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STARS AND STRIPES

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KATHY KMONICEK/AP

Cindy White looks over the devastation inside her home caused by Hurricane Helene on Tuesday in Morganton, N.C. The adjacent Catawba River flooded due to the torrential rains, destroying seven of the family's nine homes on the property.

Pair of Navy destroyers help Israel in Iran's attack

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two Navy destroyers helped defend Israel against a barrage of nearly 200 ballistic missiles launched Tuesday by Iran as the Middle East teeters on the brink of a regional war.

The USS Bulkeley and USS Cole joined Israeli air defense units in firing about a dozen interceptors to shoot down inbound Iranian missiles, according to Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the top Pentagon spokesman. He did not confirm how many missiles were successfully shot down by the Navy destroyers, stating the situation was still being assessed. Both destroyers are deployed to the Eastern Mediterranean.

"We have been closely consulting with Israel for a while now to be prepared in the eventuality. As today demonstrated, we were prepared," Ryder said.

Iran's attack follows Israel's killing of several Hezbollah leaders including its top leader, Hassan Nasrallah. The barrage of missiles targeted Tel Aviv and other central parts of Israel. Tuesday's attack included about twice as many missiles as Iran's April 13 attack on Israel, Ryder said.

There has been one reported death — a Palestinian civilian in the West Bank. No other deaths or injuries were reported so far.

SEE ATTACK ON PAGE 8

RELATED
Israel battles in Lebanon as fears of a wider war mount
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'This is urgent'

Long water and power outages from Helene test patience in the Carolinas, Georgia

By JEFF AMY,
ERIK VERDUZCO,
AND JOHN SEEWER
Associated Press

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Many residents of the Carolinas who still lacked running water, cell-phone service and electricity Wednesday made do for the moment and questioned how long their patience would last, nearly a week after Hurricane Helene caused catastrophic damage

across the Southeast and killed at least 177 people.

In remote mountain areas, helicopters hoisted the stranded to safety while search crews waded through floodwaters and moved toppled trees so they could look door to door for survivors.

More than 1.1 million customers still had no power Wednesday in the Carolinas and Georgia, where Helene tore far inland after barreling over Florida's Gulf Coast

and six days ago.

"We have no water; we have no power; but I think it's also been humbling," Anna Ramsey said as she and her two children carried water in plastic bags from a distribution site in Asheville, N.C. "It's been humbling ... what we need to do for ourselves."

Fallen trees left her family stranded for several days. They've bailed water from a creek in their backyard to flush toilets

and cooked on a propane grill.

"Friday will probably be our breaking point," she said.

Government cargo planes have been bringing food and water to the hardest-hit areas, and the Pentagon said Wednesday that the secretary of defense has authorized mobilizing 1,000 active-duty soldiers to help with supplies.

SEE HELENE ON PAGE 9

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Nike's quarterly sales, profits slump

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Nike sales and profits slumped in its fiscal first quarter as the sportswear giant wrestles with shoppers' sluggish demand for new sneaker models and other products.

The lackluster results Tuesday came after Nike announced last month that its CEO, John Donahoe, is stepping down on Oct. 13. Company veteran Elliott Hill is coming out of retirement to head up the company.

"A comeback at this scale takes time, but we see early wins — from momentum in key sports to accelerating our pace of newness and innovation," said Matthew Friend, executive vice president and Nike's chief financial officer, in a statement. "Our teams are energized as Elliott Hill returns to lead Nike's next stage of growth."

Friend told analysts Tuesday that, given its CEO transition and with three quarters left in the fiscal year, Nike has withdrawn its

full-year financial-performance guidance and intends to provide a quarterly outlook for the balance of the fiscal year. It also postponed its investor meeting that had been scheduled for Nov. 19.

Nike has been known for its innovation but in recent years, analysts have said that it has lost its focus on coming up with cool products.

Nike posted net income of \$1.05 billion, or 70 cents per share, in the quarter that ended Aug. 31.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates			
Euro costs (Oct. 3)	\$1.08	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8494
British pound (Oct. 3)	\$1.30	Thailand (Baht)	32.78
Japanese yen (Oct. 3)	140.00	Turkey (NewLira)	34.2179
South Korean won (Oct. 3)	1286.00		
Commercial rates			
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770		
Britain (Pound)	1.3263		
Canada (Dollar)	1.3482		
China (Yuan)	7.0381		
Denmark (Krone)	6.7498		
Egypt (Pound)	48.3699		
Euro	0.9049		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7643		
Hungary (Forint)	362.65		
Israel (Shekel)	3.7893		
Japan (Yen)	145.75		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3057		
Norway (Krone)	10.5670		
Philippines (Peso)	56.22		
Poland (Zloty)	3.89		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7533		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2906		
South Korea (Won)	1324.50		

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

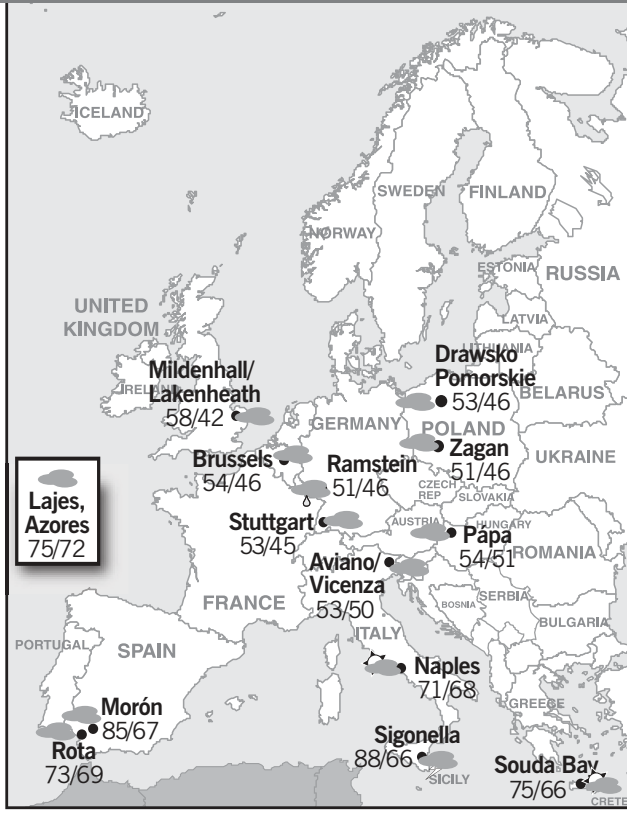
INTEREST RATES	
Prime rate	8.00
Interest Rates Discount rate	5.00
Federal funds market rate	4.83
3-month bill	4.61
30-year bond	4.07

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY 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

SOCOM job field to embrace battlefield tech

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Special Operations Command is paving the way for a new military specialty aimed at getting more tech-savvy recruits into jobs that will help commandos put emerging technology to use on the battlefield, Army officials said.

SOCOM is partnered with the military's service academies and more than a dozen other colleges to create a "talent pipeline" for future officers, the command said in a recent statement.

In late September, SOCOM brought together 94 cadets to take part in its "Ignite Program," where they worked on solutions for problems special operators are likely to encounter in conflict zones.

Command Sgt. Maj. JoAnn Naumann, the senior enlisted leader for U.S. Army Special Operations Command, told the cadets during launch of the event on Sept. 19 that a tech-oriented job field was in the works.

"Special operations is leading the Army by creating a new (military occupational specialty) this year for technology, innovation and integration — a new MOS that does not exist in the Army," she said in a statement.

During the SOCOM event, the cadets grappled with big data ana-



MARLEAH MILLER/U.S. Air Force

Cadets with U.S. Special Operations Command's Ignite Program learn about drones at the Autonomous Systems Development Facility at Hanscom Air Force Base in Massachusetts on Sept. 19.

lytics, smart sensors, swarming drones and artificial intelligence. They focused on figuring out how to help special operators generate actionable intelligence from bat-

tlefield sensors, SOCOM said.

Such efforts coincide with Pentagon concerns about keeping pace with rapid technological innovations expected to transform

how forces will fight in future wars.

Retired Gen. Mark Milley, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said during a security conference in July that he ex-

pected robots and other smart machinery to represent about one-third of the U.S. military over the next 10 to 15 years.

"It'll be a fundamental change, and I would argue that other nations' militaries are going to be similarly designed ...," Milley said during the event hosted by Axios. "The country that optimizes those technologies for military use is going to have a very significant — and potentially decisive — advantage in an armed conflict."

Naumann said a high-tech career field is needed to address such issues.

"We will have people whose job is to think about these kinds of problems, build prototypes and then help us once we get the technology integrated into the battlefield and make it work in real-world scenarios," she said.

Army 2nd Lt. Katrina Thoms, who participated in one of SOCOM's Ignite events, said the new job field will open doors for people interested in special operations in ways other than the rugged field work such units are known for.

"This gives a new pathway and a new job opportunity for people who are really good at technology, and not just the gung-ho, 'let's be in the field,' type of people," Thoms said.

NATO surveillance along Romania's border to rise

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — NATO is stepping up surveillance along Romania's border with Ukraine, a move that comes after reports that a Russian drone last week crossed into allied airspace.

U.S. Army Gen. Christopher Cavoli, NATO's supreme allied commander, authorized the mission, which began Monday with increased flights by the alliance's far-seeing AWACS aircraft.

The flights over Romania are in line with a broader effort to reinforce allied presence in the region and monitor what the Russian military is doing.

"It will also strengthen Romania's ability to respond to the increased air activity in the vicinity of its border," Allied Air Command said in a statement Monday.

NATO said the flights will take place solely over alliance territory and will operate out of Preveza Air Base in Greece and the NATO AWACS main base at Geilenkirchen, Germany.

Last week, Romania's defense ministry reported that a Russian drone briefly crossed into its airspace in connection with an attack in neighboring Ukraine.

In response to the Sept. 27 incident, Romanian and Spanish fighter jets taking part in a NATO air policing mission in the country were scrambled to monitor the airspace.

The increased presence in Romania of the AWACS aircraft, known as NATO's "eye in the sky," will give the alliance the ability to look far into Ukraine to monitor events.

Sensors in a radar dome atop the planes can detect other aircraft out to a distance of 250 miles.

Lawmakers eye moving quickly on NDAA after November return

By BRIANA REILLY
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Leading defense authorizers say they hope to move swiftly on a top legislative priority — the annual, must-pass defense policy bill — when Congress returns to town in a month and a half.

"We have to be ready when we come back to go right to the 'Big Four' meeting, and that's our objective," Senate Armed Services Chairman Jack Reed, D-R.I., told reporters last week, referring to the chairmen and ranking members of the Armed Services committees.

Those negotiations would clear the way for the release of a final, compromise version of the fiscal 2025 National Defense Authorization Act. Congress has passed the bill annually for more than 60 years.

But before a bipartisan, bicameral bill can come together, lawmakers have to resolve differences between the House's approach, in which members advanced a plan laden with divisive, conservative measures that Democrats largely oppose, and the Senate's bipartisan legislation that would spend billions of dollars more than was

agreed to in a 2023 debt limit law.

Asked about the biggest obstacles to reaching a compromise with the House, Reed, who is also on the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, seemed to nod to some of those House GOP-approved measures.

"They're generally not along the lines of DOD issues, per se. They're more political and social," he said.

Lawmakers also have to reconcile the topline funding recommendation for programs at the Defense Department and other U.S. national security initiatives. The House bill would authorize \$883.7 billion, sticking to the caps laid out in the 2023 debt limit deal, but the Senate Armed Services Committee would authorize \$25 billion more.

House Armed Services Vice Chairman Rob Wittman, R-Va., predicted in September that the debt deal's caps would become "the bottom line for" the compromise version of the NDAA.

And lawmakers will be pushing to find a resolution to all that during a compressed legislative time period. Though staff work on the bill has already begun, and is set to continue through recess, some ma-

nor sticking points will need to be overcome at the "Big Four" level before a final version can be considered by the full House and Senate.

The House and Senate are slated to resume work in Washington on Nov. 12, commencing a lame-duck session that includes five scheduled weeks of session before both chambers depart for the Christmas holiday.

"I'd like to see the NDAA hopefully get done by the end of the month in November, which I think is realistic," Wittman said. "And then that helps us, too, in trying to navigate where we go with appropriations."

The path to informal conference was officially cleared when the Senate Armed Services Committee's leaders filed a bloc of 93 amendments to their bill on Sept. 19, provisions that will be considered in the bicameral negotiations.

That informal conference process, a trend of the NDAA in recent years, involves lengthy conversations — largely at the staff level — between chambers that produce a final version acceptable to both the House and Senate, as well as the president.

Corrections

■ The headline on a story in Monday's edition incorrectly described Shigeru Ishiba as an ex-prime minister of Japan. He is a former defense minister who took over as prime minister on Tuesday.

■ A story in Wednesday's edition about a rocket attack on a U.S. base in Syria incorrectly identified a destroyer in the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group. The destroyer in the strike group is the USS O'Kane.

MILITARY

Navy toughens restrictions for drinking in Japan

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — U.S. Navy sailors have one less hour of revelry in Japan's bars and nightclubs after Navy Region Japan tightened up liberty restrictions recently imposed on all service members in the country.

U.S. sailors in Japan must adhere to a midnight-to-5 a.m. ban on drinking in public establishments off base, according to the order from Rear Adm. Ian Johnson. They may not even be in those places during those hours.

The order, which took effect Wednesday, was coordinated with U.S. 7th Fleet, Navy Region Command spokesman Cmdr. Paul Macapaga said.

The change was made to "meet mission requirements and ensure our team remains strong and fully committed to meeting our Mutual Cooperation and Security obligations in Japan, and our broader mission on maintaining international peace and security in the region," he said.

About 17,400 sailors are stationed at bases across Japan, according to All Hands magazine in January 2019.

The Navy order comes five days after U.S. Forces Japan commander Lt. Gen. Ricky Rupp issued a broader rule affecting all service members in Japan. That order bans public consumption of alcohol or being inside an off-base drinking establishment between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. It took effect Tuesday.

Under Rupp's order, individual commanders have discretion to impose more restrictive measures.

Johnson's order applies to any sailor or U.S. service member attached to a Navy unit or Navy installation, regardless of age or rank.

Sailors traveling with or as-

signed to an Army, Air Force or Marine Corps unit are required to adhere to the liberty policy that is more restrictive, the order states.

Both sets of orders define a drinking establishment as a business that may serve food or have other forms of entertainment, but "whose primary function is serving alcoholic beverages for consumption on the premises."

Pubs, taverns, nightclubs and izakayas fall into this category, according to the orders.

The orders also require commanders to ensure their personnel complete Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Training before granting liberty.

Rupp in a public message July 22 said liberty policies were under review for all service branches in Japan after charges of sexual assault and attempted sexual assault were filed that month by Okinawa prosecutors against two service members in unrelated cases.

Air Force Senior Airman Brennon R.E. Washington pleaded not guilty July 12 in Naha District Court to charges of kidnapping and sexually assaulting a minor in December.

Marine Lance Cpl. Jamel Clayton was charged in May with attempting to sexually assault a woman in Yomitan.

A third case was filed last month against a Marine on Okinawa. Lance Cpl. Michael Hofmaster was charged with sexually assaulting and injuring a woman in June.

Those cases led to formal complaints from the Japanese government to U.S. authorities, and from Okinawa prefecture to the U.S. Embassy, U.S. military commanders and the Japanese government.

It also prompted calls from Okinawa's legislature for changes to the status of forces agreement governing the U.S. military population in Japan.



JONATHAN SNYDER/Stars and Stripes

Akemi Kikugawa of the Japanese American Society helps Marine Corps spouse Camille Williamson shop at a Japanese grocery store near Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, on Sept. 17.

Group helps US military shoppers navigate Japanese grocery stores

BY JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — A group of nearly 20 Americans and Japanese teamed up here recently for a discovery expedition into the aisles of a Japanese supermarket.

Marine spouse Camille Williamson, paired with local resident Akemi Kikugawa, said the trip to an off-base grocery store made her a savvy and more confident shopper.

"I have some food allergies and so trying to figure out how to navigate that is a bit more difficult when you can't read the package labels," Williamson said at an Iwakuni city Fuji Mart. "That's probably relevant to a lot of people, so it's nice to be able to talk with somebody who can speak the language and help navigate that."

The Japanese American Society, a private organization at this base south of Hiroshima, arranges the trips to help military families navigate the challenges of shopping in the local economy.

Shopping off base is a great idea because fresh produce and other unique ingredients are more readily available and affordable, said Katsue Ogata, the society's membership committee co-chair.

"SOFA [members] have a fantastic opportunity to team up with Japanese locals to learn about local products, including trying de-

licious new foods," she said.

Off-base shopping can be intimidating for some Americans stationed in Japan.

"We've only lived here for a short time and I'm nervous to go off base because of the language barrier," Marine spouse Haylee Clark said at the MCAS Iwakuni commissary.

With the yen valued at a record low this year, some Americans are taking advantage of their purchasing power by shopping locally. When Navy spouse Stephanie Drury arrived here in April, she was thrilled about the opportunity. "I was excited to shop off base, but I didn't know where to start," she said last month at Torii Pines Cafe. "I kept joking I'm going to buy flour but end up with sugar or something else instead."

During a grocery tour in May, Drury's Japanese guides showed her their favorite tofu, soy sauce and salad dressing.

"I think I'm saving a lot of money every time I check out and I'm happy to see how little I spent," she said.

A shopping basket with milk, eggs, bread and bananas at the MCAS Iwakuni commissary was 22% more expensive than the same items at Fuji Mart, according to an informal survey Monday by Stars and Stripes.

Few food brands in the commissary overlap with items sold in lo-

cal stores, so Drury still shops for some items on base.

The guided shopping tour has been an annual event for more than a decade, Navy spouse Maggie Wu, a friendship society membership committee co-chair, said last at the base's Community Support Center.

"We noticed that a lot of SOFA members want more than just one time," she said. "So, we are thinking maybe next year, doing it twice."

While some U.S. military families are primarily buying fresh produce in Japanese supermarkets, they still shop at the commissary for familiar items and for convenience.

"I prefer to shop off base for produce," Jasmine Herion, spouse of a Department of Defense contractor, said at the commissary last month. "It's cheaper, fresher and more variety."

The number of customer transactions at commissaries in Japan has remained steady from October 2022 through August, although fewer items are being purchased, Defense Commissary Agency spokesman Keith Desbois said.

"DOD's investment to DeCA's operating budget allows commissaries to deliver a goal of 25 percent overall savings against local market baskets outside the gate if our patrons shop their commissary regularly," he said.

Army officer dies in North Carolina single-engine plane crash

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

A decorated soldier based at Fort Liberty died in a fiery plane crash over the weekend in North Carolina, the Army confirmed Tuesday.

Lt. Col. Jason Campbell, 43, was one of five people killed when a single-engine plane crashed at the



Campbell

Wright Brothers National Memorial First Flight Airport in Kill Devil Hills, said Lt. Col. John Twitty, spokesperson for the Army's Civil Affairs and Psychological Oper-

ations Command.

The plane was trying to land at the airport when it crashed into a wooded area nearby and caught fire, according to the National Park Service.

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the cause of the crash.

Campbell, a native of Texas,

was assigned to the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command, located at Fort Liberty, N.C. He was the program manager for the Civil Affairs Military Government Specialist Program, advising and assisting commanders and civilians in providing governance expertise.

Campbell had about 19 years of active-duty service. He deployed to Afghanistan in 2006 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

His awards and achievements include a Bronze Star, a National Defense Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, two Merit Service medals and three Army Achievement medals.

PACIFIC

S. Korean soldiers foil defector's dash back into North

By YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — A former defector, unhappy with life in the South, stole a 25-seat shuttle bus this week and attempted to cross a bridge into North Korea before he was apprehended by guards.

The defector, 35, was caught at 12:55 a.m. Monday on the Tongil Bridge, or Unification Bridge, in Paju city, by South Korean military guards and turned over to civilian police, according to military and police spokespeople Tuesday.

Privacy laws prohibit authorities from publicly identifying most people under arrest in South Korea. The defector was held on suspicion of theft and violating the National Security Act, a police spokesman said.

The defector found the key to the minibus in a company garage in Munsan town, crawled through a window near the driver's seat and drove nearly three miles to the bridge's south checkpoint, a spokesman for North Gyeonggi Provincial Police said by phone.

The lane toward the checkpoint

was heavily guarded, so the unidentified defector drove in the opposing lane onto the bridge, the spokesman said.

Bypassing the checkpoint and ignoring guards trying to stop him, the defector drove another 900 yards before hitting a barricade in front of the north checkpoint, where soldiers stopped him, the spokesman said.

Government spokespeople in South Korea customarily speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

No one was injured in the inci-

dent, and the fleeing defector was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the police spokesman said.

The defector has lived in South Korea since 2011 and told police he missed his family in North Korea and has not held a steady job in the South since he arrived, the spokesman said.

He settled in a section of southwestern Seoul and has worked as a day laborer.

He was familiar with the bridge and Paju, having worked in the city, according to police.

Many defectors have trouble adjusting to life in the capitalist South after leaving their authoritarian homeland.

Nearly 40% of defectors living in Seoul are receiving payments through the National Basic Livelihood system, a form of welfare in South Korea, according to a Seoul Institute report from October 2023.

Between 2012 and 2020, at least 30 defectors returned to North Korea, a spokeswoman for the South Korean Ministry of Unification said by phone Tuesday.

Repairs to Okinawa airfield may fix Air Force parachute training dispute

By BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Marine Corps plans to repair an auxiliary airfield runway early next year and resolve a dispute with Okinawa prefecture over parachute training at Kadena Air Base.

Marine Corps Installations Pacific informed the prefecture's Military Base Affairs Division in mid-September about upcoming work to reinforce the runway at Ie

Shima, a spokeswoman for the division said by phone Tuesday.

Contractors are scheduled to move construction material to the island in November or December, with repairs slated to begin in February, Marine spokeswoman 2nd Lt. Kelsey Enlow said by phone Wednesday.

Work at Ie Shima is expected to be completed sometime between June and September of next year, the division spokeswoman said. Some Japanese government officials are required to speak to the

media only on condition of anonymity.

The U.S. military will pay for the construction, a spokesman for the Okinawa Defense Bureau, an arm of Japan's Defense Ministry, said by phone Wednesday. Enlow declined to comment on the cost.

"We are aware that with this repair work, the runway will be reinforced, but we don't know in detail how it will be reinforced," the division spokeswoman said.

The Marine Corps and Air Force use the airfield on Ie Shima,

a 9-square-mile island a few miles off the Motobu Peninsula, for training, including parachute drops. Since December, the 18th Wing has conducted that training about once a month at Kadena's Ridout drop zone despite the prefecture's objections.

The Air Force has held drop training at Ridout seven times this year, most recently on Sept. 3, the spokeswoman said. The next day, Gov. Denny Tamaki protested to the Okinawa Defense Bureau, an arm of Japan's Defense Ministry,

and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she said.

The Marine Corps continues to use the Ie Shima airfield for parachute training, Enlow wrote in an email Tuesday. In August, the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit conducted a parachute exercise there, according to photos released by the unit.

The 18th Wing acknowledged questions about the parachute training emailed by Stars and Stripes on Tuesday, but did not immediately provide responses.

BEATLES NIGHT

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PACIFIC

Indigenous rituals honor Osprey crash victims

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

Family members of three Marines who died in an MV-22B Osprey crash last year attended a spiritual walk and ceremonies in Australia's Northern Territory last week.

Cpl. Spencer Collart, 21, of Arlington, Va.; Capt. Eleanor Le-Beau, 29, of Belleville, Ill.; and Maj. Tobin Lewis, 37, of Jefferson, Colo., died Aug. 4, 2023, when their tiltrotor went down on Melville Island off Australian's northern coast.

Their families, along with Marines and Australian troops, joined Indigenous people for the walk and ceremonies Sept. 24, 26 and Friday at and near the crash site, Marine Rotational Force – Darwin said in a news release Tuesday.

The Osprey was assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 363 at Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii.

A Marine Corps accident report released Aug. 9 identified "pilot error and complacency" as the crash's primary cause.



KASSIE McDOLE/U.S. Marine Corps

U.S. Marines, families of the fallen and Australian troops participate in a Pukumani ceremony on Melville Island, Australia, on Friday.

The Osprey went down after a close call with another aircraft during their approach to a landing zone, according to the report. It also found that squadron leadership had permitted "a culture that disregarded safety of flight."

The U.S. military grounded its fleet of about 400 Ospreys between Dec. 6 and March 8 as it in-

vestigated a Nov. 29 crash of an Air Force CV-22 Osprey that killed eight airmen off Japan's southern coast.

However, 10 Ospreys assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 268 (Reinforced), based at Kaneohe Bay, have been in Darwin as part of this year's annual six-month training rotation

of about 2,000 Marines.

The rotational force, set to wrap up this year's mission soon, did not respond Wednesday to emailed requests for interviews and more information about the memorial ceremonies.

The spiritual walk took place Sept. 24 at locations including Robertson Barracks and Larrakeyah Defense Precinct, where rotational force Marines live and work near Darwin, and Royal Australian Air Force Base Darwin, according to the release.

"These ceremonies prepared the way for the final Pukumani ceremony," the release said, referring to an Indigenous event designed to guide the spirits of the fallen Marines.

On Sept. 26, Marines, families of the fallen and Australian troops watched Tiwi Islanders, supported by Larrakia people, perform a healing ritual marking the end of a one-year-and-one-month mourning period, according to the release.

During the event, the Tiwi Islanders formally adopted the U.S. Marine Corps, the three fallen

Marines and their families into the community, the release said.

"The Tiwi people have a long-standing connection with both the Australian and U.S. militaries," Tiwi Land Council chairwoman Leslie Tungatalum said in the release. "This adoption shows our deep respect for the Marines and their families and strengthens the ties between us."

Marines, family members of the deceased and Australian troops traveled Friday to the crash site at Pickertaramoor, Melville Island, for the Pukumani ceremony, according to the release.

There, locals erected Pukumani poles, representing the eight Tiwi clans, alongside three additional poles for the fallen Marines, according to the release.

"We're a very close-knit family, and clearly, the Tiwi people are about family too, so that's what really draws us to them, and we feel one with them," Spencer Collart's father, Bart Collart, said in the release. "Our Marine Corps family has been wonderful as well, and it's just an honor to be here."

Marine uses 32-mile birthday run to raise money for needy

By **BRIAN McELHINEY**
AND **KEISHI KOJA**
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Children at an orphanage and shelter on Okinawa now have new basketball goals to play with thanks to a generous Marine who ran 32 miles for his 32nd birthday.

Gunnery Sgt. Mario Sanchez Jr., of the 3rd Intelligence Battalion, III Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group, pounded the pavement Aug. 14, the day before his birthday, collecting \$32 pledges from 32 fellow Marines in his battalion.

With the \$1,028 raised, he purchased basketballs and goals for Urawa Women's Shelter in Urasoe city, which accepts single mothers and their children in need of housing, and the Nagomi Children's Home, an orphanage in Nago city.

Sanchez delivered a goal and five balls to the children's home on Aug. 27. The next day he did the same at the shelter and stuck around to help set up the goal and

shoot some hoops.

"I was kind of overwhelmed by how great it felt, especially playing basketball with the kids afterwards," he told Stars and Stripes by phone Friday.

Sanchez said he likes to go on long runs to enjoy Okinawa's scenery, averaging 10 miles every other day. The longest route he's ever run was 55 miles, which took him about 10 hours, he said.

He said his 32-mile birthday run took about six hours on a route that stretched west from Camp Courtney to Kadena Air Base, around Camp Foster and back up the east coast to Courtney.

"I saw that we have some Marines in our unit that volunteer with some of the charities," he said. "I've always thought about trying to incorporate some sort of charity organization with the run, and I figured why not on my birthday?"

Sanchez talked to his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Wesley Tucker, who pointed him to the information group's community relations specialist, Takayuki Kayo. Sanchez wanted to donate to an organization that worked with kids or single mothers, and Kayo suggested the sports equip-



U.S. Marine Corps

Marine Gunnery Sgt. Mario Sanchez Jr., left, helps assemble a basketball goal he donated to the Urawa Women's Shelter in Urasoe city, Okinawa, on Aug. 28.

ment.

"Basketball is kind of a big sport to those charities, so they asked for new basketball courts," Sanchez said.

The orphanage's basketball goal was getting old, and the replacement from Sanchez has been well received, said the home's administrative chief, Dai Shimabukuro.

"The goal is already installed, and the kids are playing almost

every day when it is sunny," he said by phone Tuesday.

The women's shelter had a basketball goal that was removed this spring because it was "old and getting dangerous," said Kippe Yonaha, child supporter at the shelter.

"We were really glad to get this one from Mr. Sanchez," he said by phone Tuesday. "Mr. Sanchez helped us to install the goal, and the kids were happy and playing

on it the same day."

Sanchez had about \$300 left after purchasing the equipment and plans to donate it to his battalion's annual toy drive in December.

He said he has been on Okinawa since 2022 with his wife and two children and hopes to extend his tour on the island.

"I most likely will do a 33-miler next year, but again, that's if my body keeps it together," he said.

MILITARY

Court-martial begins for airman in slaying case

Defense will focus on whether Air Force pinned stabbing after festival on wrong person

By JENNIFER H. SVAN Stars and Stripes

SPANGDAHLEM AIR BASE, Germany — The defense's case for a Spangdahlem airman accused of fatally stabbing a local martial arts athlete and instructor more than a year ago will focus on whether the Air Force pinned the crime on the wrong person.

Opening arguments began Wednesday in the general court-martial of Airman 1st Class Grant Harrison.

Harrison, 26, has pleaded not guilty to unpremeditated murder in the death of Michael Ovsjannikov.

Ovsjannikov was killed in a confrontation during the early hours of Aug. 19, 2023, after a street festival in Wittlich, about 12 miles east of Spangdahlem. Ovsjannikov was found on the street near his home.

His body had four wounds con-

sistent with a sharp object such as a knife, according to court testimony Wednesday. Two of the wounds, one to his right abdomen and another to his back, caused excessive blood loss from internal bleeding and led to his death, the German pathologist who conducted the autopsy testified.

Harrison also pleaded not guilty to aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon and obstructing justice.

Harrison, a transient aircraft journeyman assigned to the 726th Air Mobility Squadron, faces a maximum punishment of life in prison if convicted of killing Ovsjannikov. He's been confined at the U.S. military in Europe's jail in

Sembach since Aug. 20, 2023, the 52nd Fighter Wing said this week.

Air Force prosecutor Lt. Col. Lisa Wotkowicz on Wednesday described an altercation that occurred while Harrison walked home from Pig Fest. A small group encountered Ovsjannikov, and an Air Force staff sergeant in the group got into a fight with the martial arts instructor, Wotkowicz said.

The staff sergeant is expected to testify, she said, that he and Ovsjannikov exchanged punches, and that the staff sergeant ended up on the ground.

The next thing he said he remembered, Wotkowicz said, is feeling the weight of Ovsjannikov on him and seeing Harrison standing near him with a knife in his hands.

Harrison later confessed to "stabbing a man" in messages

found on the staff sergeant's phone, Wotkowicz said, and talked about bringing a knife with him to the festival.

But civilian defense attorney Grover Baxley said that the staff sergeant was the aggressor and that the DNA and blood found at the scene, eyewitness testimony and his lack of credibility "all point to" him as being responsible for Ovsjannikov's death.

A knife was found later on the day of Ovsjannikov's death in the Lieser River, underneath a bridge that led back to Harrison's apartment in Wittlich, a German criminal investigator testified Wednesday.

Harrison was arrested along with another Spangdahlem airman in connection with the stabbing. Base officials have not released the name of the second airman.

A wing statement in response to

Stars and Stripes questions said this week that the airman was "held accountable via nonjudicial punishment," an action that was more appropriate with his role in the altercation.

No criminal charges are pending against him, Air Force officials said.

Much of Wednesday's court testimony focused on physical evidence found near Ovsjannikov's body.

More than a dozen photos were taken of blood drops found on the narrow stone street leading up to where his body was found.

Ovsjannikov did not have a bloody nose or a bloody lip, the pathologist testified during defense cross examination, nor was he found with defensive wounds on his forearms or hands.

The trial is scheduled to continue through Oct. 11.



Ovsjannikov

Memorials coming to 2 bases for airmen killed in last Vietnam action

By MATTHEW M. BURKE Stars and Stripes

Nearly two dozen U.S. airmen who perished in a helicopter crash during the last battle of the Vietnam War will receive the recognition that has escaped them for almost 50 years, with two stateside tributes in the works.

A 12,000-pound granite memorial bearing the 23 men's faces and names is set to be unveiled Oct. 10 at the Security Forces Museum at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland in Texas. A second is slated to be installed at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona next year.

"I think it is fantastic that someone cares enough to recognize them and their sacrifices," said Luther Hankamer II, a retired Air Force master sergeant and brother of Knife 13 passenger Sgt. Gregory Hankamer.

Knife 13 was the call sign of the ill-fated CH-53C Sea Stallion that crashed on May 13, 1975, the second day of a standoff between the U.S. and recently victorious Khmer Rouge communists that was dubbed the Mayaguez Incident.

"I had lost several friends in Vietnam but never a close family member, and it was the hardest time of my life to that point," Hankamer said.

The fallen consisted of 18 members of the 56th Security Police Squadron and a five-man crew from the 21st Special Operations Squadron. Their helicopter broke up in flight over northeastern Thailand, killing everyone aboard, according to a copy of the Air Force crash report.

The aircraft was on its way to a staging area to prepare for an as-

sault on a captured American cargo vessel, the SS Mayaguez.

The day before the crash, Khmer Rouge sailors had commandeered the ship about 2 miles from Cambodian territory. The vessel was traveling from Saigon to Sattahip, Thailand, with an undisclosed U.S. government and military cargo.

The crew was separated from the ship, which was parked near Koh Tang island, about 30 miles southwest of the Cambodian mainland. President Gerald Ford mobilized Air Force, Navy and Marine units to take the ship back.

Knife 13 crashed on its way to U-Tapao Royal Thai Navy Base, killing everyone on board. After the crash, U.S. military planners instead called on Marines to retake the ship.

The ensuing battle on heavily fortified Koh Tang claimed the lives of

an additional 18, including three Marines who were left behind and executed after the battle.

Relatives of six or seven of the Knife 13 crash victims will be in attendance at the first dedication, including Luther Hankamer and Greg's daughter, Sondra.

Hankamer was a talented trumpet player, smart and well-liked, his brother recalled. He was the baby of the family and his death devastated their parents. Luther was training at Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi when he got the news.

The two memorials are the brainchild of Jerry Nelson, a retired Air Force master sergeant who in 2022 was visiting the 56th Security Forces Squadron at Luke Air Force Base. He'd been stationed in Thailand and knew some of the airmen on the mission.

"I said, 'Where's the monument?'" said Nelson, the former president of the Vietnam Security Police Association. "I was informed there's not one."

The association is a tax-exempt organization dedicated to veterans who served as Air Force policemen and augmentees in Vietnam and Thailand between July 1, 1958, and May 15, 1975, according to its website.

Nelson wrote a talking paper saying what he intended to build and be-

gan rallying volunteers and raising funds. Through the association's website, the group has thus far raised about half of the \$100,000 needed to pay for both memorials.

Historians from the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama approved the memorials in May.

The Luke monument has been verbally agreed to and now just awaits the signature of Brig. Gen. David Berkland, commander of the 56th Fighter Wing.



Jerry Nelson

A memorial honoring the 23 U.S. airmen killed in a helicopter crash during the Mayaguez Incident on May 13, 1975, is being dedicated at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, on Oct. 10.

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MIDEAST

Israeli troops battle Hezbollah in Lebanon

Fears of wider war mount after latest missile attack from Iran

By WAFSA SHURFA
AND SAMY MAGDY
Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Israel's ground incursion into Lebanon to battle Hezbollah militants left eight Israeli soldiers dead Wednesday, while the region braced for further escalation as Israel vowed to retaliate for Iran's ballistic missile attack a day earlier.

The Israeli military said seven soldiers were killed in two separate attacks, without elaborating. The assaults were among the deadliest against Israeli forces in months.

Another seven troops, including a combat medic, were wounded. Earlier, the military had announced that a 22-year-old captain in a commando brigade was killed in Lebanon, the first Israeli combat death since the start of the incursion.

The announcements came on the eve of Rosh Hashana, the Jewish new year.

In Gaza, where the nearly year-long war that triggered the widening conflict rages on with no end in sight, Israeli ground and air operations in a hard-hit city killed at least 51 people, including women and children, Palestinian medical officials said.

Israel has continued to strike

what it says are militant targets across Gaza nearly a year after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack ignited the war.

The escalation on multiple fronts has raised fears of a wider war in the Middle East that could further draw in Iran — which backs Hezbollah and Hamas — as well as the United States, which has rushed military assets to the region in support of Israel.

Hezbollah, widely seen as the most powerful armed group in the region, said its fighters clashed with Israeli troops in two places inside Lebanon near the border. The Israeli military said ground forces backed by airstrikes had killed militants in "close-range engagements" without saying where.

Israeli media reported infantry and tank units operating in southern Lebanon after the military sent thousands of additional troops and artillery to the border.

Hezbollah said its fighters wounded and killed a group of Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon after detonating an explosive device, but the militants did not elaborate on the number of dead and wounded.

The two attacks announced Wednesday followed other assaults on Israeli forces earlier in the year. In June, an explosion in



MAHMOUD ILLEAN/AP

Palestinians take their photos with the debris of an Iranian missile intercepted by Israel in the West Bank city of Hebron on Wednesday.

southern Gaza killed eight Israeli soldiers. In January, 21 Israeli troops were killed in a single attack by Palestinian militants in central Gaza, the deadliest single attack on Israeli forces since Israel-Hamas war erupted.

The Lebanese army said Israeli forces advanced some 400 yards across the border and withdrew "after a short period," its first confirmation of the incursion.

The Israeli military has warned people in and around 50 villages and towns to evacuate north of the Awali River, some 37 miles from the border and much farther than the northern edge of a U.N.-declared zone intended to serve as a

buffer between Israel and Hezbollah after their 2006 war. Hundreds of thousands have already fled their homes as the conflict has intensified.

Israel has said it will continue to strike Hezbollah until it is safe for tens of thousands of its citizens displaced from homes near the Lebanon border to return.

Hezbollah has vowed to keep firing rockets into Israel until there is a cease-fire in Gaza with Hamas.

Israeli strikes have killed over 1,000 people in Lebanon over the past two weeks, nearly a quarter of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry.

Meanwhile, Israel lashed out at the United Nations on Wednesday, declaring Secretary-General António Guterres persona non grata, or banned from entering the country. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz accused him of failing to unequivocally condemn Tuesday night's Iranian missile attack.

Guterres released a brief statement after the barrage that read: "I condemn the broadening of the Middle East conflict, with escalation after escalation. This must stop. We absolutely need a cease-fire."

The move deepens an already wide rift between Israel and the United Nations.

Attack: Ships join air defense units in firing at Iranian missiles

FROM PAGE 1

No damage to U.S. military bases or assets has been reported.

"To be crystal clear, as Secretary [Lloyd] Austin has said, should Iran, its partners or its proxies target American personnel or interests in the region, the United States will take every necessary measure to defend our people separately," Ryder said.

The move by Iran was a sharp escalation of the conflict between Israel and the Iran-backed militias Hezbollah and Hamas. The attack Tuesday comes days before the one-year anniversary of the Oct. 7 surprise attack by Hamas on southern Israel. Hamas is an ally of Hezbollah and supported by Iran.

President Joe Biden earlier Tuesday directed the U.S. military to aid Israel's defense against Iranian attacks and shoot down missiles targeting Israel. Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris monitored the attack from the White House.

Damage to Israeli aircraft or



DANIEL KIMMELMAN/U.S. Navy

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Spruance sails alongside the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln.

strategic military assets is unknown, according to Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser.

"Based on what we know at this point, this attack appears to have been defeated and ineffective. This was first and foremost the result of the professionalism of the [Israel Defense Forces], but in no

small part, because of the skilled work of the U.S. military and meticulous joint planning in anticipation of the attack," he said.

In recent days, the U.S. has sent thousands of additional troops to the Middle East to boost security for American forces and help defend Israel. The additional forces

include squadrons of F-15E Strike Eagle, F-16, A-10 and F-22 fighter jets and the personnel needed to support them. U.S. Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, posted Tuesday on X that three additional aircraft squadrons of F-15E Strike Eagle, F-16 and A-10 are arriving in the region with one squadron having already arrived.

Also in the region is the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group, supported by three destroyers, and the USS Wasp Amphibious Ready Group with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, a rapid-response force from Camp Lejeune, N.C. The Wasp group includes the amphibious assault ship, dock landing ship USS Oak Hill and amphibious transport dock ship USS New York.

Austin spoke Tuesday with Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant about "the threat of an imminent Iranian attack against Israel," according to a readout of the call released by the Pentagon. The first strikes were launched by Iran

about 30 minutes earlier.

"Secretary Austin made it clear that the United States is well-positioned to defend U.S. personnel, allies and partners in the face of threats from Iran and Iran-backed terrorist organizations and is determined to prevent any actor from exploiting tensions or expanding the conflict in the region," the readout read.

During Tuesday's call, Austin and the Israeli minister discussed "severe consequences" for Iran in the event that Iran chooses to launch a direct military attack against Israel.

Ryder said Austin and Gallant spoke again after Iran's attack.

Following the attack, the White House emphasized the ongoing efforts to strike a cease-fire deal.

"The United States, through a complex combination of deterrence and diplomacy, has been able to prevent such an outbreak of full-scale war," Sullivan said. "We will continue to try and prevent an outbreak of full-scale war in the days and weeks ahead."

NATION

Up to 1K troops from NC base to aid in recovery

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

Up to 1,000 soldiers from Fort Liberty, N.C., will deploy to help get food, water and critical aid to communities still reeling from Hurricane Helene, the Defense Department announced Wednesday.

The troops provide the extra personnel and logistics needed to reach some of the hardest hit areas as quickly as possible, said Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary. The soldiers are gathering now and will move into affected areas by Thursday morning, joining other service members already working hurricane relief efforts alongside the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"Their mission will include delivering support and commodities to impacted and isolated communities, assisting with supply point logistics at commodity staging locations, and removing debris from affected routes," Ryder said.

Troops will arrive nearly one week after Hurricane Helene

struck the U.S. coast near the Big Bend region of Florida on Thursday night as a Category 4 storm and left a path of devastation as it moved inland.

At least 166 people have died because of the storm and roughly 1.2 million residents in North and South Carolina and Georgia still lack power, according to The Associated Press. Many also lack safe drinking water, working sewage systems or reliable cellphone and internet service.

Damage and debris along roads and highways has made accessing some towns difficult, particularly in western North Carolina where the roads weave through the mountains.

President Joe Biden is traveling Wednesday to North and South Carolina while Vice President Kamala Harris goes to Georgia.

"We have to jump-start this recovery process," Biden said Tuesday, estimating it will cost billions of dollars. "People are scared to death. This is urgent."

The soldiers deploying are as-



DENNÉ ALLEN/U.S. Army

Soldiers with 875th Engineering Company, 505th Engineer Battalion and 630th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 113th Sustainment Brigade deliver water and food to West Buncombe Elementary School in North Carolina for aerial pickup on Tuesday.

signed to the Infantry Task Force of the XVIII Airborne Corps and come from the 82nd Airborne Division and other units at Fort Liberty, which was spared from the worst of Hurricane Helene.

The base is located about 260 miles east of Asheville, a city that sustained significant storm damage.

They join roughly 6,500 National Guard troops from a dozen states working on hurricane recovery across the southeast. Brig. Gen. Charles Morrison of the North Carolina Army National Guard will serve as commander of the ac-

tive-duty troops as well as the Guard troops already assigned to him.

"These Guardsmen have been spearheading the response effort across the impacted region in support of their governors, providing critical lifesaving and life-sustaining support to the victims of this historic natural disaster," Ryder said.

The Defense Department has also already provided Army and Navy helicopters and crews to move personnel and supplies where roads are not safe, search-and-rescue teams from the Air Force and

high-wheeled Army vehicles and crews. The Army Corps of Engineers has sent temporary power teams, route clearance teams, water and wastewater management experts and bridge inspectors.

Meanwhile, some military installations are dealing with their own recovery efforts. The Army's Fort Eisenhower and Moody Air Force Base, both in Georgia, will remain closed through Friday with only mission-essential personnel and residents allowed on base. Power has been restored at Fort Eisenhower but not at Moody.

Helene: People try to survive with little to no supplies as recovery slow

FROM PAGE 1

It may be weeks, though, before water is fully restored in Asheville, which supplies almost all of Buncombe County's 275,000 residents. Thousands of feet of pipe from one reservoir were washed out and will have to be rebuilt, and a second intake is not working, said water system spokesperson Clay Chandler.

"There are portions of our distribution system that are going to have to be completely rebuilt," Chandler said.

The administration of North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper said Tuesday that more than two dozen water plants remained closed.

As crews reached remote areas, more destruction came into view. Homes teetered on hillsides and riverbanks that had been washed away.

In small Swannanoa, outside Asheville, receding floodwaters revealed cars stacked on top of others and mobile homes that had floated away. Sinkholes pockmarked roads caked with mud and debris.

President Joe Biden was to survey the devastation in the Carolinas on Wednesday after saying a



MIKE STEWART/AP

Homes and vehicles that were damaged in a flash flood from Hurricane Helene lie on the side of a road near the Swannanoa River, on Tuesday, in Swannanoa, N.C.

day earlier that estimating the recovery will cost billions. "People are scared to death. This is urgent," he said.

While Biden is in the Carolinas, Vice President Kamala Harris will be in neighboring Georgia.

Residents and business owners wore masks and gloves while clearing debris in Hot Springs, N.C., where almost every building

along the main street was heavily damaged.

Sarah Calloway, who owns the deli and gourmet grocery Vaste Riviere Provisions, said the storm arrived frighteningly quickly. She helped fill sandbags the night before, but they turned out to be useless.

The water rose so rapidly that even though she and others were

on an upper floor, they called to request a rescue from a swift water team.

"It was really challenging to watch how quickly it rose up and then just to watch whole buildings floating down the river. It was something I can't even describe," she said.

In the Black Mountain Mobile Home Park in Swannanoa, the damage overwhelmed Carina Ramos and Ezekiel Bianchi. The couple, their children and dog fled in the predawn darkness Friday as the rapidly rising Swannanoa River began flooding the bottom end of the park.

By then, trees blocked the roads, and the couple abandoned their three vehicles, all of which flooded.

"We left everything because we were panicking," Ramos said.

The widespread damage and outages affecting communications infrastructure left many people without stable access to the internet and cell service.

"People are walking the streets of Canton with their phones up in the air trying to catch a cellphone signal like it's a butterfly," said Mayor Zeb Smathers, of Canton,

N.C. "Every single aspect of this response has been extremely crippled by lack of cellphone communication. The one time we absolutely needed our cellphones to work, they failed."

Teams from Verizon worked to repair toppled cell towers and damaged cables and to provide alternative forms of connectivity, the company said in a statement.

AT&T said it launched "one of the largest mobilizations of our disaster recovery assets for emergency connectivity support."

The efforts to restore service was made more challenging by the region's terrain and spread-out population, said David Zumwalt, president and CEO of the Association for Broadband Without Boundaries.

Helene blew ashore in Florida late Thursday as a Category 4 hurricane and upended life throughout the Southeast, with deaths reported in six states: Florida, Georgia, Tennessee and Virginia, in addition to the Carolinas.

With at least 37 killed in South Carolina, Helene passed the 35 people who were killed in the state after Hurricane Hugo made landfall north of Charleston in 1989.

NATION

Walz and Vance take milder tone in VP debate

Associated Press

NEW YORK — In a debate that evoked a calmer era in American politics, Tim Walz and JD Vance on Tuesday went after each other's running mates and sought to shore up their campaigns' vulnerabilities at a time of renewed fears of a regional war in the Middle East and sadness over devastation from Hurricane Helene.

Walz, the Democratic governor of Minnesota, and Vance, a Republican senator from Ohio, focused many of their criticisms on the top of the ticket, as is traditional for vice presidential debates. They each pointed to the crises of the day as reasons for voters to choose Vice President Kamala Harris or former President Donald Trump.

The debate unfolded in the final weeks of a campaign that has been defined by harsh, personal attacks and historic convulsions, including a candidate dropping out and another facing two attempted assassinations. Polls have shown Harris and Trump locked in a close contest as early voting begins across the country, giving added weight to anything that can sway voters on the margins, including the impression left by the vice presidential candidates.

Despite the milder tone of the debate, there were still glimpses of the political fractures that threaten American democracy. Vance papered over the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol and echoed Trump's election denial by refusing to acknowledge that President Joe Biden won the race in 2020.

But throughout much of the rest of the night, two Midwesterners struck a noticeably friendlier tone

than the matchup between Trump and Harris — or, earlier this year, the showdown between Trump and Biden before he dropped out of the race following a disastrous debate performance.

In one raw moment when Walz said his teenage son had witnessed a shooting at a community center, Vance expressed empathy.

"I'm sorry about that. Christ have mercy," Vance said.

"I appreciate that," Walz said.

In other parts of the debate, Vance tried to soften his image, ratcheting down his typically forceful and aggressive delivery and acknowledging that people watching might not agree with him or Trump. He discussed Trump's ideas with polish while avoiding being pinned down on the more controversial parts of the former president's record. His performance immediately delighted the Trump campaign and many of its allies.

Walz depicted Trump as wrong on the issues and a chaotic leader. He occasionally stumbled over his words, even saying "I've become friends with school shooters" when he was talking about meeting with survivors. He did deliver several points sure to please Democrats, including on abortion rights and democracy — even if he never used the word "weird," the branding he attached to Trump and Vance that brought him to national prominence.

The debate began with a discussion of the Middle East, where Israeli forces are fighting Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iran has fired missiles at Israel. In Gaza, Israeli forces continue to fight Hamas after the Oct. 7 attack.



MATT ROURKE/AP

Republican vice presidential nominee Sen. JD Vance, R-Ohio, talks with Democratic vice presidential candidate Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz after the vice presidential debate on Tuesday, in New York.

"What's fundamental here is that steady leadership is going to matter," said Walz. "And the world saw it on that debate stage a few weeks ago, a nearly 80-year-old Donald Trump talking about crowd sizes is not what we need in this moment."

Vance, in his reply, argued that Trump is an intimidating figure whose presence on the international stage is its own deterrent.

"Gov. Walz can criticize Donald Trump's tweets, but effective, smart diplomacy and peace through strength is how you bring stability back to a very broken world," he said.

The debate in New York hosted by CBS News opened with a sober tone that reflected growing domestic and international concerns about safety and security. But it gave way to sharper attacks from both Walz and Vance — and a moment in which the moderators stopped the discussion by cutting the two men's mics.

Walz accused Vance and Trump of villainizing legal immigrants in Vance's home state. He pointed to the fact that Republican Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine had to send in extra law enforcement to

provide security to the city's schools after Vance tweeted about and Trump amplified false claims about Haitians eating pets.

"This is what happens when you don't want to solve it, you demonize it," Walz said, saying not doing so would allow people to "come together."

Vance said the 15,000 Haitians in the city had caused housing, economic and other issues that the Biden-Harris administration was ignoring.

When the debate moderators pointed out that the Haitians living there had legal status, Vance protested that CBS News had said its moderators would not be fact-checking, leaving the onus to the candidates.

As Vance continued and the moderators tried to move on, his microphone was cut and neither man could be heard.

The senator and the governor, both picked for their ability to communicate their party's points, seemed to spend more time talking policy than the presidential candidates have in their matchups.

On abortion, both men shared personal stories of women. Walz

talked about Amanda Zurawski, a Texas woman who was denied an abortion despite developing a life-threatening infection, and Hadley Duvall, who was a 12-year-old girl when she was raped and impregnated by her stepfather.

Vance spoke of a close friend who, he said, "told me something a couple of years ago that she felt like if she hadn't had that abortion, that it would have destroyed her life because she was in an abusive relationship."

The senator also said he never supported a national ban when running for the Senate in 2022 even though he had suggested as much, saying instead that he wanted a "minimum national standard."

The debate ran longer than the allotted 90 minutes, but there were still some key topics left unaddressed by the moderators and the candidates. Vance was not asked about Ukraine, although he's among the Republican Party's leading opponents of U.S. aid to the besieged country. No one talked about Trump's criminal cases, including his conviction in a New York case related to hush money payments.

Pa. GOP Senate candidate backs using military to fight fentanyl

Associated Press

STEELTON, Pa. — The Republican challenger trying to flip the U.S. Senate seat in swing-state Pennsylvania said he'll press for U.S. military action in Mexico to target fentanyl trafficking networks, a controversial and complicated idea that seemed to originate with former President Donald Trump.

David McCormick, who is challenging third-term Democratic Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, is making the idea part of his plan for fighting the fentanyl scourge, which is playing a big role in the

campaign and has been central to dueling TV ads in the race.

The idea of using the military garnered attention in last year's GOP primaries before Trump emerged as his party's presidential nominee for the third consecutive time.



McCormick

But now, McCormick — a decorated Army combat veteran and ex-hedge fund CEO who served on Trump's Defense Advisory Board — is test-

ing the message of unilateral U.S. military action in Mexico in a state that could be decisive in determining which party wins the White House and a Senate majority in November's election.

McCormick envisions using the U.S. military's drones and special operations teams in Mexico to destroy fentanyl trafficking cartels, though he stresses that the military should be used "selectively and thoughtfully."

"I'm not saying we're going to send the 82nd Airborne Division to do a jump into Mexico," McCormick said. "What I'm saying is the

combination of special operations and drones, I think, could eradicate the manufacturing facilities, kill the distribution networks and do a real dent in what is a terrorist activity."

Military action is justified, McCormick says, by what he calls "the biggest killer in our country." The U.S. shouldn't wait for a blessing from a Mexican government that has failed to address its problem with fentanyl production and trafficking, he said.

"So the time for negotiating with the Mexican government to get their DEA on this is gone,"

McCormick told one audience in September. "We've got to get tough on it. And that's what I would do."

Critics of using the U.S. military in Mexico say such operations would do little to hurt the cartels or stem the flow of fentanyl, while raising delicate questions about sovereignty.

Casey has neither criticized nor backed the idea of using the U.S. military in Mexico.

Instead, he has pointed to his support for measures in Congress to strengthen screening at border checkpoints.

NATION

At crunch time, candidates work on crisis management

Voters eye response to Mideast, Helene, port strike

BY AAMER MADHANI,
ZEKE MILLER
AND THOMAS BEAUMONT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A trio of new trials—a devastating hurricane, expanding conflict in the Mideast and a dockworkers strike that threatens the U.S. economy — are looming over the final weeks of the presidential campaign and could help shape the public mood as voters decide between Democrat Kamala Harris and Republican Donald Trump.

How events shake out—and how the candidates respond—could be decisive as they claw for votes in battleground states.

The sitting president, Joe Biden, is still the steward of a U.S. economy and foreign policy at this tumultuous moment and may well bear ultimate responsibility for how they play out. But how Harris and Trump approach the three disparate issues could have rippling impact on how Americans perceive their two choices this November.

“Unfortunately, there are going to be events like this, and this is where you see the leadership of a president show up,” White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Tuesday. “I think this should send a message to Americans: It matters. It matters who sits behind the Resolute Desk.”

Harris, with Biden’s help, is trying to display steady calm as a flurry of difficult problems arise all at once.

She and Biden on Tuesday toggled between directing Hurricane Helene recovery and rescue response work and huddling with

aides in the White House Situation Room to watch as the U.S. helped Israel defend against a massive attack by Iran in retaliation for the killing of Tehran-backed leaders of Lebanese Hezbollah.

All the while, they were keeping close contact with economic advisers as dockworkers took to the picket line Tuesday, a walkout stretching from ports in Maine to Texas that threatens to snarl supply chains and cause shortages and higher prices if it stretches on for more than a few weeks.

Trump, for his part, lashed out at Harris as in over her head, while claiming that this sort of crush of problems never would have happened under his watch.

“We have been talking about World War III, and I don’t want to make predictions,” Trump said at a campaign event in Wisconsin. “The whole world is laughing at us. That’s why Israel was under attack just a little while ago. Because they don’t respect our country anymore.”

Yet voters cast Trump aside four years ago in large part because of how they viewed his handling of the swirling economic, social and public health challenges that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Biden, in comments to reporters before meeting with aides Tuesday to discuss the ongoing hurricane response, seemed to acknowledge the growing frustration with the federal response to the massive storm.

“I’ve been in frequent contact with the governors and other leaders in the impacted areas, and we have to jumpstart this recovery process,” Biden said. He will travel

to the Carolinas on Wednesday to get a closer look at the hurricane devastation. He is also expected to visit hurricane-impacted areas in Georgia and Florida later this week. “People are scared to death. People wonder whether they’re going to make it.”

Harris, meanwhile, is headed to Georgia on Wednesday and North Carolina in the coming days to do the same.

Tuesday’s vice presidential debate offered a sampling of how the two campaigns were reacting to new developments to bolster their own messages and sharpen their attacks on their rivals. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz promised “steady leadership” under Harris while Ohio Sen. JD Vance pledged a return to “peace through strength” if Trump is returned to the White House.

Biden has stayed off the campaign trail since announcing in July that he was ending his reelection effort amid sliding public approval ratings.

His conspicuous absence underscores that Democrats see him as more of a liability than an asset in making the case for Harris, said Christopher Borick, director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion in Pennsylvania.

But how well Biden deals with the three latest emergency situations could have a big impact in how undecided voters perceive Harris in these final days.

“President Biden can’t help Kamala Harris on the stump,” Borick said. “But in a campaign where you are turning over every rock in a few



ANDY MANIS/AP

Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump shows off a T-shirt given to him by students at a campaign event Tuesday, at Discovery World in Milwaukee.



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris speaks to members of the media on Tuesday in Washington.

states to get that undecided voter, how he manages these crises over the next several weeks could have an impact.”

Trump, in a speech in Waunakee, Wis., and in social media postings Tuesday, offered a mixture of prayer and concern for those impacted by Helene, jabs at Harris for the dockworkers strike, and an aside about the casting of Stanley

Kubrick’s film “Full Metal Jacket.”

“The situation should have never come to this and, had I been president, it would not have,” Trump said in a statement about the strike.

Harris aides made a point of having the vice president deliver brief remarks on the Iranian attack Tuesday in between taping interviews for her campaign, aiming to portray her as ready to take command.

Fat Bear Week online voting starts after attack kills contestant

BY MARK THIESSEN
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Let the chunk-off begin.

Voting starts Wednesday in the annual Fat Bear Week contest at Alaska’s Katmai National Park and Preserve, with viewers picking their favorite among a dozen brown bears fattened up to survive the winter.

The contest, which is in its 10th year, celebrates the resiliency of the 2,200 brown bears that live in the preserve on the Alaska Peninsula, which extends from the state’s southwest corner toward the Aleutian Islands. The animals gorge on the abundant sockeye salmon that return to the Brooks River, sometimes chomping the fish in midair as they try to hurdle a



E. JOHNSTON, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE/AP

Bear 32 Chunk is seen at Katmai National Park in Alaska on Sept. 19.

small waterfall and make their way upstream to spawn.

Organizers introduced this year’s contestants on Tuesday — a

day late—because one anticipated participant, a female known as Bear 402, was killed by a male bear during a fight on Monday. Came-

ras set up in the park to livestream footage of the bears all summer captured the killing, as they also captured a male bear killing a cub that slipped over the waterfall in late July.

“National parks like Katmai protect not only the wonders of nature, but also the harsh realities,” park spokesperson Matt Johnson said in a statement. “Each bear seen on the webcams is competing with others to survive.”

The nonprofit explore.org, which streams the uncensored bear cameras and helps organize Fat Bear Week, on Tuesday hosted a live conversation about the death.

“We love to celebrate the success of bears with full stomachs and ample body fat, but the ferocity of bears is real,” said Mike Fitz, ex-

plorer.org’s resident naturalist. “The risks that they face are real. Their lives can be hard, and their deaths can be painful.”

The bracket this year features 12 bears, with eight facing off against each other in the first round and four receiving byes to the second round. They’ve all been packing on the pounds all summer.

Adult male brown bears typically weigh 600 to 900 pounds in mid-summer. By the time they are ready to hibernate after feasting on migrating and spawning salmon—each eats as many as 30 fish per day—large males can weigh well over 1,000 pounds. Females are about one-third smaller.

Voting in this year’s tournament-style bracket is open through Oct. 8.

EUROPE

Ukraine forced to withdraw from Vuhledar

Fall of town is microcosm of country's wartime predicament

BY SAMYA KULLAB
AND VOLODYMYR YURCHUK
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian forces are withdrawing from the front-line town of Vuhledar, perched atop a tactically significant hill in eastern Ukraine, after more than two years of grinding battle, military officials said Wednesday.

The fall of the front-line town nestled atop a tactically significant hill is unlikely to change the course of Ukraine's war against Russia. But the loss underscores Kyiv's worsening position, in part the result of firm Western red lines, military officials and analysts said.

Vuhledar, a town Ukrainian forces fought tooth and nail to keep for two years, is the latest urban settlement to fall to the Russians. It follows a vicious summer campaign along the eastern front that saw Kyiv cede several thousand square miles of territory.

Ukraine's military said they were withdrawing their troops from Vuhledar to "protect the military personnel and equipment" in a statement on Wednesday.

Vuhledar's fall is a microcosm of Ukraine's predicament in this chapter of the nearly three-year war. It reflects the U.S.'s refusal to grant Ukraine permission to strike targets deep inside Russian territory, preventing Kyiv from degrading Moscow's capabilities. Meanwhile, Russia's dominance of the skies allows it to develop and advance devastating aerial glide bombs for which Ukraine has no effective response, while a contro-

versial mobilization drive has failed to produce a new class of Ukrainian fighters capable of holding the line.

The Ukrainians' retreat from the town comes after a much-anticipated visit by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the U.S. last week. The Biden administration so far has refused Kyiv's request to use Army Tactical Missile Systems, or ATACMS, to strike Russian airfields and other key targets, and Zelenskyy's "victory plan," was dismissed by some as more of a wish list than a plan of action.

In the meantime, Russian fighter jets continued to drop aerial bombs on Vuhledar, which precipitated the retreat, soldiers there said.

"(The Russians') main tactic was to encircle us from the flanks, and they did this constantly for six to seven months with constant aerial attacks — due to this tactic they managed to exhaust our resources, because we don't have as much as they have," said Arsenii Prylipka, the head of the press office of the 72nd Brigade, which had been defending Vuhledar since August 2022.

After two years of failed attempts to capture Vuhledar, Russian forces switched tactics earlier this year. The town's pre-war population of 14,000 dwindled to less than 100 during the heat of the fighting.

Russian soldiers began mounting sophisticated attacks from the north and southern flanks, powered by superior electronic warfare capabilities and an array of



EVGENIY MALOLETKA/AP

A Ukrainian marine serviceman runs to take a position through the residential blocks in the frontline city of Vuhledar, Ukraine, on Feb. 25.

infantrymen on motorcycles, artillery fire, drones and aerial glide bombs. Moscow suffered heavy casualties.

Ukrainians have been pressuring the U.S. to relax restrictions on the use of Western weapons to strike targets deep inside Russia. Lawmakers said they expected a green light from the U.S. months ago, but it didn't come: The Biden administration refused to waver on this red line.

It has meant that Russian command and control centers, logistics hubs and airfields from which Russian fighter jets carry deadly aerial glide bombs, are out of reach of Ukrainian forces.

Russia fires nearly 120 aerial bombs a day on average, about 3,000 a month. The bombs are Soviet-era weapons refitted with navigational technology.

"We cannot change the dynamics, and the Russians are pushing," said Pavel Narozhnyi, founder of the non-profit Reactive Post, which sources spare parts for artillery.

Month after month of constant attacks eventually eroded Ukrainian defenses.

After two years of intense fighting, the 72nd Brigade — which never rotated out due to the intensity of the fight and the lack of a demobilization strategy from Ukrainian military leaders — withdrew from the patch of land many of their comrades died to defend.

Prylipka had said the brigade would stay until the very last moment when defending Vuhledar became impossible. That scenario unfolded this week.

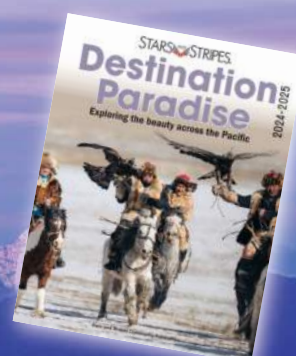
"The Russians searched for weak spots in our defenses, a con-

stant probe to find routes to penetrate the town and as they advanced they tried to destroy the entire town. All the time we are under fire," said Prylipka.

Vuhledar served as a defensive stronghold, a fortress town atop a hill surrounded by open fields and near two major roads. From there, Ukrainian soldiers were able to observe approaching Russian forces at a distance. From that vantage point, it was easy to coordinate counter-attacks. That advantage now falls to Russia.

While tactically significant, Vuhledar isn't a crucial logistics hub for Kyiv, and Russian forces already controlled most of the main roads through the town before capturing it, the U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War said. Ukraine's access to other critical supply lines remains intact.

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WORLD

US bomb from WWII explodes at Japanese airport, causing crater

BY MARI YAMAGUCHI
Associated Press

TOKYO — An unexploded U.S. bomb from World War II that had been buried at a Japanese airport exploded Wednesday, causing a large crater in a taxiway and the cancellation of more than 80 flights but no injuries, Japanese officials said.

Land and Transport Ministry officials said there were no aircraft nearby when the bomb exploded at Miyazaki Airport in southwestern Japan.

Officials said an investigation by the Self-Defense Forces and police confirmed that the explosion was caused by a 500-pound U.S. bomb and there was no further danger. They were determining what caused its sudden detonation.

A video recorded by a nearby aviation school showed the blast spewing pieces of asphalt into the air like a fountain. Videos broadcast on Japanese television showed a crater in the taxiway reportedly about 7 yards in diameter and 3 feet deep.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said more than 80 flights had been canceled at the airport, which hopes to resume operations on Thursday morning.

Miyazaki Airport was built in 1943 as a former Imperial Japanese Navy flight training field from which some kamikaze



Kyodo News/AP

This taxiway at Miyazaki Airport in Japan was damaged Wednesday in an explosion. More than 80 flights were canceled, but no one was injured, officials said.

pilots took off on suicide attack missions.

A number of unexploded bombs dropped by the U.S. military during World War II have been unearthed in the area, Defense Ministry officials said.

Hundreds of tons of unexploded bombs from the war remain buried around Japan and are sometimes dug up at construction sites.

Thai police file charges in fatal school bus fire

Associated Press

BANGKOK — Thai police on Wednesday said they were investigating whether the school bus fire that killed 23 young students and teachers in suburban Bangkok was caused by negligence after filing initial charges against the driver.

The fire on the bus carrying six teachers and 39 elementary and junior high school students on Tuesday spread so quickly many were unable to escape.

The driver, Saman Chanput, was arrested several hours later and charged with reckless driving causing deaths and injuries, failing to stop to help others and failing to report the accident, police said.

Authorities were investigating if the fire might be caused by negligence from both the driver and the bus company, and will press charges against all parties responsible, acting police chief Kitrat Phanphet told a news conference.

While an initial investigation suggested that the driver was not speeding, police found 11 natural gas canisters inside the bus that had a permit to install only six, Kitrat said.

Police have not officially concluded the

cause of the fire, but they said the driver told investigators he was driving normally until the bus lost balance at its front tire, hit another car and scraped a concrete highway barrier. The sparks from the friction might have caught on the highly flammable gas canisters and ignited the blaze, police said.

Kitrat said the fact that the driver did not immediately stop after feeling the bus was losing balance could be grounds for negligence.

The inspection of the bus found that its emergency exit could be opened, but it wasn't clear if it worked properly, said chief of police forensics Trairong Phiwpan. He also said they did not find any window breakers.

In an interview with public broadcaster Thai PBS, bus company owner Songwit Chinaboot said the vehicle was inspected for safety twice a year as required and that the gas cylinders had passed safety standards.

The families of the victims were driven from Uthai Thani, the central province where the bus departed from on a school trip, to Bangkok to provide DNA samples for the identification process.

Three students were hospitalized, two of them in serious condition.

STARS AND STRIPES

SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating The Military Business Market




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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Brush fire on reservation prompts evacuations

AZ GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY —

Crews were trying to contain a brush fire Sunday that prompted evacuations in the Gila River Indian Community southwest of Phoenix, authorities said.

Tribal officials said the fire broke out Saturday afternoon in a dry river bottom and was estimated at 415 acres by nightfall. The cause of the fire is being investigated, authorities said.

They said the blaze was still at zero containment Sunday morning. Tribal officials didn't immediately disclose how many people were at an evacuation site but said there has been no damage to homes or structures and no reported injuries.

Truck carrying lithium batteries sparks fire

CA LOS ANGELES — A Southern California bridge critical for getting goods to and from the Port of Los Angeles was closed to traffic for two days late last week after a big rig carrying lithium batteries overturned and sparked a fire.

The crash occurred before noon Thursday in the San Pedro neighborhood of Los Angeles, TV station KTLA-5 reported. No injuries were reported.

Firefighters decided to let the fire burn itself out because water "could be dangerous to the environment and actually water would not be effective," Los Angeles Fire Department spokesperson Adam Van Gerpen said. The bridge reopened Saturday after workers removed the hazardous material it spilled, NBC Los Angeles reported.

City replaces ballot box after mayor removes it

WI MADISON — An absentee ballot drop box that the mayor of a central Wisconsin city removed a week ago was back in place on Monday.

The Wausau city clerk said the box was available outside of city hall "for residents to submit absentee ballots, payments, and other important city requests as was intended."

Mayor Doug Diny removed the drop box on Sept. 22 without consulting with the clerk, who has the authority under a Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling legalizing drop boxes to make one available. They are not mandatory in the state.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court in July ruled that drop boxes are legal, but left it up to local communities to decide whether to use them.

Outgoing CEO sues over contempt charge

MA BOSTON — Steward Health Care CEO



GREG EANS/AP

Focused on fish

Dawson Adkins spends some time fishing at the pond at Jack C. Fisher Park on Monday in Owensboro, Ky.

Ralph de la Torre filed a lawsuit Monday against a U.S. Senate committee that pursued contempt charges against him for failing to appear before the panel despite being issued a subpoena.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Washington the day before de la Torre stepped down as CEO, named nearly all members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which has investigated Steward's bankruptcy.

The lawsuit claims that the lawmakers are unlawfully violating de la Torre's constitutional rights.

Dallas-based Steward Health Care operates more than 30 hospitals nationwide. It filed for bankruptcy protection in May.

Court: University digital ID cannot be used to vote

NC RALEIGH — A North Carolina appeals court on Friday blocked students and employees at the state's flagship public university from providing a digital identification produced by the school when voting to comply with a new photo ID mandate.

The decision by a three-judge panel of the intermediate-level Court of Appeals reverses at least temporarily last month's decision by the State Board of Elections that the mobile ID generated by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill met security and photo requirements in the law and could be used.

The Republican National Com-

mittee and state Republican Party sued to overturn the decision by the Democratic-majority board last month, saying the law only allows physical ID cards to be approved. Superior Court Judge Keith Gregory last week denied a temporary restraining order to halt its use. The Republicans appealed.

Governor attends Mexican presidential inauguration

NM SANTA FE — Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham headed south of the border to attend the inauguration of Mexico's next president.

In a statement Friday, she announced the outing to Mexico City for the inauguration of Claudia Sheinbaum as the Mexico's first female president.

The second-term Democratic governor also is leading a delegation to participate in a roundtable discussion about the clean-energy sector and energy security, along with a reception by U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Ken Salazar.

New Mexico taxpayers are paying for travel by the group that includes Lujan Grisham's chief of staff, Daniel Schlegel, and state cabinet secretaries for natural resources and economic development agencies.

Dems challenge order preventing drop-box use

OH COLUMBUS — The Ohio Democratic Par-

ty and two affected voters sued the state's Republican elections chief on Friday over his recent directive preventing the use of drop boxes by people helping voters with disabilities.

The lawsuit, filed at the Ohio Supreme Court, says Secretary of State Frank LaRose's order violates protections for voters with disabilities that exist in state law, the state constitution and the federal Voting Rights Act.

"Frank LaRose's illegal attempt to deprive Ohioans of their right to return their ballot at a drop box with assistance is in violation of both Ohio and federal law," party chair Liz Walters said in a statement.

"The Ohio Democratic Party alongside Ohioans impacted by LaRose's illegal directive are taking every action necessary to protect the constitutional right of every Ohioan to participate in our democracy."

Texas state fair opens with a new gun ban

TX DALLAS — The State Fair of Texas opened Friday under a new firearms ban, having withstood weeks of pressure from Republicans who had charged into a public rift with one of the state's most beloved institutions and have spent years championing looser gun laws.

Organizers put the ban in place following a shooting last year that injured three people and sent some fairgoers running and

climbing over barriers to flee. By the time thousands of visitors began streaming through the gates in Dallas on Friday — greeted by a roughly five-story tall cowboy statue known as "Big Tex" — the state's highest court had rejected a last-minute appeal from the state's GOP attorney general, who argued the ban violated Texas' permissive gun rights.

Corey McCarrell, whose family was among the first inside the sprawling fairgrounds Friday, expressed disappointment that he couldn't bring his gun to make sure his wife and two children were protected.

"It was a little upsetting," said McCarrell, who has a license to carry in Texas. "But it didn't prevent us from coming."

Millions of visitors each year attend the Texas fair, which is one of the largest in the U.S. and runs through October. When the fair announced the gun ban in August, it drew swift backlash from dozens of Republican legislators and a lawsuit from Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's lawsuit.

Paxton said Friday that he wasn't giving up, even after the Texas Supreme Court's opinion Thursday that criticized the state's argument as lacking.

"I will continue to fight this on the merits to uphold Texans' ability to defend themselves, which is protected by State law," he said in a statement.

FACES

Painting a bright path

DreamWorks Animation's 30th year capped by success of 'The Wild Robot'

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

Filmmaker Chris Sanders had finally cracked "The Wild Robot."

Peter Brown's middle-grade book, about an intelligent robot living in the wilderness, had been sitting on the shelf at DreamWorks Animation for a bit. No one had quite figured it out. Then Sanders, the man behind beloved animated features from "Lilo & Stitch" to "How to Train Your Dragon," came along.

His vision, however, was different from the norm: The story started without zippy dialogue and didn't follow traditional beats. He also wanted to embrace a more illustrated style that melded analog warmth with computer-generated imagery capabilities, which was finally technologically possible. Before he got too deep, he needed to make sure the studio was on board.

"They said, 'That's the reason we bought the book. We want to do something different,'" Sanders said. "One of the great strengths of DreamWorks is they're willing to try new things. To everybody's credit, they stayed the course."

And it's already paying off. "The Wild Robot" opened No. 1 in theaters nationwide over the weekend, riding a wave of critical acclaim. Sanders didn't know it at the time, but something bigger was at play too: "The Wild Robot" would be

released coinciding with the studio's 30th anniversary.

It wasn't so long ago that DreamWorks was the new kid on the block. The upstart, founded by Jeffrey Katzenberg, Steven Spielberg and David Geffen, was in October 1994 the first new studio in 60 years. Since their first animated release ("Antz," in 1998), DreamWorks Animation has released 49 feature films that have grossed more than \$17 billion at the box office. They have major franchises, including "Shrek," which became the first best animated feature Oscar winner, "Kung Fu Panda" and "How to Train Your Dragon," originals and Emmy-winning television series.

Animation continues to be a major force at the box office. This year there are already three animated films in the top 10 global earners: Disney and Pixar's "Inside Out 2" (\$1.6 billion), Illumination's "Despicable Me 4" (\$953.3 million) and DreamWorks' "Kung Fu Panda 4" (\$549.1 million). Post-theatrical, too, animated movies are regularly among the top performers on streaming services. Their wildly popular preschool series "Gabby's Dollhouse" was the sixth-most-viewed streaming original series in 2023.

"Every studio has its ups and downs, but their franchises really spoke to me," said Margie Cohn, who was named DreamWorks



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

A workman puts the finishing touches on a backdrop for the film "The Wild Robot" on the DreamWorks Animation campus on Wednesday in Glendale, Calif. The animated movie debuted over the weekend.



AP

From left: Jeffrey Katzenberg, Steven Spielberg and David Geffen announce the formation of Dreamworks at a 1994 news conference.

Animation president in 2019. "They never spoke down to kids; they were movies that were made for the entire family. And they respected animation not as a genre, but as a theatrical experience."

A veteran of Nickelodeon, Cohn was recruited by Katzenberg in 2013 to build the DWA Television department where she saw opportunities in groundbreaking part-

nerships with streaming companies like Netflix. Three years into her tenure, DWA, then essentially an independent studio, was acquired by NBCUniversal, a division of Comcast Corp. Universal also has the animation studio Illumination under its banner. In her new role, Cohn oversees both film and television properties.

"You don't come to the studio

and then suddenly you have a slate. You have to build the slate, and it takes years," Cohn said. "We just needed to get back to those roots."

"The Wild Robot" is a key part of that equation, different visually and thematically from what came before and what's coming. Next year has three films on the schedule: "Dog Man," based on Dav Pilkey's graphic novels about a police officer and dog who become one after an injury, "The Bad Guys 2" and "Gabby's Dollhouse: The Movie." Then, in July 2026, they plan to release the first new Shrek movie in over 15 years.

The diversity of the slate, the appeal to different audience segments and the lack of house style, Cohn said, are a great signifier of the ambition of the studio.

"It's still an event for a family to go to the movies, but you have to give them a reason to go," Cohn said. "The bar for theatrical has gotten higher, but that makes us better. It raises the bar for us too."

Day-Lewis ends acting retirement for a movie directed by his son

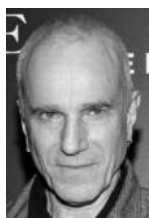
Associated Press

Daniel Day-Lewis is coming out of retirement, seven years after his last movie, for a film directed by his son Ronan Day-Lewis.

The project was announced Tuesday by Focus Features and Plan B, who are partnering on "Anemone." The film, Ronan Day-Lewis' directorial debut, will star his father along with Sean Bean and Samantha Morton. The film was co-written by the two Day-Lewises.

Earlier Tuesday, Daniel Day-Lewis and Bean were spotted driving a motorbike through Manchester, England, stoking intrigue about his impending return to acting. After making Paul Thomas Anderson's 2017 film "Phantom Thread," the 67-year-old had said he was quitting acting.

"All my life, I've mouthed off about how I should stop acting, and I don't know why it was different this time, but the impulse to quit took root in me, and that became a com-



Day-Lewis

pulsion," he told W Magazine in 2017. "It was something I had to do."

Since then, his appearances in public have been infrequent.

"Anemone," currently in production, is described as exploring "the intricate relationships between fathers, sons and brothers, and the dynamics of familial bonds."

Amazon pulls Kim Porter memoir about Sean 'Diddy' Combs

Amazon confirmed Tuesday the removal of a memoir from its site that purports to tell the story of an abusive relationship between the late actor and model Kim Porter and her longtime partner, hip-hop mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs.

Porter and Combs' children denounced

the book — titled "Kim's Lost Words: A journey for justice, from the other side..." — as a complete fabrication after it became a bestseller on Amazon in September.

The book details physical abuse, sexual coercion and other acts of violence Combs allegedly committed. Sales of the \$22 paperback skyrocketed after the news of Combs' arrest. He has pleaded not guilty.

'Good Times' actor Amos dies

John Amos, who starred as the family patriarch on the hit 1970s sitcom "Good Times" and earned an Emmy nomination for his role in the seminal 1977 miniseries "Roots," died Aug. 21. He was 84.

He played James Evans Sr. on "Good Times," which featured one of television's first Black two-parent families. Produced by Norman Lear, it ran from 1974-79.

Among Amos' film credits were "Let's Do It Again" with Bill Cosby and Sidney Poi-

tier, "Coming to America" with Eddie Murphy and its 2021 sequel, "Die Hard 2," "Madea's Witness Protection" and "Uncut Gems" with Adam Sandler.

Other news

■ **Gavin Creel**, a Broadway musical theater veteran who won a Tony Award for "Hello, Dolly!" opposite Bette Midler and earned nominations for "Hair" and "Thoroughly Modern Millie," died Monday at his home in Manhattan of a rare and aggressive form of cancer. He was 48.

■ **Drake Hogestyn**, the "Days of Our Lives" star who appeared on the show for 38 years, died Sept. 28 of pancreatic cancer, his family confirmed. He was 70.

■ **Ken Page**, who starred in Broadway's "Cats" and "The Wiz" and who voiced Oogie Boogie in the film "The Nightmare Before Christmas," died Monday. He was 70. No cause of death was available.

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OPINION

Let death be the end of Pete Rose's punishment

By CHARLES LANE

The Washington Post

If you like baseball and you weren't around in the 1970s to watch Pete Rose in his prime, I feel sorry for you. Those were also the years when baseball was my youthful passion, and for much of that time — in kids' leagues, high school and American Legion games — I copied Charlie Hustle. Rose slid headfirst, so I did; he ran to first after a base on balls, so I did; he swung slightly down on the ball (grounders and line drives have a better chance to become hits than flyballs do), so I did.

In his 24-year career, Rose, who died Monday at 83, set the records for most games played, plate appearances and at-bats. He made the all-star team 17 times, won both the National League MVP and Rookie of the Year awards, and played on three World Series winners: the 1975 and 1976 Cincinnati Reds and the 1980 Philadelphia Phillies. Incredible as his crowning achievement — a career record 4,256 hits — was, what's even more impressive is the fact that 3,125 of those hits were singles. That's more singles than Babe Ruth had hits of any kind.

How I worshipped the guy when I was a kid. And how I came to despise him later. Hopelessly addicted to gambling, he spiraled ever deeper into an off-the-field abyss of debt, dysfunctional family and personal relationships, and shady associations until he violated the professional game's inviolable rule: As player-manager of the Reds in the late 1980s, he repeatedly bet on baseball games, including his own team's.

Confronted by Major League Baseball with overwhelming evidence of his guilt, Rose accepted a lifetime ban from the game

in 1989. Baseball's Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., subsequently changed its rules to bar Rose from admission unless and until his ban was lifted. Baseball never wavered, and neither did the Hall, despite much pleading by Rose and his fans, including then-President Donald Trump who, in 2020, tweeted that Rose had "paid a decades long price."

Now his death creates an opportunity for rough justice. Rose, betrayer of the game, did not belong in the Hall. Rose's accomplishments, though, do. His posthumous induction could provide an appropriate resolution to that conundrum.

This is, or should be, a case study in the relationship between remorse and forgiveness. Just as a humble request from the offender is considered a prerequisite to a presidential pardon, lifting the ban during Rose's lifetime would have made sense — if Rose himself had ever convincingly atoned for what he did. Instead, he spent 15 years after 1989 denying he had bet on baseball before admitting it in the pages of a 2004 book he was trying to sell.

"My actions, which I thought were benign, call the integrity of the game into question," he noted. "And there's no excuse for that, but there's also no reason to punish me forever."

"But" was probably the most sincerely felt of those ghostwritten words. Rose kept trying to get reinstated so he could recover his eligibility for the Hall, often implying that it would not be clemency, but something the game owed him.

He said in 2019: "I've been suspended over 30 years. That's a long time to be suspended for betting on your own team to win. And I was wrong. But that mistake was made. Time

usually heals everything. It seems like it does in baseball, except when you talk about the Pete Rose case."

Again, the "but" and the passive voice. The sad blend of defiance, denial and desperation with which Rose conducted himself over his final years, as he descended into appearing on reality TV and hawking autographed baseballs, mockingly inscribed "I'm sorry I bet on baseball," is the subject of a superb recent HBO documentary and an equally brilliant biography by Keith O'Brien. The insistence with which the semi-repentant Rose pursued reinstatement was perhaps the best evidence that he did not quite deserve it.

And yet — the records. The on-field impact. The whole manic, rally-triggering career that began as a buzz-cut second baseman at Crosley Field, just seven miles from the working-class Cincinnati neighborhood where he grew up; reached a violent climax of sorts in the early '70s when he crashed into Bud Harrelson and Ray Fosse at second base and home plate, respectively (Google it, kids); then stretched into his 40s as he clawed out his 4,192nd hit to surpass the long-unassailable record of Ty Cobb.

All that belongs in the Hall; the time is finally right. "Going in the Hall of Fame is not going to help anybody if I'm six feet under because going in the Hall of Fame is really for your family and your fans," Rose told *The New York Times* in July. "You'd like to be here when your family celebrates and your fans celebrate, not somewhere looking down or looking up, whichever it may be." Exactly the point.

Charles Lane is a deputy opinion editor and columnist for *The Washington Post*.

The real reason 47,000 dockworkers are on strike

By HEATHER LONG

The Washington Post

For the first time since 1977, dockworkers are on strike at all East Coast and Gulf Coast ports. Some 47,000 workers have stopped unloading the massive containers full of everything from cars to toys to bananas. News stories have focused on how the strike will affect consumers. Will there be enough toys for Christmas? Which grocery prices will rise? It doesn't require a doctorate in economics to understand that, the longer this goes on, the more Americans will notice. But the bigger reason everyone should pay attention is that this is an early battle of well-paid workers against advanced automation. There will be many more to come.

The union representing the dockworkers — the International Longshoremen's Association — is demanding higher pay and benefits. There's also a dispute over where cameras can record workers. But these issues could be settled pretty easily with the United States Maritime Alliance, which represents the major shipping lines and port terminals. Just look at the West Coast dockworkers' contract deal last year that significantly hiked pay, or the record wage gains that United Auto Workers won last fall. The difficult issue at the heart of this strike is whether machines will displace workers earning up to \$39 an hour at the ports.

The dockworkers' last strike in the 1970s was also over technology. Back then, the shipping industry was beginning to use big containers, because they are much easier to

handle than individual boxes. The 44-day strike ended with a substantial pay hike and a guaranteed income for union members, whether they worked or not.

Today, the shipping industry is at the forefront of a second revolution. It is now possible to run a dockyard with almost no humans present. The two key jobs — operating cranes and moving containers around — can be automated. Cranes pick up the heavy containers from the ships and sort them on shore. Then trucks carry the containers from the dock to wherever they need to go next — a railroad or trucking hub or storage facility. People are needed to oversee things, but their role is now more akin to air traffic control. Maintenance and IT jobs also remain. But the bottom line is: Fewer workers are needed.

There's a wider context here. Only 63 ports in the world had this advanced automation by 2022. That's a tiny fraction of the roughly 1,300 container terminals in the world. Port operators make it sound inevitable that machines will come — though it's a hefty upfront expense and the equipment usually comes from China, which the Biden administration now sees as a security threat. (Efforts are underway to build cranes in the U.S.)

In this country, three terminals (in Los Angeles and Long Beach) are considered fully automated. Another three (one in New Jersey/New York and two in Virginia) are classified as semi-automated, meaning that machines do some of the sorting. A 2022 study by the Economic Roundtable of Los Angeles found that 572 jobs a year were lost (about 5% of the workforce) after automation in Califor-

nia. The study was funded by the West Coast dockworkers union.

The fact is, container ships are getting bigger and bringing more cargo. Ports that want to operate 24 hours a day to attract larger ships are likely to automate. (It's easier to schedule machines 24/7 than humans who get overtime.) But not every port needs this.

Geraldine Knatz, a former executive director of the Port of Los Angeles who is now a professor at the University of Southern California, notes that ports that introduced automation say they have experienced increased safety and more standardized performance. But her research shows that, in her words, "None of the U.S. terminals realized the level of benefits for reduced labor costs that they anticipated, and two overestimated the reduction in labor costs."

The East Coast dockworkers understand what's happening around the world. They know about shipping companies' hefty profits in recent years. And they know President Joe Biden is unlikely to force them back. (The union has been clear that it will continue unloading any military cargo, and the strike doesn't affect cruise ships.) For now, the workers feel emboldened.

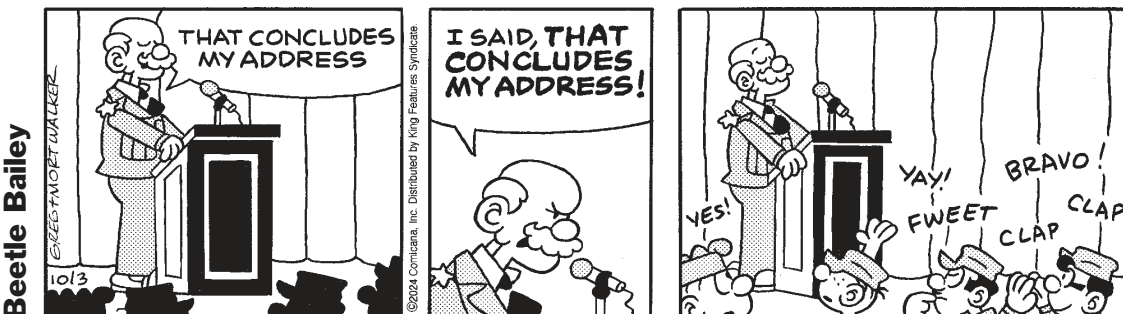
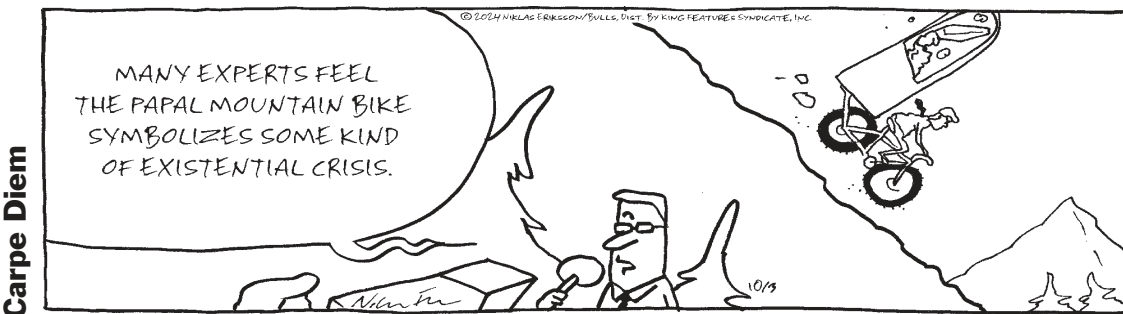
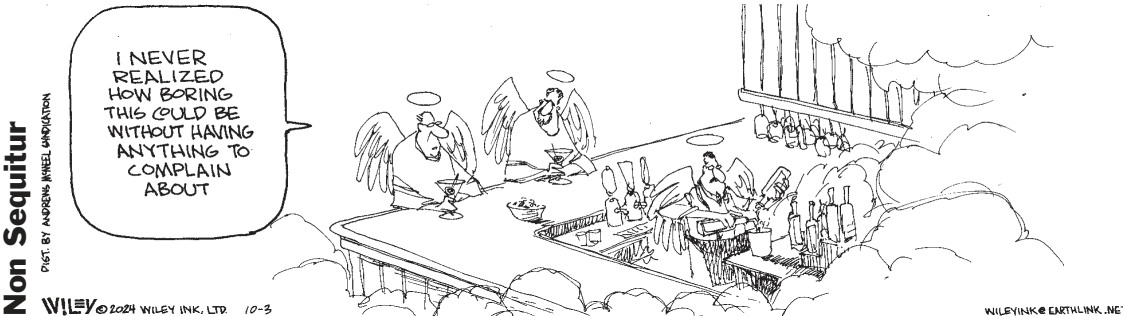
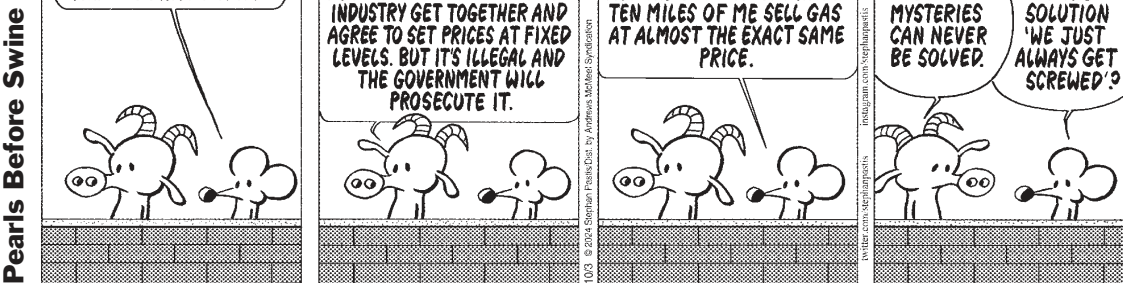
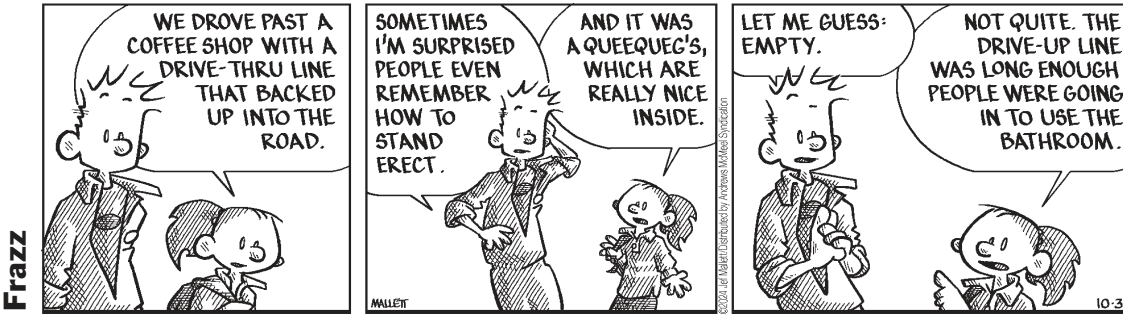
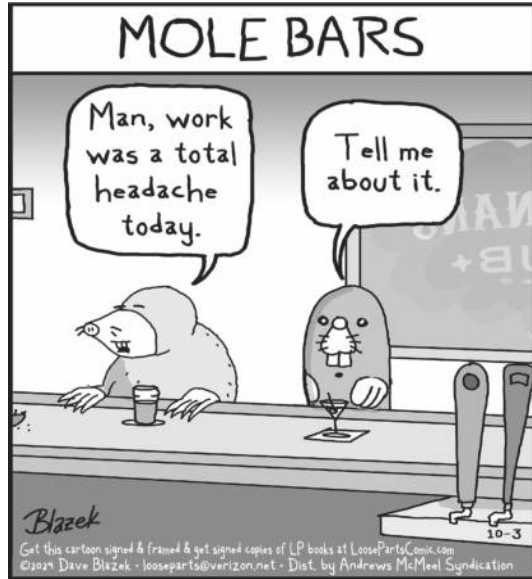
This strike will make a difference in what's available on your local store shelves. But the ramifications are bigger than that. Disputes like this can set a precedent for what happens when machines come for all kinds of jobs.

Heather Long is a Washington Post columnist. She was U.S. economics correspondent from 2017 to 2021 and a member of the editorial board from 2021 to 2024.

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11	
12					13				14				
15					16				17				
18				19			20	21					
			22			23					24	25	
26	27	28				29				30			
31					32				33				
34				35				36					
37			38					39					
			40					41			42	43	44
45	46					47	48			49			
50						51				52			
53						54				55			

ACROSS

- 1 Sandwich type
- 5 Army address
- 8 Young cow
- 12 Waikiki's island
- 13 Here (Fr.)
- 14 During
- 15 French perfume brand
- 16 Gist
- 17 Driver with a handle
- 18 Blueprint, e.g.
- 20 Words to a backstabber
- 22 Setting of a 1979 horror flick
- 26 Photo book
- 29 Actor Stephen
- 30 Motorist's org.
- 31 Prejudice
- 32 — Moines
- 33 Norms (Abbr.)
- 34 Cartoon frame
- 35 Dallas cager, for short
- 36 Social media post
- 37 Ho-hum
- 40 Hindu royal
- 41 Winter river blocker
- 45 Cupid's specialty
- 47 Pen tip
- 49 Melody
- 50 Trudge

- 51 Train unit
- 52 Slender weapon
- 53 Gimlet garnish
- 54 Chef Garten
- 55 Salamander

- 23 Fountain of Rome
- 24 Stow cargo
- 25 Sunrise direction
- 26 Starting quartet
- 27 Stead
- 28 Tango setting
- 32 "The — Code"
- 33 Add sugar to
- 35 ISP choice
- 36 Patient's need, briefly
- 38 T-shirt size
- 39 Sign of autumn?
- 42 Hoodwink
- 43 From the start
- 44 Bump into
- 45 Visual communication syst.
- 46 Roman 1051
- 48 Author Fleming

DOWN

- 1 Atlantic swimmers
- 2 Secular
- 3 "Oops!"
- 4 News offices
- 5 Egyptian peninsula
- 6 Post-op area
- 7 Steak cuts
- 8 Desert flora
- 9 Walk
- 10 Recline
- 11 New Deal pres.
- 19 "Tasty!"
- 21 New Deal proj.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

10-3

CRYPTOQUIP

IKCO UTM'DC ALXXQCF LXTMOF
 ETHC KCLDU VKQONE HMAK
 VTT JTON, IKLV KLDC UTM
 FTOC? TDCXEAKJCRRCF.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SUPPOSING YOU HEAR A RUMOR ABOUT BUTTER OR MARGARINE, DO YOU THINK IT'S O.K. TO SPREAD IT?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: D equals V

SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Schedule	
Thursday's games	
SOUTH	
Texas State (2-2) at Troy (1-4)	
SOUTHWEST	
Sam Houston St. (4-1) at UTEP (0-4)	
Friday's games	
EAST	
New Hampshire (3-1) at Harvard (1-1)	
SOUTH	
Jacksonville St. (1-3) at Kennesaw St. (0-4)	
SOUTHWEST	
Houston (1-4) at TCU (3-2)	
FAR WEST	
Syracuse (3-1) at UNLV (4-0)	
Michigan St. (3-2) at Oregon (4-0)	
Saturday's games	
EAST	
Princeton (1-1) at Columbia (1-1)	
UCLA (1-3) at Penn St. (4-0)	
CCSU (2-2) at Yale (1-1)	
Bryant (1-3) at Brown (2-0)	
Norfolk St. (2-4) at Sacred Heart (2-3)	
Penn (1-1) at Dartmouth (2-0)	
St. Francis (Pa.) (1-3) at Delaware St. (1-4)	
Lincoln (Pa.) (0-0) at Morgan St. (2-3)	
Buffalo State (0-0) at Mercyhurst (1-4)	
Albany (NY) (1-3) at Cornell (1-1)	
Wagner (2-3) at Stonehill (1-2)	
Holy Cross (1-4) at Colgate (1-4)	
Delaware (4-0) at Monmouth (NJ) (3-2)	
Lafayette (2-2) at Fordham (0-5)	
LIU Brooklyn (0-5) at Duquesne (2-2)	
Villanova (4-1) at Stony Brook (4-1)	
Temple (1-4) at Uconn (3-2)	
Appalachian St. (2-2) at Marshall (2-2)	
William & Mary (4-1) at Towson (1-3)	
SOUTH	
SMU (4-1) at Louisville (3-1)	
Boston College (4-1) at Virginia (3-1)	
Pittsburgh (4-0) at North Carolina (3-2)	
Wake Forest (1-3) at NC State (3-2)	
Marist (0-4) at Davidson (3-1)	
Tulane (3-2) at UAB (1-3)	
NC A&T (1-4) at Richmond (3-2)	
Austin Peay (1-4) at West Georgia (1-3)	
Rhode Island (3-1) at Hampton (3-2)	
Furman (1-3) at The Citadel (2-3)	
SC State (2-2) at Tennessee Tech (2-2)	
Wofford (2-2) at W. Carolina (1-3)	
Florida A&M (2-2) at Alabama St. (2-2)	
South Dakota (3-1) at Murray St. (1-3)	
VMI (0-4) at Samford (1-2)	
Ark.-Pine Bluff (1-3) at Alcorn St. (2-3)	
Gardner-Webb (1-4) at UT Martin (2-3)	
Auburn (2-3) at Georgia (3-1)	
Mississippi (4-1) at South Carolina (3-1)	
Chattanooga (1-3) at ETSU (3-2)	
East Carolina (3-2) at Charlotte (2-3)	
NC Central (3-2) at Campbell (2-3)	
W. Illinois (1-3) at Charleston Southern (1-3)	
Alabama (4-0) at Vanderbilt (2-2)	
Jackson St. (3-2) vs. Alabama A&M (2-2) at Mobile, Ala.	
Utah Tech (0-5) at North Alabama (1-5)	
Louisiana-Lafayette (3-1) at Southern Miss. (1-3)	
Clemson (3-1) at Florida St. (1-4)	
James Madison (4-0) at Louisiana-Monroe (3-1)	
Texas A&M Commerce (0-4) at SE Louisiana (1-4)	
Nicholls (1-3) at Southern U. (2-2)	
Old Dominion (1-3) at Coastal Carolina (3-1)	
UCF (3-1) at Florida (2-2)	
Duke (5-0) at Georgia Tech (3-2)	
MIDWEST	
Purdue (1-3) at Wisconsin (2-2)	
Umass (1-4) at N. Illinois (2-2)	
Drake (2-1) at Valparaiso (2-3)	
Morehead St. (3-2) at Butler (4-0)	
Tennessee St. (3-2) at Lindenwood (Mo.) (2-3)	
Indiana St. (1-3) at Youngstown St. (1-4)	
Stetson (2-2) at St. Thomas (Minn.) (1-3)	
W. Michigan (1-3) at Ball St. (1-3)	
SE Missouri (4-1) at E. Illinois (1-4)	
Miami (Ohio) (1-3) at Toledo (3-1)	
Bowling Green (1-3) at Akron (1-4)	
Iowa (3-1) at Ohio St. (4-0)	
Indiana (5-0) at Northwestern (2-2)	
North Dakota (4-1) at N. Dakota St. (4-1)	
Rutgers (4-0) at Nebraska (4-1)	
S. Dakota St. (3-1) at N. Iowa (2-2)	
Illinois St. (3-2) at S. Illinois (2-3)	
Baylor (2-3) at Iowa St. (4-0)	
Southern Cal (3-1) at Minnesota (2-3)	
SOUTHWEST	
Missouri (4-0) at Texas A&M (4-1)	
Army (4-0) at Tulsa (2-3)	
Va. Lynchburg (0-4) at Texas Southern (1-3)	
Cent. Arkansas (4-1) at Abilene Christian (3-2)	
West Virginia (2-2) at Oklahoma St. (3-2)	
Prairie View (2-3) at Incarnate Word (2-2)	
McNeese St. (4-2) at Houston Christian (2-3)	
South Alabama (2-3) at Arkansas St. (2-2)	
Tennessee (4-0) at Arkansas (3-2)	
Northwestern St. (0-5) at Stephen F. Austin (2-2)	
FAR WEST	
Navy (4-0) at Air Force (1-3)	
Weber St. (2-3) at Montana (4-1)	
Virginia Tech (2-3) at Stanford (2-2)	
UC Davis (4-1) at Portland St. (0-4)	
N. Colorado (0-5) at Montana St. (5-0)	
Presbyterian (2-3) at San Diego (2-2)	
N. Arizona (3-2) at Idaho (3-2)	
Colorado St. (2-2) at Oregon St. (3-1)	
Utah St. (1-3) at Boise St. (3-1)	
Michigan (4-1) at Washington (3-2)	
Nevada (2-3) at San Jose St. (3-1)	
Idaho St. (2-3) at Cal Poly (2-2)	
Tarleton St. (4-1) at S. Utah (2-3)	
Kansas (1-4) at Arizona St. (3-1)	
Hawaii (2-2) at San Diego St. (1-3)	
Miami (5-0) at California (3-1)	
Texas Tech (4-1) at Arizona (3-1)	

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL						
AMERICAN CONFERENCE						
East						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Buffalo	3	1	0	.750	122	83
N.Y. Jets	2	2	0	.500	76	62
Miami	1	3	0	.250	45	103
New England	1	3	0	.250	52	87
South						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Houston	3	1	0	.750	79	94
Indianapolis	2	2	0	.500	85	85
Tennessee	1	3	0	.250	79	90
Jacksonville	0	4	0	.000	60	109
North						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Pittsburgh	3	1	0	.750	75	53
Baltimore	2	2	0	.500	106	88
Cincinnati	1	3	0	.250	102	104
Cleveland	1	3	0	.250	66	87
West						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Kansas City	4	0	0	1.000	92	72
Denver	2	2	0	.500	62	55
L.A. Chargers	2	2	0	.500	68	50
Las Vegas	2	2	0	.500	78	97
NATIONAL CONFERENCE						
East						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Washington	3	1	0	.750	121	102
Dallas	2	2	0	.500	97	104
Philadelphia	2	2	0	.500	86	96
N.Y. Giants	1	3	0	.250	60	84
South						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Tampa Bay	3	1	0	.750	97	78
Atlanta	2	2	0	.500	75	85
New Orleans	2	2	0	.500	127	70
Carolina	1	3	0	.250	73	129
North						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Minnesota	4	0	0	1.000	116	59
Detroit	3	1	0	.750	104	82
Chicago	2	2	0	.500	77	75
Green Bay	2	2	0	.500	104	89
West						
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Seattle	3	1	0	.750	102	85
San Francisco	2	2	0	.500	103	82
Arizona	1	3	0	.250	96	106
L.A. Rams	1	3	0	.250	75	115
Thursday's game						
Dallas 20, N.Y. Giants 15						
Sunday's games						
Atlanta 26, New Orleans 24						
Chicago 24, L.A. Rams 18						
Cincinnati 34, Carolina 24						
Denver 10, N.Y. Jets 9						
Houston 24, Jacksonville 20						
Indianapolis 27, Pittsburgh 24						
Minnesota 31, Green Bay 29						
Tampa Bay 33, Philadelphia 16						
San Francisco 30, New England 13						
Washington 42, Arizona 14						
Kansas City 17, L.A. Chargers 10						
Las Vegas 20, Cleveland 16						
Baltimore 35, Buffalo 10						
Monday's games						
Detroit 42, Seattle 29						
Tennessee 31, Miami 12						
Thursday, Oct. 3						
Tampa Bay at Atlanta						
Sunday, Oct. 6						
N.Y. Jets vs Minnesota at London						
Baltimore at Cincinnati						
Buffalo at Houston						
Carolina at Chicago						
Cleveland at Washington						
Indianapolis at Jacksonville						
Miami at New England						
Arizona at San Francisco						
Las Vegas at Denver						
Green Bay at L.A. Rams						
N.Y. Giants at Seattle						
Dallas at Pittsburgh						
Monday, Oct. 7						
New Orleans at Kansas City						
Open: L.A. Chargers, Tennessee, Detroit, Philadelphia						
Thursday, Oct. 10						
San Francisco at Seattle						
Sunday, Oct. 13						
Jacksonville at Chicago						
Arizona at Green Bay						
Cleveland at Philadelphia						
Houston at New England						
Indianapolis at Tennessee						
Tampa Bay at New Orleans						
Washington at Baltimore						
L.A. Chargers at Denver						
Pittsburgh at Las Vegas						
Atlanta at Carolina						
Detroit at Dallas						
Cincinnati at N.Y. Giants						
Open: Kansas City, L.A. Rams, Miami, Minnesota						

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA playoffs						
(x-if necessary) (Best-of-five) Semifinals						
No. 1 New York 2, No. 4 Las Vegas 0						
New York 87, Las Vegas 77						
Tuesday: New York 88, Las Vegas 84						
Friday: at Las Vegas						
x-Sunday: at Las Vegas						
x-Tuesday, Oct. 8: at New York						
No. 2 Minnesota 1, No. 3 Connecticut 1						
Connecticut 73, Minnesota 70						
Tuesday: Minnesota 77, Connecticut 70						
Friday: at Connecticut						
Sunday: at Connecticut						
x-Tuesday, Oct. 8: at Minnesota						
PRO SOCCER						
MLS						
EASTERN CONFERENCE						
W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
Inter Miami CF	19	4	8	65	69	45
Columbus	16	5	9	57	60	33
Cincinnati	17	9	5	56	53	41
Orlando City	13	11	7	46	53	46
NYCFC	12	11	8	44	48	44
New York	10	7	14	44	48	44
Charlotte FC	11	11	9	42	37	34
Toronto FC	11	17	4	37	39	56
Philadelphia	9	12	10	37	58	48
CF Montréal	9	12	10	37	44	61
Atlanta	8	13	10	34	41	45
D.C. United	8	13	10	34	46	63
Nashville	8	14	9	33	31	47
New England	9	17	4	31	33	60
Chicago	7	16	9	30	37	55
WESTERN CONFERENCE						
W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
LA Galaxy	17	7	7	58	63	46
LAFC	15	8	7	52	54	41
Real Salt Lake	14	7	10	52	62	47
Colorado	15	11	5	50	58	53
Seattle	14	9	8	50	46	34
Houston	13	9	9	48	43	34
Vancouver	13	9	8	47	50	41
Minnesota	13	12	6	45	53	48
Portland	12	10	9	45	64	54
FC Dallas	10	14	7	37	50	52
Austin FC	9	13	9	36	34	44
St Louis City	7	11	13	34	46	58
Sporting KC	8	17	7	31	50	61
San Jose	5	23	3	18	37	72
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.						
Wednesday's games						
CF Montréal at Atlanta						
Chicago at Charlotte FC						
Cincinnati at New York City FC						
Philadelphia at Orlando City						
New York at Toronto FC						
Miami at Columbus						
New England at Houston						
D.C. United at Nashville						
LA Galaxy at Colorado						
Minnesota at Real Salt Lake						
St Louis City at Los Angeles FC						
Austin FC at Portland						
FC Dallas at San Jose						
Seattle at Vancouver						
Saturday's games						
Miami at Toronto FC						
Minnesota at Vancouver						
New York at Atlanta						
CF Montréal at Charlotte FC						
Orlando City at Cincinnati						
Philadelphia at Columbus						
D.C. United at New England						
Los Angeles FC at Sporting Kansas City						
Houston at St Louis City						
Seattle at Colorado						
Austin FC at LA Galaxy						
Real Salt Lake at San Jose						
Sunday's games						
Nashville at New York City FC						
FC Dallas at Portland						
Saturday, Oct. 12						
New England at Columbus						
PRO HOCKEY						
NHL preseason						
Tuesday's games						
Detroit 2, Pittsburgh 1						
Boston 4, Philadelphia 1						
N.Y. Rangers 5, New Jersey 4						
Ottawa 4, Montreal 3						
Columbus 3, St. Louis 1						
Minnesota 7, Chicago 2						
Vegas 6, Colorado 1						
Utah 3, San Jose 1						
Wednesday's games						
Florida at Tampa Bay						
Nashville at Carolina						
Calgary at Winnipeg						
Edmonton at Seattle						
Utah at Anaheim						
Thursday's games						
Boston vs. Los Angeles at Videotron Centre						
New Jersey at Philadelphia						
Pittsburgh at Columbus						
Toronto at Detroit						
Dallas at St. Louis						
Colorado at Vegas						

TENNIS

China Open	
Tuesday	
At National Tennis Center	
Beijing	
Purse: \$3,720,165	
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor	
Men's Singles Semifinals	
Carlos Alcaraz (2), Spain, def. Daniil Medvedev (3), Russia, 7-5, 6-3	
Jannik Sinner (1), Italy, def. Bu Yunchao-kete, China, 6-3, 7-6 (3)	
Women's Singles Round of 16	
Paula Badosa (15), Spain, def. Jessica Pegula (2), United States, 6-4, 6-0	
Zhang Shuai, China, def. Magdalena Frech (23), Poland, 6-4, 6-2	
Yuliia Starodubtseva, Ukraine, def. Anna Kalinskaya (10), Russia, 7-5, 6-0	
Coco Gauff (4), United States, def. Naomi Osaka, Japan, 3-6, 6-4, ret.	
Japan Open	
Tuesday	

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



ROD AYDELOTTE, WACO TRIBUNE-HERALD/AP

Brigham Young wide receiver Darius Lassiter maintains his balance while slipping past Baylor linebacker Matt Jones on Saturday in Waco, Texas. No. 17 BYU is atop the Big 12 standings with a 5-0 record.

Early losses could restrict Big 12 to one playoff team

BY FRED GOODALL
Associated Press

Big 12 football figured to seem a tad strange without Texas and Oklahoma hanging around the top of the league standings after the Longhorns and Sooners defected to the Southeastern Conference.

No one, however, could have forecast some of the early season surprises that could wind up affecting whether the Big 12 will be able to land more than one berth in the expanded 12-team College Football Playoff.

No. 18 Utah (4-1, 1-1 Big 12), No. 20 Kansas State (4-1, 1-1) and Oklahoma State (3-2, 0-2) — the three teams considered preseason favorites in the expanded 16-team Big 12 — didn't even make it into October without a league loss.

Some of the damage has been inflicted on one another.

Oklahoma State, which tumbled out of the Top 25 this week, lost to Utah 22-19 at home and Kansas State 42-20 on the road.

Kansas State was blown out on the road 38-9 by No. 17 BYU, while Utah fell by double digits at home to Arizona 23-10.

That leaves unbeaten BYU (5-0), improved Colorado and Texas Tech atop the conference

standings at 2-0 in league play.

No. 16 Iowa State, the Big 12's only other unbeaten team, Arizona and West Virginia are 1-0.

Granted there's a long way to go. But it's already looking like in an expanded CFP field, there may be only one playoff team from the Big 12.

What if

How would the top of the standings look if not for Baylor losing in heartbreak fashion the past two weeks? The Bears were one play away from winning at Colorado before the Buffaloes tied the game on a Hail Mary pass and then won 38-31 in overtime. Last week, they had two chances to beat BYU before falling to the Cougars 34-28 at home.

Scoreless

Houston (1-4, 0-2), a team once known for having prolific offenses that routinely scored 50, 60, sometimes even 70 points, has been shut out in its first two Big 12 games of the season by Cincinnati (34-0) and Iowa State (20-0).

Picking up steam

Coach Deion Sanders has Colorado, one of four newcomers to the Big 12 this season, off to a promising start. The Buffaloes

have won three straight following a road loss to Nebraska and matched their win total from all of last season when they went on the road last week and trounced UCF 48-21. The Buffaloes wore down the Knights with a balanced offense. Colorado's defense was impressive, too, limiting UCF's potent rushing attack to less than half the nation-leading 375.7 yards per game the Knights were averaging on the ground.

"I feel like we're trending in the right direction. ... I love where we are as a program," Sanders said. "Could we be better? Of course. But I know we're trending in the right direction."

Missed opportunity

UCF (3-1, 1-1) is in its second season in the Big 12. The Knights hosted FOX television's "Big Noon Kickoff" pregame show on campus for the first time and welcomed the opportunity to showcase the program's progress on a national stage against Colorado.

At 1-1, coach Gus Malzahn's team is very much in the conference race. There will be chances to make some noise down the stretch.

The Knights play at Iowa State on Oct. 19. They host BYU on Oct. 26 and Utah on Nov. 29.

Electric: Milroe's elite play has many calling him a Heisman favorite

FROM PAGE 24

That was highlight-reel play No. 2 for the freshman from Saraland (Ala.) High School.

Earlier, Williams bobbled the ball at least twice before turning and snagging it out of the air. Then he instantly spun the other direction to complete a 54-yard gain.

Georgia coach Kirby Smart illustrated the seemingly unsolvable dilemma of trying to contain the Milroe-Williams duo when asked about it by ESPN before the game.

Milroe's running ability makes it hard to double team Williams.

"I said we can't do anything special for Ryan Williams," Smart, a former Alabama defensive coordinator, said afterward.

"They got a guy back there at quarterback that could be the best running back in the country, and he throws the ball. You can't put two people on Ryan Williams, you can't do it."

Williams has led Alabama in receiving in all four games. He has 16 catches for 462 yards and five touchdowns after reclassifying to enter college a year early.

Williams said the season so far has been like a dream he doesn't

want to end.

"I like the dream," he said.

Milroe, meanwhile, had to bide his time for two years at Alabama before getting his shot last season.

He wound up leading the Tide to the Southeastern Conference championship after an early benching and has returned better than ever.

"They got a guy back there at quarterback (Milroe) that could be the best running back in the country, and he throws the ball."

Kirby Smart
Georgia head coach

Milroe's passer rating of 204.7 trails only No. 12 Mississippi's Jaxson Dart in the FBS. Two plays against the Bulldogs show his dual-threat abilities.

Milroe brushed off Georgia star safety Malaki Starks in the backfield before sprinting 36 yards for a touchdown on fourth down in the second quarter. His most impressive throw might have been on a wheel route to tailback Jam Miller for a touchdown.

Milroe placed the ball perfectly to a well-covered Miller.

"Guys don't always have to be wide open right now," DeBoer said. "You saw him throwing guys open and you saw receivers anticipate that and going, 'Hey, I'm going to get the ball.' That's progress in our passing game. If we keep doing that, we're going to be tough to defend."



VASHA HUNT/AP

Ryan Williams and Jalen Milroe have taken opposite paths to success at Alabama, as Williams is a freshman who took off immediately while Milroe is a fourth-year junior who had to wait two years before starting.

AUTO RACING/TENNIS

Jordan's 23XI, 2nd team sue NASCAR over charter

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Two NASCAR teams — one of them owned by Michael Jordan — filed a federal antitrust lawsuit against the stock car series and chairman Jim France on Wednesday, claiming the new charter system limits competition by unfairly binding teams to the series, its tracks and its suppliers.

23XI Racing and Front Row Motorsports filed suit in the Western District of North Carolina in Charlotte after two years of contentious negotiations between the privately owned National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing and the 15 charter-holding organizations in the series' top Cup Series.

"The France family and NASCAR are monopolistic bullies," the teams said in the lawsuit, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press. "And bullies will continue to impose their will to hurt others until their targets stand up and refuse to be victims. That moment has now arrived."

NASCAR in early September presented its final offer on what is essentially a revenue-sharing model; 13 organizations signed, with most saying they did so under duress or felt threatened into doing so.

But 23XI Racing, the team co-owned by Jordan and veteran driver Denny Hamlin, and the smaller Front Row team refused to sign. They hired Jeffrey Kessler, a top antitrust attorney who has represented the players in all four major professional North

American sports, helped push the NCAA toward an era of paid college athletes and won a landmark equal pay settlement for members of the U.S. national women's soccer team.

The lawsuit seeks details from NASCAR and France "related to their exclusionary practices and intent to insulate themselves from any competition." Kessler said he would ask for a preliminary injunction that will enable the two teams to compete in 2025 under the new charter agreement while the litigation proceeds.

"I love the sport of racing and the passion of our fans, but the way NASCAR is run today is unfair to teams, drivers, sponsors and fans."

Michael Jordan
NASCAR team owner

The teams said they will seek treble damages for anti-competitive terms that have ruled the sport since the initial 2016 charter agreement.

"Everyone knows that I have always been a fierce competitor, and that will to win is what drives me and the entire 23XI team each and every week out on the track," said Jordan, the retired NBA superstar. "I love the sport of racing and the passion of our fans, but the way NASCAR is run today is unfair to teams, drivers, sponsors and fans. Today's action shows I'm willing to fight for a compet-

itive market where everyone wins."

What is a charter?

The charter system introduced in 2016 included revenue sharing and other elements of the business for the top motorsports series in the United States while guaranteeing 36 entries in every lucrative Cup Series race. Of the 19 team owners who were originally granted charters in 2016, the lawsuit says, only eight remain in the sport.

One of the departing teams was Furniture Row Motorsports, which sold its charter for \$6 million at the end of the 2018 season — a year removed from winning the Cup Series championship — proof, the plaintiffs say, that the charters left the teams without a path to profitability.

The original charters lasted from 2016 through 2020 and were automatically renewed to continue through Dec. 31, 2024.

With expiration looming, teams argued the revenue sharing is unfair and demanded a larger share of the pot.

Front Row owner Bob Jenkins has maintained he's never turned a profit since forming his team in 2005. He won the Daytona 500 in 2021 with driver Michael McDowell, and failed to break even in that banner season.

With four sons and a desire to leave something for his family to run, Jenkins said he wants a fair agreement.

"I have been part of this racing community for 20 years and couldn't be more proud of the



LAURENT CIPRIANI/AP

23XI Racing, co-owned by Michael Jordan, center, and Front Row Motorsports filed a federal antitrust lawsuit against NASCAR on Wednesday, claiming the new charter system limits competition.

Front Row Motorsports team and our success. But the time has come for change," Jenkins said. "We need a more competitive and fair system where teams, drivers, and sponsors can be rewarded for our collective investment by building long-term enterprise value, just like every other successful professional sports league."

What do the teams want?

During negotiations, the teams asked for more revenue, a voice in governance and rule-making, and a cut from deals NASCAR earns off the names, images and likenesses of the participants.

The teams also wanted the charters to be permanent; France has refused.

According to the suit, NASCAR presented a take-it-or-leave-it offer on Friday, Sept. 6, 48 hours before the playoffs began. It says NASCAR threatened teams to sign the more than 100-page agreement or risk losing not only their charters but the charter system itself unless "a substantial number of teams" agreed.

"The teams knew that fielding a NASCAR car had become so expensive that it would be economically devastating for most of them to compete without even the modest revenue sharing and sta-

bility provided by the charter system and the complete loss of their charter values if the charter system was discontinued," the lawsuit claims.

Rick Hendrick, the winningest owner in NASCAR history, has said he signed only because he was worn down by the negotiations.

What does lawsuit claim?

The suit argues NASCAR violated the Sherman Antitrust Act by preventing any stock car racing team from competing on the circuit "without accepting the anticompetitive terms" it imposes.

"Faced with a take-it-or-leave-it offer, and no competing opportunity for premier stock car racing in the United States, most of the teams concluded that they had to sign," the lawsuit states. "One team described its signing as 'coerced,' and another said it was 'under duress.'"

"A third team said, NASCAR 'put a gun to our heads' and we 'had to sign.' A fourth described NASCAR's tactics as that of a 'communist regime.' None of these teams would permit their identities to be publicly revealed for fear of retribution from NASCAR."

Alcaraz beats Sinner, now 3-for-3 against top rival

Associated Press

BEIJING — Carlos Alcaraz won seven straight points in the decisive tiebreaker to beat top-ranked Jannik Sinner 6-7 (6), 6-4, 7-6 (3) and win the China Open on Wednesday, extending his recent mastery over his biggest rival — who is dealing with an ongoing doping case.

The third-ranked Alcaraz has now won all three of his meetings with Sinner this year, having also come out on top in semifinals at Indian Wells and the French Open.

"He could (have won) in two, I could win in two, he could win in three. It was a really close match," Alcaraz said. "Jannik, once again, he showed that he's the best player in the world, at least for me. The level that he's playing, it's unbelievable. It's a really high quality of tennis. Of shots, physically, mentally, he's a beast."

Alcaraz ended Sinner's winning streak at 15 matches and denied the Italian three straight titles after trophies in Cincinnati and at the U.S. Open.

Sinner, who was the defending champion in Beijing, had to refocus after the World Anti-Doping Agency announced on Saturday that it was appealing a decision to clear him of wrongdoing following two positive steroid tests.

Alcaraz wasted a 5-2 lead in the first set and also let Sinner get back in the third after leading 4-2 before eventually edging it out after also falling behind 3-0 in the final-set tiebreaker.

Alcaraz changed both of his shoes after falling behind 2-0 in the third-set tiebreaker. He then lost one more point before going on a seven-point run that displayed why he's a threat anywhere on the court. There were inside-out

forehand winners — including one on his first match point — a difficult volleyed approach shot, and a drop shot, too.

"I'm not going to lie: 3-0 down, two mini-breaks for him, so I didn't lose hope but I thought, 'OK, I have to give everything that I have just to try to give me the opportunity to be close,'" Alcaraz said. "I played great points just to make the 3-3 and after that I just think to go for it. If I lose it, at least I went for it."

Alcaraz produced 55 winners to Sinner's 30 but also had 52 unforced errors to his opponent's 31 — a sign of their contrasting styles: Alcaraz's attacking game vs. Sinner's steady baseline approach.

The match — which was played in cool conditions with the retractable roof open — lasted 3 hours, 21 minutes to make it the longest contest in tournament history.

Sinner and Alcaraz accounted for all four Grand Slam titles this year between them — evenly split: Sinner won the Australian Open and the U.S. Open while Alcaraz won the French Open and Wimbledon.

Alcaraz improved to 6-4 in his career against Sinner after their 10th meeting in what has become tennis' top rivalry following the 60 matches between Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic.

"I respect you a lot as a player but even more as a person," Alcaraz told Sinner during the trophy ceremony.

Sinner congratulated Alcaraz for an "amazing" job.

"Hopefully we can still play a couple of more times in the future, which I'm quite sure," Sinner said. "It's always a big pleasure to share the court with you."

NFL

Weekly statistics

AFC individual leaders					
Quarterbacks					
	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int
Stroud, Hou	139	94	1054	6	2
Burrow, Cin	134	95	978	7	1
Mahomes, KC	121	83	904	6	5
Minshew, Las	123	87	877	3	3
L.Jackson, Bal	108	72	858	5	1
Rodgers, NYJ	128	82	849	5	1
Fields, Pit	109	77	830	3	1
Allen, Buf	101	70	814	7	0
Lawrence, Jac	122	65	729	4	1
D.Watson, Cle	148	91	727	4	3

Rushers					
	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Henry, Bal	80	480	6.0	87t	5
Taylor, Ind	72	349	4.8	29t	4
Dobbins, LAC	56	342	6.1	61	2
L.Jackson, Bal	41	308	7.5	25	2
Stevenson, NE	65	267	4.1	18	2
Pollard, Ten	61	246	4.0	41	2
Harris, Pit	68	228	3.4	21	0
Cook, Buf	50	227	4.5	49t	3
Etienne, Jac	47	214	4.6	22	2
J.Ford, Cle	39	203	5.2	36	1

Receivers					
	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Collins, Hou	30	489	16.3	55	2
Chase, Cin	19	300	15.8	63t	3
Rice, KC	24	288	12.0	44t	2
Pickens, Pit	20	284	14.2	40	0
B.Thomas, Jac	17	275	16.2	66	2
Pierce, Ind	10	234	23.4	60t	2
Diggs, Hou	25	233	9.3	28	2
Shakir, Buf	18	230	12.8	52	2
T.Hill, Mia	17	217	12.8	80t	1
Bowers, Las	20	216	10.8	27	0

Punters				
	No	Yds	Lg	Avg
Cole, Las	17	886	67	52.1
Bojorquez, Cle	23	1197	84	52.0

Scoring					
Touchdowns					
	TDRush	Rec	Ret	Pts	
Henry, Bal	6	5	1	0	36
Cook, Buf	4	3	1	0	24

Kicking				
	PAT	FG	LG	Pts
Boswell, Pit	6-6	11-12	57	39
McPherson, Cin	9-10	9-10	56	36

AFC team statistics

AVERAGE PER GAME

OFFENSE			
	Yards	Rush	Pass
Baltimore	429.5	220.2	209.2
Houston	364.5	106.8	257.8
Cincinnati	338.2	102.2	236.0
Kansas City	328.2	112.5	215.8
Indianapolis	326.2	131.8	194.5
Pittsburgh	317.8	128.5	189.2
Buffalo	305.8	110.2	195.5
N.Y. Jets	294.8	91.5	203.2
Las Vegas	288.8	76.2	212.5
Jacksonville	285.5	126.2	159.2
Miami	285.0	97.8	187.2
Denver	266.0	106.2	159.8
L.A. Chargers	263.8	127.8	136.0
Tennessee	256.2	111.2	145.0
Cleveland	246.2	94.8	151.5
New England	238.8	126.5	112.2

DEFENSE			
	Yards	Rush	Pass
Tennessee	243.8	119.8	124.0
Denver	256.5	110.5	146.0
N.Y. Jets	256.5	128.5	128.0
Pittsburgh	261.2	86.8	174.5
Houston	273.8	112.8	161.0
Miami	282.0	119.5	162.5
L.A. Chargers	282.5	94.0	188.5
Cleveland	299.0	123.2	175.8
Baltimore	315.2	57.8	257.5
Buffalo	321.8	156.5	165.2
Cincinnati	326.8	145.5	181.2
Kansas City	326.8	99.0	227.8
Las Vegas	344.2	137.5	206.8
New England	353.2	99.2	254.0
Jacksonville	380.0	107.2	272.8
Indianapolis	399.8	164.8	235.0

NFC individual leaders					
Quarterbacks					
	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int
Smith, Sea	159	115	1182	4	4
Purdy, SF	122	84	1130	5	2
Prescott, Dal	149	96	1072	6	2
Goff, Det	124	88	1015	5	4
Mayfield, TB	129	91	984	8	2
Stafford, LAR	130	89	978	2	2
Darnold, Min	106	73	932	11	3
Hurts, Phi	132	90	930	4	4
Daniels, Was	106	87	897	3	1
Jones, NYG	144	91	881	4	3

Rushers					
	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Mason, SF	91	447	4.9	25	3
Barkley, Phi	73	435	6.0	65t	4
Kamara, NO	80	362	4.5	17	5
Jacobs, GB	71	329	4.6	34	0
A.Jones, Min	64	321	5.0	39	1
Robinson, Was	66	307	4.7	40	3
Hubbard, Car	55	296	5.4	38	1
Conner, Ari	64	293	4.6	22	3
Gibbs, Det	54	285	5.3	24	3
Montgomery, Det	63	271	4.3	21	4

Receivers					
	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Nabers, NYG	35	386	11.0	39	3
Metcalf, Sea	24	366	15.3	71t	2
Jennings, SF	21	364	17.3	45	3
Jefferson, Min	20	358	17.9	97t	4
Reed, GB	17	336	19.8	70t	2
Godwin, TB	27	322	11.9	41t	3
Lamb, Dal	20	316	15.8	65t	2
Goedert, Phi	24	301	12.5	61	0
Williams, Det	13	289	22.2	70t	2
Olave, NO	20	265	13.3	39	1

Punters				
	No	Yds	Lg	Avg
Mann, Phi	10	519	70	51.9
Anger, Dal	14	721	62	51.5

Scoring					
Touchdowns					
	TDRush	Rec	Ret	Pts	
Kamara, NO	6	5	1	0	36
Williams, LAR	6	5	1	0	36

Kicking				
	PAT	FG	LG	Pts
Aubrey, Dal	7-7	12-13	65	43
Moody, SF	10-10	11-12	53	43

NFC team statistics

AVERAGE PER GAME

OFFENSE			
	Yards	Rush	Pass
San Francisco	413.2	141.8	271.5
Green Bay	410.0	174.5	235.5
Detroit	397.0	151.2	245.8
Seattle	387.0	106.2	280.8
Washington	382.2	169.2	213.0
Philadelphia	365.5	153.8	211.8
New Orleans	349.0	147.5	201.5
Minnesota	340.8	123.8	217.0
Arizona	333.0	153.2	179.8
Dallas	330.8	75.2	255.5
Tampa Bay	319.0	96.0	223.0
L.A. Rams	312.5	88.2	224.2
Atlanta	309.2	102.8	206.5
N.Y. Giants	296.8	85.2	211.5
Carolina	291.0	108.5	182.5
Chicago	253.0	87.2	165.8

DEFENSE			
	Yards	Rush	Pass
Seattle	283.8	116.2	167.5
San Francisco	295.2	96.2	199.0
Chicago	295.5	121.0	174.5
N.Y. Giants	311.8	118.8	193.0
New Orleans	330.2	96.5	233.8
Tampa Bay	335.2	131.5	203.8
Atlanta	336.5	145.5	191.0
Green Bay	339.8	109.2	230.5
Detroit	349.0	90.8	258.2
Minnesota	349.2	75.0	274.2
Arizona	354.8	146.5	208.2
Dallas	355.2	145.8	209.5
Washington	357.0	136.5	220.5
Carolina	358.0	148.8	209.2
Philadelphia	365.8	128.8	237.0
L.A. Rams	385.2	165.5	219.8

BEHIND THE CALL

Scenery change revives careers of four veterans

By ARNIE STAPLETON
Associated Press

Some NFL veterans are making the most of second chances. Or even their fourth or fifth.

Derrick Henry looks just as good at 30 years old in a Baltimore Ravens uniform as he did as a twentysomething franchise player in Tennessee and Saquon Barkley is tearing it up in Philadelphia with a visit coming up in October to the Meadowlands to face his former teammates with the New York Giants.

For Sam Darnold, his fourth stop on an NFL journey that began as a baby-faced 20-year-old is proving the charm and ageless Joe Flacco is still slinging it now with his fifth team.

It's not like Henry was washed up when he bid a fond farewell to the Titans and their fans following his final game at Nissan Stadium in a Tennessee uniform eight months ago, but he's making north of 30 look just as good as he did in his 20s.

Henry took the Ravens' first offensive snap 87 yards to the end zone for the longest touchdown run in franchise history Sunday night, the bellwether burst in a 199-yard performance that propelled the Ravens to a 35-10 shellacking of the previously unbeaten Buffalo Bills that served as the NFL's biggest statement in Week 4.

The 247-pound Henry reached 21.29 mph on the run, according to NFL NextGen Stats. That ties the fourth-fastest speed by a ball carrier this season.

For good measure, Henry caught his first touchdown pass since 2019 and now has half a dozen touchdowns in four games for Baltimore, half of what he had in his final season in Nashville.

Not bad for a guy four months shy of his 31st birthday, 18 yards short of 10,000 for his career and just five trips to the end zone from an even 100.

The fountain of youth, which seems to have soaked Darnold in Minnesota and fellow 27-year-old Barkley in Philadelphia, also splashed Flacco, four months shy of 40 and light years since his days as Baltimore's franchise ironman.

Flacco, that rare star-turned-backup, came off the bench in relief of an injured Anthony Richardson to lead the Indianapolis Colts past the previously unblemished Pittsburgh Steelers 27-24.

On his fourth team since his split from the Ravens after the



TERRANCE WILLIAMS/AP

At 30, Baltimore Ravens running back Derrick Henry looks as good as he when he first joined the league. He rushed for 199 yards last week against Buffalo, including an 87-yard touchdown run.

2018 season, the league's reigning Comeback Player of the Year threw for a pair of touchdowns against a Steelers team he's beaten 11 times as a starter.

Flacco went 16-for-26 for 168 yards and two touchdowns — double what Broncos rookie Bo Nix has in four full games so far.

When CBS sideline reporter Aditi Kinkhabwala asked him afterward if he ever ages, Flacco replied, "When you're out here in this environment, no. You feel like you're 12 years old."

When Kinkhabwala told him, "Anthony Richardson told us that you were cooler than he thought," Flacco retorted: "Listen, he told me that his mom is eight days older than I am. So, there's no chance in the world that he thinks I'm cool."

NBC analyst Chris Simms sure does.

"How about Joltin' Joe?" Simms cracked on "Football Night in America." "Does this guy ever get old? Does his arm ever wear out? He's throwing lasers all around." Looking young again.

Like Henry in Baltimore, Darnold in Minneapolis and Barkley in Philly.

Henry is averaging 6 yards per carry with the Ravens, well ahead of his already impressive 4.7-yard career average.

Barkley, selected second over-

all in 2018 between Baker Mayfield, who found a home in Tampa Bay last year in his fourth NFL stop, and Darnold, is averaging just shy of 6 yards a run for the Eagles.

That's also well ahead of his 4.4-yard average with the Giants, who let him get away in free agency only to join a division rival. Barkley's four touchdown runs put him on pace to top the career-best 11 times he scored during his rookie season with the Giants in 2018.

Darnold has positioned the Vikings (4-0) as the NFL's September Surprise after leading Minnesota to a 31-29 win at Lambeau Field on Sunday.

Darnold spent a year under the tutelage of Kyle Shanahan in San Francisco before signing a one-year, \$10 million deal with Minnesota. He's completing 68.9% of his throws, a significant jump from his career average of around 60%.

Of course, not all of the league's graybeards are looking so green.

Aaron Rodgers looked every bit of his 40 years in a 10-9 loss to Denver on a sloppy, soggy afternoon at the Meadowlands where he was held without a touchdown pass.

"The weather sucked," Rodgers said. "But so did some of my throws."

With contributions from AP pro football writer Dennis Waszak Jr.

MLB PLAYOFFS

Skubal, Tigers shut down Astros

BY KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

HOUSTON — Tarik Skubal kept up his stellar season with a sensational playoff debut and the Detroit Tigers got to Framber Valdez early in a 3-1 win over the Houston Astros in their AL Wild Card Series opener on Tuesday.

The Tigers, swept in the American League Division Series in their last trip to the playoffs in 2014, got their first postseason win since Game 4 the 2013 AL Championship Series against Boston.

Down 3-0 entering the ninth, Houston scored on Yanier Diaz's RBI single and had the bases loaded when Jason Heyward hit a game-ending lineout against Beau Brieske.

Skubal, the AL pitching Triple Crown winner, allowed just four singles and walked one in six innings. About the only hard hit by the Astros off him was one that hit him — the lefty was struck on his right wrist by Diaz's second-inning comebacker.

"It was a good challenge," Skubal said. "It was fun. It was a ton of fun. I enjoyed it. It's probably the most nervous I've been since my debut. That was also fun to deal with. What a game. It was fun. Glad to come out with a win."

Yordan Alvarez, playing for the first time since spraining his right knee Sept. 22, doubled off Jason Foley starting the ninth inning. Pinch-runner Zach Dezenzo moved to third on Alex Bregman's infield single and Diaz singled on a grounder to right.

Jeremy Peña sacrificed, Brieske relieved and Victor Caratini flied out to short left. Chas McCormick walked and Brieske retired Heyward for the save.

"Skubal has been really good all year," Astros manager Joe Espada said. "We had a few chances there in the middle of the game, and



KEVIN M. COX/AP

Detroit Tigers starting pitcher Tarik Skubal reacts Tuesday after striking out the Astros' Yainer Diaz during the sixth inning of Game 1 of their AL Wild Card Series in Houston.

we couldn't capitalize. But credit to him. He made pitches. And we battled until the end. We had a shot there in the ninth and we just couldn't get a big hit."

The AL West champions were hurt by yet another playoff flop from Valdez, who went 0-3 in the postseason last year. Houston's ace ranked third in the AL with a 2.91 ERA in the regular season but permitted three runs and seven hits in just 4½ innings Tuesday.

Detroit pounced on him in the second. Wenceel Pérez singled with one out before Spencer Torkelson walked and Parker Meadows grounded into a forceout that left runners at the corners.

Jake Rogers, Trey Sweeney and Matt Vierling hit consecutive RBI singles for a 3-0 lead.

The Tigers had a runner on third with two outs in the third when Peña made a diving catch at shortstop on Torkelson's liner.

It was a return to Houston for Detroit manager A.J. Hinch, who led Houston to a championship in 2017 and the last managed a postseason game in the Astros' loss in Game 7 of the 2019 World Series.

The following January he was suspended for a year by Major League Baseball and fired the same day for his role in Houston's sign-stealing scandal.

He joined the Tigers after his suspension was up and guided the team back to the postseason with a 31-13 finish to the regular season.

"We talk about pressure on the bases," Hinch said. "We talk about good at-bats. We talk about passing the baton. All those things came through with Tarik on the mound, too. I don't think it's a small thing today in the first playoff game from a lot of these guys that it looked eerily familiar to the last two months."

The Astros, in the postseason for a franchise-record eighth straight season, had won an MLB-record 10 consecutive postseason openers. They played their 98th postseason game since 2017.

Scoreboard

Playoffs

x-if necessary
WILD CARD SERIES
(Best-of-three)
American League
Detroit 1, Houston 0

Tuesday: Detroit 3, Houston 1
Wednesday: at Houston
x-Thursday: Detroit (TBD) at Houston (TBD), **AFN-Sports 2, 8 p.m. Thursday CET; 3 a.m. Friday JKT**

Kansas City 1, Baltimore 0

Tuesday: Kansas City 1, Baltimore 0
Wednesday: at Baltimore
x-Thursday: Kansas City (Wacha 13-8) at Baltimore (TBD), **AFN-Sports, 10 p.m. Thursday CET; 5 a.m. Friday JKT**

National League
New York 1, Milwaukee 0

Tuesday: New York 8, Milwaukee 4
Wednesday: at Milwaukee
x-Thursday: New York (TBD) at Milwaukee (TBD), **AFN-Sports, 4 a.m. Friday CET; 11 a.m. Friday JKT**

San Diego 1, Atlanta 0

Tuesday: San Diego 4, Atlanta 0
Wednesday: at San Diego
x-Thursday: Atlanta (TBD) at San Diego (Cease 14-11), **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Friday CET; 8 a.m. Friday JKT (joined in progress)**

DIVISION SERIES
(Best-of-five)

American League

New York vs. Baltimore or Kansas City

Saturday: at New York (Cole 8-5)
Monday: at New York
Wednesday, Oct. 9: at Baltimore or Kansas City
x-Thursday, Oct. 10: at Baltimore or Kansas City

x-Saturday, Oct. 12: at New York

Cleveland vs. Houston or Detroit

Saturday: at Cleveland
Monday: at Cleveland
Wednesday, Oct. 9: at Houston or Detroit
x-Thursday, Oct. 10: at Houston or Detroit

x-Saturday, Oct. 12: at Cleveland

National League

Los Angeles vs. San Diego or Atlanta

Saturday: at Los Angeles
Sunday: at Los Angeles
Tuesday, Oct. 8: at San Diego or Atlanta
x-Wednesday, Oct. 9: at San Diego or Atlanta

x-Friday, Oct. 11: at Los Angeles

Philadelphia vs. Milwaukee or New York

Saturday: at Philadelphia
Sunday: at Philadelphia
Tuesday, Oct. 8: at Milwaukee or New York
x-Wednesday, Oct. 9: at Milwaukee or New York

x-Friday, Oct. 11: at Philadelphia

Witt, Ragans lead Royals past Orioles in Game 1

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

BALTIMORE — As Bobby Witt Jr. prepared to make his much-anticipated playoff debut for the Kansas City Royals, he took a moment after the final notes of the national anthem rang out at Camden Yards on Tuesday to soak it all in.

The bright lights on a cloudy afternoon. The 41,506 roaring souls in the stands, most supporting the host Baltimore Orioles. The orange towels twirling in their hands.

"I'm like, 'This is where you want to be,'" Witt said afterward. "This is the spot you want to be in. And this is what makes you a baseball player. This is what you dream of."

Witt showed why he is one of the game's biggest young stars, bringing home the only run with a single Tuesday to back six terrific innings from another playoff first-timer, Cole Ragans, and helping the Royals return from a nine-year postseason absence with a 1-0 victory over the Orioles in Game 1 of their AL Wild Card Series.

"It's kind of fitting for him to drive in the run. He's been the leader of the offense — him and

(Salvador Perez) — all year," KC's Michael Massey said. "Having him up in that situation is what we want as a team."

Witt, the 24-year-old shortstop who led the majors with 211 hits and a .332 batting average this season, bounced the ball through the infield off a 95 mph, first-pitch cutter from 2021 NL Cy Young Award winner Corbin Burnes with two outs in the sixth.

Burnes used that cutter to get Witt out in his first two at-bats.

"He took some pretty bad swings on it, weak contact, so it was a pretty good pitch," Burnes said. "He didn't hit it very hard. It just found a hole and that was the difference."

Maikel Garcia came around to score after drawing a walk, stealing second — Burnes allowed runners to swipe a major league-high 41 bases this season — and moving to third on a groundout.

Garcia is another postseason rookie, as is Lucas Erceg, who earned a four-out save, emblematic of an up-and-coming Royals club that lost 106 games last season but used a 30-win improvement to get back to October for the first time since winning the 2015



STEPHANIE SCARBROUGH/AP

Kansas City's Bobby Witt Jr., left, celebrates after hitting an RBI single Tuesday during the sixth inning of Game 1 of the Royals' AL Wild Card Series against the Orioles in Baltimore. The Royals won 1-0.

World Series.

Witt copped to some butterflies in the ninth, and Erceg said he needed to slow himself down after realizing he wasn't sticking to his normal routine on the mound. But otherwise, these KC Kids sure seemed to be right at ease in the glare when games matter the most.

"Pretty much just be yourself," Witt said. "That's what we do as a team."

Baltimore has lost its last nine postseason games.

Ragans left after 80 pitches because of cramping in his left calf, and the bullpen handled things the rest of the way. The All-Star lefty was terrific, mixing a 98 mph fast-

ball with a variety of off-speed offerings while allowing just four hits and striking out eight.

Burnes looked every bit the ace Baltimore hoped it was getting when it acquired him from Milwaukee in February.

"He did his part," Orioles manager Brandon Hyde said.

The AL's All-Star starter this season exited to a standing ovation after giving up a leadoff single in the ninth. He allowed one run, five hits and that one key free pass to Garcia.

"The walk hurt," Burnes said. "The walk cost us the game."

He became the first starter to throw a pitch in the ninth inning of a postseason game since Washington's Stephen Strasburg in Game 6 of the 2019 World Series.

But Baltimore's sluggers — the team's 235 homers trailed only the Yankees — could not come through.

The Orioles got a runner to third in the third inning, but Jordan Westburg flied out to the warning track in left field. They put men at the corners in the fifth, but Ragans struck out James McCann and 2023 AL Rookie of the Year Gunnar Henderson.

MLB PLAYOFFS

Tatis, King shine as Padres top Braves

By **BERNIE WILSON**
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Fernando Tatis Jr. hit a towering two-run homer on his first playoff swing in four years and Michael King struck out 12 in his first postseason start as the San Diego Padres beat rookie AJ Smith-Shawver and the Atlanta Braves 4-0 in Game 1 of their NL Wild Card Series on Tuesday night.

Tatis' 415-foot shot in the first inning landed in the second deck in left field at Petco Park and sent the towel-waving, sellout crowd of 47,647 into a frenzy. The 25-year-old star, who missed just over 2½ months this season with a stress reaction in his right thighbone, watched the ball fly away, tossed his bat aside, gestured toward the home dugout and did his signature stutter step around third base.

"It's beautiful energy. I love this type of situation," Tatis said. "It definitely brings the best out of me. And just looking forward to way more experiences like this."

He said he was hunting a fastball.

"I was going for it probably before he released the pitch. But looking for my fastball, he left it over the plate, and had definitely great results," Tatis said. "I knew it was going to go out. I didn't know it was going to land in the second deck just because of how high it was."

Game 2 in the best-of-three playoff was Wednesday night. If the Padres won the series, they'll face their biggest rivals, the NL West champion Los Angeles Dodgers, in the National League Division Series. The Padres elimi-



GREGORY BULL/AP

San Diego's Fernando Tatis Jr. reacts after connecting for a two-run home run during the first inning in Game 1 of the NL Wild Card Series against the Atlanta Braves on Tuesday. The Padres won 4-0.

nated the 111-win Dodgers in a 2022 NLDS.

King was brilliant in becoming the first pitcher to have 12 strikeouts with no runs or walks allowed in his first career postseason start. He permitted five hits and joined Kevin Brown and Sterling Hitchcock as the only Padres pitchers with double-digit strikeouts in a playoff game.

At 2 hours, 9 minutes, it was the fastest postseason game since Greg Maddux and the Braves beat the Dodgers in 2:08 during a 1996 NL Division Series.

"I think I dreamed of a perfect game instead of a few hits that I gave up," said King, who came over in the blockbuster trade that sent Juan Soto to the New York Yankees in December. "But I mean, to get up 1-0 in a three-game series is huge. That was the goal and we accomplished that. We've got our horse Joe (Musgrove) tomorrow and I've got a lot of confidence in us."

King made his postseason debut with the Yankees in the AL playoff bubble in 2020 at eerily empty Petco Park, where the only "fans"

were a few thousand cardboard cutouts. He pitched two innings in a Game 3 loss during a Division Series that Tampa Bay won in five games.

Getting the quick 2-0 lead "made it so I could really attack on my fastball and stay ahead in the counts and really put the pressure on," King said. "Feeling the crowd noise, knowing how big postseason games are, it all played into my mentality throughout the whole game."

The Braves clinched a playoff berth by winning the second game

of a makeup doubleheader against the New York Mets on Monday in Atlanta. But they are without NL Cy Young Award favorite Chris Sale for this series. The left-hander was scratched from the late game Monday with back spasms.

Atlanta played 27 innings on opposite coasts in a little more than 24 hours.

Tatis homered on a 94 mph four-seamer from the 21-year-old Smith-Shawver, one of the Braves' top prospects. He was making his first playoff start and just his second this season.

Luis Arraez was aboard on a leadoff single. Arraez, obtained in a trade with Miami in early May, became the first player since the 1800s to win batting titles with three teams.

Tatis experienced his first postseason game with fans in the stands. His first playoffs were in 2020 after the pandemic-shortened season. He missed San Diego's run to the 2022 National League Championship Series after receiving an 80-game PED suspension from MLB that August.

Smith-Shawver allowed three runs and four hits in 1½ innings.

Braves manager Brian Snitker said Smith-Shawver didn't know he was starting until the skipper called him Tuesday morning.

"It wasn't because of who we started that we didn't win this game," Snitker said. "We couldn't get anything going offensively."

Said Smith-Shawver: "There are obviously nerves, but also it is where you want to be throwing and sometimes it doesn't work out your way. But I don't think nerves were the issue today."

Mets continue wild ride with win over Brewers

By **STEVE MEGARGEE**
Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Mark Vientos hit a tiebreaking, two-run single during a five-run outburst in the fifth inning as the persistent New York Mets continued their thrilling week by beating the Milwaukee Brewers 8-4 in an NL Wild Card Series opener Tuesday.

The Mets didn't earn a playoff berth until they rallied late from a three-run deficit to win the opening game of a makeup doubleheader in Atlanta on Monday, one day after the regular season was supposed to end.

Now they're a win from heading to Philadelphia for an NL Division Series.

"I knew we were in a good spot when we boarded the plane," manager Carlos Mendoza said. "We celebrated. We got out of the clubhouse in Atlanta, and you could tell right away our mentality was next day, next game."



MORRY GASH/AP

New York's Jesse Winker gestures to the Mets dugout in front of Brewers third baseman Joey Ortiz after hitting a two-run triple in Game 1 of an NL Wild Card Series on Tuesday in Milwaukee.

Since Major League Baseball went to the current postseason format in 2022 that features four best-of-three Wild Card Series, the Game 1 winner has gone on to advance in each of the eight series. Only one of those eight series even made it to a winner-take-all third game.

Milwaukee has lost 10 of its last

11 playoff games, a stretch that began with its Game 7 home defeat against the Los Angeles Dodgers in the 2018 NL Championship Series.

Jesse Winker and pinch-hitter J.D. Martinez each drove in two runs for the Mets. Winker, who batted .199 with a .567 OPS for the Brewers last year before bouncing back this season, drew a chorus of boos each time he came to the plate. He also appeared to exchange words with Milwaukee shortstop Willy Adames after hitting a two-run triple in the second.

Brice Turang went 3-for-4, Jackson Chourio was 2-for-4 and William Contreras had two RBIs for the Brewers. According to MLB.com, the 20-year-old Chourio was the youngest player to get two hits in his playoff debut.

The NL Central champion Brewers had been 5-0 against the Mets this season before losing 5-0 to them in its regular-season finale Sunday.

New York was back on the field in Milwaukee again just 22 hours after the twin bill — and the Mets showed a similar tenacity Tuesday.

"It's hard to be tired when you're playing playoff baseball," Vientos said. "I had a bunch of energy. I know all of us did. We were all excited, and we got the job done."

New York starter Luis Severino recovered nicely from a shaky start. He allowed eight hits and four runs — three earned — in six innings for the win. José Buttó threw two perfect innings and Ryne Stanek retired the side in order in the ninth.

"We're not satisfied," Severino said. "We know the potential that we have in that clubhouse, and we want to go out there, and we're going to fight. We're going to fight until the end, and hopefully that end is going to be hopefully win the World Series."

SPORTS

Postseason begins

Padres, Mets, Tigers, Royals win openers in Wild Card round » **MLB Playoffs, Pages 22-23**



COLLEGE FOOTBALL



PHOTOS BY VASHA HUNT/AP

Alabama quarterback Jalen Milroe, left, and wide receiver Ryan Williams have been an extremely effective pairing that has the Crimson Tide at the top of the AP rankings.

Electric duo keeps producing

No. 1 Alabama's Milroe-to-Williams connection has plagued opposing defenses

By **JOHN ZENOR**
Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Jalen Milroe is a fourth-year junior who waited his turn to start. Ryan Williams is a 17-year-old freshman who has become an instant sensation.

Together they've rapidly forged one of the nation's most electric passing combinations for the now top-ranked Alabama Crimson Tide. Not even No. 5 Georgia could slow them down, much less stop them in the Tide's

41-34 win Saturday night.

"That man's always making a play on the ball," Milroe said of Williams. "I just have so much trust in him. When he's out at receiver, he's going to do something special with the football."

They're both doing special things so far this season. Williams and Milroe each blend speed, talent and moves that most running backs would envy. And Milroe has emerged as one of college football's top passers.

Milroe had perhaps his best

game — a career-high 374 passing yards and two touchdowns, 117 rushing yards and two TDs — against a team that came in with the nation's top pass defense and no touchdowns allowed. He became the first player in the AP poll era to reach 300 passing yards, 100 rushing yards and run for two touchdowns against a top-5 opponent.

Even his first interception of the season came when the ball was knocked out of a receiver's grasp by a Georgia defender.

Milroe emerged from that game as the Heisman Trophy favorite, according to BetMGM Sportsbook and won AP's national player of the week honors for the second time. Next up: A trip to Vanderbilt on Saturday.

Milroe's eight rushing touchdowns — two in each game — are tied with Navy's Blake Horvath for the most in the country by a quarterback this season.

"Man, he's a weapon out there," Alabama coach Kalen DeBoer said. "And he's doing it both

through the air and with his feet. He's tough to gameplan against when you're on the other side."

Then there's Williams, DeBoer's most prized and needed recruit. He caught six catches for 177 yards and a touchdown against Georgia. He made a 75-yard, back-shoulder catch for the go-ahead touchdown late in the game, with a spin move that sent two Bulldogs defenders running into each other.

SEE ELECTRIC ON PAGE 19

Jordan leads lawsuit over NASCAR charter » Auto racing, Page 20

