad project area, Guite told The Associated Press.

Eighteen people with injuries have been hospitalized, said Guite. He put the number of people still unaccounted for at around 50.



HARRY LONG/AP

Pro-China supporters display Chinese flag to mark the 25th anniversary of the former British colony's return to Chinese rule in Hong Kong on Friday.

## Xi defends vision of Hong Kong on 25th anniversary of return

Associated Press

HONG KONG — China's leader Xi Jinping marked the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return with a speech Friday that emphasized Beijing's control over the former British colony under its vision of "one country, two systems" — countering criticism that the political and civic freedoms promised for the next quarter-century have been largely erased under Chinese rule.

Xi praised the city for overcoming "violent social unrest" — a reference to massive pro-democracy protests in 2019 that were followed by a Beijing-driven crackdown that has snuffed out dissent and shut down independent media, aligning Hong Kong more closely with stricter controls under China's ruling Communist Party.

The shift shocked many in the city of 7.4 million people that Britain returned to China in 1997 after running it as a colony for more than a century. As part of the agreement, China agreed to allow

Hong Kong to have its own government and legal system for 50 years.

In the ensuing years, Hong Kong activists pushed back against Chinese efforts to curtail freedoms in the city and even made demands for fully democratic elections, drawing out hundreds of thousands of people for marches in the streets.

Under Xi, that pushback has been silenced. For years, the anniversary of the July 1 handover was marked by an official ceremony in the morning and a protest march in the afternoon. Now, protesters have been cowed into silence in what the Communist Party hails as restoring stability to the city.

Xi said that Beijing has "comprehensive jurisdiction" over Hong Kong, and that Hong Kong should respect Chinese leadership, even as Beijing allows regions like Hong Kong and neighboring Macao to maintain their capitalist system and a degree of autonomy.

"After the return to the motherland, Hong Kong has overcome all kinds of challenges and moved forwards steadily," Xi said. "Regardless of whether it was the international financial crisis, the coronavirus pandemic or violent social unrest, nothing has stopped Hong Kong's progress."

His speech represented the culmination of what China scholar Jeff Wasserstrom has described as a push and pull between two competing visions of "one country, two systems."

Many in Hong Kong "fought for a more robust understanding of the two systems, to have an idea that there's a very different lifestyle there," said Wasserstrom, a professor at the University of California, Irvine, and author of "Vigil: Hong Kong on the Brink."

That view, at least for now, has lost out to the narrower one of the Communist Party, which is mainly interested in maintaining the economic advantages of Hong Kong's capitalist system, he said.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Authorities say a stolen Olympic gold medal found

**CA** ANAHEIM — A stolen Olympic gold medal belonging to a member of the 2020 U.S. Women’s Volleyball Team has been found in Southern California, authorities said Wednesday.

Jordyn Poulter reported the medal stolen May 25 after the Olympian discovered her car broken into at a parking garage in Anaheim, police said.

Detectives later arrested a suspect in the theft, but weren’t immediately able to locate the missing medal.

On Monday, the owners of an Anaheim barbershop reported finding the gold medal inside a plastic bag discarded outside their business, police said in a statement. They handed it over to police, who plan on returning it to Poulter.

The 31-year-old suspect is charged with residential burglary, vehicle burglary, identity theft and possession of narcotics, officials said earlier this month.

## Bison gores man who sought to protect family

**WY** YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — A bull bison gores a Colorado man in Yellowstone National Park this week, park officials said.

The 34-year-old man from Colorado Springs was walking with his family near Giant Geyser in the Old Faithful area when a bull bison charged the group, park officials said.

A video of the encounter posted on social media appeared to show the man was behind the bison when it charged other members of his party. The man ran up and appeared to be trying to keep himself between the bison and his family when the bison pursued a child who tried to run away. The man grabbed the child and was thrown by the bison while still holding the child.

They both got up and ran away. The man’s arm was injured, park officials said.

## Ski resort to retire name over sensitivity concerns

**VT** SOUTH POMFRET — A small ski area in Vermont has announced that it’s retiring its name, Suicide Six, this summer amid growing concerns about the insensitive nature of the historical name.

The resort said on its website that it shares those concerns and “embraces the increasing awareness surrounding mental health.”

“The feelings that the word ‘suicide’ evokes can have a significant impact on many in our community,” the resort statement said.

The resort’s website said the name originally came after the man who built one of the runs on Hill No. 6 joked that skiing the steep trail would be suicide.

A new name will be announced in the coming weeks for the ski area



NAM Y. HUH/AP

## All aboard

People get on a Chicago River tour boat in Chicago on Wednesday.

in South Pomfret, near Woodstock, which opened in 1936 and is home of the Fisk Trophy Race, a rite of passage for competitive skiers, according to the resort’s website.

## Fire damages century-old cottage next to lighthouse

**ME** GOULDSBORO — A house on the property of the Prospect Harbor Lighthouse caught fire Monday, officials said.

Multiple fire departments responded and smoke poured from windows of the century-old lightkeeper’s cottage in the town of Gouldsboro, east of Winter Harbor.

The blaze was quickly extinguished. There was no immediate word on the extent of damage.

The lighthouse dates to 1849 but the existing lighthouse, made of wood, went into service in 1891. The keeper’s cottage, built around the same time, is in a separate structure.

## 2 workers killed in sewer line trench collapse

**TX** JARRELL — The bodies of two men who died in the collapse of a sewer line trench in Jarrell on Tuesday were recovered early Wednesday morning, officials said.

Their identities are not yet being released because some of their relatives live out of the country. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Williamson County sheriff’s office are investi-

gating the cause of the accident.

The recovery of the bodies took 16 hours due to the depth of the trench and the soil, said Mark McAdams, chief officer with Emergency Services District #5, also known as the Jarrell Fire Department.

Rescuers had to use machinery to create terraces in the soil to remove the dirt before specially trained teams from several fire departments could begin digging to reach the bodies, he said.

A foreman and an excavator witnessed the trench collapse, said Nick Spinetto, a spokesman for the city of Jarrell. The two men who died were digging a sewer line for a housing project.

## Crews battle youth camp fire, no injuries reported

**MD** THURMONT — Crews battled a fire at an overnight summer camp in western Maryland on Wednesday morning, but no injuries were reported, officials said.

Firefighters were initially dispatched about 7:30 a.m. for a report of a fire in a building at Camp Airy for Boys in Thurmont, Frederick County Division of Fire & Rescue Services spokesperson Sarah Campbell said.

When units arrived on scene, no one was in the building, but they found smoke showing through the roof and a second alarm was initiated, Campbell said. It took about 100 firefighters from Maryland and

Pennsylvania three hours to bring the fire under control, but crews were still extinguishing hot spots in the building in the afternoon, she said.

Without fire hydrants near the camp, firefighters drew water from a large pond and two pools to battle the flames, Deputy Chief Kenny Poole said at a news conference.

## Amberjack count: Tags worth \$250 to anglers

**LA** NEW ORLEANS — Scientists are trying to get a better estimate of greater amberjack populations in the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, and this means the chance at a \$250 catch for anglers.

Although the popular sport and table fish are not overfished in the South Atlantic, they are in the Gulf of Mexico, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s fisheries division.

“Understanding how these two separately managed stocks are connected is vital for enacting proper management guidelines,” according to a news release from the University of South Alabama.

Greater amberjack are big silver fish named for the long amber line along each side from nose to first dorsal fin. They can grow up to 6 feet long and 200 pounds, though up to 40 pounds is most common, according to NOAA Fisheries.

As part of the Greater Amberjack Count, scientists led by Dr.

Sean Powers of the University of South Alabama plan to tag 750 greater amberjack with yellow-and-red plastic tags.

Anglers who catch one can clip off the tag or tags, call the phone number on one side of the tag to report the catch, size, location and other details, and mail the tag or tags to the address on the other side to get the reward. The tag number — AJ followed by five digits — is on both sides.

Some of the fish will have two external tags, to give scientists a better idea of how many tags fall off of fish.

## Authorities say fireworks seizure totaled 7 tons

**CA** AZUSA — A cache of illegal fireworks seized in a Los Angeles suburb this week was four times larger than initially reported, authorities said.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office said Tuesday that 14,000 pounds of fireworks were seized from a home in Azusa and a storage unit.

Initial reports estimated 3,500 pounds.

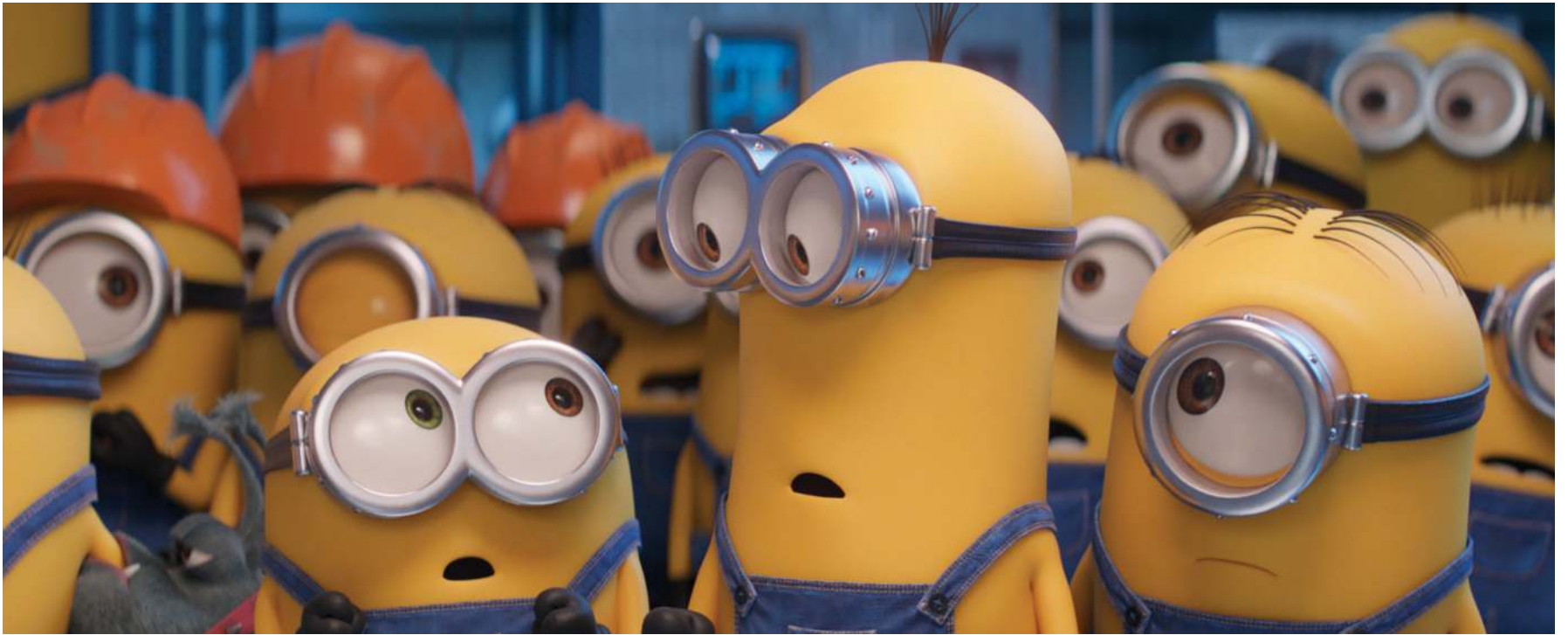
Twenty-seven homes were evacuated for hours Monday as authorities removed the explosives. Investigators also seized more than \$10,000 in cash and an illegal gun, and detained one person.

The investigation is continuing, prosecutors said.

From wire reports



## MOVIES



ILLUMINATION ENTERTAINMENT/AP

The “Despicable Me” franchise and its “Minions” spinoffs are the highest-grossing animated film franchise ever, making more than \$3.7 billion worldwide.

# Wide-eyed and (mostly) innocent

The not-so-evil Minions expand empire in 2nd prequel, ‘The Rise of Gru’

BY JAKE COYLE  
Associated Press

Some of the movies’ biggest stars barely speak a word of English, or any other language for that matter. Sure, you can occasionally hear them say “Banana!” or possibly “Smoochy smoochy!”, but most of what they say is gibberish. The Minions may be the world’s most popular, and lucrative, foreign language movie stars — even if “Minionese” isn’t an officially recognized language.

This summer, the goggle-wearing yellow ones will return yet again to further expand their sizable empire in “Minions: Rise of Gru,” now playing in theaters. The “Despicable Me” franchise (a fourth is due in 2024) and its “Minions” spinoffs already rank as the highest-grossing animated film franchise ever with more than \$3.7 billion in tickets sold worldwide.

That’s a big reason why “Rise of Gru” was held back by Universal Pictures for the past two years during the pandemic. The Minions — a second-banana scene-stealing horde of mostly incompetent but fiercely loyal henchmen — have in 12 years become a formidable force and a ubiquitous culture presence.

“There’s a lot of them so they have a kind of power in that they can overwhelm,” says Chris Renaud, producer of “Rise of Gru” and director of the first two “Despicable Me” movies. “It’s like power by wearing you out.”

“There’s a paradox about them,” says Kyle Balda, director of “Rise of Gru,” “Minions” and “Despicable Me 3.” “They want to serve an evil boss of some sort, yet there’s nothing evil about them, really. They’re quite good-natured except they like to see others fail a little bit. They



Gru, left, voiced by Steve Carell, greets Bob, Kevin and Stuart in a scene from the latest installment in the “Despicable Me”/“Minions” saga, “Minions: The Rise of Gru.”

laugh at each other’s misfortune. They’re very flawed, but their flaws end up working out for them. One of the things we often say is: They fail upward.”

Failing upward has gotten the Minions very far indeed, especially considering how close they came to never quite clicking in the first place. When the filmmakers and artists of the Paris-based animation studio Illumination were developing “Despicable Me,” the original script had them as “henchmen and technicians” and the early mock-ups drew them as hulking tough guys, almost Orc-like monsters.

Then they were cylindrically shaped robots. But the filmmakers — including Renaud, co-director Pierre Coffin and art director Eric Guillon — kept playing with the concept, trying to channel the spirit of the Jawas in “Star Wars” or the Oompa Loompas in “Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory.” Since “Despicable Me” was based on Gru, the evildoing protagonist, the Minions needed to help balance him. If the Minions loved him, he could love the Minions.

“Pierre was the one who said ‘Maybe they shouldn’t be robots,’” recalls Renaud. “I said, ‘Well, what about mole people?’ And he goes, ‘I don’t know what that is.’ So

I sent a couple ugly sketches to Pierre and Eric, and then Eric did a sketch that’s basically what you see today. We were like, ‘OK, that looks like a pill with a goggle on it. That could work.’”

But what, exactly, were the Minions? Even their creators weren’t immediately sure. They pondered a wide range of ideas. Were they created in a lab by the movie’s gadget-maker, Dr. Nefario? The Minions were effectively blank slates, and the filmmakers could funnel just about any slapstick influence through them, from Charlie Chaplin to James Bond.

A breakthrough, Renaud says, came while they were scripting a scene where the Minions craft Gru’s internet dating profile and “go full incompetent.”

That was when the “Despicable Me” filmmakers started to sense that they had hit on something potentially big — a truly cartoon creation with limitless possibilities. The Minions, wide-eyed and (mostly) innocent, were like kids.

“When we do design work, it’s like baby animals,” says Renaud. “Even if they’re behaving poorly, you forgive them and laugh at it, the way you would with your own kids.”

Just as key, too, was Coffin’s voicing of

the Minions. Coffin has voiced (with the aid of pitch modulation) nearly all the minions in each film, spitting out half-words, onomatopoeias and a grab bag of expressions from a wide spectrum of languages. If Coffin and the team had Indian food for lunch, the Minions would be shouting “Tikka Masala!” by dinner.

Because the Minions started out loosely defined, and their very nature a little mysterious, the franchise has offered them a chance to continually evolve. In 2015’s “Minions,” their backstory got filled in a little; a montage followed them through history and a long line of bosses, from a Tyrannosaurus rex to Napoleon — all of whom the Minions unwittingly sabotage. Some Minions — Kevin, Stuart and Bob — have been isolated like a trio of siblings. “The Rise of Gru” picks up after they meet young Gru, whom they call “mini-boss” even though he wants to be taken seriously as a villain.

“It’s sort of like a romantic comedy where it doesn’t all work out nicely in the beginning,” says Balda. “Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back. But in this case, Gru is the girl because it’s the Minions who are really courting him.”

Family moviegoing fell considerably during the pandemic, during which several prominent films for kids went straight to streaming. The Minions and “Rise of Gru” hope to help lead the way back to theatergoing. A trailer for the film ends with the Minions, like children at the movies, filing into a theater and hopping into their seats.

Meanwhile, the work continues for the filmmakers to find out a little more about the juggernaut they created, and to keep coming up with new gags for the Minions. In “Rise of Gru,” they learn kung fu, a complication considering the size of their legs.

Luckily, it’s not really even up to the filmmakers. The Minions are in charge.

Says Balda: “It’s almost like the Minions tell you what they want to do as you’re drawing them.”



## VIDEO GAMES

# Turtles' return more than just retro-cool

Shredder's Revenge uses modern flourishes such as individual fighting abilities to freshen adventure featuring the heroes in a half shell

By TODD MARTENS

Los Angeles Times

For the nostalgic Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles fan, new game Shredder's Revenge will be something of a dream. The work, after all, pays homage to the original 1987 cartoon series as well as the iconic 1991 Super Nintendo game Turtles in Time. It's the turtles at their most bodacious — lighthearted, chaotic and approachably humorous. And all of it is delivered with a loudly bright pixel art style.

But it's not the late '80s and early '90s sentimentality that makes the game work as well as it does.

It's the modern flourishes, whether that's newperson April O'Neil wielding broadcast equipment as a weapon or a bounty of cutesy animations that the henchmen engage in before the brawling starts.

Within minutes of booting up Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Shredder's Revenge I smiled, enjoying the way the evil Foot Clan had besieged the news station and immediately got to work behind the reception desk and in the recipe kitchen rather than trashing the place.

Nostalgia is an important ingredient in Shredder's Revenge, but revival-inspired video games work best when they're retro without feeling retro. That's been the specialty of Montreal-based Tribute Games and Paris-based Dotemu, both of whom combined talents to make an older version of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles feel fresh again. Rather than try to reboot the series like more recent film and television offerings, the studios instead took influences not only from decades-old Nintendo games but long discontinued '80s and '90s toys, wanting the game to have the charming, family-friendly appeal of spending time in a digital playset.

There are underlying motives to the game, of course. No doubt, for instance, modern keeper of the brand Nickelodeon wants the intellectual property to stay front of mind before a new animated film is set to debut on Netflix later this summer.

But to Tribute and Dotemu, Shredder's Revenge is another instance in which they can keep alive — and reintroduce — aging pixel art styles. While pixel art gets used heavily in independent games, and local studio Yacht Club Games has found fame in

crafting love letters to the 8- and 16-bit eras of yore, with Shredder's Revenge Tribute and Dotemu set out to revisit, revamp and improve upon the games of their youth.

Modern games tend to place a greater emphasis on story than in decades past, and the studios aimed to balance narrative animations with the mayhem of playing with up to six players. Encouraging players to replay the game was a core goal, as Shredder's Revenge should be able to be completed in less than three hours. That meant making sure that each character had a unique feel and that the narrative elements didn't get in the way. And then there were the decisions to be made over what to keep — and what to update — from earlier Ninja Turtles works.

In Shredder's Revenge, enemies seem to come from every direction, whether one is walking through a Channel 6 newsroom or skateboarding through Manhattan. They'll be idly going about their business when a character enters the screen, until more foes come from windows, doors or behind, and one can suddenly be fending off a pileup. With three difficulty levels, though, Shredder's Revenge should work for casual or family play sessions, as well as more hardcore runs for those who want to master the game's dozens of moves. But be careful. If you're anything like me, you'll lose a bout while being distracted looking at the parrots, hippos and giraffes in the background of the Central Park Zoo level.

"We went back to the '87 design of the Turtles," says Tribute Games co-founder Jean-Francois Major. "If you remember the TV shows back then, they were somewhat funny. They weren't super violent. They had more of a humorous tone. We tried to work with that and keep that in mind. While you're fighting, we're trying to be lighthearted."

Inspiration sometimes came from unexpected places. "We also took a lot of influence from the toy lines of the era," Major says, specifically citing some robotic toy vehicle designs that made it into the game. "They had some pretty funky toys. That adds to that vibe. We didn't really mind if they made it into the show or not. If they made sense, we opted for it."

Another modern invention: Each Turtle here moves at its own pace and comes with its own



Dotemu photos

**Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Shredder's Revenge makes use of aging pixel art styles. The developers prioritized repeat gameplay by making the game brief enough to be completed in less than three hours.**



**Each game level is designed to have different waves of enemies in different patterns depending on how many players are playing.**

set of fighting abilities. In the older arcade games, says Major, "the Turtles all shared their own move set." But even here the team referenced vintage designs, going back and looking at a six-player X-Men coin-operated, dual screen arcade game from the early '90s.

One objective, says Major, was to essentially ensure that the game felt different no matter how many people were playing.

"I don't even know what magic was needed for it to not have a big gap in the middle," says Major of the X-Men game. "That was something that really steered our decision-making. Could we do a six-player beat-'em-up? It's more fast-paced, really chaotic. The experience is a lot different when you're playing with six players. It becomes more of a party game than a tactical crowd control game. We designed each level to have different waves of enemies — dif-



**Foes can come from multiple directions in Shredder's Revenge, which offers three difficulty levels to encourage group play regardless of ability.**

ferent patterns — depending on how many players are playing. There was care that was put into that, and taking into account how many players are playing the level. That was a lot of work and a challenge for us, but I think it's something people will appreciate."

Initially, says Major, Nickelodeon approached Tribute Games to work on a different property, but Tribute was built for original games, and Major says the studio pushed for Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles if it was going to venture into licensed properties. Partly because many members of the team had experience with the brand from their Ubisoft days, and partly because those early Turtles games stand as major influences in the side-scrolling, beat-'em-up genre.

"The Turtle games left a mark on the whole industry," Major says. "Back then, if you had a Super Nintendo, it was the game

to own. If you had a Super Nintendo, you had to have Turtles in Time. And we wanted to go back to the era when people were huge TMNT fans."

Another change: from the start, says Major, it was crucial that reporter April O'Neil was a playable character. "It was always planned to do that," Major says. "April, from the first pitch that we did, was playable. I just feel it's time. We wanted to have a broader roster, and not just the Turtles. It was really time for April to have her moment to shine and not be just a damsel in distress. She's been with the Turtles all this time, and it's time for her to kick butt."

Consider it a decision — and a game — worthy of one of April's signature moves: the mic drop.

**Platforms:** Nintendo Switch, PlayStation consoles, Xbox consoles, PC

**Online:** shredders-revenge.com



## MUSIC



PHOTOS BY MARK HUMPHREY/AP

Tyler Bryant listens to finished record albums for flaws in a quality control room June 23 at the United Record Pressing facility in Nashville. United has been pressing records since 1949.

# Spinning out of control

Manufacturers struggle to keep pace with growing demand for vinyl

By DAVID SHARP  
Associated Press

**T**he arrival of the compact disc nearly killed off record albums, with vinyl pressing machines sold, scrapped and dismantled by major record labels.

Four decades later, with resuscitated record album sales producing double-digit annual growth, manufacturers are rapidly rebuilding an industry to keep pace with sales that reached \$1 billion last year.

Dozens of record-pressing factories have been built to try to meet demand in North America — and it's still not enough.

The industry “has found a new gear, and is accelerating at a new pace,” said Mark Michaels, CEO and chairman of United Record Pressing, the nation's largest record producer, in Nashville.

Demand for vinyl records has been growing at a double-digit pace for more than a decade, and mass merchandisers like Target were bolstering their selection of albums just as the pandemic provided a surprising jolt. With music tours canceled and people stuck at home, music lovers began snapping up record albums at an even faster pace.

Record album sales revenue grew a whopping 61% in 2021 — and reached \$1 billion for the first time since the 1980s — far outpacing growth rates for paid music subscriptions and streaming services like Spotify and

Pandora, according to the Recording Industry Association of America.

Record albums nearly spun into oblivion with sales overtaken by cassettes before the compact discs brushed both aside.

Then came digital downloads and online piracy, Apple iPods and 99-cent downloads. Streaming services are now ubiquitous.

But nostalgic baby boomers who missed thumbing through record albums in their local record stores helped to fuel a vinyl resurgence that started about 15 years ago.

It coincided with the launch of Record Store Day to celebrate indie record stores, said Larry Jaffee, author of “Record Store Day: The Most Improbable Comeback of the 21st Century.”

These days, though, it's more than just boomers.

A younger generation is buying turntables and albums — and cassette tapes, too — and a new generation of artists like Adele, Ariana Grande and Harry Styles have been moving to vinyl, Jaffee noted.

In Pittsburgh, taxi driver Jami Grady is too young, at age 34, to remember the heyday of record stores. But she finds records to be irresistible. She created wall art from some of the album covers from nearly 50 albums she's bought since 2019, starting with “Lemonade” by Beyoncé.

She acknowledges it's an indulgence since she already lis-

tens to music through Soundcloud, Apple Music and Pandora.

“For record players, there's something so beautiful about taking the record, putting it on the player and dropping the needle,” she said.

Manufacturers had to start nearly from scratch.

The major labels shuttered their plants long ago, but new ones are coming online. Record

**“To me, there is an electrifying sound when I play records that I don't feel from digital.”**

Mark Mazzetti  
independent A&R executive

makers launching over the past 10 to 15 years include Toronto-based Precision Record Pressing, Memphis Record Pressing, Cleveland's Gotta Groove Records and Kansas' Quality Record Pressing.

Jack White of White Stripes opened his own vinyl pressing plant, Third Man Pressing, in 2017 in Detroit, and pleaded with the major record labels to reopen manufacturing facilities.



Top, Elijah Lindsay loads vinyl records into shipping boxes. Above, Ricky Riehl inspects records for flaws before they are packaged.

There are now about 40 plants in the U.S. — most of them smaller operations — but challenges remain.

Nationwide, backlogs are six to eight months because of growing demand, and supply chain disruptions of raw materials, including vinyl polymers, have caused problems, Michaels said.

It's not easy to launch a new pressing plant because there are only a handful of companies — none in the U.S. — that make record-pressing machines. Those machines are backordered, as well.

People can debate the sound quality but it comes down to an emotional reaction, not technical specifications, said Bob Ludwig, a multi-Grammy winner who created Gateway Mastering Studios in Portland, Maine.

A friend who listened to Ludwig's remastered version of Queen's “Night at the Opera” called it “stunning” and “electric.”

“I love the vinyl experience. All of it. To me, there is an electrifying sound when I play records that I don't feel from digital,” said Mark Mazzetti, an independent A&R executive who worked for Sting, Janet Jackson and others at A&M Records.

No one knows the ceiling for record growth because of the constrained supply, said Chris Brown, vice president for finance at Bull Moose Records, a record store chain in New England.

New releases often fail to meet demand, and reorders take even longer, leaving little capacity for lesser-known eclectic albums, he said.

“Part of the fun of collecting records is being surprised,” he said. “But mid-level stuff doesn't get printed, or there's a long wait.”

Record producers gathered June 23-24 in Nashville for their annual trade event called Making Vinyl. People in the business are excited about the growth, and it's almost like “printing money” for manufacturers as sales soar to new heights, said Bryan Ekus, president of Making Vinyl.

No one knows how long the run will continue, so there's a sense that “we should make hay while the sun shines,” Ekus said.

In Nashville, United Record Pressing launched in 1949 and never stopped producing records. It's currently in the midst of a \$15 million expansion that will triple its capacity in the middle of next year.

Michaels can't help but to wonder how long the double-digit growth can be sustained, but he said he's optimistic about the future.

It's heartwarming and good for business to see high schoolers and young adults showing an interest in records, he said.

“I believe in music and I believe in the importance of music in people's lives. I don't think that changes,” he said.



## HEALTH &amp; FITNESS

# Making sleep a higher priority

American Heart Association adds sleep duration to its list of essential components of overall health

By MICHAEL MERSCHER

American Heart Association News

**P**roper sleep is essential, and a widely used scoring system for heart and brain health is being redefined to reflect that.

Since 2010, the American Heart Association has said seven modifiable components — maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, being physically active, eating a healthy diet and controlling blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar — were key to ideal cardiovascular health.

Those components, dubbed Life's Simple 7, became a common way for doctors and patients to rate and discuss heart and brain health. It's also been a key research tool, used in more than 2,500 scientific papers.

Sleep duration joins those seven original metrics in a revised scoring tool, now called Life's Essential 8, which was published last Wednesday as an AHA presidential advisory in the journal *Circulation*.

The update is about much more than adding sleep, said AHA president Dr. Donald Lloyd-Jones, who led the expert panel that wrote the advisory. The new score incorporates 12 years of research and enhances its evaluation of diet, exercise and more.

"We're hoping that this will, in fact, be a moment of empowerment, a moment of optimism for people to think positively about their health," said Lloyd-Jones, a cardiologist, epidemiologist and chair of preventive medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. "And this is a good way for them to measure it today, monitor it over time and focus on ways to maintain and improve it."

Adults should average seven to nine hours of sleep a night, the advisory says. For children, the amount varies by age.

Lloyd-Jones, who led the creation of the original seven categories in 2010, said sleep's importance was clear even then. But it was difficult to agree on how to score it, because sleep information wasn't being collected in large national databases.

"Now it is," he said, and "the science has shown us how sleep is part and parcel of cardiovascular health."

The advisory notes that both too much and too little sleep are associated with heart disease and that poor sleep health is linked to poor psychological health, an important driver of heart disease.

"And of course, sleep affects

all the other seven metrics here as well," Lloyd-Jones said.

Cheryl Anderson, dean of the Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science at the University of California, San Diego, called Life's Essential 8 "a big deal" both for health care professionals and people who want to understand their cardiovascular health.

**"We're hoping that this will, in fact, be a moment of empowerment, a moment of optimism for people to think positively about their health. And this is a good way for them to measure it today, monitor it over time and focus on ways to maintain and improve it."**

AHA President Dr. Donald Lloyd-Jones  
lead of expert panel that wrote new advisory

Anderson, who co-wrote the advisory, said the update is "a really good recognition of how science has changed, and our ability to adapt according to the changes."

The revisions introduce a 100-point measure of heart health, which can be taken online at [heart.org/lifes8](http://heart.org/lifes8). The new score replaces a 14-point scale and tweaks several of the original categories.

On smoking, for example, the old measure considered only traditional cigarette use. The new score includes nicotine use and exposure from electronic cigarettes, as well as the effects of secondhand exposure.

The new score also shifts from emphasizing total cholesterol in favor of measuring non-high-density lipoprotein cholesterol. It's now calculated by subtracting

"good" HDL cholesterol from total cholesterol, leaving just a measurement of the "bad" types of cholesterol. The new tool also expands how blood glucose is evaluated.

The system allows for more precise evaluation of exercise levels, Lloyd-Jones said. And it looks at diet in a new way. "Before, we had five very clunky yes-or-no metrics to say whether someone had a healthy diet or not. And that wasn't really appropriate for all different types of eating patterns and cultures."

Anderson said the new diet component rates how closely someone follows a Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, or DASH, type of diet.

But although the measure broadens the foods evaluated, people shouldn't focus on single items, Anderson said. "We want to think about the whole package. There is no one food or nutrient that will completely overhaul one's cardiovascular health."

Some key components of heart health, such as stress, are not part of the new score.

"Stress is real," Lloyd-Jones said. "It's an important part of all of our lives. But it's hard to measure how we internalize that stress, and what the effect is on our health status."

The advisory discusses the importance of both psychological health and the societal and environmental factors known as the social determinants of health, which include whether someone has access to healthy food, medical care or a safe place to exercise. But although Lloyd-Jones called them "foundational" for heart health, he said such factors couldn't be boiled down into something that fit the scoring system.

The old scoring system sorted responses in its seven categories as either "poor," "intermediate" or "ideal." Fewer than 1% of people in the U.S. across all age groups reached the overall "ideal" level, primarily because of diet, the advisory says.

But for people who want to improve their heart health, the new approach makes progress easier to see.

"The positive changes don't have to be really big," Anderson said. "They can be moderate. And you can still get credit for it within this new approach."

Good heart health begins with talking with a doctor to know how you're doing in all eight categories,

Lloyd-Jones said. Any improvement helps.

"If I have three or four things of the eight that are suboptimal that I could work on, do I need to tackle three or four at once? Absolutely not," he said. "The data show us that picking and improving one thing will actually have a measurable impact on improving your health and improving your health outcomes."







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Ernie Gates

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OPINION

Gun, abortion rulings revealed democracy’s limits

**BY JASON WILLOCK**  
*The Washington Post*  
Liberals and conservatives disagree bitterly about the results of last week’s Supreme Court cases on guns and abortion, but beneath that disagreement about outcomes lies a surprising agreement about process: Some things are too important to be resolved by elections.

For conservatives, the right to keep and bear arms is a case in point, as the Supreme Court’s majority explained in the Second Amendment case New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen. Striking down New York’s onerous restrictions on the concealed carry of handguns, the justices rejected arguments that they should defer to the state’s elected lawmakers. While deferring to the democratic process is “understandable — and, elsewhere, appropriate — it is not deference that the Constitution demands here,” wrote Justice Clarence Thomas for the court’s six conservatives.

In dissent, then-Justice Stephen Breyer, joined by Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan, warned that the court was limiting the ability of “democratically elected officials” to reduce gun violence. Yet in the next day’s abortion ruling overturning Roe v. Wade, the court’s ideological wings switched places. The conservative justices appealed to the virtue of democratic decision-making, which the court’s liberals rejected.

“The Court short-circuited the democratic process by closing it to the large number of Americans who disagreed with Roe,” wrote Justice Samuel Alito for the majority in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, which returned abortion policy to elected lawmakers. The same three liberal dissenters this time offered a soaring endorsement of counter-majoritarian governance: “We believe in a Constitution that puts some issues off limits to

majority rule,” they wrote in defending a right to abortion. “However divisive, a right is not at the people’s mercy.” The Bruen gun-rights majority might as well have said the same thing.

The court’s divide is not really about “democracy,” as commentators sometimes say. There’s no appetite on the left or right for unrestrained majority rule. The contest instead is over how to identify the issues that can legitimately be placed outside the scope of democratic contestation.

After all, curtailing democracy in some spheres is necessary to its proper functioning in others. If there are no limits on political majorities, then political minorities may “start thinking they’re existentially threatened by the rotation of power,” the political scientist Steven Teles has observed. That could undermine the voluntary acquiescence that makes electoral politics possible.

The Constitution is designed to maintain this balance. In last week’s decisions, the court’s liberal and conservative wings offered very different theories about when the document takes an issue out of the voters’ hands.

For the court’s conservatives, majorities must be constrained by the text of the Bill of Rights. In his Bruen opinion, Thomas offered an even stricter constraint, asserting that any limits on gun rights must be “consistent with the Nation’s historical tradition of firearm regulation,” which can elucidate the Second Amendment’s meaning in the 18th and 19th centuries.

For the court’s liberals, democratic majorities should not be shackled so much by text and tradition, but by the modernizing sensibilities of governing elites in the judiciary and administrative state. In their Dobbs dissent, the liberal justices argued that however constitutional rights were understood when they were ratified, there is room for “evolution in

their scope and meaning.” In this view, the justices’ job is in part to make the Constitution “responsive to new societal understandings and conditions,” such as by maintaining abortion rights outside the democratic process.

A more cynical way of putting this is that democracies need self-justifications, even myths, for abridging majority rule. The originalist justification, expressed by Justice Joseph Story in 1833, is that the Constitution represents the “deliberate will of the people,” carrying more weight than their “momentary ebullitions,” or current preferences. The liberal justification is that modern judges can periodically update the social compact to liberate Americans from the dead hand of the constitutional past.

The power to “withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities,” as the court put it in a 1943 decision, is an awesome but necessary one in a democracy. The Supreme Court’s conservative justices believe that when it comes to abortion, liberal justices have for decades been exercising this power without authorization — a usurpation that has damaged the country’s political institutions.

This sentiment, shared by tens of millions of Americans, contributed to a populist backlash that helped create the current court’s conservative majority. That majority hopes that enforcing the Constitution’s original meaning will put the court on a sturdier political foundation, but it could also invite a popular backlash of its own. It’s a historic experiment that will test the Constitution’s continued alignment with American political life, and our worthiness of its commands.

Jason Willock writes a regular Washington Post column on legal issues, political ideas and foreign affairs.

What 53 deaths reveal about migration from Mexico

**BY LEÓN KRAUZE**  
*Special to The Washington Post*

Soon after the horrific discovery of more than 40 dead migrants (the number would eventually grow to 53) and several injured inside a tractor-trailer in San Antonio, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott tried to use the tragedy to score a political point. “These deaths are on [President Joe] Biden,” Abbott, a Republican, tweeted. “They are a result of his deadly open border policies.”

His statement was disingenuous. In reality, the conditions that led dozens of human beings — including several children — to pile up inside a truck, without water or proper ventilation, is not the sole responsibility of the U.S. president. It is a failure shared by many regional actors, including the governor himself, who has made the dehumanization of the immigrant community a recurring political ploy.

The details of the horrors in San Antonio also illustrate the failure of Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. According to Mexico’s consul general in San Antonio, at least 27 of the immigrants who died were Mexican. This revealing figure confirms a worrying trend: After years of stability, in which more Mexicans returned to Mexico than those who immigrated to the United States, the displacement of Mexicans to the north has grown again.

During the 2018 presidential campaign and the early days of his presidency, López Obrador specifically promised that by the end of his

administration in 2024, migration from Mexico would decrease, if not disappear. “People will be working where they were born, close to their relatives, their environment, with its customs and culture,” he wrote in his campaign book. “No one, out of necessity, to mitigate his hunger and his poverty, will be forced to leave their homeland.”

Four years on, the opposite has happened: In 2021, Mexico was the largest source of illegal migration to the United States, with 608,000 Mexican nationals arrested by Border Patrol.

“When the government of President López Obrador began, we had 12 years of steadiness in the migratory flow from Mexico to the United States and now we are four or five times above that level,” Tonatihu Guillén Lopez, who was the first director of migration policy for López Obrador, told me. “The government received a period of very low migration and will be leaving with very high numbers.”

For Carlos Heredia, a professor at the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) and an expert in migration, the current trends in migration stem from an increase in the number of Mexican migrants in the United States, violence in many regions of the country and the struggling national economy. Between 2020 and 2021, during an alarming surge in homicides, the number of people displaced due to violence in Mexico quadrupled. The economy remains stagnant. These factors combine to leave many increasingly

desperate to make the precarious journey to and across the border.

The Mexican government’s responsibility goes beyond its failure to discourage the flow of Mexican migration to the north. The proliferation of human trafficking networks, which often operate with impunity throughout Mexico and in the U.S., is directly related to the horror in San Antonio. “Criminal organizations dedicated to human trafficking have found rougher and dangerous methods for those who want to get to the other side,” writes Mexican journalist Carlos Puig. “And that includes piling them up in a trailer in 100 degree heat.”

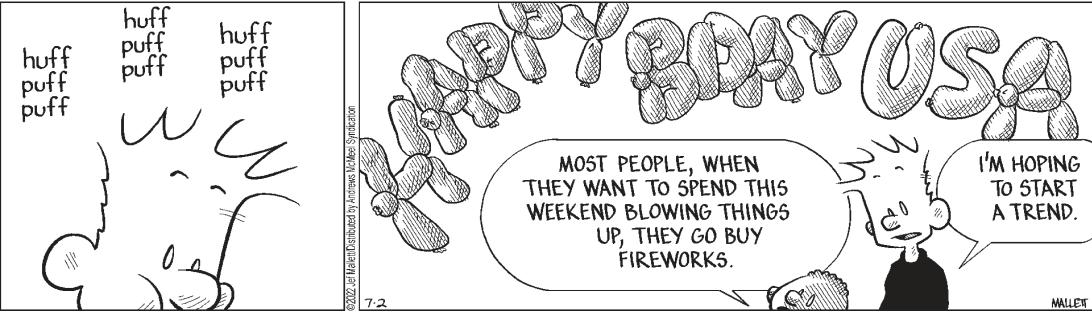
For migration expert Heredia, Mexico’s government has “failed in almost everything” in its efforts to curtail trafficking networks. In 2021, Mexican security officials reported a 228% jump in people-smuggling crimes compared to 2020. “It is an extraordinarily lucrative business that has evaded containment, with anchorage on both sides of the border.”

In an interview at the beginning of his administration, López Obrador mused: “A day will come during my government that Mexicans will not go to work in the United States, because they will have jobs and will be happy where they were born.” The dozens of Mexican bodies piled inside that truck in the sweltering Texas heat bely that promise, in the most tragic way possible.

León Krauze is a Mexican journalist and author. He is currently national news anchor for Univision, based out of Miami.



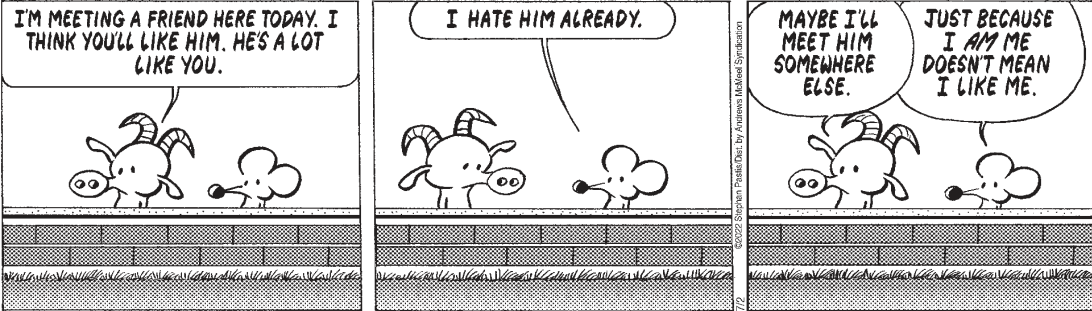
Frazz



Dilbert



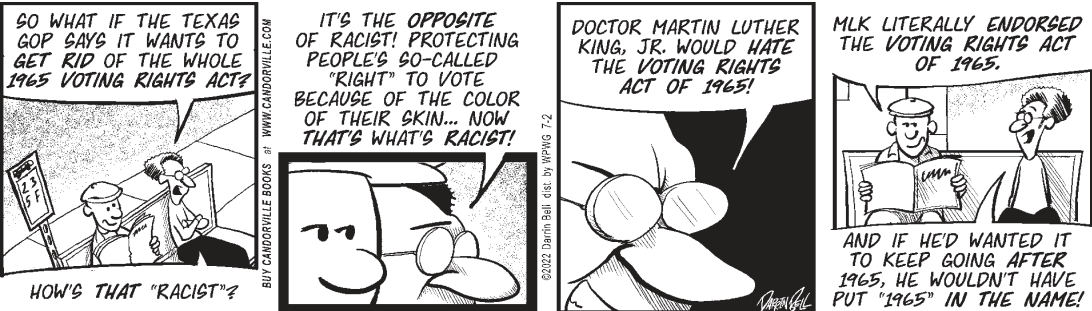
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	
11							12					13
14							15					
16				17		18				19		
20			21		22				23			
24				25		26		27				
			28		29		30					
31	32	33				34		35		36	37	38
39					40		41		42			
43				44				45		46		
47			48				49		50			
51							52					
	53						54					

- ACROSS
- 49 Take it slow
- 51 Saunter
- 52 Andean pack animals
- 53 Rescued
- 54 Austin native
- DOWN
- 18 Filch
- 21 Hardly hip
- 23 — salts
- 25 Pen tip
- 27 Computer image, briefly
- 29 Novelist Enid
- 31 Bridges
- 32 Doles out
- 33 Cosa —
- 34 Sticky stuff
- 36 Blueprint, e.g.
- 37 Pacific islander
- 38 Short jackets
- 41 Resided
- 44 Only
- 45 Auction
- 48 "Mazel —!"
- 50 Jazz band instrument

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

7-2 CRYPTOQUIP

EVX TLGREVTPTYRNE, TZE

NXCLSVRGY BTL NTFX NQXSFRFXGN

WZE BRGMRGY GTGX, RN CE

C PTNN BTL WRLMN.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: PROLONGED, BITTER RIVALRY BETWEEN TWO MEN WHO ARE PEDDLING MOSTLY THE SAME WARES: A VEND-ETTA.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Y equals G



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# SCOREBOARD/SPORTS BRIEFS

## PRO SOCCER

MLS							
EASTERN CONFERENCE							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
CF Montréal	9	6	2	29	32	29	
New York	8	5	5	29	28	20	
Philadelphia	7	2	8	29	22	13	
NYCFC	8	4	4	28	31	17	
Orlando City	7	6	4	25	20	23	
Cincinnati	7	7	3	24	27	30	
New England	6	5	6	24	27	26	
Inter Miami CF	6	7	3	21	17	25	
Columbus	5	5	6	21	20	18	
Charlotte FC	6	10	2	20	17	22	
Atlanta	5	7	4	19	24	24	
Toronto FC	5	9	3	18	24	32	
Chicago	4	8	5	17	15	22	
D.C. United	4	9	2	14	18	27	
WESTERN CONFERENCE							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
LAFC	11	3	3	36	35	18	
Austin FC	9	4	4	31	32	20	
Real Salt Lake	8	4	5	29	20	19	
FC Dallas	7	5	5	26	27	20	
Nashville	7	5	5	26	22	19	
LA Galaxy	7	6	3	24	20	19	
Seattle	7	7	2	23	24	19	
Portland	5	6	7	22	27	27	
Houston	6	8	3	21	21	21	
Minnesota	6	8	3	21	20	21	
Vancouver	6	8	3	21	18	28	
Colorado	5	7	4	19	17	21	
Sporting KC	4	10	4	16	16	32	
San Jose	3	7	6	15	25	34	

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

Thursday's games							
Austin FC 1, Charlotte FC 0							
New York 2, Atlanta 1							
Saturday's games							
Seattle at Toronto FC							
Los Angeles FC at Vancouver							
Sunday's games							
Atlanta at New York City FC							
Philadelphia at Columbus							
Cincinnati at New England							
Real Salt Lake at Minnesota							
New York at Sporting Kansas City							
Charlotte FC at Houston							
Portland at Nashville							
Chicago at San Jose							
Monday's games							
D.C. United at Orlando City							
Austin FC at Colorado							
Miami at FC Dallas							
CF Montréal at LA Galaxy							
Friday, July 8							
D.C. United at Philadelphia							
LA Galaxy at Los Angeles FC							
Minnesota at Vancouver							
Saturday, July 9							
New England at New York City FC							
Portland at Seattle							
Austin FC at Atlanta							
Nashville at Charlotte FC							
New York at Cincinnati							
Sporting Kansas City at CF Montréal							
San Jose at Toronto FC							
Miami at Orlando City							
Columbus at Chicago							
FC Dallas at Houston							
Colorado at Real Salt Lake							
Tuesday, July 12							
Houston at Austin FC							
NWSL							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
SD Wave FC	5	2	3	18	16	8	
Portland	4	1	4	16	21	7	
Chicago	4	1	4	16	14	10	
Houston	4	2	3	15	15	10	
OL Reign	3	2	4	13	7	6	
Angel City FC	4	4	1	13	7	9	
Washington	1	3	6	9	10	12	
Louisville	2	4	3	9	10	14	
Gotham FC	3	4	0	9	5	9	
Kansas City	2	4	3	9	8	13	
Orlando	2	5	2	8	9	24	
North Carolina	2	4	1	7	12	12	

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

Friday's games							
Kansas City at Houston							
North Carolina at OL Reign							
Portland at Angel City FC							
Saturday's game							
Chicago at Gotham FC							
Sunday's games							
Washington at San Diego Wave FC							
Louisville at Orlando							
Friday, July 8							
Houston at Orlando							
Gotham FC at Louisville							
Saturday, July 9							
San Diego Wave FC at Angel City FC							
Sunday, July 10							
Kansas City at Washington							
North Carolina at Chicago							
Portland at OL Reign							

## TENNIS

Wimbledon							
Thursday							
At All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club							
London							
Surface: Grass							
Men's Singles							
Second Round							
Daniel Elahi Galan, Colombia, def. Roberto Bautista Agut (17), Spain, walkover.							
Alex Molcan, Slovakia, def. Marcos Giron, United States, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4.							
Taylor Fritz (11), United States, def. Alastair Gray, Britain, 6-3, 7-6 (3), 6-3.							
Botic Van de Zandschulp (21), Netherlands, def. Emil Ruusuvuori, Finland, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4, 6-4.							
Richard Gasquet, France, def. Mackenzie McDonald, United States, 6-3, 3-6, 6-4, 6-3.							
Nick Kyrgios, Australia, def. Filip Krajinovic (26), Serbia, 6-2, 6-3, 6-1.							
Lorenzo Sonego (27), Italy, def. Hugo Gaston, France, 7-6 (4), 6-4, 6-4.							
Stefanos Tsitsipas (4), Greece, def. Jordan Thompson, Australia, 6-2, 6-3, 7-5.							
Cristian Garin, Chile, def. Hugo Grenier, France, 6-3, 6-1, 6-1.							
Liam Broady, Britain, def. Diego Schwartzman (12), Argentina, 6-2, 4-6, 0-6, 7-6 (6), 6-1.							
Brandon Nakashima, United States, def. Denis Shapovalov (13), Canada, 6-2, 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (6).							
Jenson Brooksby (29), United States, def. Benjamin Bonzi, France, 7-6 (3), 7-5, 6-3.							
Rafael Nadal (2), Spain, def. Ricardas Berankis, Lithuania, 6-4, 6-4, 4-6, 6-3.							
Alex de Minaur (19), Australia, def. Jack Draper, Britain, 5-7, 7-6 (0), 6-2, 6-3.							
Women's Singles							
Second Round							
Paula Badosa (4), Spain, def. Irina Bara, Romania, 6-3, 6-2.							
Ajla Tomljanovic, Australia, def. Catherine Harrison, United States, 6-2, 6-2.							
Alize Cornet, France, def. Claire Liu, United States, 6-3, 6-3.							
Petra Kvitova (25), Czech Republic, def. Ana Bogdan, Romania, 6-1, 7-6 (5).							
Zheng Qinwen, China, def. Greet Minnen, Belgium, 6-4, 6-1.							
Elena Rybakina (17), Kazakhstan, def. Bianca Andreescu, Canada, 6-4, 7-6 (5).							
Katie Boulter, Britain, def. Karolina Pliskova (6), Czech Republic, 3-6, 7-6 (4), 6-4.							
Harmony Tan, France, def. Sara Sorribes Tormo (32), Spain, 6-3, 6-4.							
Barbora Krejčíková (13), Czech Republic, def. Viktorija Golubic, Switzerland, 6-3, 6-4.							
Jessica Pegula (8), United States, def. Harriet Dart, Britain, 4-6, 6-3, 6-1.							
Petra Martic, Croatia, def. Kristina Kucova, Slovakia, 7-6 (4), 6-3.							
Magdalena Frech, Poland, def. Anna-Karolina Schmiedlova, Slovakia, 6-4, 6-4.							
Amanda Anisimova (20), United States, def. Lauren Davis, United States, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4.							
Iga Swiatek (1), Poland, def. Lesley Pattinama Kerkhove, Netherlands, 6-4, 4-6, 6-3.							
Simona Halep (16), Romania, def. Kirsten Flipkens, Belgium, 7-5, 6-4.							
Coco Gauff (11), United States, def. Mihaela Buzarnescu, Romania, 6-2, 6-3.							
Men's Doubles							
First Round							
Nicolas Mahut and Edouard Roger-Vasselin (12), France, def. Tomas Martin Etcheverry and Francisco Cerundolo, Argentina, 6-1, 6-2, 6-3.							
Rajeev Ram, United States, and Joe Salisbury (1), Britain, def. Carlos Taberner,							

## PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA				
EASTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	14	5	.737	—
Connecticut	13	7	.650	1½
Washington	13	9	.591	2½
Atlanta	9	11	.450	5½
New York	8	11	.421	6
Indiana	5	16	.238	10
WESTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Las Vegas	14	5	.737	—
Seattle	12	7	.632	2
Dallas	9	11	.450	5½
Phoenix	9	12	.429	6
Los Angeles	7	11	.389	6½
Minnesota	6	14	.300	8½



NFL/MLB

Timing of ruling on Watson uncertain

By Rob Maaddi  
Associated Press

Deshaun Watson’s disciplinary hearing concluded Thursday with the NFL adamant about an indefinite suspension of at least one year and the quarterback’s legal team arguing there’s no basis for that punishment, two people with knowledge of the case told The Associated Press.

Both sides presented their arguments over three days before former U.S. District Judge Sue Robinson in Delaware, according to both people who spoke on condition of anonymity because the hearing isn’t public.

Watson was accused of sexual misconduct by 24 women and settled 20 of the civil lawsuits.

Robinson, who was jointly appointed by the league and the NFL Players’ Association, will determine whether Watson violated the NFL’s personal conduct policy and whether to impose discipline.

Post-hearing briefs are due the week of July 11 so it’s uncertain when Robinson will make a ruling. The Cleveland Browns are hoping to know Watson’s availability before training camp starts July 27.

If either the union or league appeals Robinson’s decision, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell or his designee “will issue a written decision that will constitute full, final and complete disposition of the dispute,” per terms of Article 46 in the collective bargaining agreement.

A person familiar with the case told the AP the league believes it presented evidence to warrant keeping Watson off the field this season. The person said the league’s investigation determined Watson committed multiple violations of the personal conduct policy and he would be required to undergo counseling before returning.

A person familiar with Watson’s defense told the AP they expect a suspension. Asked what would be acceptable, the person said: “our goal is to get him back on the field this year.”

Two separate Texas grand juries declined to indict Watson on criminal complaints stemming from the allegations.

Watson has denied any wrongdoing and vowed to clear his name.

This is the first hearing for Robinson, who was the first female Chief Judge for the District of Delaware. Previously, Goodell had the authority to impose discipline for violations of the personal conduct policy.

MLB scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	56	21	.727	—
Boston	43	33	.566	12½
Toronto	43	33	.566	12½
Tampa Bay	40	35	.533	15
Baltimore	35	42	.455	21

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	43	36	.544	—
Cleveland	39	34	.534	1
Chicago	35	39	.473	5½
Detroit	29	45	.392	11½
Kansas City	27	47	.365	13½

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	48	27	.640	—
Texas	36	38	.486	11½
Los Angeles	37	41	.474	12½
Seattle	37	41	.474	12½
Oakland	25	53	.321	24½

National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	47	29	.618	—
Atlanta	44	33	.571	3½
Philadelphia	40	37	.519	7½
Miami	34	40	.459	12
Washington	29	49	.372	19

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	44	34	.564	—
St. Louis	43	35	.551	1
Pittsburgh	31	45	.408	12
Chicago	30	46	.395	13
Cincinnati	26	49	.347	16½

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	47	28	.627	—
San Diego	46	32	.590	2½
San Francisco	40	34	.541	6½
Arizona	34	42	.447	13½
Colorado	33	43	.434	14½

Thursday's games	
Cleveland 5, Minnesota 3	
Houston 2, N.Y. Yankees 1	
Toronto 4, Tampa Bay 1	
Seattle 8, Oakland 6	
Philadelphia 14, Atlanta 4	
Pittsburgh 8, Milwaukee 7	
Chicago Cubs 15, Cincinnati 7	
L.A. Dodgers 3, San Diego 1	

Friday's games	
Boston at Chicago Cubs	
Tampa Bay at Toronto	
Kansas City at Detroit	
N.Y. Yankees at Cleveland	
Texas at N.Y. Mets	
Baltimore at Minnesota	
L.A. Angels at Houston	
Oakland at Seattle	
Chicago White Sox at San Francisco	
Miami at Washington	
St. Louis at Philadelphia	
Atlanta at Cincinnati	
Milwaukee at Pittsburgh	
Arizona at Colorado	
San Diego at L.A. Dodgers	

Saturday's games	
Tampa Bay (McClanahan 8-3, TBD) at Toronto (Gausman 6-6, TBD), 2	
Baltimore (Lyles 4-7) at Minnesota (Gray 4-1)	
Chicago White Sox (Cease 6-3) at San Francisco (Webb 7-2)	
Kansas City (Singer 3-3) at Detroit (Fardo 1-4)	
L.A. Angels (Sandoval 3-2) at Houston (Urquidy 6-3)	
Oakland (Blackburn 6-3) at Seattle (Kirby 2-3)	
Texas (Pérez 6-2) at N.Y. Mets (Peterson 4-1)	
N.Y. Yankees (Cortes 6-3) at Cleveland (McKenzie 4-6)	
Boston (Winckowski 3-1) at Chicago Cubs (Mills 0-1)	
Miami (Castano 0-1) at Washington (Treault 2-1)	
Milwaukee (TBD) at Pittsburgh (Thompson 3-5)	
St. Louis (Liberatore 2-1) at Philadelphia (Gibson 4-3)	
Atlanta (Strider 3-2) at Cincinnati (Mahle 3-6)	
San Diego (Darvish 7-3) at L.A. Dodgers (Anderson 8-1)	
Arizona (Keuchel 2-5) at Colorado (Gomber 3-7)	

Calendar	
July 17-19	— Amateur draft, Los Angeles.
July 19	— All-Star Game, Los Angeles.
July/August TBD	— Deadline for drafted players to sign, except for players who have exhausted college eligibility.
July 24	— Hall of Fame induction ceremonies, Cooperstown, N.Y.
July 25	— Deadline for agreement between MLB and players' association for 2024 international amateur draft.



RON SCHWANE/AP

The Guardians’ Andres Giménez flips his bat after hitting a game-winning, two-run home run against the Minnesota Twins during the ninth inning on Thursday in Cleveland. The Guardians won 5-3.

ROUNDUP

Giménez homers in ninth, Guardians stun Twins again

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Andrés Giménez watched his home run clear the center-field fence, kissed his bat and then flipped it while turning toward Minnesota’s stunned dugout.

For the second day in a row, the Cleveland Guardians won a game they probably should have lost and handed the Twins another crushing defeat.

Giménez blasted a two-run homer in the ninth inning as the Guardians walked off against the Twins again, beating their AL Central rivals 5-3 on Thursday to take the five-game series and move within one game of first place.

When he crossed the plate, Giménez was splashed with water and bubble gum rained down on his head as the Guardians, who had only one hit through seven innings, celebrated their 17th last at-bat win — the most in the majors.

On Wednesday, Josh Naylor’s two-run homer in the 10th inning sent the Guardians past the Twins, whose bullpen has imploded against Cleveland several times this season.

“We keep fighting until the end,” Giménez said.

Six of Cleveland’s last at-bat wins have come against the Twins. The teams don’t play again until September, when they meet seven times.

Twins manager Rocco Baldelli called Wednesday’s loss “excruciating” when he met with reporters Thursday morning. He was searching for a similar word several hours later.

“Probably the most difficult series I’ve ever been a part of,” he said. “I’ve never seen five games against one team in four days that

felt like that.”

**Astros 2, Yankees:** Alex Bregman hit a two-run double early and host Houston held on to beat New York.

Thursday’s game completes a stretch for the Astros of nine straight games against New York teams. Houston went 3-2 against the major league-leading Yankees and swept four games with the Mets, who had baseball’s second best record before being overtaken by the Astros.

Houston starter Luis García (6-5) allowed three hits and one run with six strikeouts in 5½ innings for his third straight win.

**Pirates 8, Brewers 7:** Backup catcher Michael Perez had three home runs, rookies Oneil Cruz and Jack Suwinski hit back-to-back shots and host Pittsburgh beat Milwaukee.

It was the first multihomer game of Perez’s five-year career. He hit a two-run blast in the fourth inning off Brent Suter (1-2) to break a 3-3 tie, added another two-run homer in the sixth to make it 6-4 then had a solo shot in the eighth to increase the lead to 8-4.

**Dodgers 3, Padres 1:** Justin Turner homered twice, including a go-ahead two-run shot in the seventh inning, and host Los Angeles beat San Diego in the opener of a four-game series between the NL West’s top teams.

The Dodgers have won 12 of 13 against San Diego dating to Aug. 24, outscoring the Padres 72-29 in that span.

**Blue Jays 4, Rays 1:** Teoscar Hernández and Santiago Espinal each hit two-run home runs, Yuseki Kikuchi struck out a season-high eight in six innings to snap a seven-

start winless streak and host Toronto beat Tampa Bay.

Hernández hit his eighth homer in the second, and Espinal went deep in the seventh, his sixth. Both homers came off Rays left-hander Ryan Yarbrough (0-4).

**Phillies 14, Braves 4:** Kyle Schwarber finished off the month with another June homer, Darick Hall went deep twice and host Philadelphia avoided a three-game sweep with a rout of Atlanta.

Rhys Hoskins and Nick Castellanos also homered for the Phillies, who reached a season high in runs despite missing star Bryce Harper for the fourth straight game.

Adam Duvall and Michael Harris II went deep for the defending champion Braves, who ended June with a 21-6 mark to equal the most victories in a calendar month since the club moved from Milwaukee to Atlanta in 1966.

**Cubs 15, Reds 7:** Patrick Wisdom hit a grand slam and a solo homer en route to a career-high six RBIs, rookie Christopher Morel had a career-high five hits and host Chicago beat Cincinnati.

The Cubs collected 23 hits off five pitchers, tying their season high from a 21-0 rout of the Pirates on April 23. Seven of those hits came in the eighth against outfielder Max Schrock, who allowed a two-run homer to P.J. Higgins and a solo shot to Morel.

**Mariners 8, Athletics 6:** Julio Rodríguez homered for the second day in a row, Cal Raleigh had a two-run triple in the fifth inning and host Seattle beat Oakland.

Seattle has won 17 of 19 games against Oakland and earned its third straight victory overall to improve to 37-41.



NBA/GOLF

# Money flows on first day of free agency

Durant asks for trade; Jokic, Beal among those getting big deals

**By TIM REYNOLDS**  
*Associated Press*

The NBA generated more basketball-related income than ever this past season, the total number coming up just short of \$9 billion. Business is good. The first night of free agency underscored how good.

Nikola Jokic agreed to the biggest contract in NBA history, Bradley Beal agreed to a deal worth a quarter-billion dollars, and the money just kept flowing. Shortly after midnight Friday in the Eastern time zone, three more players — Karl-Anthony Towns, Devin Booker and Ja Morant — also agreed to huge-money extensions.

Towns and Booker agreed to four-year deals that will commence in 2024 and are worth at least \$224 million, their agent, Jessica Holtz of CAA, said. Morant will sign his first rookie extension, one that'll be worth at least \$193 million and could reach the \$230 million range, according to Tandem Sports, which represents him.

Those five players — Jokic, Beal, Towns, Booker and Morant — had more than \$1.1 billion in money committed to them in their new deals, highlighting the moves made Thursday when the NBA's annual free-agent negotiating window opened.

All those moves were overshadowed by a piece of non-free-agent news that came earlier Thursday when Kevin Durant, according to a person with direct knowledge of the situation, told the Brooklyn Nets that he wanted a trade. That undoubtedly had some sort of an impact on the decisions some teams were making, or were considering, with the surprise development that one of the world's elite players is



JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

**Kevin Durant has requested a trade from the Nets, according to a person with direct knowledge of the decision that undoubtedly will have teams scrambling to put together enormous offers.**

looking for a new place to play.

The Nets have been working with Durant to find a trade partner, and he has multiple teams on his preferred list, according to the person who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity Thursday because neither the player nor Brooklyn revealed any details publicly.

Durant is a 12-time All-Star, four-time scoring champion, three-time Olympic gold medalist and two-time NBA champion — those rings coming with Golden State, the team he was with before joining Brooklyn. He has four years and nearly \$200 million remaining on his contract, which means that it may take a haul of players, draft picks or possibly both for a team to acquire him.

Jokic agreed to a supermax extension to remain with the Denver Nuggets, the two-time reigning MVP guaranteeing himself at least \$264 million over five seasons start-

ing with the 2023-24 campaign. The final number may go up slightly depending on what the league's salary cap is going into the '23-24 season and if it exceeds current projections.

Beal will make \$251 million over the next five seasons after re-signing with Washington, one day after turning down \$37 million for this coming season from the team with whom he's spent the entirety of his 10-year career.

Towns and Booker got their deals not long afterward, as did Morant. More big-money extensions are coming at some point, particularly rookie extensions — Miami's Tyler Herro and New Orleans' Zion Williamson among the names on that list.

Jokic and Beal have signed lucrative contracts before. For some, the ones they get this summer will be their first.

Jalen Brunson, as had been wide-



NICK WASS/AP

**Wizards guard Bradley Beal agreed to a deal worth \$251 million over the next five seasons after re-signing with Washington, one day after turning down \$37 million for this coming season.**

ly speculated given his deep ties to the Knicks — his father played there, for starters — agreed to sign with New York, on a deal that ESPN reported would be worth \$104 million over four years. He had earned about \$6 million, total, in his four seasons with the Dallas Mavericks and saw his value soar by averaging 21.6 points in 18 playoff games this past season.

Anfernee Simons, who had a breakout season for the injury-plagued Portland Trail Blazers last year — taking advantage of his opportunity, and then some — agreed to a four-year, \$100 million contract

to remain with that club. And Lu Dort, undrafted three years ago and someone who made about \$4 million combined in his three seasons with Oklahoma City, will stay with the Thunder for the next five years on a deal worth nearly \$88 million.

The NBA set the new salary cap, luxury tax and other numbers that will be used this coming season and go into effect Friday.

The cap is \$123.655 million, the tax level is \$150.267 million. The minimum team salary level is \$111.29 million and the exceptions were set as well.

# LIV tees off in Oregon amid criticism over funding

**By ANNE M. PETERSON**  
*Associated Press*

**NORTH PLAINS, Ore.** — The Saudi Arabia-backed LIV Golf tour's second event teed off Thursday, angering a group of families who lost loved ones on Sept. 11 and want the Saudi government held to account for the terrorist attacks.

About 10 family members and survivors spoke at a small park honoring veterans in tiny North Plains, home to Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club.

"This event is nothing more than a group of very talented athletes who appear to have turned their backs on the crime of murder," said survivor Tim Frolich, who was injured in the collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

The LIV Golf series, funded by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, was making its first stop on American soil this week after a

debut this month outside of London.

Carlos Ortiz took the lead Thursday with a 5-under 67. Dustin Johnson, the 2020 Masters winner, was a shot back. Pat Perez, Brenden Grace and Hideto Tadihara were two shots off the lead.

"You need to get off to a good start and obviously stay with it because there's no real letting up," Perez said about the 54-hole format. "Every shot, I think, means a little bit more."

The upstart series, fronted by CEO Greg Norman, aims to challenge the PGA Tour and has lured players with big signing bonuses and rich prize purses. But critics call the tour an attempt at "sportswashing" to detract from Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses, including the murder of U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

Locally, opponents point to the 2016 hit-and-run death of 15-year-old Fallon Smart.

The Saudi national accused in the case cut off a monitoring device shortly before his trial and vanished. U.S. officials believe he was spirited home by the Saudi government.

And then there's the Sept. 11 families, who have reached out to some of the individual golfers involved in the tour but have not been granted an audience. The group produced an ad that has run on local television.

"These golfers that are getting in bed with the Saudis, they should know what they're doing. Shame on them. And to the golfers that say it's just a game of golf: Shame on them," said Brett Eagleson, the head of the group 9/11 Justice, who lost his father at the World Trade Center. "I invite them to live with the pain in our eyes, hear our stories and walk in our shoes, hear what we have to say about the kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

At Pumpkin Ridge there was a noticeable

police and security presence, including officers at the front gate. There were rumors of a designated protest area in one of the parking lots, but no one was sure where it was. Tickets to the event warned fans could not display political signs.

Phil Mickelson, a six-time major winner and a top draw on the tour, had one of the bigger galleries on opening day. He was playing in a group with Charl Schwartzel, who lost his ball on his first drive of the day. Fans along the fairway said they believed it landed in a tree.

"In this area there aren't many chances to see these guys in person," spectator Will Knowles said. "I'm staying out of the politics."

Because the event was played on two courses, it was difficult to get a handle on crowd sizes and LIV Golf did not disclose attendance figures.



## WIMBLEDON/WNBA/COLLEGE SPORTS



ALASTAIR GRANT/AP

Britain's Heather Watson celebrates Friday after defeating Slovenia's Kaja Juvan in their third-round match at Wimbledon. It's the first time Watson has made it to the fourth round in 12 appearances.

# Britain's Watson finally makes it past 3rd round

BY CHRIS LEHOURITES  
Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — Heather Watson has been through a lot at Wimbledon, and now she's made it through the third round for the first time.

The 121st-ranked Watson, making her 12th appearance at the All England Club, advanced to the fourth round on Friday by beating Kaja Juvan 7-6 (6), 6-2.

"I know I'm not speechless because I'm blabbing on, but I don't know what to say," the 30-year-old Watson said on No. 1 Court. "Playing here at home in front of all you guys, the atmosphere is everything. So, please can all of you come back for my fourth round?"

The pressure on British players at their home Grand Slam can be immense. Watson and every other British player know that well.

Before Andy Murray won the men's title, the talk among the locals would endlessly focus on Fred Perry and Virginia Wade, the last British singles champions at the All England Club.

Murray ended some of that in 2013, becoming the first British man to win the Wimbledon title since Perry in 1936. Wade, in 1977, remains the last female British champion of the grass-court Grand Slam tournament.

"I actually wasn't that nervous," said Watson, who had lost in the first round six times since making her Wimbledon debut in



KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/AP

American qualifier Jack Sock celebrates beating Maxime Cressy in a second-round match that was suspended Thursday.

2010.

In the next round, Watson will face Jule Niemeier of Germany. She beat Lesia Tsurenko 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Third-seeded Ons Jabeur also reached the fourth round, defeating Diane Parry 6-2, 6-3, while 2017 French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko beat Irina-Camelia Begu 3-6, 6-1, 6-1.

Jabeur, who is known as the "Minister of Happiness" back home in Tunisia, will next face Elise Mertens. The 24th-seeded Mertens beat 2018 Wimbledon champion Angelique Kerber 6-4, 7-5.

Fifth-seeded Maria Sakkari, however, was eliminated. The

Greek player, who reached the semifinals at both the French Open and the U.S. Open last year, lost to Tatjana Maria of Germany 6-3, 7-5.

In the men's draw, three Americans advanced — one to the third round and two to the fourth.

Qualifier Jack Sock finished off a 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (1) victory over another American, Maxime Cressy, in a match that was suspended Thursday after the second set. That made him the eighth American man to reach the third round, the most at any Grand Slam tournament since 1996.

Frances Tiafoe and Tommy Paul were also among those eight, and they already earned themselves a spot in the fourth round.

The 23rd-seeded Tiafoe, who is making his fifth appearance at the All England Club, beat Alexander Bublik 3-6, 7-6 (1), 7-6 (3), 6-4. Paul, seeded 30th, defeated Jiri Vesely 6-3, 6-2, 6-2.

Another one of those Americans, John Isner, set a men's tour ace record.

The 20th-seeded Isner hit ace No. 13,729 to break the ATP tour record held by Ivo Karlovic of Croatia. He set the record during the third game of his third-round match against Jannik Sinner on No. 2 Court.

Six-time Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic also reached the fourth round. The top-seeded Serb beat Miomir Kecmanovic 6-0, 6-3, 6-4.

# Griner trial opens in Russian court

BY JIM HEINTZ  
Associated Press

MOSCOW — American basketball star Brittney Griner went on trial Friday, 4½ months after her arrest on charges of possessing cannabis oil while returning to play for a Russian team, in a case that has unfolded amid tense relations between Moscow and Washington.

The initial session of the trial, which was adjourned until July 7, offered the most extensive public interaction between Griner and reporters since the Phoenix Mercury center and two-time U.S. Olympic gold medalist was arrested in February at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport.

Griner, 31, was escorted into the courtroom in the capital's suburb of Khimki while handcuffed and wearing a Jimi Hendrix T-shirt. At a closed-door preliminary hearing Monday, her detention was extended for another six months, to Dec. 20.

Police have said she was carrying vape canisters with cannabis oil when detained at the airport. She could face up to 10 years in

prison if convicted of large-scale transportation of drugs.

Fewer than 1% of defendants in Russian criminal cases are acquitted, and unlike in U.S. courts, acquittals can be overturned.

The state-owned Tass news agency quoted Griner as saying in court that she understood the charges but would not comment further on them until later.

Two witnesses were questioned by the prosecution: an airport customs official, who spoke in open court, and an unidentified witness in a closed session, according to the state news agency RIA-Novosti. The trial was then adjourned for a week, it said, when two other witnesses did not show up.

Alexander Boykov, an attorney for Griner, told reporters outside court that "I wouldn't want to talk on the specifics of the case and on the charges and to comment on our position on it because it's too early for it."

Boikov also told RIA-Novosti that she has been exercising in the detention area. The Russian website Business FM reported that Griner, who smiled at times, said she wishes she could work out more and that she was struggling because she doesn't understand Russian.



Griner

# Joining: Big Ten gaining another big media market

FROM PAGE 24

and the ability to expand engagement with our passionate alumni nationwide."

The Big Ten is building on previous expansion into the nation's largest media markets, and the move allows the conference to keep pace with the SEC as one of the most powerful entities in college sports.

The Big Ten will gain blueblood programs in football (USC) and basketball (UCLA) and big-name brands that will enhance the value of the conference's new media rights package currently being negotiated.

Losing flagship schools like USC and UCLA is a major blow to the Pac-12, which has had a long and amicable relationship with the Big Ten best exemplified by its Rose Bowl partnership.

"While we are extremely surprised and disappointed by the news coming out of UCLA and USC today, we have a long and storied history in athletics, academics, and leadership in supporting student-athletes that we're confident will continue to thrive and

grow into the future," the Pac-12 said in a statement.

The Pac-12's next move is unknown, but adding schools to replace USC and UCLA is a possibility.

"We look forward to partnering with current and potential members to pioneer the future of college athletics together," the Pac-12 said.

The Big Ten has expanded twice in recent years, with Nebraska joining in 2011 and Maryland and Rutgers in 2014.

"From increased exposure and a broader national platform for our student-athletes, to enhanced resources for our teams, this move will help preserve the legacy of UCLA Athletics for generations to come," UCLA athletic director Martin Jarmond said.

"We have deeply valued our membership in the Pac-12, and we have great respect for the conference and our fellow member institutions, but each school faces its own unique challenges and circumstances. We believe this is the right move for UCLA at the right time."



# SPORTS

## Cashing in

Beal, others get hefty raises on first day of NBA free agency » Page 22



Southern California's football program, top, and UCLA's basketball program, bottom, will add even more prestige to a Big Ten Conference that's already loaded in both sports.

MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ, TOP, AND CHRIS SZAGOLA, BOTTOM/AP

# USC, UCLA joining Big Ten

## Blueblood programs will become new conference members in 2024

BY RALPH D. RUSSO  
AND ERIC OLSON  
*Associated Press*

In a surprising and seismic shift in college athletics, the Big Ten voted Thursday to add Southern California and UCLA as conference members beginning in 2024.

The expansion to 16 teams will happen after the Pac-12's current media rights contracts with Fox and ESPN expire and make the Big Ten the first conference to stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The announcement, which caught the Pac-12 off-guard, came almost a year after Oklahoma and Texas formally accepted invitations to join the Southeastern Conference in July 2025.

Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren

said USC and UCLA, both members of the Pac-12 and its previous iterations for nearly a century, submitted applications for membership and the league's Council of Presidents and Chancellors voted unanimously to add the Los Angeles schools.

"Ultimately, the Big Ten is the best home for USC and Trojan athletics as we move into the new world of collegiate sports," USC athletic director Mike Bohn said. "We are excited that our values align with the league's member institutions. We also will benefit from the stability and strength of the conference; the athletic caliber of Big Ten institutions; the increased visibility, exposure, and resources the conference will bring our student-athletes and programs;

SEE JOINING ON PAGE 23



# Sources say NFL wants indefinite suspension for Watson » Page 21