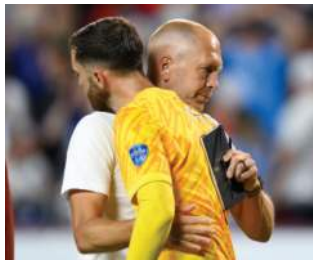


COPA AMERICA

US men fall short in group stage of tournament

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MILITARY

9,400% in excess profit spurs scrutiny of defense acquisitions

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Beverly Hills Cop, Zach Bryan album new this week

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Trump says he can end Ukraine war in a day – Russia disagrees >> Page 9

STARS AND STRIPES

stripes.com

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JUAN CORDOVA/U.S. Navy

Frigate FGS Baden-Württemberg arrives June 26 at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, to participate in the Rim of the Pacific exercise.

‘It’s very precious for us to be here’

It’s called the Rim of the Pacific, but some participants come from much farther away

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — Personnel and ships from navies across the Pacific sail into Hawaii every two years for the Rim of the Pacific exercise, but some participants come from much farther away.

“The Netherlands is almost literally on the other side of the world, so it’s very precious for us to be here,” Cmdr. Yvonne van Beusekom, commander of the HNLMS Tromp told reporters Friday from the bow of the frigate

docked at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

It is the first time a ship from the Netherlands, a European nation that borders the North Sea and lies directly across from Great Britain, has joined the drills.

Two of its European neighbors, Belgium and Germany, are also at RIMPAC, which runs through Aug. 1.

Israel, another notably non-Pacific nation, is also among the 29 participating countries.

The U.S. Navy touts RIMPAC as

SEE PARTICIPANTS ON PAGE 7



WYATT OLSON/Stars and Stripes

Cmdr. Yvonne van Beusekom, commander of the Royal Netherlands Navy frigate HNLMS Tromp, stands beside a 127-mm cannon on the ship’s bow while talking with reporters Friday.

Biden blasts court’s ruling on immunity for presidents

By COLLEEN LONG
AND WILL WEISSERT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden warned Monday that a Supreme Court ruling granting presidents broad immunity from prosecution would make an unchecked Republican Donald Trump “more emboldened to do whatever he wants” if he regains the White House in November’s election.

Biden, under intense pressure after his disastrous debate performance against Trump last week, urged Americans to think carefully about their election decision and signaled he had no intention of dropping out of the race.



Biden

Criticizing the decision by the court’s conservative majority — which all but guarantees Trump will not face trial in Washington ahead of the November election over his actions during the violent riot on Jan. 6, 2021 — Biden said it now fell to the American people “to do what the courts should have been willing to do but will not.”

“The American people have to render judgment about Donald Trump’s behavior.”

Biden’s efforts to reset his campaign following the debate, which spooked donors and stirred up major Democratic anxiety, has been looking a lot like his past attempts to keep the focus squarely on Trump’s misdeeds and shortcomings. During his brief remarks Monday, he made no mention of last week’s debate or his perfor-

SEE RULING ON PAGE 10

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Judge halts delay of gas export projects review

Associated Press

LAKE CHARLES, La. — The Biden administration can't delay consideration of projects aimed at exporting liquefied natural gas while a legal challenge by 16 Republican-led states plays out in federal court, a Louisiana judge said Monday.

U.S. District Judge James Cain, Jr. sided with the states, granting a preliminary injunction that puts the Biden administration's delay on hold.

It was unlikely, however, that

any of the projects would be on a fast track for consideration as the U.S. Department of Energy said late Monday that it disagreed with the court's ruling and was evaluating its next steps. The White House also voiced disappointment.

"We remain committed to informing our decisions with the best available economic and environmental analysis, underpinned by sound science," White House spokesperson Angelo Fernández Hernández said in an email to The

Associated Press.

President Joe Biden in January decided his administration would delay consideration of new natural gas export terminals in the United States, even as gas shipments to Europe and Asia soared following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The move aligned the Democrat with environmentalists who fear an increase in exports — in the form of liquefied natural gas, or LNG — is locking in potentially catastrophic planet-warming emissions.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (July 3)	\$1.05	Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769
British pound (July 3)	\$1.23	Britain (Pound)	1.2672
Japanese yen (July 3)	157.00	Canada (Dollar)	1.3699
South Korean won (July 3)	1352.00	China (Yuan)	7.2714
		Denmark (Krone)	6.9456
		Egypt (Pound)	48.2067
		Euro	0.9314
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8141
		Hungary (Forint)	368.05
		Israel (Shekel)	3.7573
		Japan (Yen)	161.41
		Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3065
		Norway (Krone)	10.6860
		Philippines (Peso)	58.78
		Poland (Zloty)	4.02
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7515
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3564
		South Korea (Won)	1386.96
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9044		
Thailand (Baht)	36.81		
Turkey (NewLira)	32.6637		

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

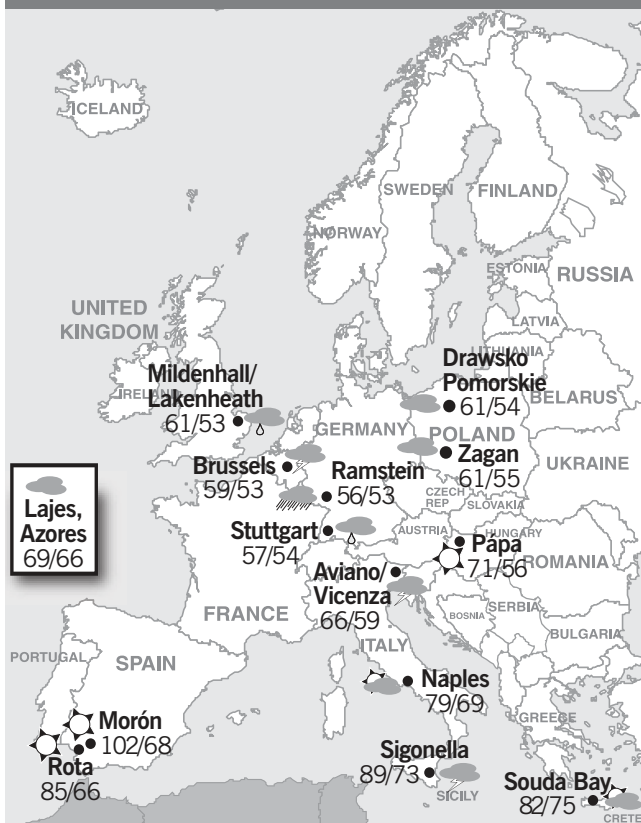
INTEREST RATES	
Prime rate	8.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	6.00
Federal funds market rate	5.33
3-month bill	5.38
30-year bond	4.63

WEATHER OUTLOOK

WEDNESDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



WEDNESDAY IN EUROPE



THURSDAY 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

Japan halts material bound for US airfield

By KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Japanese government halted shipment of landfill material destined for a U.S. military airfield on Okinawa after a truck hit and killed a security guard and injured a protester last week.

Moving material to ports at Awa and Motobu on the island by truck is suspended while authorities consider measures to prevent future incidents, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said at a video-recorded press conference Monday.

The landfill material is used to reclaim a portion of Oura Bay for a Marine Corps airfield under construction in the rural Henoko re-

gion of northern Okinawa. The material is quarried on Okinawa, trucked to the ports and then moved by ships to the airfield site at Camp Schwab.

Work at the site was set to resume fully in August after more than four years' delay while Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki fought the project in Japanese courts. The airfield is planned as a replacement for Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in urban Ginowan.

A spokesman for U.S. Forces Japan did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment Tuesday from Stars and Stripes.

Around 10 a.m. Friday, security guard Yoshikazu Usami, 47, and

an unidentified 72-year-old woman "for some reason" stepped into the path of a truck turning left from Awa port, Nago city, according to an Okinawa Prefectural Police spokesman that day.

Usami suffered severe head injuries and was declared dead at a local hospital at 11:09 a.m.; the woman was treated for a broken leg, the police spokesman said.

"This accident is very regrettable, and the Ministry of Defense is working to understand the situation," Hayashi said Monday.

Reports indicate the "accident occurred during an interaction between a security guard and a protester," Hayashi said. "The Okinawa Defense Bureau is working to confirm the details of the acci-

dent."

Protesters opposed to the U.S. military presence on the island are a regular presence outside the port.

Tamaki on Friday said the accident is "extremely regrettable," a spokesman for the prefectural Henoko Base Construction Countermeasures Division said Tuesday.

"As a prefecture, we will ask Okinawa Defense Bureau to stop transporting landfill materials until the reason of the accident becomes clear and it is possible to take preventive measures," Tamaki said, according to the prefecture's spokesman.

The Okinawa Defense Bureau notified the prefecture on Friday night that trucks moving the mate-

rial to the ports would be halted, according to the prefecture's spokesman. Some government officials in Japan may speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

Bureau director Ito Shinya visited the Liberal Democratic Party Okinawa office on Saturday and apologized for the incident, national broadcaster NHK reported that day. The Liberal Democrats are the ruling party in Japan.

Members of LDP Okinawa asked the bureau to take appropriate safety measures and "be thorough on risk management," according to a post Saturday on X by Yoshitoyo Arakaki, a member of Okinawa's prefectural assembly.

NATO allies unveil new quick reaction force

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — NATO activated a new quick reaction force this week as part of a move to update defense plans in Europe, alliance military officials said.

The Allied Response Force, which was stood up Monday during a ceremony in Solbiate Olona, Italy, brings capabilities that were absent from the NATO Response Force that it replaces.

The new unit, known as the ARF, includes cyber and space force elements. It also involves more light infantry troops capable of moving out on short notice.

"This development is crucial for the deterrence and defense of the Euro-Atlantic area, ensuring NATO is prepared to respond swiftly and effectively to any threat in an evolving security environment,"

Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe said in a statement Monday.

The ARF is part of a broader modernization effort happening at NATO, which is building a force model that involves some 300,000 alliance troops operating at a higher state of readiness.

The ARF also functions as a NATO spearhead element and gives the top military commander, U.S. Army Gen. Christopher Cavoli, a multinational force that can be deployed on short notice, SHAPE said.

The NATO Rapid Deployable Corps Italy in Solbiate Olona will lead the ARF for the next three years, SHAPE said.

"The ARF can deliver forces, fires and effects within 10 days to either strengthen deterrence or provide strategic dilemma to adversaries," SHAPE said.



Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

U.S. Army Gen. Christopher Cavoli, NATO's top military commander, speaks at a ceremony Monday in Solbiate Olona, Italy, where a new NATO quick reaction force was activated.

Drug price manipulation by Tricare pharmacy manager alleged

By KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

Members of Congress are asking the Defense Health Agency whether the Tricare pharmacy benefit manager, Express Scripts, a Cigna company, is using its market leverage to raise drug prices and limit competition.

In a June 26 letter to DHA director Lt. Gen. Telita Crosland and Dr. Lester Martinez-Lopez, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, 24 senators and representatives expressed concern that Express Scripts may be limiting access to medications for Tricare beneficiaries, thereby driving up costs while overcharging independent pharmacies and taxpayers.

"Since the DHA granted Express Scripts its exclusive Tricare con-

tract in 2009 the company has consistently leveraged its market power to squeeze independent pharmacies and steer Tricare beneficiaries to their own mail-order pharmacy, and used other tactics to increase costs for service members and taxpayers," the letter states.

Cigna in 2018 purchased Express Scripts for \$67 billion, combining it with its own mail-order pharmacy, Accredo. Express Scripts, an online pharmacy, as the Tricare pharmacy benefit manager provides prescription medication for 9.6 million service members, retirees and their families.

"However, because Cigna also owns Accredo, it can effectively keep much of its business in-house, using its [pharmacy benefit manager] to steer patients to its own

pharmacy while disadvantaging competitors," the letter states.

Express Scripts imposes "predatory terms" on other pharmacies willing to work with Tricare, the congressional members alleged. When pharmacies reject those terms, more Tricare patients turn to Accredo, a specialty pharmacy, "which is prone to delays and safety issues, but drives more profits to parent company Cigna," the letter states.

Express Scripts did not reply to an email inquiry Monday from Stars and Stripes seeking comment.

However, Express Script, in a statement to Military Times published Saturday, said Tricare beneficiaries aren't required to fill specialty prescriptions through Accre-

do, "though many choose to be because of the highly personalized support they receive from their pharmacists, nurses, clinicians, dietitians and social workers."

The members' letter asked DHA to explain by Tuesday how it tracks Express Scripts' denial of coverage for expensive specialty drugs, and whether Tricare has determined if Express Scripts is charging more for drugs through Accredo than it charges at independent pharmacies.

DHA had not yet responded to the letter, agency spokesman Peter Graves told Stars and Stripes via email Monday.

This is not the first inquiry from members of Congress on prescription drug costs.

In November, U.S. Sens. Eliza-

beth Warren, D-Mass., who signed the June 26 letter, and Mike Braum, R-Ind., wrote Christi Grimm, inspector general of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, airing concerns about vertical integration in the health care industry raising already high prescription drug costs.

"In particular, we are concerned by a recent report suggesting that large insurance companies — including Cigna, CVS Aetna, and UnitedHealth — are hiking drug prices at their vertically integrated specialty pharmacies to evade the Medical Loss Ratio, a statutory requirement for health insurers to spend at least 80 or 85 percent of health care premium dollars on medical claims," the 2023 letter stated.

MILITARY

N. Korea brags of 'super-large warhead' missile

By **HYUNG-JIN KIM**
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea said Tuesday it had test-fired a new tactical ballistic missile capable of carrying “a super-large warhead,” a claim quickly disputed by South Korean officials and experts who speculate the North likely fabricated a successful test to conceal a botched launch.

It's the second time that South Korea has questioned North Korea's claim on the development of new weapons in recent days, as the rivals are locked in heightened animosities over the North's testing activities.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said that Monday's test involved the Hwasongpho-11 Da-4.5 missile, which can carry a 4.5 ton-class warhead. It said the test was meant to verify the weapon's flight stability and hit accuracy at the maximum range of 310 miles and the minimum range of 55 miles.

The test apparently refers to the two ballistic missile launches that South Korea said North Korea performed Monday.

Joint Chiefs of Staff spokesperson Lee Sung Joon said at a briefing later Tuesday that the second North Korean missile was found to have fallen on an uninhabited area near Pyongyang, the North's capital. He said he could find few previous test launches by North Korea that have aimed at ground target sites.

“Regarding the North Korean assessment, we're weighing a possibility of deception,” Lee said.

The South Korean military has said the second North Korean mis-

sile possibly traveled abnormally during the initial stage of its flight. It said if the missile exploded, its debris would likely have scattered on the ground.

The KCNA dispatch didn't say from where it launched the new missile and where it landed. Unlike previous weapons tests, North Korea also didn't publicize any photos of Monday's test. The fact that it tested both the missile's maximum and minimum ranges suggested North Korea performed two launches.

KCNA, citing North Korea's Missile Administration, reported that North Korea will test-fire the missile again later in July to verify the performances of its simulated warhead at the medium range of 155 miles.

Some experts say test-firing missiles at ground targets could be related to efforts to test how powerful warheads are to destroy underground bunkers and structures.

But Shin Jongwoo, a Seoul-based military expert, said the lack of any photos on the launches means it's highly likely the North is trying to deceive the outsiders to cover up Monday's failed launches. He said North Korea likely launched an existing missile on Monday, not the new missile.

Yang Uk, an analyst at Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said that Monday's tests reflected North Korea's push to acquire a variety of conventional weapons. But he also said if North Korea truly succeeded in hitting a ground target, it probably would have already published related images to brag about its achievements as it's done in the past.



AHN YOUNG-JOON/AP

A TV shows a file image of a North Korean missile during a news program at Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, on Tuesday.



PHOTOS BY SARA MUIR/U.S. Coast Guard

Evaluators from the Coast Guard, Fish and Wildlife Service and the Northern Marianas' Bureau of Coastal Resource Management observe a simulated oil spill response at Saipan on June 26.

US Coast Guard, local Marianas agencies simulate oil spill cleanup

By **ALEX WILSON**
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Coast Guard led a first-of-its-kind exercise in environmental disaster cleanup recently near Saipan alongside local and federal agencies, the service announced Tuesday.

Participants in the drill, dubbed Lina'la Halom Tasi Exercise 2024, responded to a simulated oil spill June 25 to 27 near the Port of Saipan, Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam spokeswoman Chief Warrant Officer Sara Muir said in a Tuesday news release.

“The exercise tested our collective response strategies to a simulated oil spill scenario and reinforced our preparedness infrastructure, making it a highly valuable endeavor for all involved,” Muir said Tuesday.

The exercise was the first full-scale pollution response exercise in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and showcased the Coast Guard relationship with the commonwealth, a U.S. territory, according to Sector Guam commander Cmdr. Ryan Crose.

“Our joint efforts in everything from the regional response plan to testing it in this exercise significantly improved our ability to respond effectively to maritime emergencies, ensuring the safety and security of our waters,” he said in the release.

The commonwealth, which has no oil reserves or refineries, meets nearly all of its energy needs through imported petroleum products delivered through ports on Saipan and Tinian, according to



Evaluators and participants from the Oil Spill Response Operations Co. debrief following an oil spill response exercise off Saipan.

the U.S. Energy Information Administration's website.

The territory imported more than \$83 million of refined petroleum in 2022, its top import, according to The Observatory of Economic Complexity website.

Lina'la Halom Tasi, which translates to “life in the ocean” in Chamorro, tested the organizations' abilities to respond to an oil spill, dispose of contaminated materials and establish effective communication, according to the news release.

The exercise included personnel training, equipment drills and a post-scenario review.

Sector Guam worked with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, the Commonwealth Port Authority and Is-

la Petroleum & Energy to lead the exercise.

The Coast Guard's involvement helped train local personnel and improve their overall emergency response capabilities, according to Franklin Babauta, special assistant for the Homeland Security and Emergency Management, in the release.

Additional participants included the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and various local and regional agencies, according to the release.

About 65 people participated overall, Muir said.

“Given the success of this year's exercise and the invaluable insights gained, all parties desire and intend to conduct another full-scale pollution response exercise next year,” she added.

MILITARY

Paratroopers share lessons from Afghan battle

Two who fought at Wanat cite the value of training

BY REBECCA HOLLAND
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — The Battle of Wanat began before dawn with a short burst of rapid machine-gun fire, followed by continuous volleys of rocket-propelled grenades launched from all sides toward Chosen Company's outpost in the rural Wanat Valley.

Nearly four hours of combat followed. Chosen Company's 49 paratroopers and 24 Afghan soldiers forced approximately 200 Taliban fighters to break contact and withdraw, but not before nine Americans died and many were wounded.

On Monday, two paratroopers who fought in the July 13, 2008, battle shared their recollections as part of discussions designed to keep the 173rd Airborne Brigade's history fresh for current "sky soldiers."

Col. Matthew Myer and Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Hayes said the fight came down to quick decision-making.

"One thing tactically that really helped us was we moved our forces ... down to be more accessible," said Myer, who was the company's commander. "That helped us have redundant communications."

"The second thing was we could resupply ourselves by ground. We set the battlefield and it enabled us to reinforce, and we never lost communications."

Their talk to an audience of around 100 paratroopers was part of the Leaders Legacy series, which has been running since January. Myer and Hayes stressed the importance of training, even when war isn't imminent.

"Never underestimate the importance of the service you're in," Myer said. "You might think, 'We're a peacetime army; we're just training.' Good leaders know how to emphasize how important the job is that we do. The more you can do that, the better you'll be



JENNIFER FRENCH/U.S. Army

Col. Matthew Myer, center, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Hayes, right, share lessons learned from the Battle of Wanat in Afghanistan with members of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, in Vicenza, Italy, on Monday, in advance of their Saber Junction training. At left is Capt. Rob Koontz, who was moderating.



JENNIFER FRENCH/U.S. Army

A 173rd Airborne Brigade soldier asks a question of Myer and Hayes during the discussion of the Battle of Wanat.

prepared."

The presentation served as a prelude to the brigade's trip to Germany in September for the biennial Saber Junction training exercise.

Repetition is key to building the

experience and confidence needed in combat, Myer and Hayes told the paratroopers. Training is also crucial to identifying informal leaders who can step up in a crisis situation, they said.

During the battle, Hayes was thrown into the role of communicating with unfamiliar people, such as the battalion commander and medevac helicopter crews.

"We're about to go on patrol. I'm getting my gear ready, then catastrophic destruction occurs," he said. "It took a minute to go from complete fear to making decisions."

He suggested that leaders add stressful challenges in training, such as taking away supplies that soldiers would normally have, but not taking that to excess.

"We faced overwhelming firepower and mass casualty," Hayes said. "But we were tested on a level where we were able to handle it. If you had done that to us in month two of our collective training, it would have been too much."

The unit fought off a much larg-

er Taliban force, but with great sacrifice.

The battle's death toll led to criticism from some parents of the fallen, congressional scrutiny and a 274-page report by the Army's Combat Studies Institute. In 2009, the Army reprimanded two senior leaders and Myer, who was also awarded a Silver Star, which is the third-highest decoration for valor in combat. The reprimands were revoked a year later after a higher-level Army review.

Several members of the company, which is part of 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, were honored for their actions that day at Vehicle Patrol Base Kahler. They include Staff Sgt. Ryan M. Pitts, who was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Pitts fought on while grievously injured at an isolated observation post, throwing "cooked grenades" with little time until detonation at the enemy, while eventually helping Myer guide airstrikes, according to official Army accounts.

On Monday, Myer and Hayes



U.S. Army

Then-Sgt. Ryan Pitts is shown at Combat Outpost Bella, Afghanistan, in 2008. Pitts was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Battle of Wanat in July 2008.

also emphasized the importance of taking the time to build friendships, while enjoying their time in Italy.

"If you have a second every now and then, just realize you could be in the good old days right now," Hayes said. "It doesn't necessarily feel like that, but all of my big moments as a young adult happened here."

"I didn't realize it at the time. When things are not as great as you want them to be, you could still be in some of the best years of your life. Try not to take it for granted."

Both said their bond with others in the 173rd helped them not only during the battle but also in the years after it. Myer called that July day in Wanat the hardest day of his life.

"It was the hardest day for a lot of people," he said. "I got to be with Chosen Company, train with them, learn through combat with them, and then on the toughest day, see people perform and act with bravery."

"But it came at an incredible cost, and it's so hard to deal with. You think about it all the time. It's not something that goes away, ever."

Retired Marine Corps general is found dead at Calif. base

BY SALVADOR HERNANDEZ
Los Angeles Times

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service is probing the death of a military officer whose body was found at the Twentynine Palms Marine base in Southern California, officials said.

Maj. Gen. William F. Mullen was found dead at the base Saturday, according to San Bernardino County coroner's records. Mullen, at one time the com-



Mullen

NCIS is investigating the death at the facility, which is the world's largest Marine Corps training base.

manding general of the base, retired in 2020.

San Bernardino County sheriff's spokesperson Mara Rodriguez confirmed that

NCIS is the investigative law enforcement entity of the Department of the Navy. The agency leads criminal investigations and, according to its website, also investigates noncombat deaths of Navy or Marine Corps members.

NCIS officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"Major General Mullen's dedicated service to our nation and

the Marine Corps will always be remembered," said Maj. Gen. Thomas Savage, commanding general of the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command. "Our thoughts and prayers are with his loved ones."

Marine Corps officials confirmed NCIS is investigating the cause of death.

San Bernardino coroner's officials are handling the autopsy,

Rodriguez said. That investigation is ongoing.

Before his retirement, Mullen served as commanding general of the Training and Education Command, according to the U.S. Marine Corps. His extensive military background includes tours of duty in the Middle East, leading a counter-narcotics mission in the Los Padres National Forest and serving as Marine aide to President Bill Clinton.

MILITARY

Lawmakers seek review of defense firm acquisitions

BY JOHN M. DONNELLY
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Three liberal Democrats pressed the Biden administration in writing on Sunday to “closely scrutinize” a pair of defense industry acquisitions to ensure they don’t worsen “price gouging” on military spare parts.

The letter, obtained by CQ Roll Call, was sent to leaders at the Pentagon, Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission by Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Reps. John Garamendi of California and Mark Pocan of Wisconsin. Warren and Garamendi are Armed Services Committee members in their respective chambers, and Pocan is an appropriator.



Warren

In the letter, the lawmakers urged a hard look at TransDigm Group Inc.’s acquisition of two specialized aerospace parts builders: SEI Industries LTD and Raptor Labs Holdco, LLC.

“There is no indication that these mergers and acquisitions will have a beneficial impact on taxpayers or national security,” the members wrote in their letter to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, Assistant Attorney General for the Antitrust Division Jonathan Kanter and Federal Trade Commission Chair Lina M. Khan.

The letter represents the latest in a series of congressional efforts over the last few years to rein in what auditors have called excessive costs of many military spare parts.

These lawmaker initiatives have included previous demands to the administration for both information and action, plus provisions in recent NDAA and Defense spending measures.

TransDigm has been at the center of these concerns.

The company has a business model of buying up smaller companies — at least 88 so far, Friday’s missive said. The acquired firms often have low-dollar-value contracts with the Defense Department that they did not compete for and that typically fall below dollar thresholds requiring that certified cost and pricing data be presented to the government to determine fairness and reasonableness.

In many cases, TransDigm has

charged prices for spare parts that are excessive, auditors have determined.

TransDigm charged \$4,361 for a half-inch metal pin — representing nearly 9,400% in excess profit, the Pentagon inspector general reported in 2019.

In that audit and another in 2021, the IG documented \$37 million in “excess profit” reaped by TransDigm on military parts deals. TransDigm has also refused to provide the Defense Department cost and pricing data on many of its parts since that time.

CQ Roll Call disclosed last November that TransDigm had declined to provide the Pentagon with cost data on 401 different items in a one-year period ending September 2022, according to a Defense Department report to Congress on contractor cost disclosures.

In the report, Defense Department Undersecretary for Acquisition and Sustainment William LaPlante said: “The Department believes the problem in obtaining data from contractors to support fair and reasonable prices may be more prevalent than what has been collected to date, particularly with respect to sole source commercial products.”

Boeing Co. also has drawn criticism from lawmakers for refusing to provide the Pentagon with cost and pricing data. Boeing and other major contractors have been found to overcharge for spare parts over the years.

But TransDigm has stood out for its reported excesses.

Some lawmakers have sought to address what they call loopholes in Pentagon rules governing when companies must certify to the government the accuracy of their cost and price information. Exceptions to that requirement have been carved out for commercial products and for deals worth less than \$2 million.

Warren has joined with Garamendi and Sen. Mike Braun, R-Ind., on legislation that would close some of the perceived loopholes.

The last couple of defense policy bills have contained provisions aimed at strengthening congressional and Pentagon oversight of spare parts prices. But there have also been lawmaker efforts, supported by the Aerospace Industries Association, to make it easier for defense contractors to get around certifying cost and price data.



KOURTNEY NUNNERY/U.S. Army

Maj. Gen. Joseph Hilbert, right, took over as commander of 11th Airborne Division from Maj. Gen. Brian Eifler at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, on June 27.

Command change is first since 11th Airborne revived

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

The Army’s 11th Airborne Division, revived two years ago to serve as combat-ready unit for potential conflict near the Arctic Circle, changed command on June 27 for the first time.

Maj. Gen. Joseph Hilbert assumed command from Maj. Gen. Brian S. Eifler at the division headquarters at Joint Base Elmendorf-

Richardson in Alaska.

Eifler has been 11th Airborne Division commander since the Pentagon reestablished the division in 2022. President Joe Biden has nominated Eifler for promotion to lieutenant general to serve as deputy chief of staff for Army G-1, the service’s labor force section. He will require Senate confirmation.

Hilbert most recently was deputy chief of staff for Army G-8, the ser-

vices plans and logistics office.

The 11th Airborne Division includes two brigade combat teams. The 1st Brigade uses variants of the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter when deployed as airborne troops and is based at Fort Wainwright near Fairbanks. The 2nd Brigade parachutes from transports into landing zones and is based at Elmendorf-Richardson near Anchorage.

Texas court denies call to reverse pardon of ex-soldier who killed Air Force veteran

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — A request by a county prosecutor in Texas to reverse the pardon of a former Army sergeant who was convicted of fatally shooting an Air Force veteran during a racial protest was denied by the state’s highest criminal appeals court.

Gov. Greg Abbott’s pardon of Daniel Perry in May came about one year after he was sentenced in a Travis County courtroom to 25 years in prison for the death of Garrett Foster in downtown Austin on July 25, 2020.

The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals did not offer an explanation in the document issued last week denying the request. It came about three weeks after José Garza, the district attorney of Travis County,



Perry

filed the request and said the pardon “made a mockery of our legal system.”

Garza’s office has not publicly commented on the denial and declined Monday to provide a statement.

The shooting occurred during a Black Lives Matter protest and became a talking point of conservative media. Foster, 28, was carrying an assault rifle in downtown Austin during a Black Lives Matter protest, when Perry, who was working a side job as a rideshare driver, turned his car into a group of protesters. Perry, who was also armed, said he shot Foster because Foster pointed his rifle at Perry’s car.

Perry, 37, was convicted of murder on April 7, 2023, and Abbott called for a pardon review within 18 hours of the verdict, citing Perry’s right to self-defense.

Perry, who enlisted in 2012, was stationed at Fort Cavazos at the time of the shooting. Afterward, he was moved to Fort Wainwright in Alaska. He received an other-than-honorable discharge in March, which means he could no longer face military charges.

Garza, who argued the governor’s pardon exceeded his constitutional authority, announced his request last month during a news conference with Foster’s family alongside him.

“We had justice for Garrett for 18 hours after waiting three years for a trial,” said Sheila Foster, Garrett Foster’s mother.

MILITARY

Participants: Nations beyond Pacific join to help protect trade

FROM PAGE 1

the world's largest maritime exercise, and it focuses primarily on developing relationships among the participants and improving their ability to work together in the event of disaster or warfare in the Pacific.

But the benefits go beyond region and thus draws navies from across the globe, U.S. Navy Vice Adm. John Wade, commander of this year's RIMPAC, said during a news conference Thursday.

"Look, we live in an interconnected world, and what is happening in one area of the world also impacts another," said Wade, who also commands the San Diego-based 3rd Fleet. "And it's clear, at least to me and my senior leader-

ship, that global security and our future prosperity is absolutely linked to the Indo-Pacific region."

About 80% of the world's trade by volume flows through the Indo-Pacific, he said.

China is involved in producing and shipping a great deal of that trade, but Beijing has at the same time grown more strident in its goal of dominating the region not just economically but militarily.

"So, peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific is so vitally important," Wade said. "Even though there are nations that are not in the Pacific, per se, their interests do apply to the Pacific, and I would highlight that that is why they are participating."

Rear Adm. Kazushi Yokota of

the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, the exercise's vice commander, shortened that thought to a familiar phrase.

"Free and open oceans are critically important to every country in the world," Yokota said.

Van Beusekom reminded listeners that the Netherlands is a trading country.

"Much of our trade goes to and from Asia so it's a vitally important area for us. Being able to train with countries, with the different navies, is very important to us to enhance our cooperation and improve the stability of the region."

The HNLMS Tromp, a 475-foot-long air defense and command frigate with a vertical missile launching system, arrived in Ha-

waii on Wednesday.

That was roughly the halfway mark in the ship's six-month worldwide deployment that took it through the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, East China Sea, Taiwan Strait and South China Sea.

After RIMPAC, it will traverse the Panama Canal, visit the Caribbean and then return home, van Beusekom said.

The frigate came to the Pacific to support the United Nations coalition that oversees enforcement of maritime sanctions against North Korea, she said.

The frigate, which carries a crew of about 200 for the global deployment, conducted maritime operations in May in the South China Sea with the U.S. Navy littoral

combat ship USS Mobile and dry cargo ship USNS Wally Schirra.

"While traveling over here ... we have visited several ports and seen how important this region is," van Beusekom said.

An incident with a Chinese aircraft in the East China Sea also gave the crew a better understanding of the challenges in maintaining freedom of navigation in the region.

While in those waters during the UN mission, a Chinese People's Liberation Army helicopter approached the ship's helicopter crew, van Beusekom said.

"It was potentially unsafe," she said. "The helicopter was very close, but we were able to continue the mission."

Air Force warrant officer training returns for first time since 1950s

By LYDIA G. GORDON
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force's warrant officer training school is open for business, marking a return to the service after nearly 70 years.

The school, which held an assumption of command ceremony Friday at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., aims to address the

growing demand for highly specialized technical and tactical experts, a service statement said.

The Air Force disbanded the warrant officer corps in 1958 after the creation of the senior master sergeant and chief master sergeant ranks.

That left the Air Force as an outlier among the other Pentagon

services, where warrant officers work in such varied roles as aviation, food safety, special operations and vehicle maintenance.

The Air Force says its future warrant officers are expected to play a more crucial role in areas such as technology and cybersecurity.

In an April statement, service

chief Gen. David Allvin said the reintroduction of the school is part of larger changes that are "essential for maintaining a strategic advantage in an era defined by Great Power Competition."

Similar to the Army, Navy and Marine Corps, the Air Force will undergo a selective application process to designate qualified air-

men to attend the school.

The school's opening class of about 30 people is set to begin its eight weeks of training in October.

To attend, the students must be in the pay grade of E-5 or higher, age 42 or younger and in the service for at least five years, among other requirements.



D*DAY 80TH ANNIVERSARY



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MILITARY

Austin: US to give \$2.3B more to Ukraine

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Tuesday that the U.S. will soon announce an additional \$2.3 billion in security assistance for Ukraine, to include anti-tank weapons, interceptors and munitions for Patriot and other air defense systems.

Austin's remarks came as Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov met with him at the Pentagon. And they mark a strong response to pleas from Kyiv for help in battling Russian forces in the Donetsk region.

Of that total, \$150 million of the aid will come from presidential drawdown authority (PDA) and the remainder will be provided by Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI). PDA allows the Pentagon to take the weapons from its stocks and send them more quickly to Ukraine; USAI

puts weapons on longer-term contracts.

"Make no mistake, Ukraine is not alone, and the United States will never waver in our support," Austin said as he opened the meeting with Umerov. "Alongside some 50 allies and partners, we'll continue to provide critical capabilities that Ukraine needs to push back Russian aggression today and to deter Russian aggression tomorrow."

The announcement comes just days before the U.S. hosts the NATO summit in Washington and as Ukraine has continued to lobby for military support and acceptance into the alliance.

"We'll take steps to build a bridge to NATO membership for Ukraine," Austin told Umerov.

"Hopefully soon Ukraine will receive its invitation," the Ukrainian minister responded.

Ukrainian President Volody-

myr Zelenskyy said Sunday that Russia had dropped more than 800 powerful glide bombs in Ukraine in the last week alone. And he urged national leaders to relax restrictions on the use of Western weapons to strike military targets inside Russia. In particular, he said, Ukraine needs the "necessary means to destroy the carriers of these bombs, including Russian combat aircraft, wherever they are."

Austin did not refer to the restrictions in his opening comments, but he told Umerov that they would discuss "more ways to meet Ukraine's immediate security needs and to build a future force to ward off more Russian aggression."

Including the latest \$2.3 billion, the U.S. has committed more than \$53.5 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the Russian invasion in February 2022.



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, right, greets Ukraine's Defense Minister Rustem Umerov during an arrival ceremony Tuesday at the Pentagon.

Sigonella curbs July 4 attendance amid threats

By ALISON BATH

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — A U.S. Navy base in Sicily is limiting attendance at its Fourth of July celebration this year to people with Defense Department affiliation, as American military installations across Europe remain on heightened alert.

Only military members, dependents, DOD civilians, contractors, NATO employees and Italians with an affiliated identification card will be able to attend July Fourth festivities at Naval Air Station Sigonella, the base announced in a post to its Facebook page on Tuesday.

The restriction means that the annual event is closed to the public and that nonaffiliated guests cannot attend, as they were allowed to previously, NAS Sigonella said in a statement Tuesday. The event takes place on the base's administrative site known as NAS I.

"While there is no specific threat targeting NAS Sigonella, the increase in security requirements is a proactive measure to ensure the safety and security of our community," the statement

said.

It wasn't immediately clear how many other bases in Europe, if any, are curtailing attendance at their Independence Day celebrations, which are traditionally open to guests as a gesture of goodwill.

Festivities at Naval Station Rota in Spain will continue as planned and include Americans, members of the Spanish navy, Spanish employees and their guests, the base said in a statement.

It also appeared that a celebration at Naval Support Activity Naples in Italy would go on without attendance restrictions, and a similar event at Naval Support Activity Souda Bay on the Greek island of Crete already took place Saturday.

NAS Sigonella's action comes as the security threat level at military bases across Europe was raised over the weekend. On Sunday, the Army garrison in Stuttgart issued a communitywide alert that the force protection threat level had been elevated to condition "Charlie" until further notice.

Similar directives were sent to the Army's Rheinland-Pfalz garrison and Ramstein Air Base in Ger-



RAMON GO/U.S. Navy

The Independence Day celebration fireworks display at NAS Sigonella, Sicily in 2016.

many. In Italy, officials at Aviano Air Base and NSA Naples also raised their condition level to Charlie.

The Charlie threat level "applies when an incident occurs or intelligence is received indicating some form of terrorist action or targeting against personnel or facilities is likely," according to the Army's website.

At a news briefing Monday, Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said the elevation was due to a combination of factors, including the Euro 2024 soccer tournament and the upcoming Olympic Games.

American detained after death in Kaiserslautern

By ALEXANDER RIEDEL

Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — A 20-year-old American woman is in custody following the fatal stabbing of a 64-year-old man at the Kaiserslautern main train station over the weekend, police said Tuesday.

Military officials were not immediately able to say Tuesday whether the woman is affiliated with the Defense Department.

Kaiserslautern and the surrounding areas are home to the U.S. military's largest overseas community.

Video footage from Saturday afternoon shows the man and woman riding the escalator one after the other from the entrance hall down to the platform, according to German law enforcement authorities.

At the end of the escalator, the footage shows the man touching the woman's buttocks, which led to a verbal exchange, said Udo Gehring, Kaiserslautern's public prosecutor, in a statement Monday.

The video then shows the young woman unfolding a knife and

pointing it at the man, Gehring said.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the suspect and the victim did not know each other prior to the incident, Gehring said.

Witnesses called emergency services shortly before 3:30 p.m. Despite prompt medical attention, the man succumbed to his injuries later that afternoon in a local hospital.

West Palatinate and Kaiserslautern federal police temporarily halted train services Saturday as they searched for the suspect. That afternoon, the 20-year-old woman turned herself in at the Landstuhl police station.

The Kaiserslautern public prosecutor has ordered an autopsy and issued an arrest warrant for the woman on charges of manslaughter. She has exercised her right to remain silent.

The woman, who has not been named under Germany's strict privacy laws, is considered by prosecutors as a flight risk and being kept in custody.

Anyone with information about the incident may contact Kaiserslautern police at 0631 369-2620.

Navy looking to add housing for 8,000 sailors in Hampton Roads

The Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK — The Hampton Roads area could soon see new Navy housing that would provide beds for about 8,000 sailors, area officials announced Monday.

A bipartisan group of state and local elected officials participated

in a roundtable discussion with U.S. Navy personnel on federal, state and local investments in the Hampton Roads region. The goal was to bring all levels of government together to ensure a unified approach, including timelines, on revitalizing downtown Newport

News around the shipyard.

"This is an effort to make Newport News the center for excellence for shipbuilding," Rep. Rob Wittman said during a news conference at the U.S. Navy Tour and Information Office in Norfolk. "This is about prioritizing quality

of life for our sailors, quality of life for our men and women that work at the shipyard. We know we have to be successful in both those enterprises. If we're going to recruit and retain the best in our Navy, we have to take care of them."

Vice Adm. Christopher "Scotty"

Gray said the Navy is looking at creating 8,000 new beds for sailors in Hampton Roads. He said 1,000 to 1,500 beds would likely be in Newport News, although he noted the Navy is still working on specifics. He said he hopes the Navy has worked out a timeline by the fall.

WAR IN UKRAINE

Trump says he can end Ukraine war in one day

Russia's UN ambassador disagrees

By EDITH M. LEDERER
Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Donald Trump has said repeatedly he could settle the war between Russia and Ukraine in one day if he's elected president again. Russia's United Nations ambassador says he can't.

When asked to respond to the claim from the presumptive Republican nominee, Vassily Nebenzia told reporters Monday that "the Ukrainian crisis cannot be solved in one day."

At a CNN town hall in May 2023, Trump said: "They're dying, Russians and Ukrainians. I want them to stop dying. And I'll have that done — I'll have that done in 24 hours." He said that would happen after he met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin. And he keeps repeating the claim on the campaign trail.

During last week's debate with President Joe Biden, Trump claimed, "If we had a real president, a president that knew — that was respected by Putin ... he would have never invaded Ukraine."

Nebenzia said the war could have ended in April 2022 in Istanbul when Russia and Ukraine were "very close" to an agreement. Moscow invaded its neighbor two months earlier on Feb. 24, 2022, though Russia insists its "special military operation" began in 2014 after clashes in Ukraine's east resulted in Moscow

seizing the Crimea Peninsula.

The Russian ambassador blamed Ukraine's Western backers for blocking the April 2022 peace deal and telling Kyiv to keep fighting Russia.

Now, he said, Zelenskyy "is running around with his so-called peace plan which, of course, is not a peace plan but a joke." While meeting in Switzerland last month, nearly 80 countries called for the "territorial integrity" of Ukraine to be the basis for any peace agreement to end the war. But some key developing nations did not join in and Russia did not attend the conference.

Nebenzia pointed to Putin's offer on June 14 to "immediately" order a cease-fire in Ukraine and start negotiations if Kyiv begins withdrawing troops from the four regions annexed by Moscow in 2022 and renounces plans to join NATO.

Zelenskyy, who has vowed not to give up any territory, rejected what he called an ultimatum by Putin to surrender more land.

The Trump campaign didn't respond to an email seeking comment about Nebenzia's remarks.

Nebenzia called Zelenskyy's peace formula "a nonstarter" and said he needs to be "realistic" and take into account what's happened since April.



Nebenzia



SERHIY MORGUNOV/For The Washington Post

Emergency workers look over damage from a Russian glide bomb attack in Kharkiv.

Russia's devastating glide bombs keep falling on its own territory

The Washington Post

The powerful glide-bombs that Russia has used to such great effect to pound Ukrainian cities into rubble have also been falling on its own territory, an internal Russian document has revealed.

At least 38 of the bombs, which have been credited with helping drive Russia's recent territorial advances, crashed into the Belgorod region on the border with Ukraine between April 2023 and April 2024, according to the document obtained by The Washington Post, though most did not detonate.

Roughly comparable to the more advanced American JDAM guided bombs, these glide bombs are large Soviet-era munitions retrofitted with guidance systems that experts say often fail — resulting in impacts on Russian territory.

The majority of the bombs were discovered by civilians — forest rangers, farmers or residents of

villages surrounding the city. In most cases, the Defense Ministry didn't know when the bombs had been launched, indicating that some of them could have been there for days.

According to the document, at least four bombs fell on the city of Belgorod itself, a regional hub with a population of about 400,000 people. An additional seven were found in the surrounding suburbs.

The most, 11, fell in the Graivoron border region where some could not be recovered because of the "difficult operational situation."

The document, originally intercepted by Ukrainian intelligence and passed on to The Post, includes a spreadsheet of incidents citing emergency decrees on bomb cleanup and evacuation and appears to be a product of the Belgorod city emergency department.

Astra, an independent Russian media outlet, verified that many of

the incidents in the document matched those it had collected from local governments and reports in local news media. People mentioned as witnesses have been confirmed as residents.

While the bombs usually fail to detonate, one of the first recorded hitting Belgorod in April 2023 did explode when it crashed into a normally busy street, creating a crater 65 feet wide, shattering windows, and hurling parked cars onto roofs of buildings. The impact happened at night, however, and no casualties were reported. A day later a second, unexploded bomb was found buried 23 feet into the ground.

Russian military acknowledged at the time that the "accidental release of aircraft munition" from a Russian Su-34 fighter-bomber was behind the explosion. The document later confirmed it was FAB-500, a glide bomb, carrying a 500 kilogram, or 1,100 pound, payload.

Russian ally, Hungary's leader in Ukraine; 1st visit since war began

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — During his first visit to neighboring Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told President Volodymyr Zelenskyy Tuesday that the ongoing war was "the most important issue for Europe."

Known as Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest European Union ally, Orbán's visit was a rare gesture in a tumultuous relationship between the two countries as Budapest has repeatedly broken ranks with the rest of the European Union and leaned toward Moscow.



Orbán

The Hungarian prime minister has routinely blocked, delayed or watered down EU efforts to extend assistance to Ukraine and to sanction Moscow over its war, frustrating Zelenskyy and other EU leaders.

Meanwhile, on the war's front line, Kyiv's forces are scrambling to hold at bay a Russian push in eastern Ukraine. Delays in the provision of crucial Western military aid left the Ukrainian army at the mercy of the

Kremlin's bigger and better-equipped forces.

In a sign of still frosty relations, Zelenskyy did not publicly acknowledge Orbán's visit until hours after his arrival, posting on X that the two had discussed trade, cross-border cooperation, infrastructure and energy.

However, the Ukrainian president's office released a video showing Zelenskyy thanking Orbán for his visit and welcoming him to the country after shaking hands and then sitting across from each other at a round table with Hungarian, Ukrainian and EU flags in the background.

The two countries have had a tense relationship since the war started with Orbán portraying himself as a champion for peace and calling for immediate cease-fire and peace talks without expanding on what that would mean for Ukraine's territorial integrity.

This visit comes the day after Hungary took over the six-month rotating presidency of the EU, a position that has little real power but can be used to set the tone of the bloc's agenda. Hungarian officials have indicated that they will act as "honest brokers" in the role despite worries from some EU lawmakers that Hungary's demo-

cratic track record makes it unfit to lead the bloc.

Orbán's press chief, Bertalan Havasi told Hungarian news agency MTI early Tuesday the meeting would be an opportunity to build peace as Ukraine fights off Russia's invasion.

During his visit, the Hungarian prime minister told Zelenskyy: "This is war and peace, war between Russia and Ukraine, the invasion of Russia against Ukraine." He added that the war "is the real issue. My target is to be here to understand how we could be helpful to Ukraine in the forthcoming six months."

NATION

Prosecutor open to Trump sentencing delay

Associated Press

Manhattan prosecutors said Tuesday they would not oppose Donald Trump's request to delay the sentencing in his hush money trial as he seeks to have the conviction overturned following a Supreme Court ruling that granted broad immunity protections to presidents.

In a letter filed with the New York court, prosecutors with Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office said they would be open to a two-week delay in the July 11 sentencing in order to file a response to Trump's motions.

"Although we do believe the case to be without merit, we do not oppose his request" to delay the sen-

tencing pending determination of the motion, the prosecutors wrote.

The letter came one day after Trump's attorney requested the judge delay the sentencing as he weighs the high court's decision and how it could influence the New York case.

The lawyers argue that the Supreme Court's decision confirmed

a position the defense raised earlier in the case that prosecutors should have been precluded from introducing some evidence the Trump team said constituted official presidential acts, according to the letter.

If a delay is indeed granted, it would push a sentencing decision past the Republican National Con-

vention, which will kick off in Milwaukee on July 15. That means that Trump, now the presumptive GOP nominee, could become the Republican presidential candidate while it remains unknown what sentence he will face.

Trump's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ruling: Biden looks to reset after rough debate

FROM PAGE 1

mance, and did not take questions, delivering an unusually political message from the White House.

"I know I will respect the limits of presidential power as I have for the three-and-a-half years, but any president, including Donald Trump, will now be free to ignore the law," Biden said.

Biden seemed relaxed and confident, striking a clear and crisp tone and looking tanned and rested—all of which was in stark contrast to his often halting performance during last week's debate, when his face was notably pale. The president also had the benefit of a teleprompter for his remarks about the court, something he didn't have while facing off with Trump.

There have been private discussions in Biden's camp on what more the president could do to counteract what Americans saw during the debate, when he gave convoluted answers, trailed off at times, occasionally stared blankly and sounded raspy-voiced. The talks have included questions about whether Biden should be seen more in public through town-hall-style events or interviews and press conferences, which he has generally avoided during his time in office.

But most in his orbit are waiting on more substantial polling to come back in order to assess how bad the damage was before altering course in any substantial way. That's according to four Biden advisers who were not authorized to speak publicly about internal discussions and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Biden's team may not alter anything at all. Many think—or hope—the fraught moment will pass, particularly after Biden's family encouraged him to stay in the race and keep fighting during a huddle at Camp David on Sunday.

Campaign officials said Monday they had nothing to announce on new events. They said Biden would be campaigning as he has been, hitting battleground states as he has already been doing for months.

An ad released Monday was called "I Know" using clips from Biden's post-debate North Carolina rally, where he said, "When you get knocked down, you get back up."

Quentin Fulks, Biden's principal deputy campaign manager, put the focus on Trump in a call with reporters, saying, "When you do see President Biden out on the trail, he will be talking about the reasons why Americans should be scared of Donald Trump, as he has been for months."

Even before the debate, the age of the 81-year-old Democratic president had been a liability with voters, and the prime-time faceoff put the issue front-and-center before perhaps the largest audience he will have in the four months until Election Day. CNN, which held the debate, said more than 51 million people watched.

"I think his age was baked in, to a large degree, and I know he can do better than he did on Thursday night. I expected to see better. I'm not sure other voters did," said Jennifer Palmieri, a White House communications director during the Obama administration and a spokesperson for Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign.



JULIA NIKHINSON/AP

Steve Bannon speaks outside Danbury Federal Correctional Institution on Monday in Danbury, Conn.

Bannon surrenders at a federal prison to serve 4-month sentence

Associated Press

DANBURY, Conn. — Longtime Trump ally Steve Bannon was taken into custody Monday after surrendering at a federal prison to begin a four-month sentence on contempt charges for defying a subpoena in the congressional investigation into the U.S. Capitol attack.

Bannon arrived at the Federal Correctional Institution in Danbury, Conn., around noon and was formally taken into federal custody, the Bureau of Prisons said.

Speaking to reporters, Bannon called himself a "political prisoner," said former President Donald Trump was "very supportive" of him and slammed Democrats, including Attorney General Merrick Garland.

"I am proud of going to prison," Bannon said, adding he was "standing up to the Garland corrupt DOJ."

Shortly before he arrived to surrender, a small group of supporters gathered on the side of the road outside the prison. They cheered as Bannon and GOP Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia spoke during a news conference, holding up flags and signs supporting Bannon as a small group of protesters shouted, "Lock him up!" and "traitor!"

The crowd was rowdy, often breaking into chants of, "USA!" A supporter of President Joe Biden taunted Bannon by yelling "traitor" while Trump supporters tried to shout her down. Police had to stop traffic to allow the black SUV

that Bannon was riding in to pull out of a church parking lot where Bannon's supporters had gathered.

A judge had allowed Bannon to stay free for nearly two years while he appealed but ordered him to report to prison Monday after an appeals court panel upheld his contempt of Congress convictions. The Supreme Court on Friday rejected his last-minute appeal to stave off his sentence.

A jury found Bannon guilty of two counts of contempt of Congress: one for refusing to sit for a deposition with the Jan. 6 House Committee and a second for refusing to provide documents related to his involvement in the Republican ex-president's efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Biden.

Giuliani disbarred in New York for false statements about 2020 election

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Rudolph Giuliani, the former New York City mayor, federal prosecutor and legal adviser to Donald Trump, was disbarred in the state on Tuesday after a court found he repeatedly made false statements about Do-

nald Trump's 2020 election loss.

The decision was handed down by a New York appeals court in Manhattan.

The court ruled that Giuliani be "disbarred from the practice of law, effective immediately, and until the further order of this

Court, and his name stricken from the roll of attorneys and counselors-at-law in the State of New York."

Giuliani's spokesperson didn't immediately respond to an email and a phone call seeking comment Tuesday.

Giuliani has already had his New York law license suspended for false statements he made after the election.

He was the primary mouthpiece for Trump's false claims of election fraud after the 2020 vote, standing at a press conference in

front of Four Seasons Total Landscaping outside Philadelphia on the day the race was called for Democrat Joe Biden over the Republican Trump and saying they would challenge what he claimed was a vast conspiracy by Democrats.

NATION



NAM Y. HUH/AP

A hiring sign is displayed at a restaurant in Arlington Heights, Ill., on Friday. On Tuesday, the Labor Department reported that U.S. job openings rose slightly to 8.1 million in May.

US job openings rise to 8.1M despite higher interest rates

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—U.S. job openings rose slightly to 8.1 million in May despite the impact of higher interest rates intended to cool the labor market.

Vacancies rose from a revised 7.9 million in April, the first reading below 8 million since February 2021, the Labor Department reported Tuesday. April openings were marked down from an originally reported 8.1 million.

Layoffs rose to 1.65 million in May from 1.54 million in April. The number of Americans quitting their jobs — a sign of confidence in their prospects — was basically unchanged.

“The report was another sign that the labor market is holding firm... The expansion looks solid,” said Robert Frick, economist at the Navy Federal Credit Union.

The U.S. economy and job market have been remarkably resilient

in the face of the Federal Reserve’s campaign to raise interest rates to rein in inflation. The Fed hiked its benchmark rate 11 times in 2022 and 2023, lifting it to a 23-year high.

Defying expectations of a recession, the U.S. economy kept growing and employers kept hiring.

But lately there have been signs the economy is losing some steam. Job openings have come steadily down since peaking at 12.2 million in March 2022. The job market is still strong. There are 1.25 jobs for every unemployed American, but that’s down from a 2-to-1 ratio in January 2023.

From January through March this year, the economy grew at an annual pace of just 1.4%, slowest since spring 2022. Consumer spending, which accounts for around 70% of U.S. economic activity, expanded just 1.5% after advancing at a pace of more than 3% in each of the last two quarters of 2023.

The Labor Department is expected to report Friday that employers added 190,000 jobs last month, down from 272,000 in May, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet. Unemployment is forecast to stay low at 4%.

High interest rates have helped bring inflation down closer to the Fed’s target of 2% a year from a four-decade high 9.1% in June 2022. Progress on containing price increases is expected to allow the central bank to start cutting rates. Wall Street investors are expecting the first rate cut at the Fed’s September meeting.

Speaking at a conference in Portugal on Tuesday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said that progress toward lower inflation appears to have resumed after stalling earlier this year. But he said the Fed needed to see more evidence before it cuts rates.

Biden’s campaign announces \$264M fundraising haul

Associated Press

WASHINGTON— President Joe Biden’s reelection campaign and the Democratic National Committee reported raising \$264 million in the year’s second quarter, an impressive haul that may help them calm fears within their own party about last week’s shaky debate performance.

The total announced Tuesday includes \$127 million collected during June alone, when the campaign says it took in more than \$33 million on the day of the debate and in its aftermath. Biden also has \$240 million in cash on hand, outpacing the \$212 million it reported having last month.

Biden campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez called the totals “a testament to the committed and growing base of supporters standing firmly behind the president.”

The announced totals come as Biden’s campaign continues to scramble to quell panic among some Democrats, who have questioned whether the president can win November’s election after a debate where he appeared raspy, trailed off and at times gave convoluted answers. Some of the campaign’s top leaders have held multiple calls since the debate, preaching patience to donors and top surrogates.

Campaign officials nonetheless insist there’s been no discussion “whatsoever” of Biden exiting the race nor of any staff shakeups.

Former President Donald Trump, who is set to accept the Republican presidential nomination at the party’s convention this month in Milwaukee, has yet to announce the quarterly fundraising totals for his campaign and affiliat-

ed entities. A spokesman said they would release them “when we’re ready.”

Biden enjoyed a large fundraising advantage over Trump in the early stages of the race, but the former president has narrowed the gap more recently.

In April, which is included in Tuesday’s full second quarter totals, Biden and the DNC reported raising more than \$51 million. That was well short of the \$76 million that Trump and the Republican Party reported taking in for that month.

Trump also reported raising \$141 million in May, padded by tens of millions of dollars in contributions that flowed in after Trump’s guilty verdict in his criminal hush money trial.

Biden’s most recent quarterly total was enhanced by a glitzy June fundraiser in Los Angeles that he held with movie stars George Clooney and Julia Roberts and former President Barack Obama. That event took in more than \$30 million, a record for a Democratic candidate.

The president’s campaign said nearly half of the donations that came after the debate were from first-time donors. It said 95% of all second-quarter donations were under \$200, and more than 1.5 million total donors made over 2.8 million contributions.

The Biden campaign has used its funds to help open 200-plus campaign offices in battleground states that work with state Democratic parties and have more than 1,000 staffers. Biden’s team said that coming out of the debate last weekend, the campaign staged 1,500 events across the battlegrounds.

Justices take case on FDA conduct on vape products

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court took up an e-cigarette case Tuesday, weighing whether the Food and Drug Administration wrongly blocked the marketing of sweet flavored products amid a surge in vaping by young people.

Vaping companies argue the FDA unfairly denied more than a million applications to market fruit or candy flavored versions of nicotine-laced liquid that’s heated by the e-cigarette to create an inhalable aerosol.

The case comes as the FDA un-

dertakes a sweeping review after years of regulatory delays intended to bring scientific scrutiny to the multibillion-dollar vaping market, which includes thousands of flavored vapes that are technically illegal but are widely available. The FDA recently approved its first menthol-flavored electronic cigarettes for adult smokers.

The agency says the sweet flavored e-liquids pose a “serious, well-documented risk” of enticing more young people to pick up a nicotine habit.

High court will hear an appeal to upend Texas’ age verification law for porn sites

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear an appeal from the adult entertainment industry seeking to upend a Texas law that requires pornographic websites to verify the age of their users.

The justices will review an appellate ruling that allowed the age verification to go into effect. Arguments in the legal fight between the Free Speech Coalition, a trade association for the adult entertainment industry, and Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican who signed House Bill 181

into law, will take place in the fall.

In April, the high court turned aside an emergency appeal asking to put the age verification on hold while the legal fight continues.

Similar age verification laws have passed in other states, including Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, Utah and Virginia.

The Texas law carries fines of up to \$10,000 per violation that could be raised to up to \$250,000 per violation by a minor.

Last year, a federal judge blocked the law’s age verification require-

ment and health warnings, finding that they likely violated the Constitution. In March, a divided panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the age verification ruling, although it upheld the health warnings ruling that adult sites can’t be forced to publish statements with which they disagree.

The health warnings, disputed by the industry, included that pornography is addictive, impairs mental development and increases the demand for prostitution, child exploitation and child sexual abuse images.

NATION

Suit: Iran, Syria, N. Korea aided Hamas' attack

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Victims of Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel sued Iran, Syria and North Korea on Monday, saying their governments supplied the militants with money, weapons and know-how needed to carry out the assault that precipitated Israel's ongoing war in Gaza.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in New York, seeks at least \$4 billion in damages for "a coordination of extrajudicial killings, hostage takings, and related horrors for which the defendants provided material support and resources."

Iran's mission to the United Nations declined to comment on the al-

legations, while Syria and North Korea did not respond.

The United States has deemed Iran, Syria and North Korea to be state sponsors of terrorism, and Washington has designated Hamas as what's known as a specially designated global terrorist.

Because such countries rarely abide by court rulings against them in the United States, if the lawsuit's plaintiffs are successful, they could seek compensation from a fund created by Congress that allows American victims of terrorism to receive payouts. The money comes from seized assets, fines or other penalties leveled against those that, for ex-

ample, do business with a state sponsor of terrorism.

The lawsuit draws on previous court findings, reports from U.S. and other government agencies, and statements over some years by Hamas, Iranian and Syrian officials about their ties. The complaint also points to indications that Hamas fighters used North Korean weapons in the Oct. 7 attack.

But the suit doesn't provide specific evidence that Tehran, Damascus or Pyongyang knew in advance about the assault. It accuses the three countries of providing weapons, technology and financial support necessary for the attack to oc-

cur.

Iran has denied knowing about the Oct. 7 attack ahead of time, though officials up to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have praised the assault.

Iran has armed Hamas as a counter to Israel, which the Islamic Republic has long viewed as its regional archenemy.

In the years since the collapse of Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, Iran and Israel have been locked in a shadow war of attacks on land and at sea. Those attacks exploded into the open after an apparent Israeli attack targeting Iran's embassy complex in Damas-

cus, Syria, during the Israel-Hamas war, which sparked Tehran's unprecedented drone-and-missile attack on Israel in April.

Neighboring Syria has relied on Iranian support to keep embattled Syrian President Bashar Assad in power amid a grinding civil war that began with the 2011 Arab Spring protests. Like Iran, Syria also offered public support for Hamas after the Oct. 7 attack.

North Korea denies that it arms Hamas. However, a militant video and weapons seized by Israel show Hamas fighters likely fired North Korean weapons during the Oct. 7 attack

Melting of Alaska's Juneau icefield accelerating, study shows

Associated Press

The melting of Alaska's Juneau icefield, home to more than 1,000 glaciers, is accelerating. The snow covered area is now shrinking 4.6 times faster than it was in the 1980s, according to a new study.

Researchers meticulously tracked snow levels in the nearly 1,500-square mile icy expanse going back to 1948 with added data back to the 18th century. It slowly shriveled from its peak size at the end of the Little Ice Age around 1850, but then that melt rate sped up about 10 years ago, according to a study in Tuesday's Nature Communications.

"What's happening is that as the climate is changing, we're getting shorter winters and longer summers," study lead author Bethan Davies, a glaciologist at Newcastle University in England. "We're having more melt, longer melt season."

It's melting so fast that the flow of ice into water now averages about 50,000 gallons every second, according to study co-author



BECKY BOHRER/AP

A group of people take in the views of the Mendenhall Glacier in June 2023, in Juneau, Alaska. A new study says the melting of Alaska's Juneau icefield, home to more than 1,000 glaciers, is accelerating.

Mauri Pelto, a professor of environmental science at Nichols College in Massachusetts.

"In fact, glacier shrinkage in Alaska from the year 2000 to the year 2020, we're losing more ice in Alaska than anywhere else," Davies said.

Only four Juneau icefield glaciers melted out of existence be-

tween 1948 and 2005. But 64 of them disappeared between 2005 and 2019, the study said. Many of the glaciers were too small to name, but one larger one, Antler glacier, "is totally gone," Pelto said.

Alaska climatologist Brian Brettschneider, who was not part of the study, said the acceleration

is most concerning, warning of "a death spiral" for the thinning icefield.

An icefield is a collection of glaciers, while an ice sheet is something continent-wide and only two of those remain, in Greenland and Antarctica. The most famous glacier in the Juneau icefield is the Mendenhall Glacier, a tourist hotspot. The Arctic is warming about four times faster than the rest of the globe with Alaska warming 2.6 degrees Fahrenheit since 1980, according to federal weather data.

"When you go there the changes from year-to-year are so dramatic that it just hits you over the head," Pelto said.

Pelto first went to the Juneau icefield in 1981 to try to make the U.S. ski team and has continued to study it since, giving up competitive skiing for research.

"In 1981, it wasn't too hard to get on and off the glaciers. You just hike up and you could you could ski to the bottom or hike right off the end of these glaciers," Pelto said. But now they've got lakes on the edges from melted snow and

crevasses opening up that makes it difficult to ski, he said.

It's also now like a staircase of bare rocks there, Pelto said. White snow and ice reflect the sun's heat, the dark rocks absorb it, making the ground warmer, melting more snow in a feedback effect that amplifies and accelerates the warming-triggered melt, the study said.

Key is the snow elevation line. Below the snow line, snow can disappear in the summer, but there's snow cover year-round above. That snow line keeps moving upward, Pelto said.

The shape of Juneau's icefield, which is rather flat, "makes it vulnerable to particular tipping points" because once the snow line moves up, large areas are suddenly more prone to melt, Davies said.

"The tipping point is when that snow line goes above your entire icefield, ice sheet, ice glacier, whichever one," Pelto said. "And so for the Juneau icefield, 2019, 2018, showed that you are not that far away from that tipping point."

US will pay Moderna \$176M to develop an mRNA pandemic flu vaccine

Associated Press

The U.S. government will pay the vaccine maker Moderna \$176 million to accelerate development of a pandemic influenza vaccine that could be used to treat bird flu in people, as concern grows about cases in dairy cows across the country, fed-

eral officials announced Tuesday.

Moderna already has a bird flu vaccine in very early-stage testing that uses the same mRNA technology that allowed rapid development and rollout of vaccines to protect against COVID-19. The new funds from the U.S. Department of

Health and Human Services include continued development of the vaccine, including a late-stage trial next year if those early study results are positive.

But the project can be quickly redirected to target another form of influenza if a different threat than

the H5N1 form of bird flu emerges, HHS officials stressed.

The award was made through the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, or BARDA, a program that focuses on medical treatments for potential pandemics.

The H5N1 virus was detected earlier this year in dairy cows and has spread to more than 135 herds in 12 states and infected three people to date, all with mild cases. Federal health officials stress that the risk to the wider population remains low.

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STARS AND STRIPES

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WORLD

Hurricane Beryl on path toward Jamaica after Caribbean ruin

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Hurricane Beryl roared through open waters on Tuesday as a monstrous Category 5 storm heading toward Jamaica after earlier making landfall in the southeast Caribbean, killing at least six people.

A hurricane warning was in effect for Jamaica and a hurricane watch for Grand Cayman, Little Cayman, Cayman Brac and for Haiti's entire southern coast.

Beryl was forecast to start losing intensity on Tuesday but still to be near major hurricane strength when it passes near or over Jamaica early Wednesday, near the Cayman Islands on Thursday and into Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula on Friday, according to the National Hurricane Center.

The center said Beryl was expected to bring life-threatening winds

and storm surge to Jamaica, where officials warned residents in flood-prone areas to prepare for evacuation.

"I am encouraging all Jamaicans to take the hurricane as a serious threat," Prime Minister Andrew Holness said in a public address late Monday. "It is, however, not a time to panic."

Beryl is the earliest Category 5 storm ever to form in the Atlantic, fueled by record warm waters.

Late Tuesday, the storm was located about 235 miles southeast of Isla Beata in the Dominican Republic. It had top winds of 160 mph and was moving west-northwest at 22 mph.

In Miami, National Hurricane Center Director Michael Brennan said Jamaica appears to be in the direct path of Beryl.

A tropical storm warning was in



RICARDO MAZALAN/AP

Fishermen pull a boat damaged by Hurricane Beryl back to the dock at the Bridgetown Fisheries in Barbados, on Monday.

place for the entire southern coast of Hispaniola, an island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

As the storm barreled through the Caribbean Sea, rescue crews in the southeast Caribbean fanned out across the region to determine the extent of the damage that Hurricane Beryl inflicted after landing on Carriacou, an island in Grenada, as a Category 4 storm.

Three people were reported killed in Grenada and Carriacou and another in St. Vincent and the Gre-

nadines, officials said. Two other deaths were reported in northern Venezuela, where five people are missing, officials said.

One fatality in Grenada occurred after a tree fell on a house, Kerryne James, minister of climate resilience, environment and renewable energy, told The Associated Press.

She said the nearby islands of Carriacou and Petit Martinique sustained the greatest damage, with water, food and baby formula a priority.

Scores dead in stampede at India event

Associated Press

LUCKNOW, India — Thousands of people at a religious gathering in India rushed to leave a makeshift tent, setting off a stampede Tuesday that killed more than 100 and left scores injured, officials said.

It was not immediately clear what triggered the panic following an event with Hindu figure Bhole Baba. Local news reports cited authorities who said heat and suffocation in the tent could have been a factor. Video of the aftermath showed the structure appeared to have collapsed.

At least 116 people died, most of them women and children, said Prashant Kumar, the director-general of police in northern India's state of Uttar Pradesh, where the stampede occurred.

More than 80 others were injured and admitted to hospitals, senior police officer Shalabh Mathur said.

Police officer Rajesh Singh said overcrowding may have been a factor.

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Campus carry weapons law debuts in state

WV CHARLESTON — People with concealed carry permits can possess firearms on West Virginia public college and university campuses under a state law that debuted Monday.

Institutions of higher learning can implement exceptions to the law, which bans the open carry of a firearm on campus.

Similar legislation has passed in 11 other states.

As the bill moved through the Legislature last year, the presidents of West Virginia's largest schools told lawmakers that decisions about whether or not to allow guns on campus should be left to the institutions. They also voiced concerns about students struggling with mental health challenges.

When Republican Gov. Jim Justice signed the law in March 2023 he said he wanted the law to "send a message to the world, by God, if you want to mess with us, we can mess back."

Dems' retail theft bill ignores older convictions

CA SACRAMENTO — Top California Democrats want to advance legislation to crack down on retail theft, announcing they plan to send the measure to voters in November despite a tough-on-crime initiative already backed by retailers and law enforcement.

The lawmakers' plan, led by Gov. Gavin Newsom, seeks to put fewer people behind bars for stealing compared to the other plan. Newsom and lawmakers negotiated the plan behind closed doors over the weekend after failing to convince the coalition of law enforcement and business groups to drop their initiative.

Both proposals would make shoplifting a felony for repeat offenders and increase penalties for fentanyl-related charges. But the lawmakers' plan is narrower in scope.

Under the retailers' plan, any prior theft-related convictions, even if they happened years ago, would count toward a three-strike policy for increased sentences. Lawmakers also are proposing harsher punishment for repeat thieves, but the convictions would have to happen within three years of each other.

Scuba diver dies during salvage operation on lake

MN CRANE LAKE — Authorities are investigating the death of a scuba diver during a salvage operation on Crane Lake in northern Minnesota.

The 50-year-old man from the town of Embarrass was assisting a group of people Sunday in recovering a piece of sunken machinery from a part of the lake that



KIICHIRO SATO/AP

Splash and dash

Children run as they are splashed by a crashing wave on a breakwater along the shore of Lake Michigan on Sunday in Chicago.

was about 70 feet deep when he failed to resurface, the St. Louis County Sheriff's Office said in a statement. Rescuers found him, but despite lifesaving efforts they were unable to save him.

The salvage operation was based on a barge that was going to be used to transport the sunken equipment back to shore.

The man was trained as a scuba diver but was not affiliated with any recovery or salvage company, the sheriff's office said.

The accident happened outside the boundary of Voyageurs National Park, which includes part of Crane Lake.

Ex-labor union president is sentenced to prison

PA READING — The former president of a Philadelphia labor union has been sentenced to four years in prison for his role in what federal prosecutors said was embezzlement of more than \$600,000 of union funds.

Brian Burrows, 64, of Mount Laurel, N.J., former president of Local 98 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, was also ordered Wednesday in federal court in Reading to forfeit almost \$136,000 and to pay an amount of restitution to be determined later.

Burrows and John "Johnny Doc" Dougherty, the union's long-time business manager, were convicted in December of conspira-

cy, embezzlement and other counts. Prosecutors said they used the money for items including home renovations, concerts, groceries and even a cookie tray for the christening of a relative's baby.

Dougherty is scheduled to be sentenced July 11.

Two people killed after vintage biplane crashes

KS HOXIE — Authorities are investigating the crash of a vintage biplane in northwest Kansas that killed two Colorado residents.

The 1934 WACO YKC single-engine biplane crashed into a field around 10 miles north of Hoxie in Sheridan County around 6:10 p.m. Sunday, the Kansas Highway Patrol said.

The Patrol identified the pilot as David Allen, 78, of Elbert, Colo., and the passenger as Jeanne Allen, 79. They died at the scene.

The Federal Aviation Administration and National Transportation Safety Board are in charge of the investigation.

Man dies when fireworks explode in his garage

PA UNION CITY — A man was killed when some fireworks exploded at his Pennsylvania home, state police said.

Michael Cross, 55, of Union City, was working in his garage when the blast occurred around

10:15 a.m. Sunday in the Erie County community. Neighbors soon arrived and helped get Cross away from the flames, but he was pronounced dead at a hospital a short time later.

No other injuries were reported. The Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is among the agencies involved in the ongoing investigation into the blast.

Man gets life sentence in starvation death of son

AZ FLAGSTAFF — A northern Arizona man has been sentenced to prison for the rest of his life on convictions including first-degree murder in the 2020 starvation death of his 6-year-old son, according to court proceedings.

A Coconino County judge sentenced Anthony Martinez, 28, on Friday to life in prison on the murder conviction, with additional prison sentences linked to child abuse and kidnapping convictions in the abuse of the deceased child and an older sibling.

Additionally, cumulative sentences of three years prison were added on two convictions for aggravated assault, which can be served concurrently or credited against time served.

The Arizona Daily Sun reported that Martinez declined to speak during the court hearing but wrote a letter to his children that was read aloud by a defense attor-

ney, apologizing "for all the things I put you through."

Store ships LGBTQ+ books to areas with bans

CA SAN FRANCISCO — In an increasingly divisive political sphere, Becka Robbins focuses on what she knows best — books.

Operating out of a tiny room in Fabulosa Books in San Francisco's Castro District, one of the oldest gay neighborhoods in the United States, Robbins uses donations from customers to ship boxes of books across the country to groups that want them.

In an effort she calls "Books Not Bans," she sends titles about queer history, sexuality, romance and more — many of which are increasingly hard to come by in the face of a rapidly growing movement by conservative advocacy groups and lawmakers to ban them from public schools and libraries.

"The book bans are awful, the attempt at erasure," Robbins said. She asked herself how she could get these books into the hands of the people who need them the most.

Beginning last May, she started raising money and looking for recipients. Her books have gone to places like a pride center in west Texas and an LGBTQ-friendly high school in Alabama.

FACES



NETFLIX/AP

Eddie Murphy, left, and Paul Reiser are pictured in a scene from "Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F." The movie begins streaming Wednesday on Netflix.

This week: Beverly Hills Cop, Zach Bryan

Associated Press

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV, streaming services and music platforms this week.

Movies

■ After nearly 30 years of fits and starts, the fourth Beverly Hills Cop movie is finally upon us. Eddie Murphy reprises his role as Axel Foley in "Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F," which debuts on Netflix on Wednesday. Judge Reinhold and John Ashton also return but they get some fresh blood in a detective played by Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Captain (Kevin Bacon). Taylour Paige also joins the ensemble as Axel's daughter. The original "Beverly Hills Cop," which launched Murphy to stardom in 1984, is also streaming on Netflix now.

■ Emma Roberts is "living her best Florida life" when she remembers her lifetime dream of being an astronaut in "Space Cadet." Unbeknownst to her, a friend ("Hacks" castmate Poppy Liu) embellishes her résumé and she's accepted into a competitive NASA training program. It aspires

to be a kind of "Legally Blonde" meets "Private Benjamin" (who wouldn't dream of such heights) and will be available to stream on Prime Video starting Thursday.

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

Music

■ On the 4th of July, country music star Zach Bryan will release a new studio album, "The Great American Bar Scene." Little is known about it just yet. There will be 18 tracks — 17 songs and a poem — and it will be previewed at bars around the U.S. and Canada before hitting streaming on Independence Day. (Listen, it would be foolish to expect a traditional rollout from the sometimes-irreverent musician, who just two years ago released a live album titled "All My Homies Hate Ticketmaster.") The album will feature "Purple Gas," a duet with the Canadian up-and-comer Noeline Hofmann, as well as "Pink Skies," a folksy tearjerker that AP recently named one of the songs of the summer. That song is an exemplar of Bryan's specific skill set — little more than an acoustic guitar, harmonica, and raspy, specific storytelling that reveals



DISCOVERY, DISNEY JR./AP

New TV programming this week includes Discovery Channel's "Shark Week," left, and "minisodes" of the popular animated children's series "Bluey" on Disney+.

universal truths. "The kids are in town for a funeral," he sings. "So pack the car and dry your eyes." He's an expert at writing a novel in few words, so prepare to take notes.

— AP Music Writer Maria Sherman

Television

■ The beloved animated children's series "Bluey," about a family of dogs, rolls out super short episodes this summer be-

tween one and three minutes long. The first seven minisodes will begin airing Wednesday on Disney+. A second batch of minisodes will be released later this year.

■ NBC's "Macy's 4th of July Fireworks" is now in its 48th year. This Independence Day, the sky over New York's Hudson River will light up in patriotic colors and pyrotechnics. Country singer Mickey Guyton will host alongside media personality Zuri Hall. The festivities air live Thursday beginning at 8 p.m. ET on NBC and Peacock.

■ Summer is for sharks. Discovery Channel's annual "Shark Week" kicks off on Sunday with John Cena as host. The network has 21 hours of original programming to sink your teeth into, hosted by John Cena. "Shark Week" will also stream on Max.

■ Former reality star Hannah Berner, who was a cast member on Bravo's "Summer House," is ready to debut her first comedy special. "We Ride At Dawn" drops Sunday on Netflix. Berner is also the co-host of the popular podcast "Giggly Squad" with former "Summer House" cast member Paige DeSorbo.

— Alicia Rancilio

BET: 'Audio malfunction' caused heavy censorship of Usher speech

Associated Press

Usher's acceptance speech of the BET Awards' lifetime achievement award was heartfelt, occasionally profane and lengthy — and few people got to hear it.

The 13-minute speech was largely censored by the network, leaving viewers at home curious to know what Usher said. A BET spokesperson told The Associated Press that "due to an audio malfunction during the live telecast, portions of his speech were inadvertently muted. We ex-



Usher

tend our sincere apologies to USHER as we couldn't be more grateful for his participation."

A full version of the speech is now available on BET's YouTube channel and was included in a Monday rebroadcast, with a few profanities removed. Much of his speech centered on the idea of fatherhood, forgiveness, and his three-decades-long ca-

reer. It appears that the heavy censoring started shortly after Usher said "Sorry, I'm gonna curse and let you know how I really feel" early on in his acceptance.

He recounted walking into music mogul L.A. Reid's office at 12 or 13 years old and telling a room full of executives that he'd make it. "That wasn't ego speaking. I rebranded that word that day," he said in a section of the speech that didn't air. "I rebranded that word that day. I expressed goals out loud."

The R&B superstar is an eight-time Grammy winner who recently ended a two-year Las Vegas residency. In February, he released his first solo album in eight years, and in August is scheduled to kick off a 24-city U.S. tour titled "Past Present Future."

His album "Confessions" has sold more than 10 million units in the U.S., ranking it among one of the bestselling music projects of all time. It launched No. 1 hits such as "Yeah!" with Ludacris and Lil Jon, "Burn" and "Confessions Part II."

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OPINION

South China Sea disputes are difficult to navigate

BY ELIZABETH SHACKELFORD

Chicago Tribune

The South China Sea has become one of the world's most dangerous potential flashpoints. Territorial disputes in this area — often over uninhabitable rocks — have been a source of conflict and competing claims for a century. But China has become more aggressive recently with its claims to the area. With great power competition heating up worldwide, this could translate to big trouble.

In June, Chinese coast guard ships rammed and boarded Philippine navy vessels, using machetes, axes and hammers to damage the boats and threaten the crews. It was the latest and most violent in a series of confrontations between China and the Philippines in the area.

At the core of the clash was Second Thomas Shoal, a submerged reef in the Spratly Islands, a little more than 100 nautical miles west of the Philippines, where the Philippine navy has maintained a presence with a handful of marines on a grounded Navy transport ship since 1999. The Philippine vessels were attacked as they were resupplying the outpost.

Why such violence over a rocky feature that doesn't even qualify as land? For the Philippines, it's a matter of sovereignty and standing up to the Chinese government's overreach. Under international law, this shoal falls well within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

For many others, including the United States, China's aggressive claim to Second Thomas Shoal is part of a bigger threat to freedom of navigation in critical shipping lanes and to accessing a wealth of natural resources, from massive oil and natural gas reserves to abundant fish and seafood.

Several countries in the region lay claim to some of the islands, rocks and territorial waters of the South China Sea, but China's claims

are the most sweeping by far. They are demonstrated by the nine-dash line first detailed in a map China issued in 1947, which encompasses nearly the entirety of the sea, in an awkward U-shape stretching far south of China's shores.

The nine-dash line is such a source of angst that Vietnam banned last year's blockbuster movie "Barbie" because it portrays a childlike map that appears to show a dotted trail extending into the ocean from where China would be on the Asian landmass.

China has tried to strengthen its claim by expanding the size of islands it physically controls and by building new islands and militarizing them.

By the 1990s, China expanded its claims beyond islands and rocks to include the water itself, the seabed below and the airspace above. This is in clear violation of the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention — a treaty that China not only signed but also helped negotiate.

The shipping lanes mean these local skirmishes have global implications, and potentially global responses, since more than 20% of all global trade and 60% of maritime trade pass through these waters. A meaningful threat to the global economy doesn't stay local for long.

This is a big part of America's interest in maintaining peace and security in the region. Freedom of navigation is one of the oldest principles of international law, going back 400 years. The United States has made the defense of freedom of navigation worldwide a core U.S. national security priority.

But an even riskier element comes from U.S. security commitments in the region — one in particular. The United States engages in defense cooperation with Vietnam, but has no clear commitments to come to its defense. The U.S. government has enshrined into law its commitment to assist Taiwan in case of an attack, but the nature of how we would do so

remains intentionally ambiguous.

The Philippines, however, is a treaty ally with whom we've clearly agreed to mutual defense. This means that an armed attack on the Philippines would invoke America's commitment to defend it. If that attack comes from China, the United States could quickly find itself in direct conflict with a near-peer global power.

For decades, it wasn't at all clear how the Philippines' claims to these disputed islands factored into that commitment. This suited the U.S. government, since ambiguity was a deterrent to any provocations by the Philippines against China's competing claims.

But that all changed in 2019, when then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated publicly that the islands were included in that pact. Today, U.S. government guidelines make clear that the commitment applies to Philippines assets anywhere within the South China Sea.

The good news is that the United States and its partners in the region are eager, so far, to avoid full-scale war. Since the most recent skirmish, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has publicly stated that his country is "not in the business to instigate wars," and his government indicated that it would not invoke its treaty with the United States over the incident.

Avoiding war with China, though, requires the Philippines and its Western ally to strike the right balance by not escalating tensions with China but also not emboldening it to go further.

It will also depend on how keen China is to avoid war, and given its recent actions, that might not be a shared priority.

Elizabeth Shackelford is the Magro Family Distinguished Visitor in International Affairs at Dartmouth College and a foreign affairs columnist for the Chicago Tribune. She was previously a U.S. diplomat and is the author of "The Dissent Channel: American Diplomacy in a Dishonest Age."

As China regresses on women's rights, US can step up

BY RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHY AND KATHY CASTOR

Special to The Washington Post

Mao Zedong once declared that "women hold up half the sky." Yet even the pretense of that belief has been abandoned in today's China.

President Xi Jinping, Mao's current successor as Communist Party chairman, has turned back the clock on the role of women in society and the workplace. His policies have driven women out of political decision-making, out of the workforce and back into subordinate roles in all aspects of modern life. This backsliding by China gives U.S. policymakers an opportunity to offer women and girls worldwide a better model for their lives.

Despite initial progress after the Communist Revolution and the "Reform and Opening Up" that started in 1978, women in the People's Republic of China have never reached parity with men in either leadership or social status. While they nominally enjoyed the same rights as men, the societal preference for boys over girls persisted, as demonstrated by the results of the one-child policy, which more often favored male children over female.

In recent years, even after the relaxation of the one-child policy, China has experienced a considerable decline in birthrates as its society rapidly ages. This has resulted in calls from the Chinese Communist Party for women to exit the workforce and the public sector to fo-

cus on childbearing and more traditional roles in the home.

For the first time in two decades, there are no women in the Politburo, the CCP's executive policymaking body. The absence of women leaders in China's top tiers of government reflects broader systemic and cultural factors within the CCP. Xi called on female attendees at the National Women's Congress in Beijing last year to leave the workplace, return home, get married and have children. In a concerted effort over the past few decades to compel young women to marry early, state-controlled media have shamed unmarried women in their late 20s as "leftover women." The CCP has tightened divorce laws, making it difficult for women to leave abusive marriages, and regressed on reproductive choice, announcing in 2021 that it would seek to reduce abortions for "nonmedical reasons" — presumably because of the declining birthrates.

The challenges women face in political leadership are a feature of the CCP and not a reflection of the country as a whole. Although women are not nearly at gender parity, there are several very successful female chief executives and entrepreneurs who show that women can be a dynamic force in China's economy.

Under previous leadership, China had an emerging civil society, including feminist groups, but the CCP under Xi has cracked down, accusing women's rights activists of "subverting state power." This began with the 2015 arrest of five young feminist activists who

protested sexual harassment on the eve of International Women's Day and has continued with actions such as the suppression of the #MeToo movement.

The U.S. Congress should show the world an alternative to the CCP's treatment of women by supporting women's rights here at home, including reproductive freedom. Passing the Women's Health Protection Act, the Equal Rights Amendment and the Paycheck Fairness Act would be important steps toward ensuring that American women have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Abroad, Congress must support funding for international women's empowerment programs, advance initiatives to combat gender-based violence and promote women's participation in government. Congress should also codify gender-based violence as a ground for seeking asylum in the United States.

Finally, Congress must consider expanding international sanctions against individuals or entities responsible for human rights violations, including violations of women's rights.

No country can reach its full potential without full participation and equal rights for women. Mao might have believed that women hold up half the sky, but the U.S. can show it takes a democracy to truly lift women up.

Raja Krishnamoorthi, the ranking Democrat on the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, represents Illinois' 8th Congressional District. Kathy Castor, a Democrat, represents Florida's 14th Congressional District and serves on the committee.

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

Grid for Eugene Sheffer Crossword with numbered squares from 1 to 59.

ACROSS

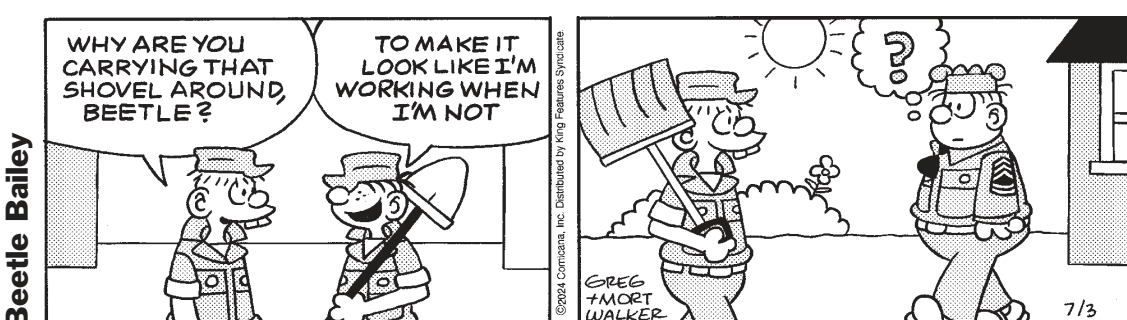
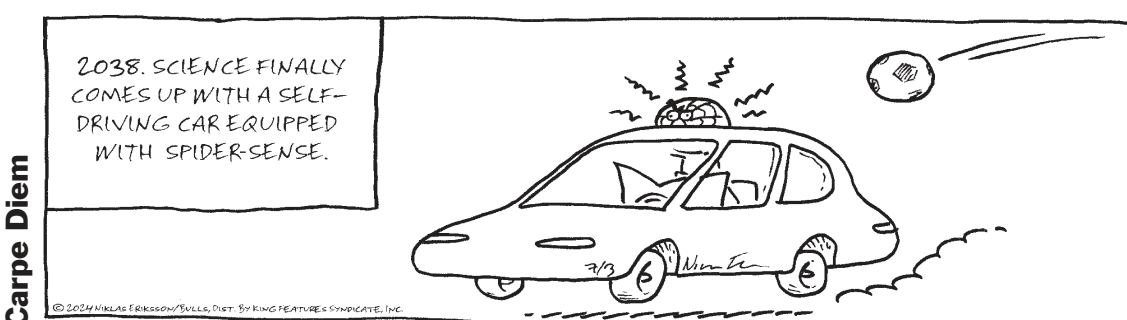
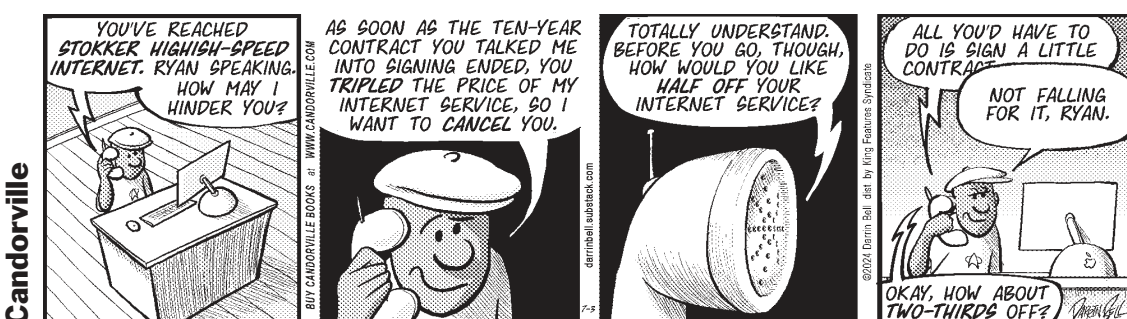
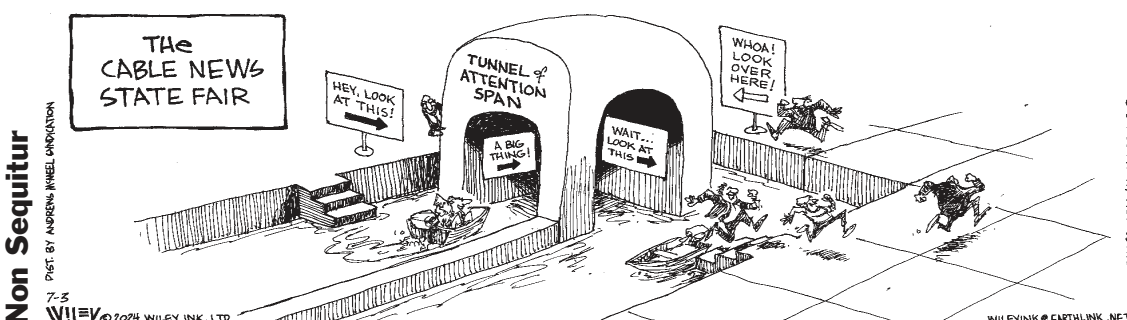
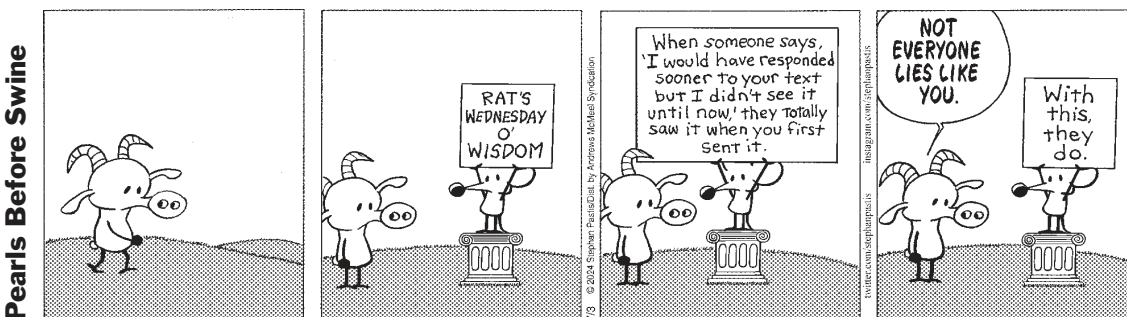
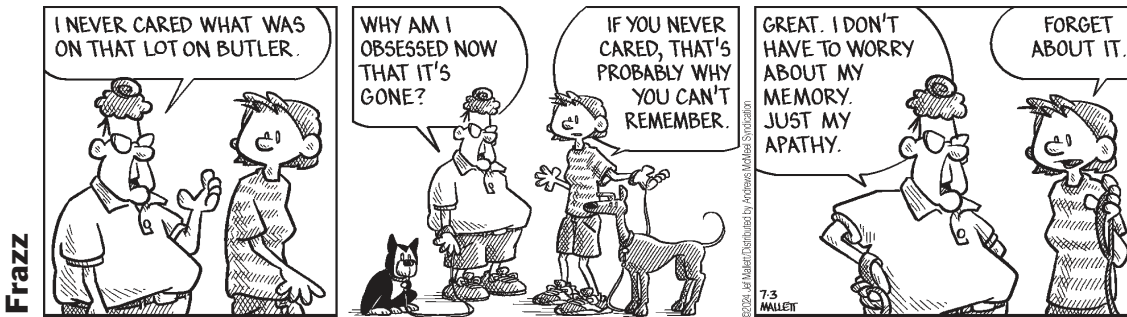
- 1 Prego rival
5 Invoice fig.
8 - -bitty
12 Object of worship
13 Actress Vardalos
14 Antitoxins
15 Soccer player's skill
17 "The Rookie" actor Julia
18 - de corps
19 Paint type
21 German cry
22 Not many
23 Attorney's field
26 Small barrel
28 Andrew - Webber
31 Sci-fi race
33 British rule of India
35 Pressing need
36 Apple products
38 Prattle
40 Campground letters
41 Crème - crème
43 Japanese pond carp
45 Nonstop
47 Scents
51 Source
52 Katy Perry hit single of 2010
54 French 101 verb
55 Leftover bit

DOWN

- 16 Candle part
20 Super Bowl org.
23 Floral ring
24 Jungfrau, for one
25 Carpentry
27 Joke
29 - -hoo!"
30 Crime lab evidence
32 Thinks creatively
34 Capital of Indonesia
37 Devious
39 Drill
42 Regarding
44 Hawkeye
45 Bailiwick
46 Used car sites
48 - Lisa"
49 Bohemian
50 Vail gear
53 Hot temper

Answer to Previous Puzzle

Answer grid for the previous crossword puzzle with words like JAIL, MUSICBOX, STA, etc.



7-3 CRYPTOQUIP

GYBXY FBME HJ XLN BR
DQNJQXWVU JBWWBMP JHN LM
QPP EQVBOQNU DQNRHM WH
ENBOQ? L UHVFR-GLPQM.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I IMAGINE A COMICAL JANITOR HIDING IN A CLOSET MIGHT SUDDENLY JUMP OUT AND CRY "SUPPLIES!"
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: P equals G

NBA



ERIC GAY/AP

Klay Thompson is moving on from the Golden State Warriors, with the four-time league champion agreeing to join the Western Conference champion Dallas Mavericks, two people with knowledge of the move said Monday.

Thompson leaving Warriors for Mavericks, sources say

BY SCHUYLER DIXON
AND TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

DALLAS — Klay Thompson has taken off his Golden State jersey for the last time. And the Warriors say they're going to retire it to commemorate his time with them.

Thompson is moving on from the Warriors, with the four-time league champion agreeing to join the Western Conference champion Dallas Mavericks and change franchises for the first time in his 13-year NBA career, two people with knowledge of the decision said Monday.

ESPN and The Athletic first reported the multiteam deal which, as currently constructed, will be executed as the sign-and-trade of a three-year, \$50 million contract involving the Warriors, Mavericks and Charlotte Hornets, said the people, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the agreement has not been announced.

Without mentioning Dallas — by league rule, they technically cannot acknowledge any part of the trade yet — the Warriors released a statement in tribute to Thompson on Monday night, saying they “can’t overstate Klay Thompson’s incredible and legendary contributions” to the team

and that “the amount of joy and happiness that Klay provided Warriors fans ... cannot be minimized.”

“His penchant for delivering in pressurized situations on the biggest stage, including many Game 6 heroics, has helped define a career,” the Warriors said. “Klay’s legacy will live on forever and we look forward to the day we can retire his #11 jersey at Chase Center, where he will join a host of Warriors immortals, including those who helped shape this recent dynasty — himself included.”

Thompson is sixth on the NBA’s all-time 3-pointers made list with 2,481, behind Reggie Miller (2,560), Damian Lillard (2,607), James Harden (2,940), Ray Allen (2,973) and Thompson’s now-former “Splash Brother” with the Warriors, Stephen Curry, and his 3,747 career makes from beyond the arc.

There were indications last season that Thompson and the Warriors might be headed toward a breakup.

Thompson came off the bench 14 times — not much in the grand scheme of things considering he played 77 games, but those were his first appearances as a reserve since his rookie season of 2011-12. He shot 38.7% from 3-point range, the second-worst of his career. He

averaged 17.9 points, the third-lowest of his career. He wasn’t always in the finishing lineup and the season — and his Warriors career — ended with a 0-for-10 shooting performance against Sacramento in a play-in tournament loss.

Thompson — a five-time All-Star and two-time All-NBA selection who missed two entire seasons with injuries — took a long look around the court after that game, soaking in the scene just in case it would be his final time playing with the Warriors. Turns out, it was. And now he’ll join a Dallas team that just went to the NBA Finals as a shooter brought in to help Luka Doncic and Kyrie Irving.

“We thank Klay for his contributions and wish him the best as another chapter in his journey is written,” the Warriors said.

The Hornets were planning to acquire guard Josh Green as part of the deal, giving up two second-round draft picks. The 15th overall pick in the 2020 draft, Green has spent all four of his NBA seasons with the Mavericks and averaged 8.2 points, 3.2 rebounds and 2.3 assists this past season.

The league’s moratorium on signings and most other offseason movement will be lifted on Saturday.

76ers make splash with \$400M in deals for George, Maxey

BY DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Paul George ditched LA and decided to help form a new Big Three in Philly with Joel Embiid and Tyrese Maxey. Of course, Maxey needed to stick around to complete the talented trio — and the Philadelphia 76ers went all in on lavish, long-term contracts to make that happen.

Up first, George agreed to a four-year, \$212 million free-agent contract after the nine-time All-Star spurned the Los Angeles Clippers. Maxey was on deck, and the first-time All-Star soon agreed in principle by sunrise Monday to a five-year, \$204 million extension.

The 76ers threw down the gauntlet while most of the NBA was sleeping — committing more than \$400 million in salary to two players they believe position them as the top contender to dethrone the NBA champion Boston Celtics.

Here they come, team of the year? Hold up.

The 76ers have been down this high-priced, high-expectations road before without a championship to show for their efforts. They have failed to find the right pieces to field a winner around their franchise player Embiid, falling short in their star hunting with Ben Simmons, Jimmy Butler, James Harden, Al Horford and a list that goes on and on.

They’ll try again, this time with George in tow — not as the elite centerpiece he was asked to be in the past with Indiana, Oklahoma City and the Clippers, but in a complementary role to Embiid, hopeful his 34-year-old legs can hold up over the long haul to ease some of the burden on the 2023 NBA MVP. The 76ers were a bottom feeder when Embiid was hurt last season — and he’s often injured — so rolling the dice on a player widely considered the best

available on the free-agent market was a chance team president Daryl Morey was willing to take.

George and Maxey intend to sign their contracts shortly after the league’s moratorium on signings is lifted Saturday, a person with knowledge of the deals told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not yet finalized. Though the ink hasn’t hit the contracts yet, the 76ers already are a sports betting darling, jumping to an 8-1 favorite to win the 2025 title behind Boston and Denver, per BetMGM Sportsbook.

“We’re planning on being the best team in the East next season,” Morey said last week during the draft.

George at least should keep them in the mix in the East and give them a viable No. 1 scoring option when Embiid is out.

The 76ers finished 31-8 in the regular season with Embiid — about a 65-win pace — and a woeful 16-27 without him.

Morey and the 76ers devised this plan as far back as a year ago when they asked Maxey to play out the final year of his rookie contract and wait a summer for an extension to free up the salary cap space needed to pursue free agents. Morey then took on only expiring contracts and draft picks in his deals throughout the season — notably in trading Harden to the Clippers and signing veteran Kyle Lowry to a short-term deal — that left the 76ers with essentially only Embiid and Maxey as the lone key holdovers on the roster once the season ended and roughly \$65 million in cap space this summer.

“This offseason’s a big one,” Morey said after the 76ers were knocked out of the playoffs. “I owe it to the fans, to ownership, to everybody to get this team where we’re in a place where we’re competing for championships.”



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Tyrese Maxey is sticking around for the long haul, agreeing in principle to a five-year, \$204 million extension with the Philadelphia 76ers on Monday, a person with knowledge of the deal told the AP.

NHL/OLYMPICS

Teams drop over \$1B in free-agent frenzy

Preds' signings of Marchessault, Stamkos highlight huge opening

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
AND JOHN WAWROW
Associated Press

The Nashville Predators made a huge splash when free agency opened Monday by signing Stanley Cup champion forwards Steven Stamkos and Jonathan Marchessault in a series of moves topping \$100 million that made Smashville the center of attention on a record-setting, billion-dollar day across the NHL.



Marchessault

Stamkos left Tampa Bay after 16 seasons, two Cup titles and two more trips to the Final to sign a four year, \$32 million contract with Nashville.

"By no means did I ever envision that a day like today would happen, but it did," Stamkos said. "It was definitely a bitter pill to swallow when it really started to materialize that it wasn't going to work in Tampa."

Stamkos turned to the Predators, made his decision and got a call from Marchessault asking if he was signing with them too, worried it was one or the other. "He said, 'No Stammer, I'm coming, too,'" Stamkos recalled.

Marchessault got \$27.5 million for the next five seasons less than 13 months since earning playoff MVP honors in leading Vegas to its first championship. The two will have company: Defenseman

Brady Skjei signed with Nashville for seven years and \$49 million, and Scott Wedgewood came in at \$3 million for two years to back up franchise goaltender Juuse Saros.

General manager Barry Trotz called it "a massive day for the future of our organization." The Predators at \$111.5 million became the first team to surpass \$100 million committed to new players in free agency since the Florida Panthers five years ago started building toward the championship they won

last week.

"It's huge because it's a statement, I think, for the rest of the league," Trotz said. "These players see what we're doing with our franchise. We have lots to offer, and we're very determined to win. We're committed to that."

Marchessault was an original member of the expansion Golden Knights in 2017 and helped them reach the Final twice and win the Stanley Cup last year. He is coming off scoring a career-high 42 goals and, like Stamkos, was one of his team's most recognizable faces.

On the first day of free agency, teams committed a record \$1.12 billion in contracts as more than 100 players changed teams. The total — the most ever spent in any single day of free agency, accord-



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

The Nashville Predators made a big splash in the opening minutes of NHL free agency by spending over \$100 million to sign Steven Stamkos, pictured, Jonathan Marchessault and Brady Skjei.

ing to CapFriendly — is a direct result of the salary cap jumping to \$88 million per team, the first big increase since before the pandemic.

"A lot of cash," Toronto GM Brad Treliving said. "There were some really good players available. You saw teams be aggressive, and lots of players changed teams."

Jake Guentzel signed a \$63 million, seven-year contract with Tampa Bay after it acquired his rights from Carolina over the

weekend, opting to pay him big money at age 30 rather than Stamkos at 34.

"Things just didn't work out in Carolina, and then I heard Tampa might be trading for my rights, so obviously I got really excited because everyone hears how good of a team and good of a spot this is," said Guentzel.

Chicago and Washington were among the busiest teams.

The Blackhawks signed forwards Tyler Bertuzzi (four years, \$22 million), Teuvo Teravainen

(three years, \$16.2 million), Craig Smith (one year, \$1 million), defenseman Alec Martinez (one year, \$4 million) and goaltender Laurent Brossoit (two years, \$6.6 million).

The Capitals, beyond trading for Jakob Chychrun, continued their roster overhaul by signing defenseman Matt Roy to a six-year contract worth \$34.5 million and forwards Brandon Duhaime (two years, \$3.7 million) and Taylor Raddysh (one year, \$1 million).

Basketball stars seeking berths in last-chance qualifiers

BY TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

Luka Doncic and Giannis Antetokounmpo are about to get one last chance at reaching the Paris Olympics. Same goes for Dornantas Sabonis and Nikola Vucevic. And Rudy Fernandez is about to get his shot at making history.

The last four spots in the 12-team Olympic men's basketball field for the Paris Games started getting decided Tuesday, with the beginning of winner-take-all qualifying tournaments in Spain, Latvia, Puerto Rico and Greece.

Each site is playing host to a six-team tournament that runs through July 7, and the four winners get the last four spots in the Olympic field.

"We are in the best possible place," Antetokounmpo said when asked about getting to play qualifying games at home in Greece.

It's likely he and Doncic will go head to head at some point; Slovenia is in Greece for that qualifier. Meanwhile, in Spain, the perennial Olympic medal contenders



CHARLES KRUPA/AP

Dallas Mavericks guard Luka Doncic is among several NBA stars still looking to qualify for the Paris Olympics later this month.

aren't just trying to get to Paris — there's also a quest to make Fernandez, the Spanish great, the first six-time men's basketball Olympian.

"We want to see that dream happen," Spain coach Sergio Scariolo said.

The format has two groups of three teams at each tournament. For group play, which runs Tuesday through Thursday, each nation plays the other two teams in their group. The top two teams in each group — so four total from each site — advance to semifinals

that will be held on Saturday. Championship games at all four sites are Sunday.

A look at the qualifiers:

Spain

Site: Valencia, Spain.

Group A: Lebanon, Angola, Spain.

Group B: Finland, Poland, Bahamas.

Outlook: Spain is at home and that's a big edge, but the Bahamas believes it can surprise for three very good reasons — Deandre Ayton, Buddy Hield and Eric Gordon, all of whom are on that nation's roster for the qualifiers.

Latvia

Site: Riga, Latvia.

Group A: Georgia, Philippines, Latvia.

Group B: Brazil, Cameroon, Montenegro.

Outlook: The host Latvians didn't get the easiest draw in the world, especially with the Philippines now coached by Tim Cone — a former Miami Heat summer league assistant with more than two dozen championships during his time in the Philippines. Montenegro's hopes rest largely on Nikola Vucevic.

Greece

Site: Piraeus, Greece.

Group A: Slovenia, New Zealand, Croatia.

Group B: Egypt, Greece, Dominican Republic.

Outlook: The potential for a Greece-Slovenia final seems high, and that would be great theater — Doncic vs. Antetokounmpo for a spot in the Olympics. Doncic played through injuries in the NBA Finals for Dallas in its five-game loss to Boston, so the fact that he's playing here shows how much the Olympic shot means to him.

Puerto Rico

Site: San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Group A: Mexico, Ivory Coast, Lithuania.

Group B: Italy, Puerto Rico, Bahrain.

Outlook: Danilo Gallinari headlines the roster for an experienced Italy team, one that has to face host Puerto Rico in the group stage but could still advance to the semifinals even with a loss. Lithuania seems to have the most experience in Group A, and it would be a surprise not to see it in the semifinals.

MLB

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	53	31	.631	—
New York	54	32	.628	—
Boston	44	39	.530	8½
Tampa Bay	42	42	.500	11
Toronto	38	46	.452	15
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	52	30	.634	—
Minnesota	47	37	.560	6
Kansas City	47	39	.547	7
Detroit	38	46	.452	15
Chicago	24	62	.279	30
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	47	39	.547	—
Houston	43	41	.512	3
Texas	38	46	.452	8
Los Angeles	36	47	.434	9½
Oakland	30	56	.349	17

National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	55	29	.655	—
Atlanta	46	36	.561	8
New York	41	41	.500	13
Washington	39	45	.464	16
Miami	30	54	.357	25
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	50	35	.588	—
St. Louis	43	40	.518	6
Pittsburgh	40	43	.482	9
Cincinnati	39	45	.464	10½
Chicago	39	46	.459	11
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	52	33	.612	—
San Diego	46	42	.523	7½
Arizona	41	43	.488	10½
San Francisco	41	44	.482	11
Colorado	29	55	.345	22½

Monday's games	
Houston 3, Toronto 1	N.Y. Mets 9, Washington 7, 10 innings
Colorado 8, Milwaukee 7, 10 innings	
Tuesday's games	
Boston at Miami	Chicago White Sox at Cleveland
St. Louis at Pittsburgh	N.Y. Mets at Washington
Cincinnati at N.Y. Yankees	Houston at Toronto
San Francisco at Atlanta	Detroit at Minnesota
Philadelphia at Chicago Cubs	San Diego at Texas
Tampa Bay at Kansas City	Milwaukee at Colorado
Baltimore at Seattle	L.A. Angels at Oakland
Arizona at L.A. Dodgers	
Wednesday's games	
Boston (Bello 7-5) at Miami (Rogers 1-8)	Chicago White Sox (Fedde 5-3) at Cleveland (Williams 0-0)
St. Louis (Mikolas 6-7) at Pittsburgh (Jones 5-6)	N.Y. Mets (Scott 0-2) at Washington (Parker 5-4)
Cincinnati (Abbott 7-6) at N.Y. Yankees (Rodón 9-5)	Houston (Blanco 8-3) at Toronto (Kikuchi 4-8)
San Francisco (Hicks 4-4) at Atlanta (Sale 10-3)	Philadelphia (Wheeler 9-4) at Chicago Cubs (Imanaga 7-2)
San Diego (Mazur 1-) at Texas (Gray 3-4)	Detroit (Flaherty 5-5) at Minnesota (Festa 1-0)
Tampa Bay (Pepiot 4-4) at Kansas City (Wacha 4-6)	Milwaukee (Rea 7-2) at Colorado (Hudson 2-11)
L.A. Angels (Daniel 1-0) at Oakland (Estes 2-3)	Baltimore (TBD) at Seattle (Gilbert 5-4)
Arizona (Montgomery 6-5) at L.A. Dodgers (Stone 9-2)	
Thursday's games	
N.Y. Mets at Washington	St. Louis at Pittsburgh
Cincinnati at N.Y. Yankees	Houston at Toronto
Chicago White Sox at Cleveland	Boston at Miami
Detroit at Minnesota	Philadelphia at Chicago Cubs
San Diego at Texas	L.A. Angels at Oakland
Baltimore at Seattle	San Francisco at Atlanta
Tampa Bay at Kansas City	Milwaukee at Colorado
Arizona at L.A. Dodgers	

ROUNDUP

Astros top Jays; 10th win in 11 games

Associated Press

TORONTO — Hunter Brown pitched six shutout innings, Jeremy Peña and Yordan Alvarez hit home runs and the Houston Astros beat the Toronto Blue Jays 3-1 on Monday afternoon for their 10th win in 11 games.

After going 4-0 with a 1.16 ERA in five June starts, Brown (6-5) opened July with another solid outing. The right-hander allowed two hits, both singles. He walked three and struck out five.

"It couldn't happen to a better guy," Peña said. "He prepares really well and he goes out there and competes."

Decked out in special red jerseys and caps, the Blue Jays lost on the Canada Day holiday for a second year in a row.

After Rafael Montero worked a 1-2-3 seventh inning, the Blue Jays loaded the bases against Bryan Abreu in the eighth. Abreu escaped by getting Daulton Varsho to ground out.

"You can have him against the ropes but he's going to figure out a way to get people out," Astros manager Joe Espada said of Abreu. "That's just Bryan. He's so good, his stuff is so explosive."

Josh Hader allowed a solo home run to Ernie Clement in the ninth but finished for his 13th save in 14 chances.

Toronto left eight runners on base, twice leaving the bases loaded. The Blue Jays finished 0-for-6 with runners in scoring position.

"We just needed a hit in certain spots," manager John Schneider said.

Blue Jays slugger Vladimir Guerrero Jr. was scratched from the lineup Monday because of pain



FRANK GUNN, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Houston Astros designated hitter Yordan Alvarez, right, is congratulated by teammate Alex Bregman after they scored on Alvarez's two-run home run in the ninth inning against the Blue Jays in Toronto on Monday.

in his right hand. Guerrero was hit on the fingers by a 96 mph fastball against the Yankees on Sunday.

Mets 9, Nationals 7 (10): J.D. Martinez and Jose Iglesias homered in a six-run 10th inning, and visiting New York held off Washington to spoil the major league debut of prized outfield prospect James Wood.

Francisco Alvarez had three RBIs for the Mets (41-41), who stopped a two-game skid and improved to 17-6 in their last 23 games.

In the opener of a four-game series between NL East rivals, Harri-

son Bader was hit by pitch leading off the 10th to put two runners on. Martinez followed with his 10th homer, a drive to center field against Hunter Harvey (2-4).

Washington scored four times in the bottom half before Reed Garrett struck out Luis García Jr. with two on for his fourth save.

Rockies 8, Brewers 7 (10): Jake Cave came through with a bases-loaded single over a five-man infield in the bottom of the 10th inning to give host Colorado a victory against Milwaukee.

Brenton Doyle homered twice

and Charlie Blackmon went deep on his birthday for the third time in his career to help the Rockies outlast the Brewers.

William Contreras homered among his three hits for Milwaukee, finishing a triple shy of the cycle. Willy Adames had three hits, including an RBI single to ignite a three-run eighth that put the Brewers back in front 7-6.

Doyle homered for the second time in the game, a two-out solo shot in the bottom of the eighth off Elvis Peguero, to produce the fourth tie of the night at 7-all.

Home Run Derby changes opening round setup

Associated Press

The Home Run Derby is altering its format.

This year's event, which takes place on July 15 at Arlington, Texas, limits the number of pitches each hitter can face in each round and changes the setup of its opening round.

All eight hitters will be competing against one another in the opening round, with the top four advancing to the semifinals. The semifinalists will be seeded depending on how many homers they hit in the first round.

Under the previous format, the eight hitters essentially competed in a tournament, with one-on-one quarterfinal, semifinal and championship matchups. They were seeded according to their season home-run totals.

In the first round and the semifinals, each hitter will now get ei-



LINDSEY WASSON/AP

The American League's Randy Arozarena, of the Tampa Bay Rays, is introduced at the MLB All-Star Home Run Derby in Seattle last year.

ther three minutes or 40 pitches, depending on which of those benchmarks gets reached first. In the final round, a hitter will get

two minutes or 27 pitches. That doesn't include the bonus periods that hitters will get in each round.

Under the previous format, hit-

ters still faced a time limit but there wasn't any restriction on the number of pitches they could face.

Each hitter will get bonus pitches until they hit into three outs during that period. He gets a fourth out if he hits a homer that goes at least 425 feet in the bonus period. Under the old format, each hitter got an extra 30 seconds of bonus time and could receive another 30 seconds of bonus time if he hit two homers of at least 440 feet during the regulation period.

Although Major League Baseball hasn't yet announced all the players competing in this year's Home Run Derby, Baltimore's Gunnar Henderson said Sunday night on social media that he would be participating. Last year's Home Run Derby was won by Toronto's Vladimir Guerrero Jr.

WIMBLEDON

83rd-ranked player ousts Vondrousova in first round

No. 6 seed second defending women's champ to lose in opener

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

LONDON — Marketa Vondrousova became the first defending women's champion at Wimbledon to lose in the first round the next year since 1994, eliminated 6-4, 6-2 by Jessica Bouzas Maneiro at Centre Court on Tuesday.

Vondrousova was a surprise title winner at the All England Club 12 months ago, the first unseeded woman to claim the trophy at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament.

Now she enters the books in another — and less-wanted — historic way. The only other time in the sport's Open era, which dates to 1968, that a woman went from a championship at Wimbledon to an immediate exit a year later was when Steffi Graf was defeated by Lori McNeil 30 years ago. "I was happy to be back on the Centre Court," Vondrousova said. "It just didn't go as planned today."

Vondrousova was seeded No. 6 this time, but the left-hander, who was the runner-up at the 2019 French Open and a silver medalist at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago, was never quite able to demonstrate her full game Tuesday. She appeared to still be suffering after-effects from a fall during a tuneup tournament on grass in Berlin last month that hurt her hip.

"I was a bit slower, maybe. I was a bit scared," Vondrousova



said. "But credit to her. She was playing a good match, too. I didn't feel at my best, (but) she didn't give me many points for free."

How big a deal was this for Bouzas Maneiro?

She is competing in a Grand Slam tournament for only the third time and came into the day with an 0-2 record at those events. Bouzas Maneiro also had never won a match at a tour-level grass tournament and never beaten an opponent ranked in the top 10.

"This is one of the most important moments in my life, in my career, here in this sport. This is amazing," said Bouzas Maneiro, a 21-year-old from Spain who is ranked 83rd this week, equaling

her career high.

"I was like, 'I have no pressure. Just enjoy the moment, enjoy the tournament.' Just trying to be free playing, and I did it, so I'm happy for that," she said.

Vondrousova added to the series of past major title winners dropping out of the singles brackets within the first 30 hours of action at Wimbledon this year — although others did so without playing a point.

Earlier Tuesday, Andy Murray pulled out of singles because he decided he wasn't able to compete a little more than a week after having surgery to remove a cyst from his spine. His final appearance at Wimbledon, which he won in 2013 and 2016, will come in dou-



PHOTOS BY KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/AP

No. 86 Jessica Bouzas Maneiro of Spain, above, celebrates after defeating No. 6 Marketa Vondrousova, left, of the Czech Republic in a huge upset during the first round at Wimbledon on Tuesday.

bles alongside his brother, Jamie.

"I'm disappointed. I wanted to play in the tournament, and I wanted to have a chance to go out there and walk out on my own on Centre Court again and give it another go. But I also was only going to do that if I felt like I could be competitive. And I didn't feel like that today," Murray said.

Intermittent rain delayed matches on the outside courts more than once Tuesday, and the retractable roofs at Centre Court and No. 1 Court were shut to allow play in those two stadiums. Early winners included 2022 champion Elena Rybakina and No. 5 seed Jessica Pegula among the women, and No. 7 Hubert Hurkacz among the men.

The initial signs of trouble for Vondrousova on Tuesday came right away: She double-faulted three times in the very first game and got broken to trail 1-0.

"My serve wasn't so good today," Vondrousova said. "Overall, I think, I wasn't at my best."

She wound up with seven double-faults, part of her total of 28 unforced errors, twice as many as Bouzas Maneiro in a match that lasted only a little more than an hour.

"I'm surprised with myself, honestly. At the beginning, I was a little bit nervous, but then ... the atmosphere was so nice," Bouzas Maneiro said. "I was comfortable here playing, and I was like at home. I don't know why."

Djokovic wins with sleeve on his knee

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

LONDON — Novak Djokovic wore a gray sleeve on his surgically repaired right knee while winning his first-round match at Wimbledon on Tuesday without too much of a test.

Playing his first match since tearing the meniscus in his knee at the French Open on June 3, Djokovic never faced a break point along the way to a 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 victory over qualifier Vit Kopriva in under two hours on Centre Court.

"Very pleased with the way I felt on the court. Obviously, coming into Wimbledon this year was little bit of different circumstances for me, because of the knee. I didn't know how everything was going to unfold on the court, really," Djokovic said. "Practice sessions are quite different from official match play. I'm just extremely glad (with) the way I felt today, the way I played."

He accumulated 15 break chances, converting six, and delivered his usual clean strokes, finishing with twice as many winners, 32, as unforced errors, 16.



KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/AP

Novak Djokovic returns to Vit Kopriva during their first-round match at Wimbledon on Tuesday.

There were plenty of quick points, which probably was at least in part a result of Djokovic trying not to spend too much time running more than he needed to. He ended up taking 68 of the 91 exchanges that lasted four or fewer strokes.

"I tried to really focus on the game and not really think too much about the knee," Djokovic said. "Everything I could possibly do, I've done, along with my team, in the last 3½ weeks in order to give myself a chance to be able to play."

The 37-year-old Djokovic has won seven of his men's-record 24 Grand Slam titles at the All England Club and was the runner-up to Carlos Alcaraz last year.

Djokovic hurt his knee during a five-set win at Roland Garros and pulled out of that tournament, then had surgery in Paris on June 5. Less than a month later, he was back in action and taking the first step toward what he hopes would be an eighth championship at Wimbledon, which would tie Roger Federer's mark for the most by a man.

"If it was for any other tournament, I probably wouldn't risk it, wouldn't rush it as much," Djokovic said. "I just love Wimbledon."

Speaking to the crowd after the match, Djokovic thanked his surgeon, saying: "Without him doing his job well, things would be a bit complicated."

Scoreboard

Tuesday

At London

Purse: Euro 17,942,000

Surface: Grass

Seedings in parentheses

First Round

Men's Singles

Tomas Martin Etcheverry (30), Argentina, def. Luca Nardi, Italy, 6-1, 6-4, 6-2.

Yoshihito Nishioka, Japan, def. Nuno Borges, Portugal, 6-2, 7-6 (6), 2-6, 6-3.

Alexei Popyrin, Australia, def. Thiago Monteiro, Brazil, 6-4, 6-7 (8), 6-3, 6-4.

Jaume Munar, Spain, def. Billy Harris, Britain, 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Hubert Hurkacz (7), Poland, def. Radu Albot, Moldova, 5-7, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4.

Alex de Minaur (9), Australia, def. James Duckworth, Australia, 7-6 (1), 7-6 (3), 7-6 (4).

Lorenzo Musetti (25), Italy, def. Constant Lestienne, France, 4-6, 7-6 (4), 6-2, 6-2.

Alexander Zverev (4), Germany, def. Roberto Carballes Baena, Spain, 6-2, 6-4, 6-2.

Luciano Darderi, Italy, def. Jan Choinski, Britain, 7-5, 4-6, 2-6, 7-5, 6-2.

Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard, France, def. Sebastian Korda (20), United States, 7-6 (5), 6-7 (4), 7-6 (6), 6-7 (4), 6-3.

Novak Djokovic (2), Serbia, def. Vit Kopriva, Czechia, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2.

Francisco Comesana, Argentina, def. Andrey Rublev (6), Russia, 6-4, 5-7, 6-2, 7-6 (5).

Women's Singles

Jessica Pegula (5), United States, def. Ashlyn Krueger, United States, 6-2, 6-0.

Harriet Dart, Britain, def. Zhuoxuan Bai, China, 6-4, 6-0.

Laura Siegemund, Germany, def. Kateryna Baindl, Ukraine, 6-4, 6-1.

Wang Xinyu, China, def. Viktoriya Tomova, Bulgaria, 7-6 (4), 3-6, 6-0.

Elena Rybakina (4), Kazakhstan, def. Elena-Gabriela Ruse, Romania, 6-3, 6-1.

Jessica Bouzas Maneiro, Spain, def. Marketa Vondrousova (6), Czechia, 6-4, 6-2.

SOCCER



MATTHIAS SCHRADER/AP

Portugal's Pepe, left, and Cristiano Ronaldo celebrate their shootout win over Slovenia in a round of sixteen match Monday at Euro 2024 in Frankfurt, Germany. Portugal advances to the quarterfinals.

Ronaldo, Portugal survive shootout against Slovenia

By GRAHAM DUNBAR
Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany — No one does high drama in international soccer to such an operatic extent as Cristiano Ronaldo.

Portugal is heading to a blockbuster quarterfinal with France at the European Championship after its star captain generated compelling viewing on center stage of the victory over Slovenia on Monday.

Winning a penalty shootout 3-0 after a 0-0 game against the 57th-ranked team in world soccer might not sound like much.

But there were tears, lots of them, from Ronaldo; an apology in prayer form to his fans, who responded with adulation; extravagant arm gestures of anger, frustration and exasperation; chances wasted and denied to make more tournament history; a renewed duel with an old rival goalkeeper; and ultimately redemption and victory.

Ronaldo's mother was in the stadium and TV pictures showed her crying, too, after he missed his penalty.

"Sometimes it's hard and difficult to score penalties," Ronaldo told Portuguese broadcaster RTP after the match, getting emotional again. "I've scored more than 200 penalties in my career. Sometimes it's a mess."

Still, the last act of Monday's show gave Portugal what it needed.

"We showed the enthusiasm that we still have to play, to have

fun, to give joy to the fans and that's it, this is our life," he said after it was all over, close to midnight in Frankfurt.

The 39-year-old Ronaldo went into the game without a goal at Euro 2024.

The moment when he surely had to become the oldest player ever to score at a Euro finals tournament came in the first period of extra time, the 105th minute, after missing five or six of the kind of chances he has thrived on now for 20 years at this level.

Portugal had been awarded a penalty kick and Ronaldo stepped up to take what could have been the decisive goal.

Instead, Slovenia goalkeeper Jan Oblak, a long-time adversary from their time playing Spanish league soccer in Madrid, dived left to push aside the well-struck shot against a post and away to safety.

Tears welled in Ronaldo's eyes and soon flowed during the break before the second period of extra time began. Teammates consoled him, kissed his forehead and urged him to keep going.

Extra time also finished 0-0 and when the penalty shootout started, Slovenia's first kick was saved by Portugal goalkeeper Diogo Costa.

Up stepped Ronaldo, facing a massed stand of about 10,000 Portugal fans. He placed it perfectly low beyond Oblak diving to his right.

Ronaldo looked apologetically to the fans and put his hands to-

gether as if in prayer. The fans responded with a bellowing and forgiving shout of "Siuuuu" — their soccer icon's trademark goal scream.

"I was certain that he had to be the first penalty taker and show us the way to victory," Portugal coach Roberto Martinez said. "Life gives you difficult moments and the way he reacted makes us very proud."

Costa answered the rest of those fans' prayers with as good a penalty shootout as any goalkeeper could have.

He saved all three of Slovenia's kicks from Josip Ilicic, Jure Balkovec and Benjamin Verbic. Then he was in tears, too.

Bruno Fernandes and Bernardo Silva also scored for Portugal to seal the shootout 3-0 with two kicks to spare.

"I was sad and now I'm overjoyed. This is what football gives you," Ronaldo said in translated comments in a post-game interview. "You cannot explain it."

The personal duel between Ronaldo and Oblak had been memorable merely in regulation time.

It was an intensely frustrating first 90 minutes for Ronaldo with three free kicks, two mistimed jumps for headers and a golden chance to score with his first clear shot in open play.

That was in the 89th, when he ran clear on goal with the ball passed perfectly into his stride. The left-foot shot was low and powerful but Oblak's block was better.

Pushed: Uruguay's goal stands after video review

FROM PAGE 24

header by Ronald Araújo, who out-jumped defender Tim Ream, but the rebound went right to Olivera and he tapped the ball in with his left foot.

Olivera appeared to be offside on the initial header but the goal stood after a video review.

Three minutes before Uruguay scored, the U.S. was in position to advance.

Bruno Miranda had tied the score for Bolivia against Panama in a game started simultaneously in Orlando, Fla., which meant the U.S. would only need a tie. But Panama went on to a 3-1 victory to claim the second spot in Group C behind Uruguay, and the U.S. was bounced from the group stage for the first time in 20 continental and global tournaments on home soil.

"This is still a young team. Still a lot of potential. But potential doesn't really matter if you go out on the pitch and you don't get the job done," defender Antonee Robinson said. "Everyone needs to try and up the level, myself included."

Berhalter was rehired in June 2023 and given a contract through the upcoming World Cup, which the U.S. will co-host with Canada and Mexico. But despite a lineup that included Pulisic, Weston McKennie and Tyler Adams, the U.S. failed to even match its last Copa America appearance, when it lost to Argentina in the 2016 semifinals.

During the second half Monday night, the home crowd of 55,460 in less-than-full Arrowhead Stadium began chanting, "Fire Gregg."

The U.S. next plays September friendlies against Canada and New Zealand.

"It wasn't only Copa America. It's learning from these high-level

games we're playing pre-tournament," Berhalter said, "and having this collective understanding that the margins are so small, and there is very little separating any of these teams."

Berhalter and the Americans knew the difficulty of their situation — Pulisic at one point said they would need to play "the best game of our lives" to advance — and they looked like a team with nothing to lose for most of the first half.

It was one marked by physical play and questionable calls.

Folarin Balogun, who had two goals already in the tournament, bore the brunt of several challenges. He was left calling for help after a collision with Uruguayan goalkeeper Sergio Rochet, then was left rolling on the field after Araújo's challenge later in the half.

Balogun eventually had to leave with a hip pointer and Ricardo Pepi took his place.

In the middle of the chaos was 32-year-old Peruvian referee Kevin Ortega, whose several questionable calls hurt the U.S.

The first came when Ortega began to pull a yellow card and stop play, then allowed it to continue — while still holding the card — as Uruguay nearly scored on an attack. The second came when the U.S. had a clear advantage after a hand ball on Uruguay, but the Peruvian referee eventually blew his whistle and called the play back for a free kick.

"This referee was awful," Robinson said. "I've never seen a referee, you know, let a quick free kick go while he's got a yellow card in his hand. And it's literally embarrassing. And I hope something happens to him from that."



ED ZURGA / AP

U.S. captain Christian Pulisic argues a non-call Monday with referee Kevin Ortega during a Copa America Group C match against Uruguay.

SPORTS

Defending champion ousted

Vondrousova beaten in first round by player ranked 83rd » Wimbledon, Page 22



COPA AMERICA



ED ZURGA/AP

Uruguay's Federico Valverde, left, fends off a challenge by the United States' Gio Reyna during their Copa America Group C match Monday in Kansas City, Mo. Uruguay won 1-0.

US pushed out in group stage



REED HOFFMAN/AP

Coach Gregg Berhalter is under fire after the U.S. failed to advance to the quarterfinals.

Heat turned up on Berhalter after Americans underachieve

BY DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Gregg Berhalter gave a single-word answer after the United States was eliminated from the Copa America with a loss to Uruguay when asked whether he was the right man to lead the Americans into the 2026 World Cup.

“Yes,” Berhalter said.

Plenty of others are sure to have plenty more to say about his future with the national team.

After a disastrous loss to Panama put the U.S. in a dire predicament, Berhalter's lineup of players from European clubs created precious few opportunities

against Uruguay. And when Mathías Olivera found the back of the net for a questionable second-half goal, La Celeste walked out of Arrowhead Stadium with a 1-0 victory on Monday night and the Americans were left wondering how everything had gone so wrong.

“We're all going to do a review of the whole tournament and see where we fell short,” Berhalter said. “It's obvious the Panama game hurt us, put us behind the 8-ball, and I think collectively — the staff, the players, the sporting department — have to look at where do we improve. How do we get better? We know it's a talented team, one with big potential, and we didn't show it.”

Berhalter and the U.S. hoped to show the team had advanced since its round-of-16 elimination against the Netherlands at the 2022 World Cup. Instead, the U.S. managed only a 2-0 win over lowly Bolivia and was upset 2-1 by the Panamanians.

“We had a good start and brought a lot of energy but at the end of the day, just not enough quality,” U.S. captain Christian Pulisic said. “I felt like we gave it everything but we just couldn't score.”

Indeed, the lone goal Monday night came in the 66th minute when Nicolas De La Cruz swung a free kick in front of the American goal. Matt Turner parried a

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Tatum, Celtics agree on \$300M extension » NBA, Page 18

