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STARS AND STRIPES

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SERHIY MORGUNOV/For The Washington Post

Soldiers from the Fifth Brigade of Ukraine's National Guard emerge from a trench in Russian shelling near Kreminna, Ukraine, on Sunday.

'Fighting for every little piece'

Constant shelling, no heat or coffee with Ukrainian troops on east front

By ISABELLE KHURSHUDYAN
The Washington Post

NEAR KREMINNA, Ukraine — Deep in the forest and less than a mile from enemy Russian positions, the sound of incoming artillery landing nearby thunders every few minutes. The landscape is littered with unexploded ordnance, so the Ukrainian soldiers don't dare step anywhere they have not before. They pack light because they might be on the move quickly — forward, they hope. In their cramped, hastily dug mud outpost, they apologize that they only have tea — no room for coffee. A commander manning one of Ukraine's forward-most positions did not flinch at the roar of shells crashing close by as he zoomed in on his

EUROPE
WNBA star Brittney Griner freed in prisoner swap for Russian arms dealer
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tablet to show how Kyiv's forces in the area have advanced within five miles of Kreminna — an occupied stronghold for the Russian military and potential gateway for the Ukrainian forces as they press into the eastern Luhansk region. "We've pushed them back, and now we just need to take their logistical routes," said the

deputy battalion commander in the Ukrainian National Guard's 5th Slobzhanska Brigade, whom The Washington Post agreed to identify by his call sign, Tor, because of the security risks. "As soon as they lose that, they'll have to abandon their positions," Tor said. "They won't be able to bring in reinforcements or more ammunition." Less than a month after Moscow withdrew its troops from the western bank of the Dnieper River and the city of Kherson — the sole regional capital Russia had captured in this invasion — the focus of the war has once again turned to eastern Ukraine, where Russia has

SEE FIGHTING ON PAGE 8

Pending NDAA grants new prosecutors more power

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

New military prosecution offices will take more power from commanders in certain criminal cases, creating a more transparent justice system under reforms included in the defense budget bill. The reforms will allow prosecutors to approve expert witnesses, grant immunity and approve trial delays. They will also create randomized jury selection and add three new crimes to the prosecutors' jurisdiction.



Gillibrand

"While changes in last year's NDAA did give some powers to [new military prosecutors], commanders still had a significant prosecutorial and judicial power making the system susceptible to bias and undermining trust," Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand said. The New York Democrat drafted the legislation included in this year's National Defense Authorization Act, the annual bill that outlines defense priorities and spending. The changes build on reforms enacted as part of 2022's NDAA. Last year's legislation formed new offices in each service branch to make decisions on when to prosecute a service member charged with one of 11 felonies, a task previously left to the commander of the accused. The House is set to take up the bill this week, followed by a vote in the Senate. "This year's NDAA is the culmination of nearly a decade of work

SEE POWER ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Boeing's last 747 rolls out of Wash. factory

Associated Press

SEATTLE — After more than half a century, the last Boeing 747 rolled out of a Washington state factory on Tuesday.

The 747 jumbo jet has taken on numerous roles — a cargo plane, a commercial aircraft capable of carrying nearly 500 passengers, and the Air Force One presidential aircraft — since it debuted in 1969. It was the largest commercial aircraft in the world and the first with two aisles, and it still towers over most other planes.

The plane's design included a second deck extending from the cockpit back over the first third of the plane, giving it a distinctive hump that made the plane instantly recognizable and inspired a nickname, the Whale. More elegantly, the 747 became known as the Queen of the Skies.

It took more than 50,000 Boeing employees less than 16 months to churn out the first 747. The company has completed 1,573 more since then.

But over the past 15 years or so,

Boeing and its European rival Airbus released new widebody planes with two engines instead of the 747's four. They were more fuel-efficient and profitable.

Delta was the last U.S. airline to use the 747 for passenger flights, which ended in 2017, although some other international carriers continue to fly it, including the German airline Lufthansa.

The final customer is the cargo carrier Atlas Air, which ordered four 747-8 freighters early this year.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Dec. 9)	\$1.03
Dollar buys (Dec. 9)	0.9270
British pound (Dec. 9)	\$1.19
Japanese yen (Dec. 9)	134.00
South Korean won (Dec. 9)	1287.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
Britain (Pound)	1.2229
Canada (Dollar)	1.3582
China (Yuan)	6.9691
Denmark (Krone)	7.0567
Egypt (Pound)	24.6324
Euro	0.9488
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7841
Hungary (Forint)	395.65
Israel (Shekel)	3.4379
Japan (Yen)	136.54
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3068
Norway (Krone)	9.9735
Philippines (Peso)	55.29
Poland (Zloty)	4.44
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7604
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3533

South Korea (Won)	1318.39
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9374
Thailand (Baht)	34.71
Turkey (NewLira)	18.6437

(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	7.00
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50
Federal funds market rate	3.83
3-month bill	4.30
30-year bond	3.44

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY 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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PACIFIC

At Pearl Harbor, vivid memories of attack

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

PEARL HARBOR NATIONAL MEMORIAL, Hawaii — On the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, Robert Lee had a panoramic view of what appeared to be hell on Earth.

The 20-year-old Oahu native was sleeping in that Sunday morning after a late night out with friends, when he was startled out of bed by the sound of explosions.

He lived with his father, a Navy employee, and mother in a hillside home overlooking Pearl Harbor, where much of the Pacific Fleet was moored.

“I woke to the sound of anti-aircraft fire,” Lee, 101, recalled Wednesday as he sat awaiting the start of a ceremony at the Pearl Harbor National Memorial commemorating the 81st anniversary of Japan’s surprise attack on Oahu.

“As soon as I looked out my window, I could see the Japanese aircraft dropping torpedoes,” he told Stars and Stripes. “Those torpedoes went across the channel to strike the ships that were tied up along Battleship Row.”

Lee saw the battleship USS Oklahoma as it slowly capsized, with



Ira Schab, 102, who was a musician aboard the USS Dobbin during the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, awaits the beginning of the ceremony.

429 of its crew perishing.

The hull of the USS Arizona glowed molten red from the detonation of its magazine below decks before it sank, Lee said. The death toll on the Arizona, now a memorial resting on the channel bottom, was 1,177 sailors and Marines.

Ira Schab, 102, a musician temporarily assigned to the USS Dobbin, a destroyer tender moored at Ford Island, recalled that he and other members of the band were getting ready to play for the raising of the colors.

He described the commencing attack: “Chaos. Noise. Chaos. Explosions.”



Kenneth Stevens, a 100-year-old Pearl Harbor survivor, salutes the USS Daniel Inouye Wednesday during a ceremony at the Pearl Harbor National Memorial commemorating the 81st anniversary of the attack.

Schab and Lee were among only nine survivors of the surprise attack to attend the ceremony. Fewer than two dozen other World War II veterans joined them.

For almost all the other roughly 2,500 people attending the ceremony, the sights, sounds and terrors of the surprise attack can only be imagined.

Rear Adm. Stephen Barnett, commander of Navy Region Hawaii, urged the audience to do just that during a brief address before the harbor and the USS Arizona Memorial.

“Ladies and gentlemen, how very appropriate it is that this ceremony is conducted right here in the contemplation circle of the beautiful grounds of the Pearl Harbor National Memorial,” he said.

“From this vantage point, you can see much of the historic harbor right behind us,” Barnett said. “We can try to imagine what it must have been like 81 years ago, to stand on the shore of Pearl Harbor as destruction rained down on the ships of the mighty Pacific Fleet.”

Lou Conter, one of only two still-living survivors of the Arizona, addressed the audience in a prerecorded video message.

“I had hoped to be with you in Honolulu for this 81st commemoration, but my 101-year-old legs are not what they used to be,” said Conter, who until recent years had been a fixture at the annual ceremonies.

“I have been back for many commemorations, and each time I am on the Arizona Memorial, I take a moment to view the names of my shipmates and thank God for their ultimate sacrifices,” he said.

History is vital and important, said Conter, who seemed mindful of how few survivors like him remain.

“We need to make future generations understand what Pearl Harbor really was about and what was at stake,” he said. “Our schools need to teach more than a paragraph on Pearl Harbor.”

Earlier in the day, at a ceremony at the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., Adm. Christopher Grady, vice

chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the audience that the day of the attack “defined a generation — and, indeed, Dec. 7, 1941, is a day that changed the course of history.”

Charles Sams, director of the National Park Service, told the Hawaii audience that the first-person accounts of survivors have “added power and meaning to this site in a way that no one else can.”

“I challenge you to carry the Pearl Harbor legacy forward, sharing the stories of valor and sacrifice with your friends and family and instilling a sense of respect and inspiration in future generations,” Sams said to those too young to have lived through World War II.

“That’s how we keep the everlasting legacy of Pearl Harbor alive and continue to honor those whose lives were lost so many years ago,” he said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Doug G. Ware contributed to this report.
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Nine survivors of the attack on Pearl Harbor sit in the front row for the commemoration of the event at the memorial in Hawaii.

US prods China, Russia to rebuke N. Korea for weapons tests

By **DAVID CHOI**
Stars and Stripes

China and Russia are failing to uphold their duties as regional powers to keep North Korea accountable for its unprecedented provocations, a State Department spokesman said during a press briefing this week.

Ned Price singled out Beijing and Moscow, two of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, for stonewalling U.S. efforts to collectively condemn Pyongyang and strengthen existing sanctions against the communist regime through additional resolutions.

Both nations have already vot-

ed in favor of those sanctions on North Korea, Price said. No measure may pass the Security Council short of a unanimous vote.

“We think it is important,” Price said, that U.N. member states, the U.N. Security Council and especially all permanent members of the U.N. Security Council enforce the resolutions that the Security Council has already passed.”

The United States, United Kingdom and France are the other three permanent members of the Security Council. Ten other nonpermanent council seats are filled by countries elected to two-year terms.



Price

The communist regime has fired at least 60 ballistic missiles in 33 tests so far this year, a record, and fired several artillery barrages that South Korea’s government alleges violates previous inter-Korean agreements.

China and Russia resist U.S. proposals and by using their veto power “are enabling and embold-

ening” North Korea’s provocations, according to U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

“For too long, [North Korea] has acted with impunity,” she said before the U.N. on Nov. 21. “It has conducted escalatory and destabilizing ballistic missile launches without fear of a response or reprisal from this Council.”

In her statement, Thomas-Greenfield accused Russia and China of “blatant obstructionism” that “needlessly raises tensions in the region.”

“You simply cannot be considered a responsible steward of nuclear weapons if you condone this behavior,” she added.

China and Russia, two of North Korea’s closest political allies, argue that joint military exercises by the U.S. and South Korea provoke Pyongyang and another council resolution would exacerbate tensions in the region.

Lacking a Security Council consensus, the U.S. imposed its own sanctions against North Korean affiliates. On Dec. 1, the Treasury Department sanctioned three North Korean officials — Jon Il Ho, Yu Jin and Kim Su Gil — for having direct ties to the communist regime’s weapons program.

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PACIFIC

70 years on, Christmas drops deliver

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam — Three crates brimming with essential supplies for island life fell swiftly over the Pacific Ocean from the back of a cargo plane Wednesday until small parachutes blossomed to slow their descent.

Its four powerful engines roared as the C-130J Super Hercules from the 374th Airlift Wing at Yokota Air Base, Japan, circled 300 feet above Eauripik, a lonely speck in a vast sea about 500 miles south of Guam.

The drop was one of two the crew made that day, delivering seven crates to two atolls as part of the 71st annual Operation Christmas Drop, which delivers humanitarian aid to the small, nearly inaccessible islands of Oceania.

The U.S. Air Force leads the way on Operation Christmas Drop and was joined this year by air force crews and aircraft from Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and India. Ten other nations, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Indonesia and Malaysia, sent observers to see the missions in action.

The operation kicked off Dec. 2 and ends Friday, during which air crews will fly approximately 35 sorties and make 200 drops to 57 islands, a spokesman for the 374th Airlift Wing, 1st Lt. Danny Rangel, told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday. Those drops deliver more than 60,000 pounds — 30 tons — in total.

Inside each 2-by-2.4-by-3-foot crate are myriad provisions for the remote islands' inhabitants: food, water, medical supplies, fishing gear and amenities such as clothing and toys.

The chance to participate in Operation Christmas Drop, and the knowledge that it delivers such essentials, is second to none, according to Capt. Andrew Zaldivar, 31, a

C-130 instructor pilot from Yokota.

"It is one of the most incredible experiences in my life," the native of Hockessin, Del., said during media interviews Wednesday. "I tell everybody that this is the best thing I've ever done in the Air Force, hands down."

As the mission commander this year, Zaldivar manages all Christmas Drop flying operations. He also flew missions in 2021, when fewer islanders and partner nations participated because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Last year, they requested we take some serious COVID mitigations; this year, that was not requested," he told Stars and Stripes before Wednesday's flight. "So, it's really, really nice seeing everything kind of open up again, and just getting back to something that we're a little bit more used to."

Throughout the flight, the international observers watched the delivery process and despite the roar of aircraft engines, discussed among themselves how they might participate in future operations.

The chance to take part is "very important," said Maj. Corey Gallagher of the Royal Canadian Air Force. He explained that he was there to evaluate how Canadian procedures compare with those of Operation Christmas Drop.

"If we are invited to come and participate with an aircraft, we will be ready to come through and execute the operation with our allies," he said during the flight. "Obviously, the Indo-Pacific region is important to Canada as well because we're a Pacific nation also."

Working with international partners is a benefit of the operation, Zaldivar said, but the primary benefit is the relief it delivers to the islanders.

"This operation, it's all about



PHOTOS BY ALEX WILSON/Stars and Stripes

Airmen aboard a C-130J Super Hercules prepare to parachute donated Operation Christmas Drop supplies to the remote Eauripik islands in the Federated States of Micronesia on Wednesday.

these people that we get to help," he said.

After dropping the crates onto Eauripik, the aircraft circled around to confirm the supplies were delivered and to wave to roughly a dozen islanders who rushed to the shore to signal their gratitude.

The pilots, along with the airmen responsible for dropping the crates, returned the gestures, holding up hand signs for "peace" and "hang loose."

Moments like that are part of the magic of Christmas Drop, said Staff Sgt. Kembria Mims, an aviation resource manager with the 374th Airlift Wing.

"It almost brings tears to my eyes when I see them waving back at us and just knowing the impact you've had on these islands," Mims, 23, of Augusta, Ga., told Stars and Stripes before Wednesday's flight.

Eauripik, one of 607 islands in the Federated States of Micronesia, consists of three coral atolls



Crates filled with Operation Christmas Drop donations are parachuted from an Air Force C-130J Super Hercules toward the Eauripik islands on Wednesday.

with a population in 2021 of 114, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Super Hercules crew continued to Ifalik, four atolls 433 miles south of Guam and home to 593 people. There, the crew dropped four crates and waved

just as enthusiastically as they did over Eauripik.

"It just sends chills all over," Zaldivar said. "It's one of the most special things in the world."

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Japan sends fighter jets to Philippines for 1st time since WWII

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Japanese fighter jets are operating in the Philippines for the first time since World War II at a former U.S. air base, the Japan Air Self-Defense Force announced Wednesday.

A pair of Japanese F-15J Eagles landed Tuesday at the former Clark Air Base, north of Manila on the Philippines' main island of Luzon, the Air Self-Defense Force tweeted the next day. The post included photographs of the jets parked at Clark, now an international airport, and flying in formation with Philippine FA-50 jets.

"We will promote mutual un-

derstanding by unit-to-unit exchanges with [the Philippine Air Force] and develop #DefenseCooperation and exchanges," said the tweet, which noted that the deployment marks the first time the Japanese air force, formed in 1954, has sent fighters to an Association of Southeast Asian Nations country.

Japanese forces in January 1942 overran the then-Clark Field, a U.S. Army Air Corps base that became a major hub for Japanese air operations. Kamikaze fighters launched attacks on U.S. warships from nearby Mabalacat before the area was recaptured in January 1945.

After the war, Clark and nearby Subic Naval Base formed America's largest overseas military community before both were damaged in the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo and, soon after, returned to the Philippines.

About 60 Japanese personnel arrived at Clark on Nov. 27 and are conducting exchanges with the Philippine Air Force through Sunday, according to a Nov. 21 statement from the Self-Defense Force.

The F-15s were due to fly out of Clark on Thursday, a Japanese air force spokesman told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday.

It's customary in Japan for

some government officials to speak to the media without giving their names.

The deployment comes as the U.S. Air Force begins a phased replacement with rotational forces of its F-15s at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa. Japan has also deployed a KC-767 tanker/transport aircraft and two C-2 transport aircraft to Clark for this month's training, according to the Self-Defense Force statement.

Philippine troops are in Japan this week as observers at the annual U.S.-Japan Yama Sakura command post drills, which conclude Monday.

Japan has assisted the Philip-

ppines in recent years with efforts to make peace with Islamic militants on the southern island of Mindanao, as one example, Patrio Abinales, a professor at the University of Hawaii's School of Pacific and Asian Studies, said by email Wednesday.

"But with China becoming more aggressive, the Japanese appear to up the ante," he said.

Beijing and Manila have clashed repeatedly in recent years over disputed South China Sea territory.

Stars and Stripes reporter Hana Kusumoto contributed to this report.
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MILITARY

Senator wants answers on soldier's death in Germany

By ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

Sen. Charles Grassley has asked the Army's senior criminal investigator to provide answers about the investigation into the death of Spc. Denisha Montgomery, citing "disturbing" allegations she made weeks before her body was found in her barracks in Germany.

The circumstances leading up to Montgomery's death on Aug. 9 "raise serious questions which require further investigation," Grassley wrote in a letter sent Tuesday to Criminal Investigation Division director Gregory Ford.

Montgomery, assigned to the 139th Military Police Company, was found unresponsive, hanging from her military-issued belt in her barracks room at Lucius Clay Kaserne in Wiesbaden.

She was pronounced dead at the scene. After a brief investigation by German police, the case was turned over to CID. U.S. Army Europe and Africa announced her death five days later.

Air Force Col. Alice Briones, the director of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System, who conducted Montgomery's autop-



FACEBOOK

Pfc. Denisha Montgomery, shown during an exercise in an undated photo from social media, was found dead in her barracks room in Wiesbaden, Germany, on Aug. 9.

sy, later determined the death to be a suicide, Army officials told Stars and Stripes in a statement Nov. 9.

Montgomery, a mother of three, was deployed to Germany from Fort Stewart, Ga., and was scheduled to return with her unit at the end of September. Her family planned a large welcome home celebration.

Instead, "my beautiful firstborn

came home in a box, with no explanation," Montgomery's mother, Heather Montgomery, said in a statement to Stars and Stripes on Wednesday.

In a July 19 video call with her family, Montgomery said that four fellow military police officers had physically assaulted her while traveling back to base from a water park.

In tears, the soldier recounted

being choked and thinking that she was going to die.

Copies of phone transcripts provided to Stars and Stripes showed that Montgomery did not trust her military leadership. She texted her uncle that a first sergeant in her command had dissuaded her from filing a report of the assault.

Grassley, an Iowa Republican, wrote that Montgomery also said she had reported a sexual assault of another female soldier in her platoon.

"The clear conflict between the video description from PFC Montgomery and CID demands explanation," Grassley wrote. "The allegations presented to my office are disturbing and illustrate an example of a sexual assault that has yet to see justice."

Grassley's letter demanded a release of the complete CID report to his office by Dec. 20. Grassley also asked whether investigators have verified allegations made in Montgomery's video, identified and investigated soldiers who were with her and looked into allegations of sexual assault by or against Montgomery.

On Wednesday, Army spokes-

man Lt. Col. Terence Kelley said the service "has endeavored to provide all possible information to both Spc. Denisha Montgomery's family and Congress throughout the ongoing law enforcement investigation into her death and will provide thorough overviews to both once complete."

Last month, Army officials told Stars and Stripes they hoped to complete the case soon and would provide Montgomery's family with "a comprehensive update" of their findings.

"The circumstances surrounding Denisha's death are extremely troubling, and the military's response to this family has been horrific," Lindsey Knapp, a representative for the family and executive director of the advocacy organization Combat Sexual Assault, said in an email Wednesday. "Denisha deserves justice, and we will not rest until that occurs."

In 2021, Grassley sponsored the bipartisan Military Justice Improvement and Prevention Act, which came in the aftermath of the killing of Army Spc. Vanessa Guillen at Fort Hood, Texas.

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MILITARY

Visa program for war interpreters taken out of NDAA

BY J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

The end may be coming for a program that resettles Afghan interpreters who worked with U.S. forces during the 20-year-long war, after provisions for its extension were removed from the Senate version of the defense spending bill.

Republican lawmakers drew sharp criticism from Democrats and advocacy groups after the removal of language prolonging the Special Immigrant Visa program past 2023 from the National Defense Authorization Act text released Tuesday, a joint explanatory statement accompanying the bill said.

"It's tremendously disappointing that Republican obstruction prevented Congress from extending authorization of the Afghan SIV program in this bill, which is fundamental to the United States upholding its promise to our Afghan allies," Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., said Wednesday in an email.

Sen. Charles Grassley in particular has long raised objections over what he has said were lax criteria for SIV program eligibility. The Iowa Republican sought stipulations as far back as 2018 that only Afghans classified as translators or inter-

preters should be allowed to apply for an SIV.

A spokesman for Grassley declined comment Wednesday, but in an interview in August he said other Republicans in the Senate and House also had voiced various concerns.

Grassley as well as a Republican member of the House led efforts to strike the provision from the defense bill, a congressional staffer familiar with the matter but unauthorized to speak on the record told Stars and Stripes.

The SIV program once had some bipartisan support. In May last year, three months before the U.S.-backed government in Kabul fell, a letter from 20 senators that included seven Republicans called for continued support for "the (Biden) administration to uphold the integrity of the program."

The program, which began in 2009, resettles people and their family members who face risks to their lives because of their previous work with the U.S. government. The SIV program received \$1 billion from the Senate in 2021 as part of an emergency spending bill.

Although Iraqis who provided the same service to U.S. troops in their



RYAN BROOKS/U.S. Air Force

Afghan evacuees leave a U.S. C-17 Globemaster III after arriving at Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait, last year.

country are also eligible for the visas, Afghans make up the vast majority of applicants.

The State Department's National Visa Center received more than 530,000 inquiries in the five months after Kabul fell to the Taliban in August 2021.

Advocates for veterans and Afghan translators decried the Senate's move in comments to Stars and Stripes.

"It would be unconscionable for Congress to allow the Afghan SIV program to expire with tens of thousands of U.S. allies still in harm's way," said Adam Bates, policy counsel for the New York-based International Refugee Assistance Project.

Jeff Phaneuf, advocacy chief at the Virginia-based nonprofit No One Left Behind, on Wednesday called it "a betrayal of our promise

to those who served alongside American forces during the last 20 years of war."

Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., a Marine veteran, said in a statement Wednesday that opponents of the visas were driven by "nativist undercurrents."

"It is beyond me why some of my colleagues who have never even known what it is like to put their lives in the hands of these brave allies in combat would deliberately strip reauthorization for this program," Moulton said, adding that he still intends to vote for the larger defense bill despite his objection to the revision.

Rep. Jason Crow, D-Colo., said he and some of his colleagues will try to save the program by introducing standalone legislation or attaching the program to the larger omnibus government funding bill.

"I'm going to try to fix it," Crow, an Army veteran, said in a call Wednesday.

The U.S. welcomed some 74,000 Afghans following the Taliban takeover last year. About half of them are eligible for SIVs or have applied, a senior administration official said in 2022.

Currently, anyone who applies by Dec. 31, 2023, will be considered.

Another bill, the Afghan Adjustment Act, which provides permanent legal status to Afghans outside the SIV program or the asylum system, remains under debate in Congress.

The bill faces opposition by some Republicans, who have said the security procedures in it are not stringent enough.

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Power: Gillibrand hopeful changes to prosecutions will have notable results

FROM PAGE 1

with advocates, survivors and veterans groups. It finally strips commanders of their remaining judicial and prosecutorial powers for covered offenses and gives them to trained professional military prosecutors," Gillibrand said Wednesday during a news conference.

Gillibrand has long been a vocal proponent of overhauling the military justice system, citing its failure to get sexual assault and harassment in the armed forces under control. Despite increasing scrutiny and millions of dollars spent on prevention efforts, the numbers of assaults rose from about 2,500 in fiscal 2010 to about 6,200 in fiscal 2019, according to a March 2021 Government Accountability Office report on military sexual assault.

Only one-third of sexual assault victims are willing to come forward and report their crimes, which shows a lack of trust in the system, Gillibrand said. About 44% of victims indicated they would be more likely to come forward with a prosecutor in charge

of decision-making instead of a commander.

"Taking commanders out of the role of overseeing and influencing these cases will build more credibility for survivors and more credibility in the special trial counsel. It just creates the perception that justice is possible and so hopefully more cases come forward and more cases end in conviction," Gillibrand said.

Congress mandated in 2022 that the decision on whether to prosecute service members accused of 11 felony crimes move to an Office of Special Trial Counsel housed within each military service branch. The military attorney leading each office reports to the civilian secretary of the service.

The 11 crimes included were murder, manslaughter, rape and sexual assault, rape and sexual assault of a child, other sexual misconduct, kidnapping, domestic violence, stalking, retaliation, child pornography and nonconsensual pornography.

The fiscal 2023 NDAA would add three new crimes to the jurisdiction of the new prosecutors:

death or injury of an unborn child and mailing obscene matter, as well as sexual harassment, which was added under an amendment from Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif.

She has also spent the last decade working on military justice reform and worked last year to include sexual harassment as a stand-alone crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

"Shockingly, these extremely complex and critical sexual harassment cases were not taken out of the chain of command last year," Speier said in a statement issued Wednesday. "This year's NDAA agreement rights that egregious wrong and will finally ensure that this gateway crime receives the respect and resources it requires."

The bill also removes all residual prosecutorial duties and other judicial functions of the convening authority from military commanders for these crimes. This includes granting clemency, convening preliminary hearings and ordering depositions.

It also eliminates the announcement of the commander's name as

the convening authority at trial and adds reporting requirements to the new legal office beginning in 2025. Commanders will remain in control over crimes that impact good order and discipline within a unit, such as failure to report or follow orders, disrespect and larceny offenses.

"These changes will go a long way to increasing the confidence that survivors have, whether they're survivors of domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or the families of the loved ones who have been murdered to come forward and to feel like they're going to get justice," said retired Col. Don Christensen, president of Protect Our Defenders, a human rights group that has advocated on behalf of service members for justice reforms.

"This is something that affects both those accused of crimes and accusers, and the confidence that military members have in the justice system is critical to our ability to have a lethal fighting force. These changes will go a long way to doing that," he said during Gillibrand's news conference.

The services each nominated to the Senate last month a one-star flag officer to lead the new legal offices. They've also begun certifying attorneys to work in the offices. Gillibrand said she's pleased with the progress so far.

The offices should begin to take shape by June, so the attorneys assigned to them are ready by the mandated operational deadline of December 2023, she said.

After nearly 10 years working toward this goal, Gillibrand said she's ready to see how the reforms take shape. Congress has enacted more than 250 smaller reforms during that time, and some still haven't fully developed.

"The most important thing for me to do is just oversight [and] accountability to make sure they're doing the things they promised to do. If they're not, we have to just keep pushing on them," she said. "We have good reforms in place. I want to see if they work, and if they don't, we'll amend the system."

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MILITARY



VER.DI

Civilian employees of the American military training areas in Hohenfels, Vilseck, Grafenwoehr, Ansbach, Illesheim and Katterbach, all in the German state of Bavaria, went on a daylong strike Wednesday.

Germans employed at US bases go on strike, demand pay raise

By ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

More than 800 German workers at American military installations in Bavaria took to the streets this week to call for a wage increase to offset rising utility prices and cost of living.

Ver.di, a union that represents civilians employed at bases across Europe, declared a strike Wednesday in the largest German state after rejecting a 2.5% pay increase offered by the U.S. and German military, the union said in a statement the same day.

Employees at bases in Hohenfels, Vilseck, Grafenwoehr, Ansbach, Illesheim and Katterbach held an all-day walkout Wednesday, and in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, 20 union members participated in a short lunchtime protest.

"From shooting range personnel to plumbers, public works craftsmen and budget analysts, workers from across the spectrum of services were represented," Die-

ter Gebhardt, a Ver.di union steward in Vilseck, told Stars and Stripes on Thursday. "We saw bombastic participation, and it shows that the initial offer was not acceptable."

U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria acknowledged the strike and potential interruptions to services online Wednesday morning but officials declined to provide further comment to Stars and Stripes.

"The strike is a legitimate form of labor action protected by German law," garrison officials wrote on Facebook. "USAG Bavaria gates will remain open operating under normal hours. Services affecting your health and safety will continue, but you should be prepared for a potential disruption in garrison services staffed by striking employees."

U.S. military officials with U.S. Army Europe and Africa were not immediately available for comment Thursday.

The union is asking for a pay

raise of 9.5% and 150 euros per month for local job trainees, who receive apprenticeship pay, Ver.di spokeswoman Kathrin Birner said, according to the statement.

Employers had proposed to raise pay for a 14-month period starting in January 2023 and offered a payment of 500 euros in each of November and December, according to the Ver.di statement.

Given the rapidly rising costs of energy and food, the proposal was perceived as a "slap in the face," according to the statement.

"High one-off payments are good for achieving timely and, above all, short-term relief," Birner told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday. "However, permanently high prices can only be countered with a permanent increase in the pay tables."

The first round of negotiations began Nov. 29 and talks remain ongoing.

Stars and Stripes reporter Michael Slavin contributed to this report.

Okinawa finds high PFAS levels, seeks further tests on US bases

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Environmental Preservation Division for Okinawa prefecture suspects U.S. military bases are the source for high levels of toxic PFAS contamination discovered in summer groundwater samples, a division official said recently.

The division requested base access for further testing, the official told Stars and Stripes on Monday.

The prefecture sampled 46 sites surrounding U.S. military installations between July and September as part of a biannual groundwater survey, according to a Dec. 1 statement from the environmental division.

Of the sites sampled, 32 exceed-

ed Japan's provisional safe drinking water standard of 0.05 micrograms per liter, according to data released with the statement.

Yara Hijaga spring, approximately 1,500 feet from the northern fence line at Kadena Air Base, registered the highest levels of a combined PFOS and PFOA mixture, 2.1 micrograms per liter — 42 times the provisional safety standard.

The highest levels came from sources downstream of U.S. bases, particularly Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, rather than upstream sources, the spokesman said.

"We think that the contamination comes from the U.S. bases," the division spokesman told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday.

Some government officials in Japan are required to speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

PFAS — manmade per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances — are chemicals used to make coatings and products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease and water, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. It's also found in firefighting foam commonly used at U.S. military bases. PFOS and PFOA are examples of PFAS.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency updated its health advisories in June to say no level of PFOS or PFOA in drinking water is safe. The synthetic compounds accumulate in the body over time, according to the agency.

DOD splits \$9B cloud contract among 4 firms

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Google, Oracle, Microsoft and Amazon will share in the Pentagon's \$9 billion contract to build its cloud computing network, a year after accusations of politicization over the previously announced contract and a protracted legal battle resulted in the military starting over in its award process.

The Joint Warfighter Cloud Capability is envisioned to provide access to unclassified, secret and top-secret data to military personnel all over the globe. It is anticipated to serve as a backbone for the Pentagon's modern war operations, which will rely heavily on unmanned aircraft and space communications satellites, but will still need a way to quickly get the intelligence from those platforms to troops on the ground.

The contract will be awarded in parts, with a total estimated completion date of June 2028, the Pentagon said in a statement.

Competition is intense to snap up big corporate and government cloud contracts — awards to build global computing networks where information is stored, shared and secured over the internet instead of on local computer systems. The

Pentagon's award is seen as one of the most coveted because it's a stamp of approval in a market where ensuring a client's data security is important.

"It's the most important cloud deal to come out of the Beltway," said analyst Daniel Ives, who monitors the cloud industry for Wedbush Securities. "It's about the Pentagon as a reference customer. It says significant accolades about what they think about that vendor, and that's the best reference customer you could have in that world."

Last July, the Pentagon announced it was canceling its previous cloud computing award, then named JEDI. At the time, the Pentagon said that due to delays, technology had changed to the extent that the old contract, which was awarded to Microsoft, no longer met DOD's needs.

It did not mention the legal challenges behind those delays, which had come from Amazon, the losing bidder. Amazon had questioned whether former President Donald Trump's administration had steered the contract toward Microsoft due to Trump's adversarial relationship with Amazon's CEO at the time, Jeff Bezos.

US to deploy more troops to Estonia to up NATO defense

Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia — The United States will deploy additional infantry troops to the Baltic country of Estonia "in the coming weeks" to strengthen defenses on NATO's eastern flank, Estonian defense officials said Thursday.

The deployment consists of a U.S. infantry company — a unit typically consisting of 80 to 250 soldiers, Estonia's Defense Ministry said in a statement. That will

be accompanied by the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System as well as associated command and control equipment and systems.

"This decision marks a significant enhancement of the U.S. rotational military presence in Estonia and the Baltic States, demonstrating the U.S.' long-standing commitment to the security of our region and greatly enhancing NATO's posture," Estonian Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur said.

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EUROPE

WNBA star Griner is freed in prisoner swap

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Russia freed WNBA star Brittney Griner on Thursday in a dramatic prisoner exchange, as the U.S. released notorious Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout but failed to win freedom for another American, Paul Whelan, who has been jailed for nearly four years.

The swap, at a time of heightened tensions over Ukraine, achieved a top goal for President Joe Biden but carried a heavy price.

“She’s safe, she’s on a plane, she’s on her way home,” Biden said from the White House, where he was accompanied by Griner’s wife, Chelle, and administration officials.

The deal, the second such exchange in eight months with Russia, procured the release of the most prominent American detained abroad. Griner is a two-time

Olympic gold medalist whose monthslong imprisonment on drug charges brought unprecedented attention to the population of wrongful detainees.

Biden’s authorization to release a Russian felon once nicknamed “the Merchant of Death” underscored the escalating pressure that his administration faced to get Griner home, particularly after the recent resolution of her criminal case and her subsequent transfer to a penal colony.

The Russian Foreign Ministry also confirmed the swap, saying in a statement carried by Russian news agencies that the exchange took place in Abu-Dhabi and that Bout has been flown home.

Russian and U.S. officials had conveyed cautious optimism in recent weeks after months of strained negotiations, with Biden saying in

November that he was hopeful that Russia would engage in a deal now that the midterm elections were completed. A top Russian official said last week that a deal was possible before year’s end.



Griner

Even so, the fact that the deal was a one-for-one swap was a surprise given that U.S. officials had for months expressed their determination to bring home both Griner and Whelan, a Michigan corporate security executive jailed in Russia since December 2018 on espionage charges that his family and the U.S. government has said are baseless.

“We’ve not forgotten about Paul Whelan,” Biden said. “We will keep

negotiating in good faith for Paul’s release.”

Whelan’s brother David said in a statement he was “so glad” for Griner’s release but also disappointed for his family. He credited the White House with giving the Whelan family advance notice and said he did not fault officials for making the deal.

“The Biden Administration made the right decision to bring Ms. Griner home, and to make the deal that was possible, rather than waiting for one that wasn’t going to happen,” he said.

In releasing Bout, the U.S. freed a former Soviet Army lieutenant colonel whom the Justice Department once described as one of the world’s most prolific arms dealers. Bout, whose exploits inspired a Hollywood movie, was serving a 25-year sentence on charges that

he conspired to sell tens of millions of dollars in weapons that U.S. officials said were to be used against Americans.

The Biden administration was ultimately willing to exchange Bout if it meant Griner’s freedom. The detention of one of the greatest players in WNBA history contributed to a swirl of unprecedented public attention for an individual detainee case — not to mention intense pressure on the White House.

Griner’s arrest in February made her the most high-profile American jailed abroad. Her status as an openly gay Black woman, locked up in a country where authorities have been hostile to the LGBTQ community, infused racial, gender and social dynamics into her legal saga and made each development a matter of international importance.

Fighting: Grinding pace of war playing out in the east of Ukraine

FROM PAGE 1

stoked armed conflict since 2014.

Here, Ukraine is still on the offensive. But the gains are slower and harder-fought than the surprise counteroffensive that expelled Russian forces from nearly the entire northeast Kharkiv region in just one week in September.

The fight here epitomizes the grinding pace that military analysts and Western intelligence officials expect the war to slow to this winter. Ukrainians have refuted suggestions of an operational pause, saying that would just give Russia time to regenerate its forces at a moment they appear weakened.

But Ukrainian soldiers concede that the battles in the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions, collectively known as Donbas, are tougher — perhaps reflecting the new priority of Russian President Vladimir Putin and his commanders: avoiding further defeats after the humiliating retreats from the north and south.

Putin has repeatedly said that the main goal of his war is to “liberate” all of Donbas, meaning losses in the region would mark a clear and obvious failure.

Front lines here are well-reinforced by second and third waves of Russian defenses. Sometimes reinforcements are brought in hours after a Ukrainian attack — often recently mobilized fighters.

Oleh, a company commander for one of the Ukrainian brigades fighting near Kreminna, said that after his unit attacked Russian positions in a village north of the city, drone reconnaissance observed two trucks bringing in more soldiers early the next morning.

“The enemy just brings in the mobilized in piles, and they just get pushed to the front, without any training,” he said. The Post agreed to withhold Oleh’s surname because he still has family members living under Russian occupation in his home Luhansk region.

“There’s a lot of them,” Oleh said of the Russians. “They just bring them here as meat.”

The Ukrainians are fighting to hold off a mass of enemy forces, including mercenaries, in the Donetsk region city of Bakhmut, currently the site of the bloodiest battle in the war. Their goal is to keep Russia from attempting to encroach on the cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has started to make gains at the edges of the occupied Luhansk region, which directly borders mainland Russia. Multiple brigades are attacking on two fronts — from the north, toward the occupied city of Svatove, and here from the east, toward Kreminna.

Taking both would threaten Russia’s hold on the cities of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk, which Moscow’s forces captured in much-hyped victories in late June and early July, following fierce battles.

“Any failure for them now is devastating, so they’re fighting hard for every little piece,” Tor said. “They fought many months for Lysychansk, and they’re about to lose it.”

Mixed in with the inexperienced troops are veteran forces. Oleh said “Kadyrovites” — Chechen forces fighting for Russia — had stormed his unit’s positions over the weekend but took heavy losses.

“They don’t even try to recover the bodies of their dead,” he said. “Today, for example, they abandoned one of their wounded. We tried to help the man and evacuate him, but he didn’t survive.”

Oleh said contract soldiers from the Wagner mercenary group are also fighting in the area. Pro-Russian social media accounts have posted images of a vast “Wagner line” of defense — two rows of concrete pyramid blocks intended to stop tanks — stretching around parts of the occupied Donetsk and Luhansk regions and even along the Russian border.

Earlier this month, soldiers in Ukraine’s



SERHIY MORGUNOV/For The Washington Post

A Ukrainian military unit moves toward a front-line position near Kreminna on Sunday.

92nd Mechanized Brigade fighting on the northern edge of the Luhansk region, near Svatove, shrugged off those fortifications. “Boys, tell me, this ... concrete triangle, would you shatter it with direct fire?” asked Oleksandr, a captain, who spoke on the condition that only his first name be used.

“Yes, of course, it’ll turn to dust,” replied a soldier standing on top of a “trophy” T-72 tank, which was seized from retreating Russian forces along with the equipment to repair it and the ammunition to arm it.

At that point, Oleksandr complained that the main thing hindering the Ukrainian advance was the mild, wet weather. Troops — and their tanks and armored personnel carriers — were literally stuck in the mud. But just a week later, a drop in temperature has made the battle ground firmer and more favorable.

The freeze also has its drawbacks. Soldiers in Tor’s unit posted in the forest near Kreminna are so close to Russian forces that they won’t dare to heat their outdoor living quarters, which could reveal their location to Russian drones flying overhead. They sleep in their coats, under light sleeping bags in the cold open air.

A week ago, they were some five miles farther back in this same forest.

One day’s events feel like a month’s worth

here. There is just one narrow dirt road that winds into the forest. The Russians know it is a lifeline for the Ukrainians — used to bring in reinforcements and to evacuate any wounded — so they hit it constantly with artillery. At its edges are destroyed vehicles that in the past few days veered off just slightly to make room for oncoming traffic — and unluckily hit a mine.

Last week, while evacuating a wounded Ukrainian soldier with shrapnel wounds in his stomach and side that were causing internal bleeding, Roman Kabashnuy, a member of Tor’s unit, sped down the bumpy road to get the soldier medical help faster. The man screamed in pain from the back seat while another soldier tried to hold him down. Slowing down could mean death — more shelling could occur at any moment — but driving too fast could cause the wounded man harm, too.

Just an hour after Kabashnuy drove Post journalists up the road to the unit’s front-line position, the ride back looked different. New trees and branches were strewn across the road — signs of recent shelling. There was a fresh crater, too.

“Something has already changed,” Kabashnuy said, while his comrade rushed out of the car to move a fallen tree out of the way. “This is how we live here.”

NATION

House OKs same-sex, interracial unions bill

By MARY CLARE JALONICK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House gave final approval Thursday to legislation protecting same-sex marriages, a monumental step in a decadeslong battle for nationwide recognition of such unions that reflects a stunning turnaround in societal attitudes.

President Joe Biden is expected to promptly sign the measure, which requires all states to recognize same-sex marriages, a relief for hundreds of thousands of couples who have married since the Supreme Court's 2015 decision that legalized those marriages na-

tionwide.

The bipartisan legislation, which passed 258-169, would also protect interracial unions by requiring states to recognize legal marriages regardless of "sex, race, ethnicity, or national origin."

In a debate ahead of the vote, several gay members of Congress talked about what it would mean for them and their families. Rep. Chris Pappas, D-N.H., said he was set to marry "the love of my life" next year and that it is "unthinkable" that his marriage might not be recognized in some states.

Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Wis., said he and his husband should be able

to visit each other in the hospital just like any other married couple and receive spousal benefits "regardless of if your spouse's named Samuel or Samantha."

Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., said that the idea of marriage equality used to be a "far fetched idea, Now it's the law of the land and supported by the vast majority of Americans."

While the bill received GOP votes, most Republicans opposed the legislation and some conservative advocacy groups lobbied aggressively against it, arguing that it doesn't do enough to protect those who want to refuse services

for same-sex couples.

"God's perfect design is indeed marriage between one man and one woman for life," said Rep. Bob Good, R-Va. "And it doesn't matter what you think or what I think, that's what the Bible says."

Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-Mo., choked up as she begged colleagues to vote against the bill, which she said undermines "natural marriage" between a man and a woman.

"I'll tell you my priorities," Hartzler said. "Protect religious liberty, protect people of faith and protect Americans who believe in the true meaning of marriage."

Democrats moved the bill quickly through the House and Senate after the Supreme Court's June decision that overturned the federal right to an abortion. That ruling included a concurring opinion from Justice Clarence Thomas that suggested same-sex marriage should also be reconsidered.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., presided over the vote as one of her last acts in leadership before stepping aside in January. She said the legislation "will ensure that 'the federal government will never again stand in the way of marrying the person you love.'"

Former Border Patrol agent convicted of killing 4 sex workers

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — A former Border Patrol agent who confessed to killing four sex workers in 2018 was convicted Wednesday of capital murder, after jurors heard recordings of him telling investigators he was trying to "clean up the streets" of his South Texas hometown.

Juan David Ortiz, 39, receives an automatic sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole because prosecutors decided not to seek the death penalty.

Ortiz, a Border Patrol intel supervisor at the time of his arrest, was accused of killing Melissa Ramirez, 29, Claudine Anne Luera, 42, Guiselda Alicia Cantu, 35, and Janelle Ortiz, 28. Their bodies were found along roads on the outskirts of Laredo in September 2018.

During the trial that began last week, jurors heard Ortiz's confession during a lengthy taped interview with investigators.

Ortiz told investigators he had been a customer of most of the women, but he also expressed disdain for sex workers, referring to them as "trash" and "so dirty" and

insisting he wanted to "clean up the streets."

He said "the monster would come out" as he drove along a stretch of street in Laredo frequented by the women.

Following the verdict, family members of the victims faced Ortiz to give their statements. Ramirez's sister-in-law, Gracie Perez, said she was "a loving, kind and funny person." She told Ortiz that the hearts of Ramirez's children are now broken.

"Do you know how much pain you have caused this family?" Perez said. "My heart is torn apart knowing that I won't be able to see her but to visit her in the cemetery," she said.

Defense attorneys said Ortiz was improperly induced to make the confession and that it should not be considered. Defense attorney Joel Perez argued that Ortiz, a Navy veteran who had been deployed to Iraq, was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, had been suffering from insomnia, nightmares and headaches, and was medicated and had been drinking that night.



JERRY LARA, THE SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS/AP

Former U.S. Border Patrol supervisor Juan David Ortiz reacts as recorded jail phone calls to his wife, Daniella, are played outside the presence of the jury during his capital murder trial at the Cadena-Reeves Justice Center in San Antonio, Texas, on Tuesday.

Prosecutors told jurors it was a legal confession provided by an educated senior law enforcement official who was not having a mental breakdown.

Erika Pena testified that Ortiz picked her up on the evening of Sept. 14, 2018, and that she got a bad feeling when he told her he was the "next to last person" to have sex with Ramirez, whose body had been found a week earlier. She testified that he told her he was worried investigators would find his DNA on the body.

"It made me think that he was

the one who might have been murdering," Pena, 31, told the jury.

Pena escaped from his truck at a gas station after he pointed a gun at her, and she ran straight to a state trooper who was refueling his vehicle. Ortiz fled.

Authorities tracked Ortiz to a hotel parking garage in the early hours of Sept. 15, 2018, and he was arrested.

Ortiz served in the U.S. Navy for nearly eight years, until 2009, holding a variety of medical posts and served a three-year detachment with the Marines.

US jobless claims up modestly last week

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Slightly more Americans filed for jobless claims last week but the labor market remains one of the strongest parts of the U.S. economy.

Applications for unemployment benefits rose to 230,000 for the week ending Dec. 3, up by 4,000 from the previous week's 226,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The four-week moving average of claims, which smooths out week-to-week volatility, rose by 1,000 to 230,000.

About 1.67 million people were receiving jobless aid the week that ended Nov. 26, up 62,000 from the week before. That's the most in 10 months, but still historically low.

Jobless claims are seen as a proxy for layoffs, and combined with other employment data, show that American workers are enjoying extraordinary job security at the moment. That's despite an economy some see in danger of tipping into a recession due to the aggressive actions of the Federal Reserve, which is trying to cool the economy by raising interest rates.

The Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest rate six times since March, sending the housing market into a downturn under the strain of mortgage rates that have more than doubled from a year ago. Many economists expect the United States to slip into a recession next year with more Fed rate hikes expected to increase borrowing costs and slow economic activity.

Most observers forecast that the Fed will raise rates by another half-point at its final meeting of 2022 next week.

Schumer reelected Senate leader after Dems win majority

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Chuck Schumer was unanimously elected Thursday for another term as Senate Democratic leader, helming a bolstered 51-seat majority for a new era of divided government in Congress.

Senate Democrats met behind closed doors at the Capitol to choose their leadership team for the new Congress that begins in January.

As Senate majority leader,

Schumer has proven to be a surprisingly steady, if frenzied, force amid one of the more consequential sessions of Congress.

He took the helm in the weeks after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, and led his party through the COVID-19 crisis and unexpected legislative achievements, many of them bipartisan. A former campaign chief, he steered the party to the majority and expanded it to 51 seats with Sen. Raphael Warnock's special election

win Tuesday in Georgia.

Schumer's reelection puts two New Yorkers at the top of the Democratic leadership in Congress, alongside Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, the incoming House minority leader. Jeffries was elected to lead Democrats after Speaker Nancy Pelosi's decision to step aside next year.

Senate Democrats are expected to fill out their leadership team with new and returning figures.

Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois is on

track for another term in the No. 2 spot. The No. 3 position is to be filled by Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan.

With Republicans taking control of the House, it will be a new challenge for Schumer in divided Washington.

Senate Republicans already chose their team, putting Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell on track to become the longest serving party leader in the chamber.

NATION

Pot now legal in Missouri, but you can't buy it

By JIM SALTER AND HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH
Associated Press

O'FALLON, Mo. — As of Thursday, it's lawful for adults to possess and use marijuana in Missouri. That doesn't mean you can legally buy it just yet, or use it everywhere.

Medical marijuana has been legal in the state since a ballot measure passed in 2018, but voters went a step further this November by approving a constitutional amendment legalizing the drug for anyone 21 or older. The new law makes Missouri the 21st state to allow recreational use.

The change comes with some confusion. For one thing, dispensaries can't yet sell for recreational use. People will eventually be able to grow their own, but applications to do so won't be taken until next month. And places such as schools and businesses can still prohibit the drug.

John Mueller, co-founder of Greenlight Dispensaries, said the company's 15 Missouri shops are getting calls from people confused about the new law and why they can't yet buy it from the dispensaries.

"I think everybody's anxious and excited about adult use," said Mueller, whose company plans to add 300 jobs at cultivation, manufacturing and dispensary locations for the expected uptick in business. "Every dollar we sell is a dollar that doesn't go to the black market."

Recreational users are also calling and emailing the Missouri Wild Alchemy dispensary in O'Fallon, owner Jason Crady said — "24/7."

"There's a lot of buzz about it," said Crady, who is busy hiring and training staff in preparation for

recreational sales.

Existing medical dispensaries will eventually be allowed to sell to recreational users, but the agency hasn't determined when that will be. John Payne, a leader of the campaign to legalize marijuana, said recreational sales will likely begin in February.

The state is expected to issue an additional 144 dispensary licenses by early 2025.

Spokeswoman Lisa Cox of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, which regulates marijuana, said personal cultivation application forms will be available Jan. 7 for people who want to grow a limited amount of their own.

Some places will continue to prohibit lighting up. Among them: the four campuses of the University of Missouri System. The system cited two federal laws — the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act and the Drug-Free Workplace Act — on Wednesday in announcing a continued prohibition of marijuana on campuses and at university-sponsored events. Student violators could face discipline up to expulsion.

Legalization is concerning for some in law enforcement who worry it will mean more impaired drivers.

Kevin Merritt, executive director of the Missouri Sheriffs' Association, said marijuana impairment is more difficult for police to assess because there is nothing comparable to blood-alcohol tests that determine intoxication levels in people who have been drinking.

The amendment also requires expungement of criminal records for most people incarcerated or on probation for a misdemeanor marijuana offense, a process expected to be completed by mid-2023.



CHARLIE RIEDEL/AP

Michael Stonebarger sorts young cannabis plants at a marijuana farm operated by Greenlight, on Oct. 31, in Grandview, Mo.



PHOTOS BY STEVEN SENNE/AP

Metal detectorist Denise Schoener, of Hanson, Mass., searches for historic coins and artifacts in a farm field in Little Compton, R.I., on Oct. 27.

Murderous 1600s pirate hid out in US colonies with impunity

By WILLIAM J. KOLE
Associated Press

WARWICK, R.I. — One tarnished silver coin at a time, the ground is yielding new evidence that in the late 1600s, one of the world's most ruthless pirates wandered the American colonies with impunity.

Newly surfaced documents also strengthen the case that English buccaneer Henry Every — the target of the first worldwide manhunt — hid out in New England before sailing for Ireland and vanishing into the wind.

"At this point, the amount of evidence is overwhelming and indisputable," said historian and metal detectorist Jim Bailey, who's devoted years to solving the mystery "Every was undoubtedly on the run in the colonies."

In 2014, after unearthing an unusual coin engraved with an Arabic inscription at a pick-your-own-fruit orchard in Middletown, R.I., Bailey began retracing Every's steps.

Research confirmed that the exotic coin was minted in 1693 in Yemen. Bailey then discovered that it was consistent with millions of dollars' worth of coins and other valuables seized by Every and his men in their brazen Sept. 7, 1695, sacking of the Ganj-i-Sawai, an armed royal vessel owned by Indian emperor Aurangzeb.

Historical accounts say Every's band tortured and killed passengers aboard the Indian ship and raped many of the women before escaping to the Bahamas, a haven for pirates. But word quickly spread of their crimes, and English King William III — under enormous pressure from a scandalized India and the influential East India Compa-



Four 17th century silver coins with Arabic inscriptions rest together on a table in Warwick, R.I., on Oct. 27. The coin at top left was found in Connecticut, while the other three were found in Rhode Island.

ny trading giant — put a large bounty on their heads.

Detectorists and archaeologists have since located 26 similar coins stretching from Maine to the Carolinas. All but three coins turned up in New England, and none can be dated later than when the Indian ship was captured.

"When I first heard about it, I thought, 'Wait a minute, this can't be true,'" said Steve Album, a rare coin specialist based in Santa Rosa, Calif., who helped identify all of the silver Arabic coins found in New England.

"But these coins have been found legitimately and in a few instances archaeologically, and every single one predates the sacking of the ship," said Album, who has lived in Iran and has traveled widely in the Middle East.

Captured pirates William Phillips and Edward Savill testified on Aug. 27, 1696, that one of two ships that left the Bahamas went to Virginia and New England be-

fore reaching Ireland. Critically, Bailey said, the records clarify a muddy timeline that long has been misinterpreted by historians to suggest Every lingered two months on the Caribbean island — something he'd never have done as a fugitive.

Every's exploits have inspired Steven Johnson's book "Enemy of All Mankind," and the final installment of PlayStation's popular "Uncharted" video game franchise. Earlier this year, Sony Pictures released a movie adaptation starring Tom Holland, Mark Wahlberg and Antonio Banderas.

Bailey's next challenge: figuring out what happened to Every after the trail ran cold following his arrival in Ireland on June 20, 1696. It's the mystery's elusive final chapter — one he hopes to detail in a forthcoming book about the cold case.

"We're chasing down the lost history behind one of the greatest crimes of the 17th century," he said.

WORLD

Iran executes first known prisoner arrested in protests

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran said Thursday it executed a prisoner convicted for a crime allegedly committed during the country's ongoing nationwide protests, the first such death penalty carried out by Tehran.

The execution comes as other detainees also face the possibility of the death penalty for their involvement in the protests, which began in mid-September, first as an outcry against

Iran's morality police. The protests have expanded into one of the most serious challenges to Iran's theocracy since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Activists warn that others could also be put to death in the near future, saying that at least a dozen people so far have received death sentences over their involvement in the demonstrations.

The execution "must be met with strong reactions otherwise we will be facing daily executions of protes-

ters," wrote Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, the director of the Oslo-based activist group Iran Human Rights. "This execution must have rapid practical consequences internationally."

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock condemned the execution in a Twitter post, saying "the Iranian regime's contempt for humanity is limitless."

The Mizan news agency, run by Iran's judiciary, identified the exe-

cuted protester as Mohsen Shekari. It said he had been convicted in Tehran's Revolutionary Court, which typically holds closed-door cases. The tribunals have been internationally criticized for not allowing those on trial to pick their own lawyers or even see the evidence against them.

Shekari was accused of blocking a street in Tehran and attacking with a machete a member of the security forces, who required stitches for his wounds, the agency said.

The Mizan report also alleged that Shekari said he had been offered money by an acquaintance to attack the security forces.

Iran's government for months has been trying to allege — without offering evidence — that foreign countries have fomented the unrest. Protesters say they are angry over the collapse of the economy, heavy-handed policing and the entrenched power of the country's Islamic clergy.

Taliban official says 27 people lashed in public in Afghanistan

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Twenty-seven people were lashed in public on Thursday in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan as punishment for alleged adultery, theft, drug offenses and other crimes, according to a court official.

Afghanistan's new authorities have implemented hard-line policies since they took over the country in August 2021 that have underlined their interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia.

The country's Supreme Court issued the final rulings after appeals. In a statement, the court said the lashings took place in the northern province of Parwan, with 18 men and nine women punished in all.

Abdul Rahim Rashid, an official

with the court, said the men and women were each lashed between 25 to 39 times. An unspecified number of those punished also received two-year prison terms in Charakar, the provincial capital, he added.

The lashings were carried out before a "public gathering of locals and officials," Rashid added.

Provincial officials and local residents attended the public punishments, during which officials spoke about the importance of Sharia law, added the court statement.

Thursday's lashings come a day after the Taliban authorities executed an Afghan convicted of killing another man, the first public execution since the former insurgents returned to power last year.

President of Peru is ousted by Congress

Associated Press

LIMA, Peru — The president of Peru was ousted by Congress and arrested on a charge of rebellion Wednesday after he sought to dissolve the legislative body and take unilateral control of the government, triggering a grave constitutional crisis.

Vice President Dina Boluarte replaced Pedro Castillo and became the first female leader in the history of the republic after hours of wrangling between the legislature and the departing president, who had tried to prevent an impeachment vote.

Boluarte, a 60-year-old lawyer, called for a political truce and the installation of a national unity government.

"What I ask for is a space, a time to rescue the country," she said.

Lawmakers voted 101-6 with 10 abstentions to remove Castillo from office for reasons of "permanent moral incapacity."

He left the presidential palace in an automobile that carried him through Lima's historic downtown. He entered a police station and hours later federal prosecutors announced that Castillo had been arrested on the rebellion

charge for allegedly violating constitutional order.

Witnesses saw some small-scale clashing between police and some protesters who had gathered near the station.

"We condemn the violation of constitutional order," federal prosecutors said in a statement.

Fluent in Spanish and Quechua, Boluarte was elected as vice president on the presidential ticket that brought the center-left Castillo to power July 28, 2021. During Castillo's brief administration, Boluarte was minister of development and social inclusion.

Are you in the picture?



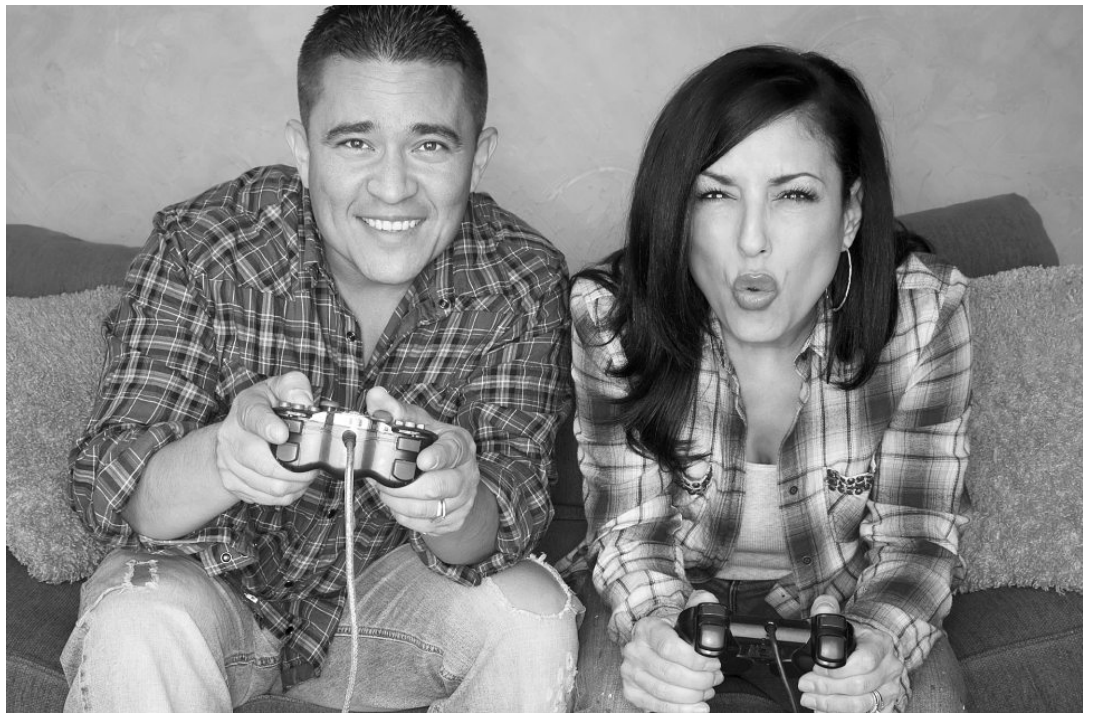
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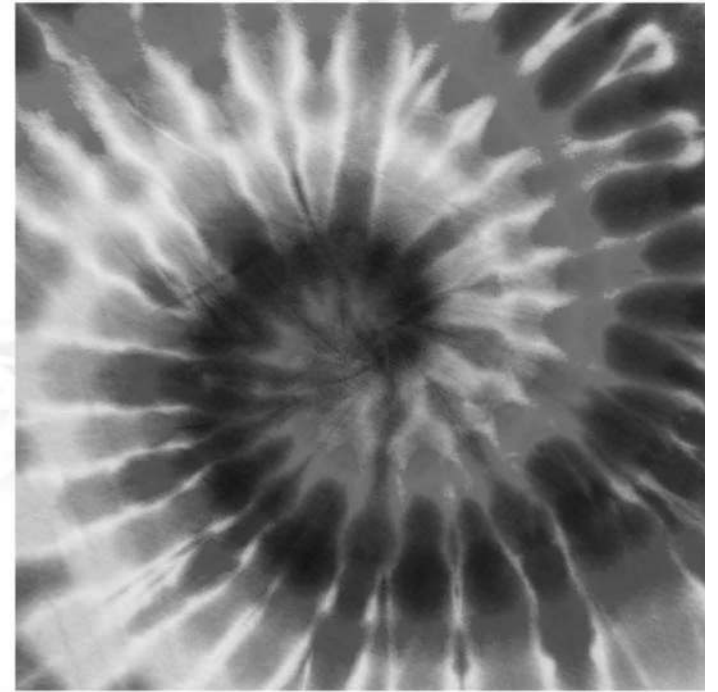
Abu Dhabi

HOLIDAY SHOWDOWN

12 - 11 - 22

Tie Dye

When: 1600
Where: USO 2nd Sprung
First come first serve



Cornhole

When: 1800
Where: Pavillion



Bingo

When: 2000
Where: Pavillion

USO Holidays



HEALTH & FITNESS



iStock

The darker the room, the better your sleep

Experts explain why snoozing with the lights on is bad for your physical health, offer tips to manage exposure

By **RICHARD SIMA**
The Washington Post

Many of us are surrounded by light at night — from streetlights streaming through our windows to televisions and smartphones by our beds. And now research shows that exposure to light at night in the hours before bedtime and even during sleep can be detrimental to our health.

Light is a key regulator of our brain's biological clock, known as the suprachiasmatic nucleus.

"Light is powerful in that it can synchronize rhythms and, at the wrong time, it can desynchronize rhythms," said Phyllis Zee, neurologist and director of the Center for Circadian and Sleep Medicine at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

In one 2022 study, Zee and her colleagues tested how light exposure would affect the biology of 20 young healthy adults as they slept.

One group spent a night asleep in dim light, equivalent to ambient streetlight from outside, followed by a night with the overhead lights on. The overhead lights emitted a glow that was roughly equivalent to hotel hallway lighting — bright, but not sufficient for comfortable reading, Zee said. A control group spent both nights sleeping in dim light.

Participants who slept with the lights on reported that they slept fine, but brain recordings showed that they spent less time in slow wave and rapid eye movement sleep, which are more restful stages critical for cognitive functioning.

The effects on their metabolism and heart were even more striking. Blood samples indicated that a single night sleeping under room light increased participants' insulin resistance, which is important for blood sugar control, the following morning. But most surprising to the researchers was how the light exposure affected heart rate.

"It was high the entire night," Zee said. "That's what was bizarre."

These results suggest that, even with our eyes closed, our brain can be aware of relatively low light, which may cause the brain's autonomic "fight-or-flight" system to become "low-key revved up," Zee said. "It's almost like in preparation to run or having to wake up."

Though this study was conducted with a small sample size of young and healthy people, other recent research

suggests that light exposure during sleep may be even more detrimental to older individuals. In another 2022 study involving more than 550 adults 63 and older, Zee and her colleagues found that any light exposure during sleep was associated with higher prevalence of obesity, diabetes and hypertension.

Other research indicated that sleeping with even a little light in the room decreased sleep quality. Kenji Obayashi, a researcher studying the epidemiology of circadian rhythms at Nara Medical University in Japan, conducted a 2019 study involving more than 1,100 older participants that found light exposure in the hours before waking up was associated with more sleep disturbances.

"We know that even moderate levels of light at night, like you may see coming in from the windows outside or your night light or hallway light, seems to affect your brain," Zee said.

Why light exposure at night disrupts sleep

Specialized sensors in our retina have a direct connection to the suprachiasmatic nucleus and are especially sensitive to short-wavelength light, also known as blue light. Light does not need to appear blue to contain short-wavelength light. Classic LEDs appear white, for example, but contain a lot of short-wavelength light.

"They're very effective at telling our biological clock it's not yet time to sleep," said Christine Blume, sleep scientist at the Centre for Chronobiology at the University of Basel.

In the morning, short wavelength-rich light such as sunlight helps us wake up and aligns our internal clock with the external environment. But having light late at night delays our circadian rhythm, knocking it out of sync.

"That creates a state where your internal clock is going to be more misaligned with that of the social and sun clock," Zee said. This, in turn, can cause sleep loss and partial sleep deprivation because you wake up earlier than your internal clock would like to.

Light also suppresses the secretion of melatonin, the "hormone of darkness," which the pineal gland produces in dim light to prepare our body for sleep, Blume said. At the same time, light reduces sleepiness and activates us, which is helpful in the morning and daytime, but less healthy when we want to sleep.

Light at night "may affect our overall health via circadian misalignment in our daily life," Obayashi wrote.

This kind of disruption of our circadian clocks can lead to a host of issues, including sleep disturbances, mood disorders, cognitive impairments, metabolic dysfunction and cancer risk.

How to manage light exposure at night

It can be tough to create total darkness, so here are some tips to mitigate the effects of light at night:

■ **Reduce your light exposure before bed:** In the two to three hours before you go to sleep, try to dim the lights and avoid screens and smartphones to allow melatonin release.

■ **Change the quality of the light you are exposed to:** Reduce the amount of activating shortwave, blue light hitting your retinas. Our computers and smartphones have applications to filter out blue light, such as f.lux, which can be programmed to adapt to the time of day.

■ **Keep your sleep environment as dark as possible:** Draw the blinds, especially if your outdoor environment is bright. But also be mindful of the light you have in the bedroom. Zee recommends taking a look around your sleeping quarters to see what unnecessary lights can be covered, turned off or faced away from your eyes when you sleep.

■ **Try eye masks:** "Eye masks may be an easy item to block light during sleep," although there are not any randomized trials on how eye masks affect sleep at home, Obayashi wrote. Studies on patients recovering in intensive care units show that using eye masks can improve their subjective sleep quality. But some people may find eye masks uncomfortable, which may cause less restful sleep.

■ **Keep rooms dark with blackout curtains:** But Zee says that one downside of blackout curtains is that they block out light not only in the night but also in the morning, when it helps us wake up.

■ **Get more daylight during the day:** "The more time you spend under the open sky, the less impressed your internal biological clock will probably be by artificial light at night," Blume said.

Light boxes and other light therapy sources can help during the morning. But "if possible, use what's free outside," Blume said.

GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



MICHAEL LIEDTKE/AP

Netflix co-founder and original CEO Marc Randolph stands outside the Santa Cruz, Calif., post office where in 1997 he mailed a Patsy Cline CD to determine whether a disc could make it through the postal system without being damaged. That successful experiment led to the then-ubiquitous DVD-by-mail service.

Netflix DVDs not dead yet

Some subscribers still prefer receiving discs in mail to streaming

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE
Associated Press

Netflix's trailblazing DVD-by-mail rental service has been relegated as a relic in the age of video streaming, but there is still a steady — albeit shrinking — audience of diehards like Amanda Konkle who are happily paying to receive those discs in the iconic red-and-white envelopes.

"When you open your mailbox, it's still something you actually want instead of just bills," said Konkle, 40, who teaches film studies classes as an associate professor at Georgia Southern University and has been subscribing to Netflix's DVD-by-mail service since 2005.

It's a small pleasure that Konkle and other still-dedicated DVD subscribers enjoy, but it's not clear for how much longer. Netflix declined to comment for this story but during a 2018 media event, co-founder and co-CEO of Netflix Reed Hastings suggested the DVD-by-mail service might close around 2023.

When — not if — it happens, Netflix will shut down a service that has shipped more than 5 billion discs across the U.S. since its inception nearly a quarter century ago. And it will echo the downfall of the thousands of Blockbuster video rental stores that closed because they couldn't counter the threat posed by Netflix's DVD-by-mail alternative.

The eventual demise of its DVD-by-mail service has been inevitable since Hastings decided to spin it off from a then-nascent video streaming service in 2011.

Back then, Hastings floated the idea of renaming the service as Qwikster — a bungled idea that was so widely ridiculed that it was satirized on "Saturday Night Live." It finally settled on its current, more prosaic handle, DVD.com.

The operation is now based in a nondescript office in Fremont, Calif., located about 20 miles from Netflix's sleek campus in Los Gatos, Calif.

Shortly before its breakup from video streaming, the DVD-by-mail service boasted more than 16 million subscribers, a number that has now dwindled to an estimated 1.5 million subscribers, all in the U.S., based on calculations drawn from Netflix's limited disclosures of the service in its quarterly reports. Netflix's video streaming service now boasts 223 million worldwide subscribers, including 74 million in the U.S. and Canada.

"The DVD-by-mail business has bequeathed the Netflix that everyone now knows and watches today," Marc Randolph, Netflix's original CEO, said during an interview at a coffee shop located across the street from the post office in Santa Cruz, Calif.

The 110-year-old post office has become a landmark in Silicon Valley history because it's where Randolph mailed a Patsy Cline CD to Hastings in 1997 to test whether a disc could be delivered through the U.S. Postal Service without being damaged.

The disc arrived at Hastings' home unblemished, prompting the duo in 1998 to launch a DVD-by-mail rental website that they always knew would be supplanted

ed by advancing technology.

"It was planned obsolescence, but our bet was that it would take longer for it to happen than most people thought at the time," Randolph said.

With Netflix's successful streaming service, it might be easy to assume that anyone still paying to receive DVDs through the mail is a technophobe or someone living in a remote part of the U.S. without reliable internet access. But subscribers say they stick with the service so they can rent movies that are otherwise difficult to find on streaming services.

For Michael Fusco, 35, that includes the 1986 film "Power" starring a then-youthful Richard Gere and Denzel Washington, and 1980's "The Big Red One" starring Lee Marvin. That's among the main reasons he has been subscribing to the DVD-by-mail service since 2006 when he was just a freshman in college, and he has no plans to cancel it now.

"I have been getting it for almost half my life, and it has been a big part," Fusco said. "When I was young, it helped me discover voices I probably wouldn't have heard. I still have memories of getting movies and having them blow my mind."

Knowing the end is in sight, Randolph said he will lament the death of the DVD service he brought to life while taking comfort its legacy will survive.

"Netflix's DVD business was part and parcel of who Netflix was and still is," he said. "It's embedded in the company's DNA."

Use the SSL Connex mic to record calls, meetings and music

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

At some point, we all need to produce top-quality audio, whether for more advanced work-from-home video meetings, conference calls, instrumental or vocal recordings, or simple family FaceTime or speakerphone hands-free calls. Getting audio isn't problematic, and neither is audio quality when using Solid State Logic's new SSL Connex USB microphone, built for both advanced and everyday use.

The SSL Connex touts the microphone as having optimized studio-quality processing using SSL EQ, and its dynamics algorithms are taken from professional studio and broadcast products.

The USB bus-powered microphone works with Mac (macOS 10.14 or later) and PC (Windows 10 or later) laptops, desktop computers or USB tablets. It has a built-in USB-C output connection and a 1/8-inch 3.5mm headphone port.

A 2-meter USB Type-C to Type-C cable and USB Type-C (female) to Type-A (male) adapter are included to get you connected and recording immediately. Onboard touch-sensitive controls include push-to-talk, mic mute, a cough button and headphone volume.

The portable and futuristic silver desktop microphone (3.54-by-3.54-by-1.57 inches) looks like a four-sided pyramid with a flat top. Behind each of the four sides are microphone capsules creating a quad microphone array. On top is the Solid State Logic logo, with a backlit RGB, which illuminates to indicate if the mic is muted or in one of four user modes.

The four modes are indicated by a different color. Solo mode glows in white and is optimized

for a single sound source from the front of the unit. The white glowing solo mode can be used for calls, a meeting presenter or anything else from a single user. The SSL Connex is optimized to capture the speech only from the front and reduces unwanted sound from the back and sides.

Green is the group mode for multiple sound sources and is ideal for livestreaming with various users in a round-table, conference-call environment, making great use of the SSL Connex's quad microphones. The internal and automatic smart mixer technology allows all the participants to be heard clearly and without unwanted background noise.

When the top glows magenta, the mic is in the vocal mode for performance recording. In this mode, the SSL Connex uses its SSL EQ and dynamics processing algorithms to enhance the recording or livestream. This mode also rejects audio and sounds from the rear and sides of the unit for optimum recording.

And finally, the blue mode is designed for a group of musicians positioned around the SSL Connex. The quad mic system works perfectly in this scenario to eliminate unwanted background noise and to ensure the vocals are appropriately captured from each angle and source.

Some other features and specifications of the SSL Connex include a sample rate of up to 96 kHz. The bottom has a standard 1/4-inch-20 female tripod mounting thread for attaching to your accessories. It's rated to operate in temperatures ranging from 33.8 to 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

Online: solidstatelogic.com; The MSRP price is \$199.99, but you can get it for an introductory price of \$149.99.



SOLID STATE LOGIC/TNS

Solid State Logic's Connex USB microphone has four recording modes: solo, group, vocal and music.

VIDEO GAMES



Coffee Stain North photos

Goat Simulator 3 offers plenty of opportunities to wreak havoc and terrorize the residents of the game, but now you can also outfit your goat with costumes that you can purchase with points you earn in the game. Some costumes are merely cosmetic while others give your goat unique abilities.

Time to gather your herd

Goat Simulator sequel adds polish, bigger world and multiplayer feature

BY KHEE HOON CHAN
The Washington Post

The original Goat Simulator was born from a singular premise: What happens when you take control of a goat to wreak havoc in a sandbox environment? The result is utterly rambunctious: screams, explosions, mayhem — all the work of a lone goat with rag-doll physics and a ridiculously elastic tongue. However, it's also a gag that very quickly grows stale after an hour or so. Compounding this is the game's (partially intentional) unpolished state. The jankiness is part of the joke, but in practice proved frustrating to play, with assets clipping into one another and the goat getting stuck at invisible barriers. Remember those infamous Skyrim glitches, like when a random villager would spin like a helicopter rotor? Goat Simulator wanted to be a game about capturing moments like these — a title seemingly made for Twitch or YouTube.

Goat Simulator 3 (the game's first joke is that Goat Simulator 2 doesn't exist) seems to take itself a lot more seriously than its predecessor. That's not to say that the unrestrained, slapstick humor of the original has vanished; the sequel still conducts itself with the propriety of a massive fart joke. You can still head-butt bystanders off a skyscraper. You can set everyone in your vicinity on fire by dousing yourself in gasoline. You can reduce people to tears by bleating incessantly into their faces.

The main difference is that Goat Simulator 3 no longer revels in that one-note joke alone, with the sequel proving to be a much more polished experience. For one thing, clipping into objects or falling through the ground doesn't happen as frequently as in the first. And then there's Goat Simulator 3's decision to anchor its comedic routines to the joy of exploration. The discovery of Easter eggs, gags, gaming and pop culture references and other events is the engine that drives the game, rather than the propensity to perform genocidal stunts with a rag-doll goat.

One element of what made the first Goat Simulator's shtick grow stale so rapidly was its boundaries. In the original, there are only two zones to gallivant in, and they're pretty vanilla aside from a few interesting sights,

such as stumbling upon a Deadmau5 concert. But in Goat Simulator 3, there are several cities and places, each brimming with life and vibrancy, to explore. There's a food factory that manufactures fake bananas. There's a cemetery where phantoms can be tormented and dragged out of their graves with your elastic tongue. There's a huge, impossibly rad bouncy castle. By highlighting them as places of interest with a symbol on the map, Goat Simulator 3 encourages exploration. How you get there is up to your own discretion (the goat can confidently handle a steering wheel now, so grand theft auto is a totally viable option).

If one goat isn't enough, you can also invite up to three friends to engage in caprine duties and terrorize the town together — a new feature that helps extend the shtick's life span considerably. Goat Simulator 3 includes multiplayer minigames, such as Car Derby, Prop Hunt, The Floor Is Lava and other derivatives of popular minigames you may already be familiar with from titles like Mario Party and Garry's Mod. Though what's more entertaining is the freedom to goof around with your belligerent goat buddies across these cities, chuckle together at the absurdity of your collective mayhem and leave a trail of smoking destruction in your wake.

The game also offers quest-like features called "events" and "instincts" to inspire mischief-making. Think of events as mini puzzles you can solve, with vaguely worded descriptions barely serving as clues ("Care for the flowers in the garden"). Instincts are more straightforward achievements you can unlock ("Do a 720 degrees backflip"). This, too, is how Goat Simulator 3 gradually emboldens your curiosity, as you entertain fleeting thoughts like "Can I dive bomb into a grieving crowd in the midst of their funeral procession?" — and then scratch that itch. Yet Goat Simulator 3 is at its best when you are just trotting along to wherever your hooves bring you, free as the wind, and stumbling into these snafus randomly.

Witnessing how the ill-fortuned residents of Goat Simulator 3, including the very world itself, will warp themselves in response to your antics is another part of the game's joys. Even something as banal as stepping into a



The Goat Simulator sequel allows you to play with friends, exploring its expanded world and playing new minigames.

petrol station could result in complete pandemonium. In one instance, I walked in the path of a passerby, who lost his temper at this act of audacity and attempted to kick me. Unfortunately for him, he missed, his foot instead launching an innocent bystander into the wall. The pillars holding up the roof of the petrol station immediately disintegrated, the roof fell in and that triggered fiery explosions. The fire engine swung by, but then knocked into another vehicle, causing yet another round of explosions. It's a demonstration of the butterfly effect at play, and it's downright hilarious.

There are also a host of other activities to busy your goat with. Goat Simulator 3 now has unlockable costumes, which you can purchase with points you earn from events and instincts, collect after completing specific events, or pick up while exploring. Some costumes are merely cosmetic, like making your goat carry a dumbbell in its mouth or putting on a silly straw hat. But others come with abilities that can aid you in your high jinks. Gravity helmets cause people nearby to float, and a saddle lets you hoist a nearby victim onto your back. A personal favorite is a costume that's just a curmudgeonly elderly woman who shoots balls of yarn out of a cannon. Tons of collectibles, like glistening trophies that hover precariously at the end of a crane, are ripe for hoarding.

There are funnier games out there, from the refined comedic diction of Untitled Goose Game to the sardonic humor of Portal. But it's the thrill of discovering ludicrous scenes, and the delight of digging into every nook and cranny in search of more absurd secrets to unearth, that elevates Goat Simulator 3 above the one-note joke of the original game.

Platforms: PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X/S, PC
Online: goatsimulator3.com

MUSIC



Making it merry

Harry Connick Jr. jazzes up the holidays with US tour, new album

BY KELLI SKYE FADROSKI
The Orange County Register

Singer-songwriter, composer, actor and former “American Idol” judge Harry Connick Jr. loves the Christmas season.

It’s not all about the fancy gifts, twinkling lights and the holiday rush for the Connick family, the 55-year-old performer insists. It’s more about the time spent together, lounging around the house with his wife, Jill, who he says is an “absolutely amazing cook,” and their three adult daughters.

“We just like being together,” he said during a recent phone interview. “We eat some good food and just hang out. We’re thankful for what the holiday actually means, so we’ll go to midnight mass or church in the morning and it’s pretty laid back. We’re just hanging out and talking the whole time — or, let me rephrase that — I’m listening all of the time because there’s so much going on with my daughters and all of their adventures. I sit back and listen to what they have to say and we just have a really good time.”



Connick is closing out 2022 with his first holiday tour in a handful of years, which is in support of his fourth Christmas album, “Make It Merry,” now streaming exclusively on Apple Music. Before his family hunkers down at his father-in-law’s house in Colorado to spend

SEE CONNICK ON PAGE 17

Harry Connick Jr. recently released his fourth Christmas album, “Make It Merry.”

Georgia Connick

Fill your stocking with Alicia Keys, Chris Isaak this holiday season

Associated Press

Holiday music might not be everyone’s cup of tea, but with new records from Alicia Keys, Joss Stone and Debbie Gibson, there’s something that might appeal to everyone at the table. So pull out the record player, light some candles and get festive — and thankful for new music.

Associated Press journalists unwrapped the latest new holiday-themed albums from Chris Isaak, Davis Causey & Jay Smith, Louis Armstrong, Pentatonix and more.

Alicia Keys, Santa Baby

(Alicia Keys Records)

Alicia Keys’ Christmas album



debut, “Santa Baby,” is as cheeky, cozy and captivating as the classic it is named after.

For a holiday fanatic, there is nothing more heartwarming than Christmas songs. However, Keys is able to take a holiday favorite and improve it with her vocals and R&B twist.

So, like a square of butter over a freshly baked tower of pancakes, listeners’ hearts will be sweetly melting into a sugary puddle.

The 15-time Grammy winner wraps those beloved old Christmas songs with originals, sure to join the pantheon of glorious jolly songs. In the music video for the song “December Back 2 June,” a joyous Alicia Keys wears bubble ponytails and a metallic suit, singing “Christmas is all the time when I’m with you.”

Ending with “Ave Maria,” the artist risks it all by taking a slow classic and adding a soul vibe with a recurring drumbeat that makes an already solemn song into something fresh and beautiful.

Like that perfect black sweater in your wardrobe, this album goes with everything, whether you’re feeling like snuggling under a blanket drinking hot tea or preparing yourself for a winter date. This album has it all: The sexy, the homey and the nostalgic.

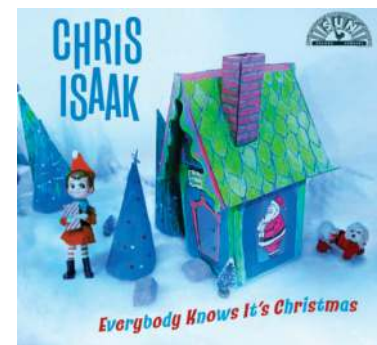
— Martina Inchingolo

Chris Isaak, Everybody Knows It’s Christmas

(Sun Records/Virgin UMG)

Fresh off a lifetime achievement award from the Americana Music Association, singer Chris Isaak is in a festive mood. It only makes sense that his next project would be a holiday album.

On “Everybody Knows It’s



Christmas,” Isaak, who has built a career ranging comfortably between rockabilly and doo-wop, applies his distinctive talent to 13 holiday tracks in the Sun Studio style.

Isaak and his backup band, who are touring behind the al-

SEE STOCKING ON PAGE 17

MUSIC

Stocking: New releases from Stone, Gibson highlight season

FROM PAGE 16

bum, take up familiar tunes like “Winter Wonderland” and “Jingle Bell Rock” with exuberant style, but they also dial up rockabilly cuts like “Run Rudolph Run” and an original called “Almost Christmas” that fits right in. There’s not an earworm in the bunch, which can be a rarity for a holiday album.

Isaak’s music can feel lightweight, but he succeeds by never taking himself too seriously. He always seems to do things just for the fun of it, and this album is no exception. And hey, isn’t Christmas supposed to be fun?

— Scott Stroud

Davis Causey/Jay Smith, Pickin’ On Christmas

(Strolling Bones Records)

More than two decades after it was recorded, “Pickin’ On Christmas” again makes a lovely holiday gift.

In 1998, Athens, Ga., guitarists Davis Causey and Jay Smith found themselves with little money for presents, so they recorded an album of eight instrumentals for a limited run of 100 CDs, and gave them to friends and family.

Now the set is available on the Strolling Bones label, and it’s full of good cheer and interesting

interplay.

With the help of overdubs, Causey and Smith trade licks and engage in creative counterpoint to generate plenty of winter warmth. The festive mash-up “Silver Bells/Silent Night” settles into a boogie rhythm pushed by drummer Jeff Reilly, and features what sounds like at least five guitars. Another innovative interpretation, “We Three Kings/God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen,” combines funky syncopation with three guitars improvising.

There’s plenty of variety. The one original tune, the serene “Following a Star,” includes a synth guitar part by Causey that sounds like a cello, while Randall Bramblett contributes a sprightly soprano sax part on “What Child Is This?” “Little Drummer Boy” mixes Causey’s resonator guitar and Smith’s classical guitar, and several cuts feature blue notes and other jazz colors.

Causey has become a model of longevity, his 60-year career highlighted by work with Kris Kristofferson, Marvin Gaye and Waylon Jennings, among others. Smith died shortly after these tunes were recorded, which makes the album a poignant celebration of musical kinship.

— Steven Wine



Joss Stone, Merry Christmas, Love

(S-Curve Records)

Soul singer Joss Stone has released her first album of Christmas songs, to which the only natural reaction is: Why did it take so long to get these chestnuts roasting?

“Merry Christmas, Love” is a brilliant addition to the holiday canon with Stone’s seemingly effortless takes on 13 classics, breathing new life into “White Christmas” and “Let It Snow.” She also wrote two nifty originals.

Though she has a Ferrari engine, her restraint is admirable, letting the song shine, like one of the prettiest versions of “In The

Bleak Midwinter” you’ll ever hear and an absolutely joyous take on Irving Berlin’s “Snow.”

Stone shows exquisite control and tone on “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” and leaves the beauty of “Away in a Manger” unadorned. One of the new ones, “If You Believe,” borrows a beat from “The Little Drummer Boy” but soars at the end, unleashing that Ferrari.

The album ends with a tricky one — “Silent Night.” And Stone absolutely smashes it, with sonic fireworks. This collection needs to be on repeat this holiday — and next.

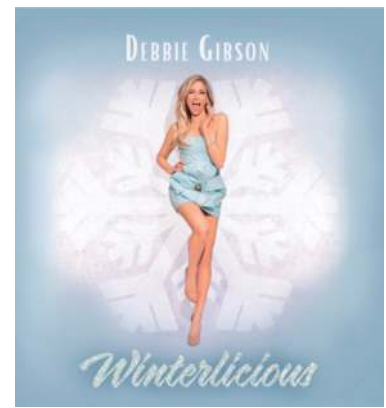
— Mark Kennedy

Debbie Gibson, Winterlicious

(Stargirl Records)

Writing your own Christmas songs must be a daunting task, but that hasn’t stopped Debbie Gibson. Thank goodness.

The singer who gave us “Only in My Dreams” offers “Winterlicious,” her first ever holiday album. It’s an eclectic set, mixing classics with originals, including a duet with her dad, a new Hanukkah song — big points for inclusion, Ms. Gibson — and ends with an emotional and super New Year’s Eve song,



“Cheers.”

One highlight is a rare Christmas breakup song — she and New Kids on the Block’s Joey McIntyre co-wrote the terrific “Heartbreak Holiday.” Other Gibson originals like “Jingle Those Bells,” “Christmas Star” and “Christmas Dreams” deserve to be on your holiday rotation, and her cover of “The Candy Man” is a great showcase for her Broadway-ready voice.

The duet with Joe Gibson on “White Christmas” is painful — sorry, dad — but the driving, over-the-top and maybe even naughty arrangement of “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen” goes down well. This album has got something for everyone.

— Mark Kennedy

Connick: Live shows to include original, traditional song selections

FROM PAGE 16

Christmas Day this year, Connick will be spreading holiday cheer on the road.

The Connick family is also big on Christmas music, although Harry admits that his wife runs the household playlist. It includes classics like Nat King Cole’s “The Christmas Song.” This year, Connick said he was able to curate his own playlist via Make It Merry Radio, which can be found on Apple Music. He included some of his favorites, even the ones that yank hard at the heartstrings, like country-pop star Kacey Musgraves’ “Christmas Makes Me Cry.”

Though there’s plenty of upbeat holiday songs on the list, he said that Christmas can be an emotional time, which is why a song like Charles Brown’s “Please Come Home for Christmas” has such an impact.

“I think my dad was telling me that he spent one Christmas without my mother, and that was back in the ’50s, and he was looking out the window and my gosh, you just want to, like the song says, be with the ones you love,” he said. “Those songs do make you cry.”

For the live shows, Connick is playing selections from his latest album, including “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas,” “Jingle Bells” and newly-recorded versions of his original songs, “(It Must’ve Been Ol’) Santa Claus” and “When My Heart Finds Christmas.” He also has two new songs: “On This Christmas Morning” and the album title track, “Make It Merry.”

“There are different ways to write these



Georgia Connick

Harry Connick Jr. is currently on tour playing holiday songs, and he has curated an Apple Music playlist.

songs,” he said of his holiday songwriting process. “You can write them autobiographically or you can just write like I did with ‘Make It Merry.’ That’s about a guy who’s alone and all he really wants is for this person to consider to come spend the holiday with him and that one’s not from personal experience. But definitely some of them go back to my own childhood.”

He’s ready to close out the year with his adoring fans and wants each one of these shows to be a true celebration, especially considering all of the holiday events that were canceled over the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“When you get out there and sing a song like ‘Sleigh Ride’ and everybody is in a good mood and singing along, that is a certain type of luxury for a performer,” he said. “Not that there’s a heaviness to any other show, but as a person in charge of how the evening is going to go, when you walk into a situation where there are a bunch of people already ready to have a good time, it makes it just super fun and this will be a party the whole night.”

“To know that all of us can all now see the light at the end of the tunnel and we’re able to be productive in a normal way again, that’s everything. And we don’t really know the effect this pandemic will have on us in the future. It was an immensely stressful time for so many reasons and I was one of the fortunate ones who could work at home. I think about all of the men and women who sacrificed so much to keep our lives normal and I feel thrilled to be able to get back to work. Those folks are still near and dear to my heart because I know that was a beyond stressful time for them.”

In 2021, Connick released “Alone With My Faith,” which he recorded in his home studio during the lockdowns and earned him a Grammy nomination. He also joined the cast of “Annie Live!,” playing Oliver “Daddy” Warbucks in the production that

aired on NBC last December. Next year, Connick said he has a bunch of music, TV, film and Broadway projects in the works — but he can’t talk about any of them just yet. However, he will serve as a judge on “Australian Idol” in 2023. He was a mentor on “American Idol” in 2012 and returned as a judge alongside Jennifer Lopez and Keith Urban in 2013.

“There’s some extraordinary talent out there,” he said. “When I was a mentor on ‘American Idol,’ I only did the one show, but that’s what I really like doing. Being a mentor is different than a judge because you can’t really have an interaction and that kinda goes against my personality style, to just objectively judge. I’d much rather collaborate and work with them, but it’s really fun and in the short amount of time that I have, I do try to give them whatever sort of advice I think may help. Sometimes they don’t need it.”

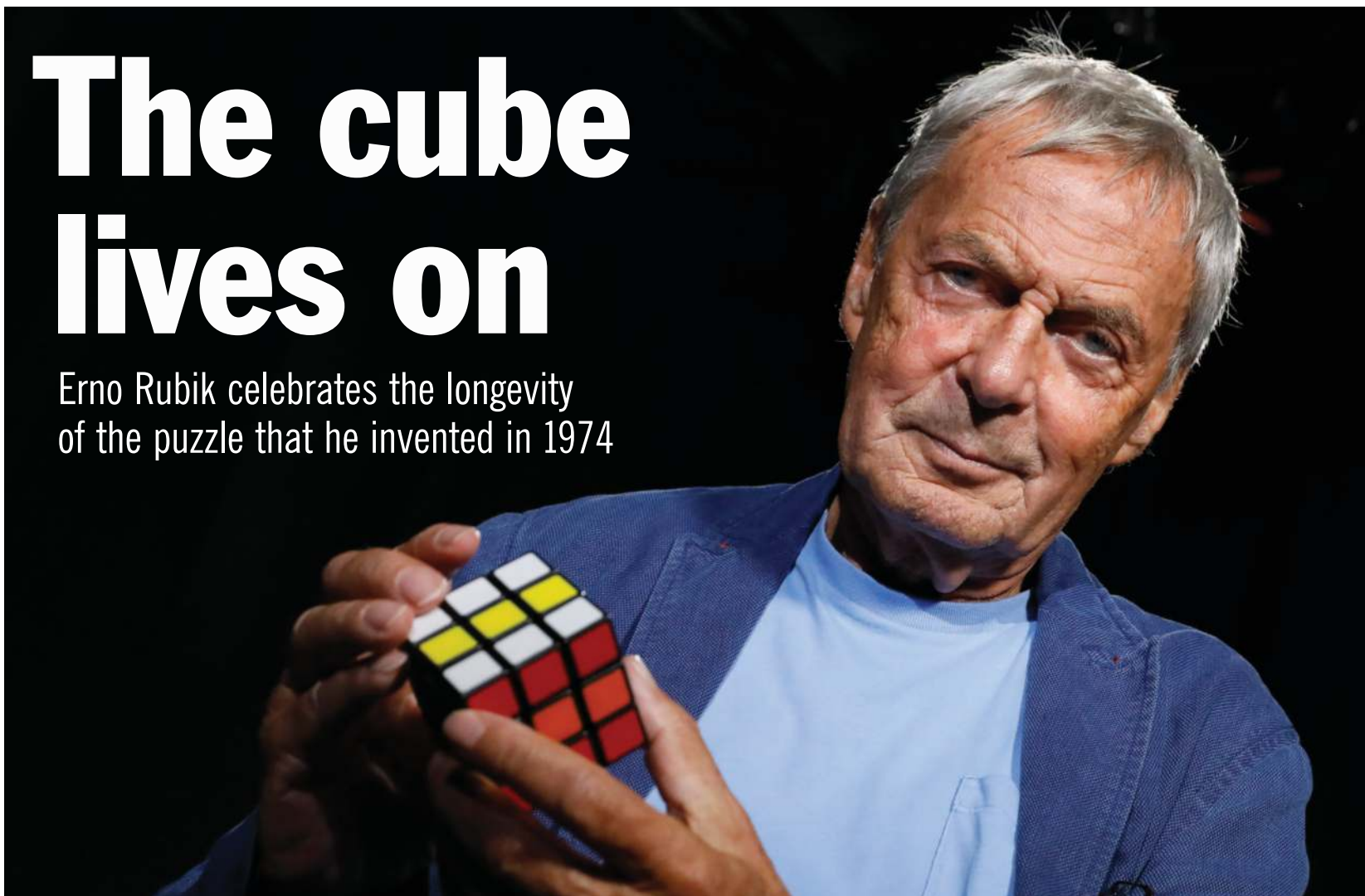
This year, Connick said he’s just thankful for everyone and everything. He’s also very much aware of the financial strain on individuals and families this holiday season, with the cost of just about everything going way up, including the price of concert tickets.

“I don’t take this lightly because tickets are expensive, especially around the holidays and people have presents to buy, so every single person that comes to these shows, I am really grateful,” he said. “I think people can see that I’m genuinely excited and humbled to be on that stage and I’m gonna give them everything I’ve got.”

LIFESTYLE

The cube lives on

Erno Rubik celebrates the longevity of the puzzle that he invented in 1974



AP photos

Professor Erno Rubik, inventor of the Rubik's Cube, is photographed in New York in 2018. Rubik has seen his color-matching puzzle go from a classroom teaching tool in Cold War-era Hungary to a worldwide phenomenon with more than 450 million cubes sold.

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

If you've ever had trouble solving a Rubik's Cube, a good piece of advice is to break it down into steps. It's worth a shot: That advice is from the man who invented it.

"Problem solving is a very basic activity of the human mind and if a problem is complex, you need to divide the problem into smaller elements," says Erno Rubik, who invented the cube in 1974.

Rubik has seen his color-matching puzzle go from a classroom teaching tool in Cold War-era Hungary to a worldwide phenomenon with more than 450 million cubes sold and a mini-empire of related toys.

"For me, the cube represents what freedom means. Freedom is never endless," he said during a recent visit to New York. "It lets you do what is necessary to achieve your goal."

The original 3x3 Rubik's has more than 43 quintillion — that's more than 43,000,000,000,000,000,000 — possible configurations, but the principles behind the cube have been refashioned for 2x2, 4x4 and 5x5 cubes, a board game called Rubik's Race, a pyramid, a tower and a Christmas tree, among others.

It even made the transition to electronic media with Rubik's Revolution and Rubik's Touch. Spin Master acquired the brand in 2021. Their latest brainteaser is called the Phantom, which takes the 3x3 original cube and adds a memory test: Using thermochromic technology, the multi-color tiles revert to black unless the heat of the user's hand keeps them visible.

"The principle of the cube is not limited," Rubik says. "The complexity of the task is to stimulate our mind and it makes it a much more enjoyable activity."



A gamer plays with Rubik's Magic Cube at the international game fair "SPIEL" in Essen, Germany, on Oct. 26, 2017.

The goal of all Rubik puzzles is to start with some randomized and shuffled messy configuration and, by rotating faces or parts, transform each side into a single color or a pattern of colors.

Practiced cube-solvers can complete the Rubik's Cube in a matter of seconds, with the current world record-holder solving a cube in 3.47 seconds. There are also records at the World Cube Association for fastest solving while wearing a blindfold or using one hand.

It took 36 years after the invention of the toy for anyone to calculate the minimum number of moves to solve it. In 2010, a group of mathematicians and computer

programmers proved that any Rubik's Cube can be solved in 20 moves.

Rubik was a budding artist who hoped to become a sculptor or a painter before he studied architecture, which he argues is art with a function: "Architecture is changing the environment according to our needs."

He got a degree in architecture at Budapest University of Technology and became a teacher in the interior design department at the Academy of Applied Arts and Crafts in Budapest.

Rubik regularly used physical models and materials to teach concepts in construction and design.

"As our body needs some kind of exercises, the brain needs that kind of exercise as well," he says. Thus was born an elegant teaching tool he named "The Magic Cube."

"I tried to make it as simple as possible because I thought the task itself is complicated enough," he says. "You don't need to complicate any more."

The puzzle — which uses rounded elements for the center core — is easy to use, but also hard enough to solve that more than one cuber has thrown it across a room in frustration.

"One of the main keys of the cube is the contradiction between complexity and simplicity," Rubik says. "On one hand, the cube is a very simple form. And on the other hand, the potential of the variation of movement is so complicated."

The brain-bending elegance of the Rubik's Cube is part of the reason it has endured, while other faddish toys and games — Tamagotchi or Shopkins, anyone? — have not.

"Usually these kinds of crazes are ending very soon," Rubik says. "But the cube didn't die."

In 2014, it landed in the National Toy Hall of Fame, joining such childhood classics as Barbie, Hot Wheels, G.I. Joe and the hula hoop. The hall noted that the cube has caused its own medical condition, known as "cube's thumb" or "Rubik's wrist." The cube has also show up in TV shows and movies from "The Simpsons" to "The Pursuit of Happyness."

Rubik recalls the early days when some were convinced the cube was impossible to solve. He knew it could be done.

"I tried to explain and show people it is possible, and if something is possible for me, you can do it yourself," he says. "It's a very nice proof of the power of science."

CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

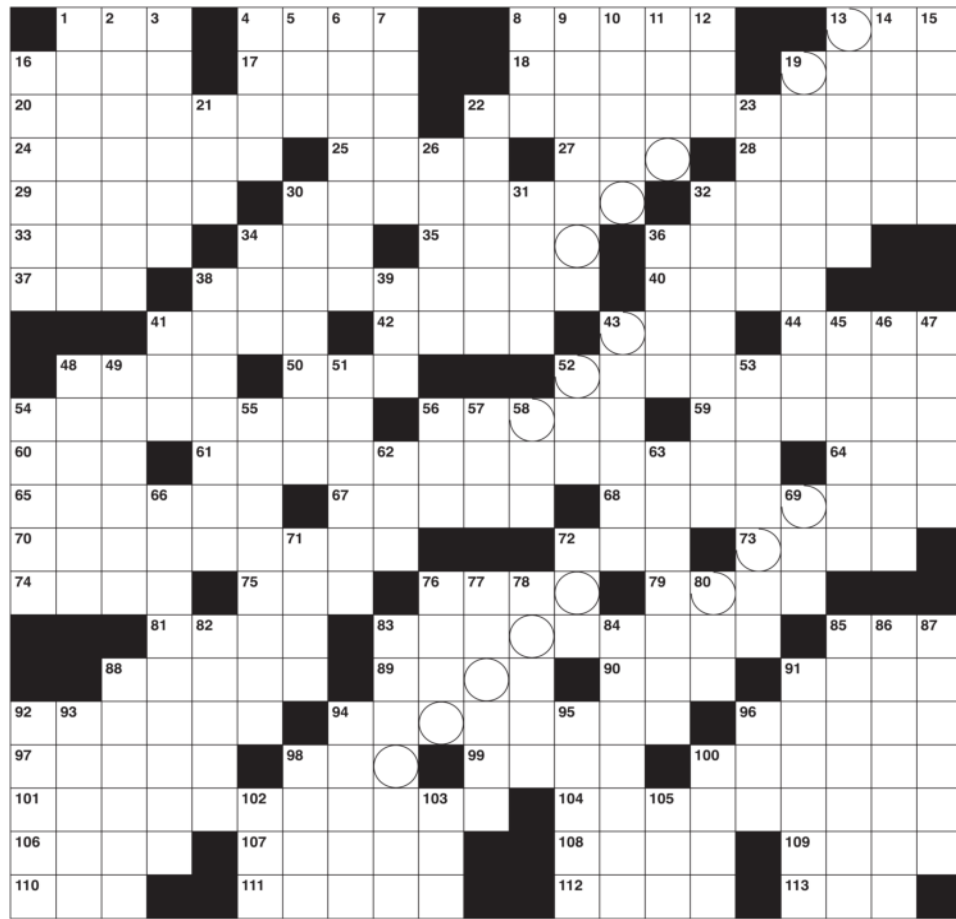
GOING OFF ON A TANGENT

BY ADAM WAGNER / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Adam Wagner, of Oakland, Calif., is a creative lead at the San Francisco-based 1-Down. (Solve the puzzle to see the name of the company!) He has been constructing crosswords for The Times for two years. This one started with the answers at 85- and 86-Down and branched out, literally, from there. Adam recently released Anigrams, a free daily online word game that I find almost as addictive as Wordle. — W.S.

ACROSS

- 1 Gambling spot?
- 4 Chap
- 8 Addis ____
- 13 Pro response
- 16 Bit of chicanery
- 17 ____ water (healthful drink)
- 18 Totally uncool
- 19 Rock's Jethro ____
- 20 "You're gonna love this, I promise!"
- 22 Urban area typically with the tallest buildings
- 24 Rocky road topping?
- 25 Length for a pregnancy
- 27 Moneymaking venture
- 28 LeBron James became one in 2018
- 29 That's the spirit!
- 30 Highway network that famously has sections without a speed limit
- 32 Service recipient
- 33 An ocean
- 34 Device dusted off to watch old home movies, maybe
- 35 Flat-topped French hat
- 36 Ante alternative
- 37 Musician Brian
- 38 Public court proceeding
- 40 Many a bad Yelp review
- 41 Luxuriate (in)
- 42 They're not sciences
- 43 ____ Cannon, creator of the "Pitch Perfect" film series
- 44 Fish sticks?
- 48 Strength of character
- 50 "Me!"
- 52 Compliment to a French chef
- 54 Crackerjack
- 56 Slack-jawed
- 59 Automotive successor of the Bel Air
- 60 Proudly embody, informally
- 61 What you're on when you're making progress
- 64 Product sold on a rack, informally
- 65 "Them's fightin' words!"
- 67 Set one's sights
- 68 Welcome-center handouts
- 70 Free of flaws, as a reputation
- 72 DiFranco of folk
- 73 Sewer in American history
- 74 Hamlet's cousin
- 75 Music-genre prefix
- 76 Ideal engine sound
- 79 Duel personalities?
- 81 Like some memes
- 83 Major concern for a meteorologist
- 85 The Bruins, on scoreboards
- 88 Contents of a household box
- 89 Pasta whose name means "barley" in Italian
- 90 Startled scream
- 91 Weight
- 92 Goes from one thing to another
- 94 Purchase option for a dedicated fan
- 96 Like dumbbells
- 97 Like Roma tomatoes
- 98 Something that may be sold by the yard
- 99 The Nature Conservancy and World Wildlife Fund, e.g., in brief
- 100 Hate, hate, hate
- 101 Certain juicing need
- 104 Residential construction project
- 106 Deep shot, in hoops
- 107 Weird
- 108 Brother of Logan Roy on "Succession"
- 109 Has a meal
- 110 Urban grid: Abbr.
- 111 Tennis champ ____ Osaka
- 112 Figs. first issued in 1936
- 113 Summer on the Riviera
- 9 Deep inhalation to get high
- 10 Ordered delivery, perhaps
- 11 Hive mind of "Star Trek: TNG," with "the"
- 12 National Dog Show org.
- 13 ____ someone's yum (criticized a person's tastes, slangily)
- 14 Discovery astronaut Ochoa
- 15 With it
- 16 Shake a little
- 19 Amtrak booking
- 21 Worker with wax
- 22 "Oof, what a day!"
- 23 Run-D.M.C.'s "You Be ____"
- 26 Longtime co-host of the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade
- 30 Good Texas hold 'em hand
- 31 Auto-loan figs.
- 32 Bit of roofing in Spanish-style architecture
- 34 Biden and Harris, notably, in brief
- 36 Underwire undergarments
- 38 Muffin makeup, maybe
- 39 Over-emoter
- 41 Trade, informally
- 43 Star N.F.L. wide-receiver Allen
- 45 First family from Illinois
- 46 Exercise in a swimming pool
- 47 Grabs
- 48 "____ Life" (1981 Rick James single)
- 49 Tool for cutting wood along the grain
- 51 Scandalized
- 52 Pro who gets many return customers?
- 53 Bad makeup artist
- 54 Spot for a band
- 55 High ways
- 56 Early stop at a casino, maybe
- 57 Univ. senior's hurdle
- 58 Funding
- 62 "____ but a scratch": oft-quoted Monty Python line
- 63 Con artist
- 66 Chattering plastic teeth, for one
- 69 Rapper ____ Def
- 71 Group with lodges
- 72 Part of E.T.A.: Abbr.
- 76 100%
- 77 Allow for more high-density housing and mixed-use development, in urban-planning lingo
- 78 Company shake-up, for short
- 80 Symbol of sturdiness
- 82 Pallid
- 83 Problem for a pitcher
- 84 They have their ups and downs
- 85 & 86 Very upset . . . like the answers to five of this puzzle's clues?
- 87 Grand mounts
- 88 They go around at museums
- 91 Coffin carrier
- 92 Drops down?
- 93 In no way hidden
- 94 It has only one-sixth of the mass of Earth's moon
- 95 Goobers
- 96 Pentagon inits.
- 98 Cousin of turquoise
- 100 Part of the eye that focuses light onto the retina
- 102 Momma's boy
- 103 Big name in outdoor gear
- 105 Jones of CNN



GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

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FACES



JONATHAN BRADY/AP

Office workers in London watch the controversial documentary “Harry and Meghan” on Thursday, the first day it streamed on Netflix.

Trashing the newspaper tabloids

First episodes of ‘Harry and Meghan’ examine relationship between media, royal family

BY DANICA KIRKA AND JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, offered a sweeping indictment of Britain’s media and the racism they believe has fueled coverage of their relationship in a Netflix documentary series that promises to tell the “full story” of the couple’s estrangement from the royal family.

Relying on interviews with the couple, as well as their friends and experts on race and the media, the first three episodes of “Harry and Meghan” dissect the close relationship between tabloid newspapers and the royal family while discussing the history of racism in the British Empire and how it continues to pervade society.

“In this family sometimes, you know, you’re part of the problem rather than part of the solution,” Harry says in the program, which began airing Thursday. “There is a huge level of unconscious bias. The thing with unconscious bias is that it is actually no one’s fault. But once it has been pointed out, or identified within yourself, you then need to make it right.”

The media’s treatment of Meghan — and what they felt was a lack of sympathy from royal institutions about the coverage — were at the heart of the couple’s complaints when they walked away from royal life and moved to Southern California almost three years ago. Promoted with two dramatically edited trailers that hinted at a “war against Meghan,” the series “Harry & Meghan” is the couple’s latest effort to tell their story.

The series comes at a crucial moment for the monarchy as King Charles III tries to show that the institution still has a role to play after the death of Queen Elizabeth II, whose popularity dampened criticism of the crown during her 70-year reign. Charles is making the case that the House of Windsor can help unite an increasingly diverse nation by using the early days of his reign to meet with many of the ethnic groups and

faiths that make up modern Britain.

Harry’s 2018 marriage to the former Meghan Markle, a biracial American actress, was once seen as boosting the royal family’s effort to move into the 21st century, making it more representative of a multicultural nation. But the fairy tale, which began with a star-studded ceremony at Windsor Castle, soon soured amid stories that Meghan was self-centered and bullied her staff.

Netflix released the first three hourlong episodes on Thursday, with three more due Dec. 15. The documentary includes video diaries recorded by Meghan and Harry — apparently on their phones — in March

“No one knows the full truth. We know the full truth.”

Prince Harry

2020, amid the couple’s acrimonious split from the royal family. It’s “my duty to uncover the exploitation and bribery” that happens in British media, Harry says in one entry.

“No one knows the full truth,” he adds. “We know the full truth.”

The series begins by telling the story of Harry and Meghan’s courtship and the initial enthusiasm that greeted their relationship. But the tone shifts as Harry recounts the intense media scrutiny faced by Meghan, reminding him of the way his mother, Princess Diana, was treated before she died in a car crash while being trailed by photographers.

“To see another woman in my life who I loved go through this feeding frenzy — that’s hard,” Harry says. “It is basically the hunter versus the prey.”

Harry and Meghan said they initially tried to follow palace advice to remain silent about the press coverage as other members of the royal family said it was a rite of passage they all had to go through. But the couple said they felt compelled to tell their story because there was something different about the way Meghan was treated.

“I said, ‘The difference here is the race element,’” Harry said.

That bias has deep roots in the history of the British empire, which was enriched by the enslavement of Black people and the extraction of wealth from colonies in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, said historian and author David Olusoga in the program. It is only since World War II that large numbers of Black and Asian people moved to Britain, changing the face of the nation.

Those changes are reflected in the British media. While Black people make up about 3.5% of Britain’s population, they account for just 0.2% of the journalists, Olusoga said.

“We have to recognize that this is a white industry,” he said. “... So people who come up with these headlines, they are doing so in a newsroom that’s almost entirely white, and they get to decide whether something has crossed the line of being racist.”

King Charles III was asked if he had watched the documentary as he carried out an engagement on Thursday in London. He did not reply.

Race became a central issue for the monarchy following Harry and Meghan’s interview with American talk show host Oprah Winfrey in March 2021. Meghan alleged that before their first child was born, a member of the royal family commented on how dark the baby’s skin might be.

Buckingham Palace faced renewed allegations of racism only last week when a Black advocate for survivors of domestic abuse said a senior member of the royal household interrogated her about her origins during a reception at the palace.

Celine Dion shares diagnosis of rare disorder, postpones tour

Celine Dion announced that she was diagnosed with a rare and incurable neurological condition known as stiff-person syndrome, and that she will cancel or postpone some shows in her “Courage World Tour.”

In an emotional, five-minute-long Instagram video posted Thursday, Dion, 54, told fans: “I’ve been dealing with problems with my health for a long time, and it’s been really difficult for me to face these challenges and to talk about everything that I’ve been going through.”

“Recently, I’ve been diagnosed with a very rare neurological disorder called the stiff-person syndrome,” she continued.

“While we’re still learning about this rare condition, we now know this is what’s been causing all of the spasms that I’ve been having. Unfortunately, these spasms affect every aspect of my daily life, sometimes causing difficulties when I walk and not allowing me to use my vocal cords to sing the way I’m used to.”

Because of her diagnosis, the singer said she “won’t be ready to restart my tour in Europe in February.”

Stiff-person syndrome, or SPS, is a neurological and autoimmune disorder that causes muscles to stiffen progressively, causing painful and debilitating spasms. In more extreme forms, it can prevent people from walking or going about their day-to-day lives.

It is not curable, but symptoms can be managed through medication.

Dion’s “Courage World Tour” was to restart in February after several delays. Her spring 2023 shows have been moved to 2024 and her summer 2023 concerts have been canceled.

Lana Del Rey releases new song, announces 2023 album

Lana Del Rey is back, and she’s got Southern California on her mind once again.

The Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter dropped a new single on Wednesday, “Did You Know That There’s a Tunnel Under Ocean Blvd,” the title track from her ninth studio album, which she announced is due March 10.

“Did you know that there’s a tunnel under Ocean Boulevard? / Mosaic ceilings, painted tiles on the wall,” Del Rey sings in her signature femme-fatale sigh in the mournful, slow-rolling piano ballad. “I can’t help but feel somewhat like my body, mind, my soul/ Hand-made beauty sealed up by two man-made walls.”

“Did You Know That There’s a Tunnel Under Ocean Blvd” will arrive almost four years after 2019’s critically adored “Norman F—ing Rockwell!”

The new album was produced by Del Rey’s frequent collaborator Jack Antonoff, among others, and features contributions by Jon Batiste, Father John Misty and Antonoff’s band Bleachers.

Other news

■ **Peter Cooper**, award-winning music journalist and musician, died Dec. 6 after suffering a severe head injury. He was 52. Cooper wrote for The Tennessean for 14 years, interviewing and writing about artists such as George Jones, Johnny Cash, Taylor Swift, Kris Kristofferson and more. He was a co-producer on a Grammy-nominated tribute record for acclaimed singer-songwriter Tom T. Hall.

From wire reports

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Ex-prison worker faces 100-year sentence

IN INDIANAPOLIS — A former Indiana Department of Correction worker faces a potential sentence of 100 years in prison under a deal in which she agreed to plead guilty to two counts of murder for a knife attack two years ago in which two people were killed and a third was wounded, a prosecutor said.

Kristen L. Wolf, of Madison, also will plead guilty to attempted murder and attempted battery by means of a deadly weapon for the attack at an Indianapolis apartment that killed Victoria Cook, 24, and Dylan Dickover, 28, and seriously injured Elizabeth McHugh, Marion County Prosecutor Ryan Mears said.

During the attack, a DOC hat that Wolf was wearing fell off and was left at the scene, investigators said. The hat had a tag with the name "Wolf" written on it. At the time, Wolf worked at a prison in the Ohio River city of Madison.

State officials: No giant hornets found in 2022

WA BELLINGHAM — Citizen trapping of northern giant hornets in northwest Washington ended Nov. 30 without any confirmed sightings of the hornets this year, state officials said.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture also said that no confirmed sightings of the hornets were reported nearby in British Columbia, Canada. The northern giant hornet is native to Asia and has been the target of eradication efforts after hornets were discovered in both locations in 2019.

The hornets will not be considered eradicated until Washington has gone three years with no detections. Confirmed sightings of the pest were last recorded in 2021.

Jury awards \$2.6M to 3 workers fired by clerk

IL WAUKEGAN — A jury awarded more than \$2.6 million to three former Lake County employees who claimed the county circuit court clerk fired them because they supported her opponent in the 2016 election.

One of Lake County Circuit Court Clerk Erin Cartwright Weinstein's first acts after taking office in December 2016 was to fire three former top deputies of former clerk Keith Brin, whom she defeated in the election.

Michelle Higgins, Tiffany Deram and Joshua Smothers campaigned for Brin and were seen alongside him in parades and other events by Weinstein, her husband or her top deputy, court records state.

Including punitive damages, the jury awarded Higgins \$1.1 million in compensation for pain and suffering, lost wages and pension; while Deram received \$1 million; and Smothers \$542,000.



EMILY BALL, BRISTOL (TENN.) HERALD COURIER / AP

Stress relief

Bristol, Tenn., Police officer Chesney Roark and K-9 Sonny talk with King University student Katie Biggs in the library for an exam stress break.

Officials add construction management scholarship

KY FRANKFORT — Kentucky officials have introduced a new construction management scholarship for students to attend any of five state schools.

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet said the scholarship is available to students focusing on a four-year construction management degree who attend Northern Kentucky University, Eastern Kentucky University, Western Kentucky University, Morehead State University or Murray State University.

State transportation officials said up to 30 new scholarships will be awarded for the 2022-23 school year to prospective and current college students pursuing civil engineering and engineering technology degrees.

Governor wants free lunch for all students

NM SANTA FE — Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham wants New Mexico to help provide school lunches without charge to all K-12 students across the state.

Lujan Grisham spokeswoman Nora Meyers Sackett confirmed

that the governor will pursue legislation when lawmakers meet in January 2023 to ensure that every student has access to free and nutritious school meals by covering the cost of breakfast and lunch for students that don't already qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

The new initiative backed by the governor would build on efforts to combat hunger by offsetting co-payment charges for school meals.

Sackett said more details of proposed state spending on school meals will be released in early January within the governor's annual state spending recommendations to the Legislature.

Beach erosion uncovers wooden ship from 1800s

FL DAYTONA BEACH SHORES — Severe beach erosion from two late-season hurricanes has helped uncover what appears to be a wooden ship dating from the 1800s which had been buried under the sand on Florida's East Coast for up to two centuries.

Beachgoers and lifeguards discovered the wooden structure, between 80 feet to 100 feet, poking out of the sand over Thanksgiving weekend in front of homes which

collapsed into rubble on Daytona Beach Shores last month from Hurricane Nicole,

An archaeological team removed sand and made a shallow trench around the structure's wooden timbers, took measurements and made sketches in an effort to solve the 200-year mystery.

There are no plans to remove the ship from Daytona Beach Shores, not only because the cost would likely run in the millions of dollars, but because it's protected where it is, packed into the wet sand, maritime archaeologist Chuck Meide said.

State library to display historic portrait photos

TN NASHVILLE — The Tennessee State Library & Archives is putting its collection of over a million historic photographs on display for a new exhibit on portraits.

The library in Nashville said its exhibit, named Tennesseans Through the Lens: Portrait Photography in Tennessee, is free and open to the public.

The photos show how Tennesseans have used portraits throughout history to share pictures of themselves, friends, family members and celebrities.

The exhibit displays the way technology has changed the way Tennesseans document significant moments.

Man sentenced to prison for gun stash, bunker

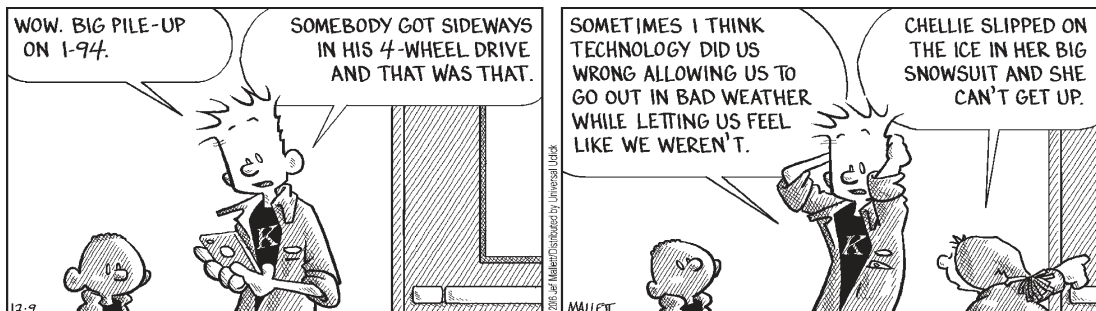
WA EVERETT — A man was sentenced to 42 months in federal prison after he was found with an illegal arsenal of guns and explosives in a bunker in the Arlington area northeast of Everett.

Court documents said last November that James Bowden, now 42, confronted a man in a car and the two argued before Bowden fired a gun into the car's windshield, hitting the man's hand, The Herald reported.

In a subsequent search of Bowden's property, federal investigators found a room in a garage that was set up with chemicals and equipment used to make explosives.

A removable panel in the floor revealed a ladder to a bunker with guns, ammunition, grenades and other equipment, prosecutors said. Prior felony convictions prohibited Bowden from having the weapons.

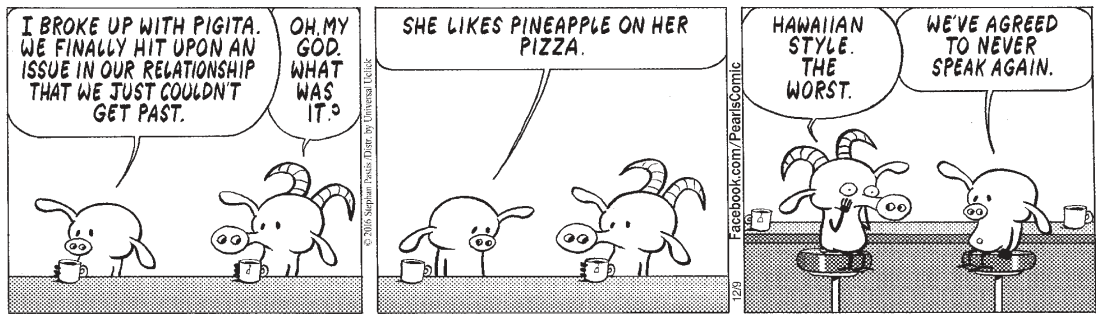
Frazz



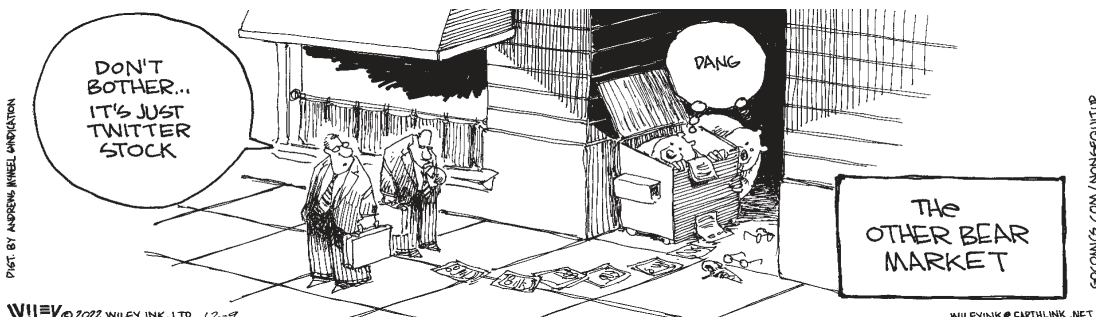
Dilbert



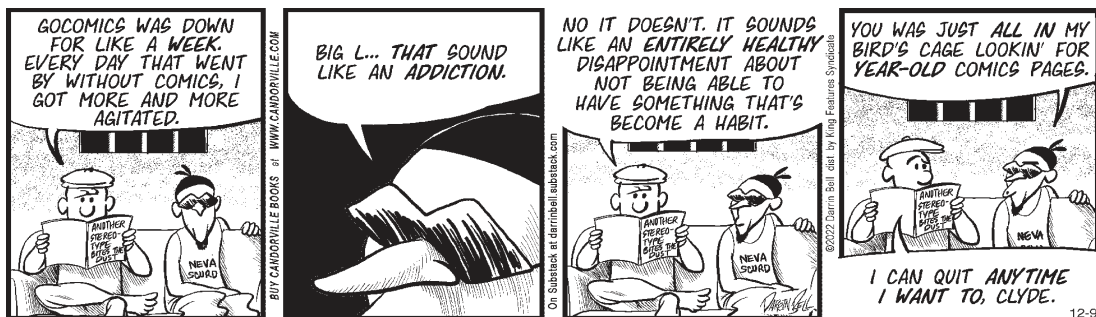
Pearls Before Swine



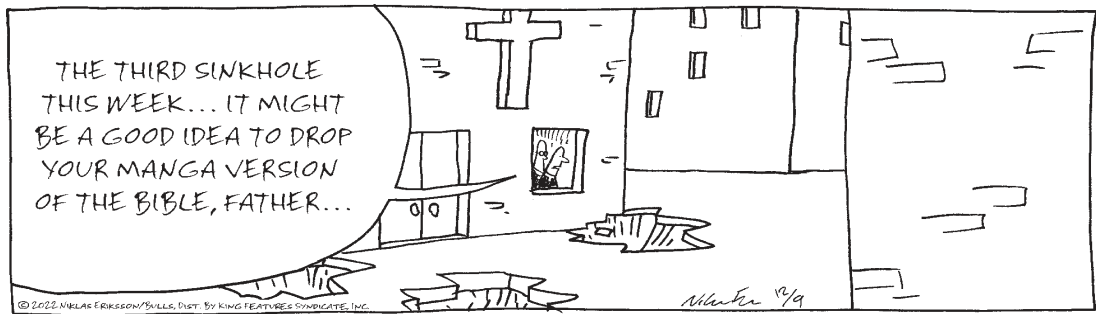
Non Sequitur



Candorville



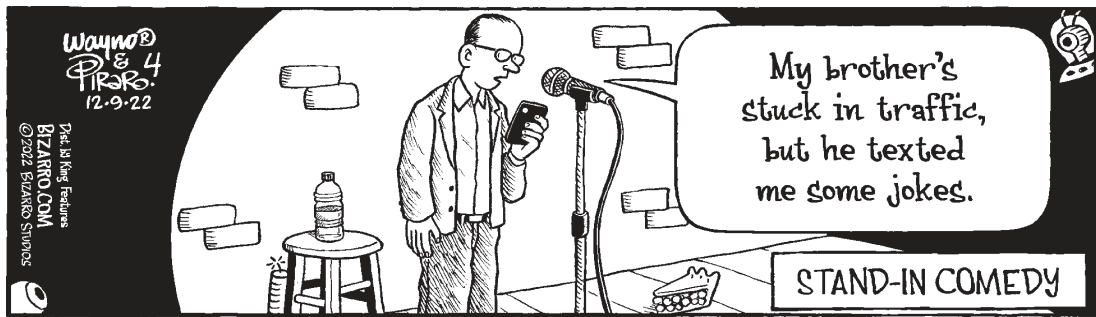
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11
12				13				14				
15				16				17				
18				19								
20			21		22				23	24	25	26
			27	28				29	30			
31	32	33						34				
35					36			37				
38					39	40			41	42	43	44
				45					46		47	
48	49	50	51								52	
53						54					55	
56						57					58	

ACROSS

- 1 Broadband letters
- 4 Squealer
- 7 Wee hr.
- 12 Slangy suffix
- 13 Sch. founded by Jefferson
- 14 Mrs. Flintstone
- 15 Pallid
- 16 Ice-cream cone order
- 18 JFK info
- 19 "Holy smokes!"
- 20 Floral garlands
- 22 Lair
- 23 Curly cabbage
- 27 Existed
- 29 Vienna's river
- 31 Host
- 34 Access the web
- 35 African desert
- 37 Lawn coating
- 38 Editor's "keep it"
- 39 The Browns, on scoreboards
- 41 Zilch
- 45 Expensive violin
- 47 Distant
- 48 Orange liqueur
- 52 Sailor
- 53 Seoul setting
- 54 "For shame!"
- 55 Green prefix

DOWN

- 25 Wall St. deal
- 26 Still, in verse
- 28 — Lingus
- 30 Pub serving
- 31 Twisty letter
- 32 Yoga pad
- 33 "Evita" role
- 36 Pinnacle
- 37 Abhor
- 40 Endures
- 42 Frequently
- 43 Civil rights org.
- 44 Goof
- 45 "Sad to say ..."
- 46 Gross
- 48 B'way show purchase
- 49 Sturgeon product
- 50 Hot temper
- 51 Signing need

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

12-9

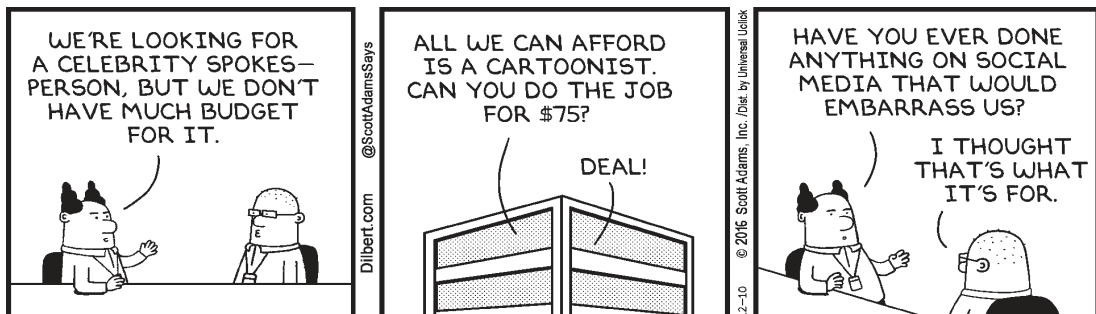
CRYPTOQUIP

NK F AFLZ ZJXNCNGY VFIJC
 OJGOMJ CDNHXA PFXI FYZ
 KGLHA PJHDJY GONYNGYC,
 NC NH VNYZ-HGSSMNYS?
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: FACE-REDDENING
 COSMETIC APPLICATION BRUSHED ON BY ONE
 OF THE DISNEY PRINCESSES: MULAN ROUGE.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals P

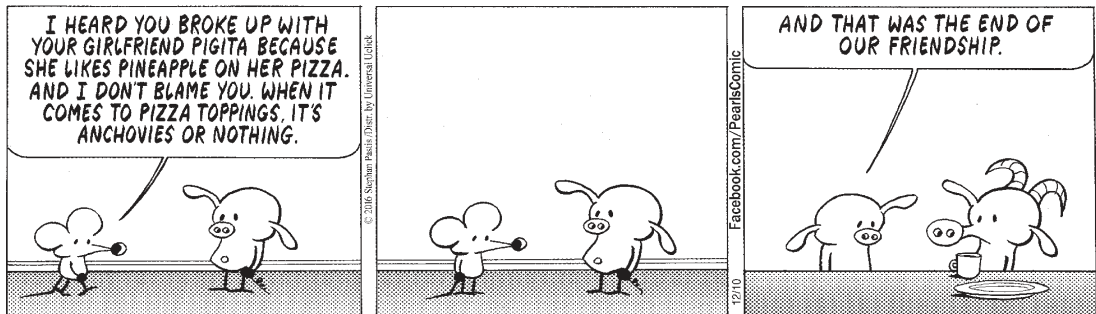
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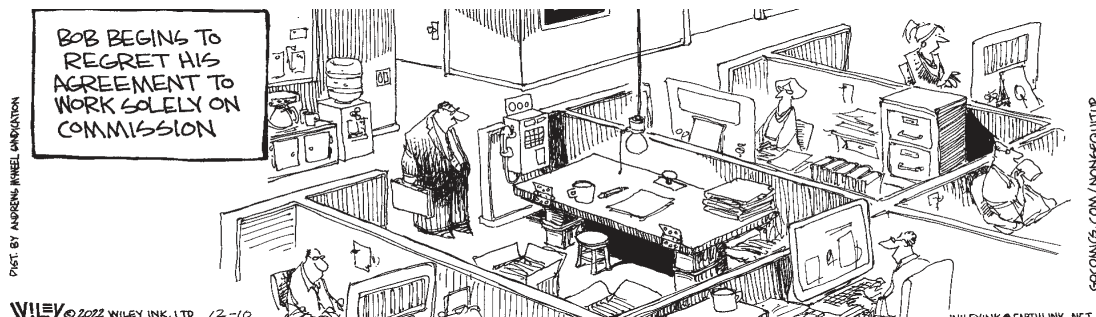
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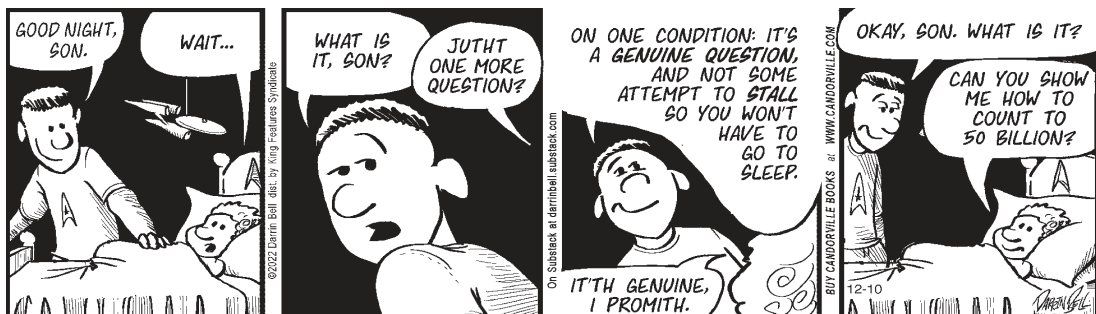
Pearls Before Swine



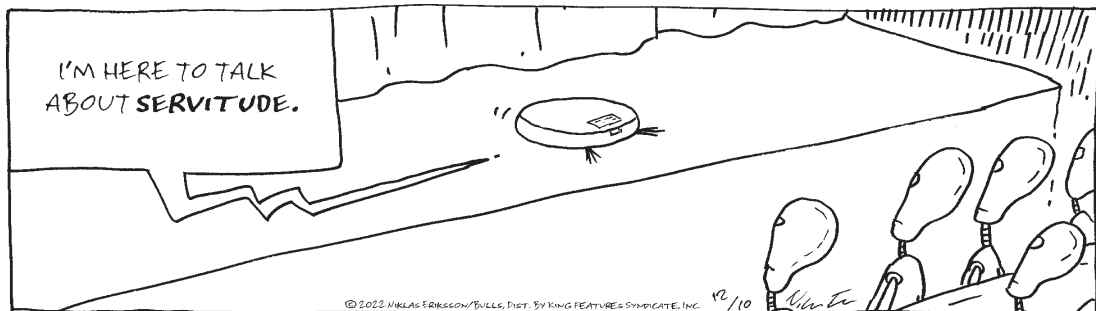
Non Sequitur



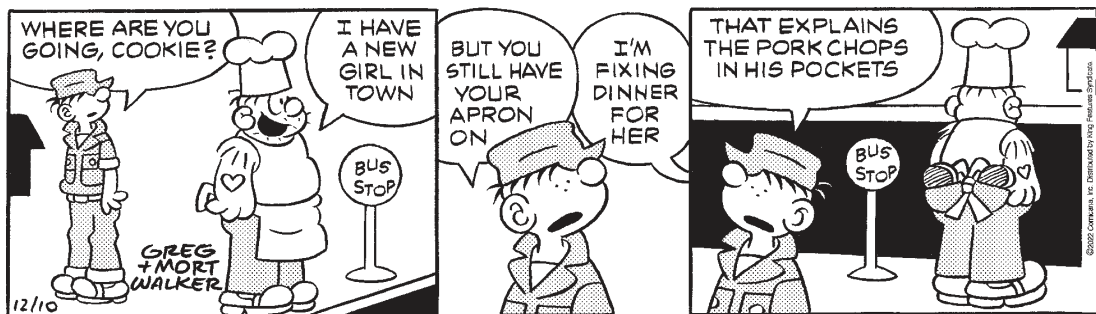
Candorville



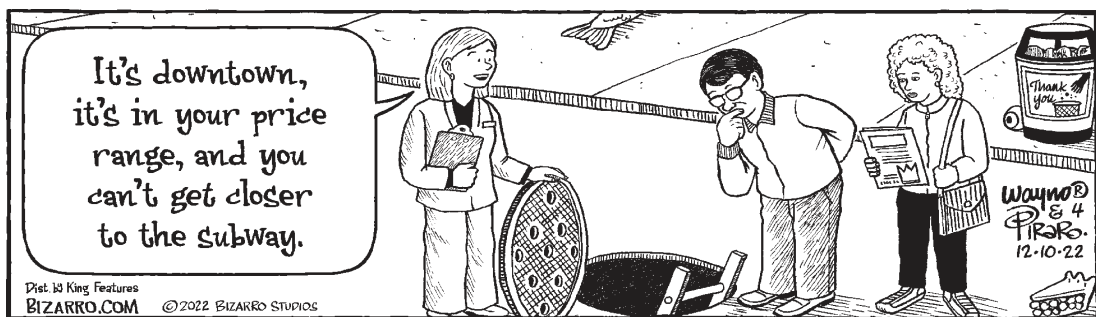
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



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Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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30					31				32			
33				34					35			
			36				37					
38	39	40				41				42	43	44
45						46				47		
48						49				50		
51						52				53		

ACROSS

- 1 Chum
- 4 Bright star
- 8 Item on stage
- 12 Boxer Laila
- 13 Slender weapon
- 14 "I'm a klutz!"
- 15 Numbered rd.
- 16 Ogler's look
- 17 Entreaty
- 18 Secret listeners
- 21 Uno + uno
- 22 Inlet
- 23 Like Cheerios
- 26 Blend
- 27 Furry foot
- 30 Lunch hour
- 31 Sinbad's bird
- 32 Sultry Horne
- 33 Squeeze (out)
- 34 Group of seals
- 35 Peruses
- 36 "Levitating" singer Lipa
- 37 Madre's sibling
- 38 Visitors to the Caribbean, e.g.
- 45 Equitable
- 46 TV alien
- 47 Mafia boss
- 48 Humorist
- 49 Church area
- 50 "I — Rock"
- 51 Thanksgiving veggies
- 52 Drudge

53 Periodical, for short

27 Pot pie morsel

DOWN

- 1 Rid of rind
- 2 Utah ski resort
- 3 Actor Schreiber
- 4 Wrestling hold
- 5 Pundits' pieces
- 6 Swerve
- 7 Type of exercise
- 8 Opium flower
- 9 Actor's part
- 10 Abbr. on a phone
- 11 Unpaid TV ads
- 19 Biblical garden
- 20 Peace (Lat.)
- 23 Low digit
- 24 Fine, to NASA
- 25 "Little piggie"
- 26 Chic, to Austin Powers
- 27 Pot pie morsel
- 28 Moreover
- 29 "Now, where — I?"
- 31 Driver's aid
- 32 Vault
- 34 Bit of wit
- 35 Cal — Jr. (baseball's "Iron Man")
- 36 Fixes socks
- 37 Upper body
- 38 Uncertain
- 39 Mystery writer
- 40 Actor Neeson
- 41 Aspiration
- 42 Wax-coated cheese
- 43 "Arrivederci —"
- 44 Hose woe

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

12-10

CRYPTOQUIP

Z DCKGU FV VQAZBQ VEBA
 QRESFXL PUF DZKRQR SFIQSUQX
 SF VFXA Z LEKIEKI IXFCN:
 SUQ LNBEGQ IEXBL.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A HARD DECISION MAKES PEOPLE SWITCH BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN OPINIONS, IS IT MIND-TOGGLING?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals F

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OPINION

Memo to GOP: Enough with your infighting

BY HUGH HEWITT

Special To The Washington Post

November's elections revealed that we remain a 50-50 country — and the grinding of red and blue plates beneath the surface of American politics continues to increase.

It was a status quo election. Despite strong showings in places as disparate as Florida and Iowa, Republicans got lucky with Democratic overreaches in New York state. New, more conservative, state supreme courts in Ohio and North Carolina are expected to approve congressional maps that will in 2024 add to the GOP's razor-thin advantage in the House. The Senate map also favors the GOP, which must defend only 10 seats in two years even as Democrats (and independents who caucus with them) try to hold 23.

There's a lesson here: America's self-sorting into blue and red enclaves is far from complete. Citizens fleeing tax burdens know exactly where to move. In the main, red states such as Florida, Ohio and Iowa got redder. Voters are smart; states that let taxpayers keep more of their money are winning the votes of people who pick up and move. But Democratic incumbents did well, beating the historic mean overall.

The GOP's march to the House majority over the past two election cycles should buttress not just House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy's claim on the speaker's gavel but also GOP chair Ronna McDaniel's bid for another term. McDaniel has built out enduring infrastructure in nearly every state, begun the expanded outreach to underrepresented minorities by establishing GOP community centers among ethnic enclaves, and has upped small-dollar donations. She appears poised to return — unless Donald Trump tries to change the rules governing the primaries.

There are skill sets to running a party organization. Newcomers usually don't know them, and tend to leave chaos in their wakes. Best to leave good enough alone and count on additional improvements from McDaniel and company. House Republicans must move quickly next month to confirm McCarthy as the speaker and to stand up a select committee on China.



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE / AP

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., is seeking enough GOP backing to become Democrat Nancy Pelosi's successor when Republicans take control of the House in the new Congress.

Infighting will waste time and momentum. Get on with the job.

Trump set off not one but two rounds of outrage in the past week, moves that sucked the air out of all conversations about the GOP — which might have helped the elected Republicans recognize their peril. Trump's disastrous dinner with Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, and Nick Fuentes sparked condemnations so fierce, sustained and across-the-board that the former president tried to lay a "controversy backfire," demanding on Truth Social that the 2020 election be overturned, Constitution be damned.

The consequence of this was not, as Trump hoped, to divert attention from the dinner but rather to increase concerns that he's swinging wildly, without a plan and damaging only himself. Trump rarely endangers his standing with his own base, but this past week he might have done so. Whatever the consequences, he provided Republicans in Washington with a reason to avoid their own cliffs inside the party.

For now, 2023 offers the GOP one great advantage: There is going to be a competitive race for the nomination. The first debate in the last contested GOP presidential primary contest occurred on Aug. 6, 2015.

In the months after, 11 other debates followed. If repeated next year, debates pro-

vide huge audiences for GOP critiques of President Joe Biden's recessionary policies, his weak national security posture, the open border, and the crime and fentanyl crises.

Every month that goes by without one or two gatherings of presidential candidates is a missed opportunity to set the agenda for 2024 and close the party's small-dollar-donor gap. The forums and debates will quickly become the means of sharpening distinctions among the candidates, but more crucially, the means to distinguish the GOP from the Democrats as Congress crawls toward compromise over the next two years.

My bet is that Biden will announce after Christmas but before the Super Bowl.

His Hamlet act is over; it is clear he is running. His push to move the first primary to South Carolina, where he wrapped up the 2020 nomination, is a reminder that he intends to seek reelection — and it's a stiff arm to any rivals who thought they might challenge him.

That's just another reason for Republicans to get into the fight — and on with their debates.

Hugh Hewitt is a nationally syndicated radio host on the Salem Radio Network. He is also a professor at Chapman University School of Law, where he has taught constitutional law since 1996.

Alex Jones can't use bankruptcy to escape accountability

New York Daily News editorial

It's been a busy few days for sentient scumbucket Alex Jones. Last Thursday, he hosted a certain rapper turned antisemitic ranter, squirming a little as his brother in hate praised Hitler and Nazis. Friday, Jones — who's been morally bankrupt for decades — filed for Chapter 11 personal bankruptcy, a transparent attempt to make it harder for families he smeared to collect a substantial share of the \$1.5 billion defamation judgment they won earlier this year.

Jones, who's gotten away with almost every vile thing he's done and said in his 48 years, must not escape accountability this time.

Let's repeat in plain terms what prompted jurors and a judge to order he pay a huge sum to the loved ones of first graders and educators murdered in 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary by an unstable young man. Jones repeatedly called the massacre a whole-cloth hoax staged by nefarious forces, which



TYLER SIZEMORE, HEARST CONNECTICUT MEDIA / AP

Alex Jones, ordered this year to pay \$1.5 billion to Sandy Hook families in a defamation case, filed for Chapter 11 personal bankruptcy last week.

is to say he called mothers and fathers enduring unimaginable grief actors who were gladly profiting from the experience.

It is literally impossible to concoct a more nauseating lie.

Nor was it an idle falsehood. Jones' followers proceeded to hound the people they were told were fabricators. They harassed and tormented them. They forced them to move. They turned what was already a period of awful anguish no human should ever have to endure into hell on Earth.

Jones has been slithering away from having to pay any price for years. As The Washington Post reported last month, records show that when, in mid-2020, it started to look like there might be consequences for his vile lies, he started moving money into other companies controlled by himself, relatives or friends.

And so, when his Free Speech Systems entered corporate bankruptcy in July, the very live and still unanswered question was where else in the woodwork he has bills rolled up and stashed. That is now underlined in light of his attempt to restructure his personal finances.

Reality might finally bite Alex Jones. It must leave a mark.

SCOREBOARD

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL							
AMERICAN CONFERENCE							
East							
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA		
Buffalo	9	3	0	.750	333	209	
Miami	8	4	0	.667	299	289	
N.Y. Jets	7	5	0	.583	252	223	
New England	6	6	0	.500	249	226	
South							
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA		
Tennessee	7	5	0	.583	219	240	
Indianapolis	4	8	1	.346	209	298	
Jacksonville	4	8	0	.333	258	272	
e-Houston	1	10	1	.125	188	287	

North							
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA		
Baltimore	8	4	0	.667	285	236	
Cincinnati	8	4	0	.667	312	255	
Cleveland	5	7	0	.417	290	300	
Pittsburgh	5	7	0	.417	213	277	

West							
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA		
Kansas City	9	3	0	.750	350	270	
L.A. Chargers	6	6	0	.500	272	309	
Las Vegas	5	7	0	.417	292	296	
Denver	3	9	0	.250	166	204	

NATIONAL CONFERENCE							
East							
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA		
Philadelphia	11	1	0	.917	338	226	
Dallas	9	3	0	.750	333	206	
N.Y. Giants	7	4	1	.625	245	252	
Washington	7	5	1	.577	253	256	

South							
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA		
Tampa Bay	6	6	0	.500	217	219	
Atlanta	5	8	0	.385	288	312	
Carolina	4	8	0	.333	230	266	
New Orleans	4	9	0	.308	265	297	

North							
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA		
Minnesota	10	2	0	.833	289	279	
Detroit	5	7	0	.417	315	324	
Green Bay	5	8	0	.385	263	302	
e-Chicago	3	10	0	.231	270	333	

West							
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA		
San Francisco	8	4	0	.667	282	190	
Seattle	7	5	0	.583	318	304	
Arizona	4	8	0	.333	264	321	
L.A. Rams	3	9	0	.250	201	280	

Thursday's game							
Las Vegas at L.A. Rams							
Sunday's games							
Baltimore at Pittsburgh	Cleveland at Cincinnati	Houston at Dallas	Jacksonville at Tennessee	Minnesota at Detroit	N.Y. Jets at Buffalo	Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants	Kansas City at Denver
Carolina at Seattle	Tampa Bay at San Francisco	Miami at L.A. Chargers	Open: Indianapolis, Atlanta, Chicago, Green Bay, New Orleans, Washington				

Monday's game							
New England at Arizona							

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Schedule

Saturday's game

EAST

Army (5-6) vs. Navy (4-7) at Philadelphia

FCS playoffs

Quarterfinals

Friday's games

Montana St. vs. William & Mary

North Dakota St. vs. Samford

Sacramento St. vs. UIW

Saturday's game

South Dakota St. vs. Holy Cross

NCAA Division II playoffs

Semifinals

Saturday, Dec. 10

Ferris St. (12-1) vs. West Florida (12-1)

Colo. Sch. of Mines (12-2) vs. Shepherd (13-1)

NCAA Division III playoffs

Semifinals

Saturday, Dec. 10

Wartburg vs. Mount Union (13-0)

North Central (III.) (13-0) vs. Mary Hardin-Baylor

Thursday, Dec. 15

San Francisco at Seattle

Saturday, Dec. 17

Indianapolis at Minnesota

Baltimore at Cleveland

Miami at Buffalo

Sunday, Dec. 18

Atlanta at New Orleans

Dallas at Jacksonville

Detroit at N.Y. Jets

Kansas City at Houston

Philadelphia at Chicago

Pittsburgh at Carolina

Arizona at Denver

New England at Las Vegas

Cincinnati at Tampa Bay

Tennessee at L.A. Chargers

N.Y. Giants at Washington

Monday, Dec. 19

L.A. Rams at Green Bay

NFL injury report

NEW YORK — The National Football League injury report, as provided by the league (OUT: Player will not play; DOUBTFUL: Player is unlikely to play; QUESTIONABLE: Player is not certain to play; DNP: did not practice; LIMITED: limited participation; FULL: Full participation):

Sunday

BALTIMORE RAVENS at PITTSBURGH STEELERS — BALTIMORE: DNP: DE Calais Campbell (NIR-resting player), C/G Trystan Colon (NIR-personal), WR Devin Duvernay (NIR-resting player), OLB Justin Houston (NIR-resting player), T Morgan Moses (NIR-resting player), CB Marcus Peters (NIR-resting player), QB Lamar Jackson (knee), OL Patrick Mekari (toe), CB Daryul Worley (hamstring), G Kevin Zeitler (knee). LIMITED: OLB Del'Shawn Phillips (quadricep), LB Patrick Queen (thigh), LB Kristian Welch (concussion). FULL: T Ronnie Stanley (ankle). **PITTSBURGH**: DNP: RB Najee Harris (oblique), OL Chuku Okorafor (shoulder), DL Larry Ogunjobi (toe), LB Malik Reed (back). LIMITED: WR Diontae Johnson (hip), LB T.J. Watt (ribs).**CAROLINA PANTHERS at SEATTLE SEAHAWKS** — CAROLINA: DNP: RB D'Onta Foreman (foot), LB Cory Littleton (ankle). LIMITED: DE Brian Burns (knee), T Ikem Ekwonu (knee), S Myles Hartsfield (ankle), DT Matt Ioannidis (calf), TE Giovanni Ricci (neck), S Xavier Woods (knee). **SEATTLE**: DNP: RB DeeJay Dallas (ankle), WR Marques Goodwin (hand), RB Kenneth Walker III (ankle), TE Will Dissly (calf), S Ryan Neal (knee). LIMITED: RB Travis Homer (knee), OT Abraham Lucas (elbow). FULL: OLB Bruce Irvin (knee), ILB Jordyn Brooks (neck), NT Al Woods (knee).**CLEVELAND BROWNS at CINCINNATI BENGALS** — CLEVELAND: DNP: G Joel Bitonio (NIR-resting player), DE Jadeveon Clowney (NIR-resting player), WR Amari Cooper (NIR-resting player), DE Myles Garrett (NIR-resting player/shoulder), CB A.J. Green (knee), T James Hudson (illness), WR Anthony Schwartz (concussion), DB Denzel Ward (ankle/illness). LIMITED: WR David Bell (thumb), TE David Njoku (knee). FULL: DE Chase Winovich (knee), DE Alex Wright (knee). **CINCINNATI**: DNP: OT La'el Collins (NIR-resting player), TE Hayden Hurst (calf), DT D.J. Reader (NIR-resting player). LIMITED: S Vonn Bell (NIR-resting player). FULL: S Jessie Bates (groin), HB Joe Mixon (concussion).**HOUSTON TEXANS at DALLAS COWBOYS** — HOUSTON: DNP: DE Mario Addison (knee), DT Maliek Collins (NIR-resting player), WR Nico Collins (foot), WR Brandin Cooks (calf), FB Troy Hairston (chest), DT Kurt Hinish (shoulder), DE Jerry Hughes (NIR-resting player), CB Derek Stingley (hamstring, illness). LIMITED: K Ka'imi Fairbairn (right groin). FULL: LB Garret Wallow (ankle). **DALLAS**: DNP: CB Anthony Brown (Achilles), DT Johnathan Hankins (NIR-personal), CB Kelvin Joseph (illness), DE Sam Williams (illness). LIMITED: CB DT Quinton Bohanna (knee), S Jayron Kearse (shoulder), DE Demarcus Lawrence (foot).**JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS at TENNESSEE TITANS** — JACKSONVILLE: DNP: G Trevor Lawrence (toe), LB Chad Muma (ankle). LIMITED: S Andre Cisco (shoulder), WR Zay Jones (chest). **TENNESSEE**: DNP: DE Denico Autry (knee), CB Tre Avery (concussion), WR C.J. Board (rib), WR Treylon Burks (concussion), CB Kristian Fulton (groin),

LB David Long (hamstring). LIMITED: G Nate Davis (knee), RB Hassan Haskins (hip), RB Derrick Henry (NIR-resting player), C Ben Jones (NIR-resting player), DT Jeffery Simmons (ankle), QB Ryan Tannehill (ankle), DT Teair Tart (ankle).

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS at DENVER BRONCOS — KANSAS CITY: LIMITED: LB Nick Bolton (groin), WR Kadarius Toney (hamstring). FULL: S Deon Bush (elbow), LB Willie Gay (groin), QB Patrick Mahomes (foot), RB Jerick McKinnon (hamstring), T Lucas Niang (knee), RB Isiah Pacheco (shoulder, quadricep), G Trey Smith (knee), CB L'Jarius Sneed (calf), G Joe Thuney (ankle), CB Jaylen Watson (hand), CB Joshua Williams (quadricep). **DENVER**: DNP: LB Dakota Allen (hamstring), TE Andrew Beck (hamstring, illness), T Tom Compton (illness), WR Jerry Jeudy (ankle), K Brandon McManus (right quadricep), G Dalton Risner (shoulder, back), WR Courtland Sutton (hamstring). LIMITED: LS Jacob Bobenmoyer (wrist), LB Baron Browning (elbow), DE Jonathan Harris (knee), S Kareem Jackson (NIR-resting player), CB K'Waun Williams (wrist, elbow, ankle).**MIAMI DOLPHINS at LOS ANGELES CHARGERS** — MIAMI: DNP: T Terron Armstead (toe/pec), LB Melvin Ingram (nir-rest). LIMITED: QB Teddy Bridgewater (knee), DT Raekwon Davis (knee), S Eric Rowe (back), TE Durham Smythe (quad/knee), QB Tua Tagovailoa (ankle), WR Jaylen Waddle (fibula), DT Justin Zimmer (back). FULL: LB Jerome Baker (hip), RB Myles Gaskin (shoulder), OL Robert Jones (shoulder), CB Kader Kohou (thumb). **LOS ANGELES CHARGERS**: DNP: S Derwin James (quadricep), DT Sebastian Joseph (knee), T Trey Pipkins (knee). LIMITED: CB Bryce Callahan (groin), G Zion Johnson (shoulder), C Corey Linsley (concussion), LB Kenneth Murray (hamstring), WR Mike Williams (ankle). FULL: WR DeAndre Carter (quadricep), C Will Clapp (shoulder), CB Michael Davis (knee), G Jamaree Salyer (knee).**MINNESOTA VIKINGS at DETROIT LIONS** — MINNESOTA: DNP: DL Jonathan Bullard (bicep), FB C.J. Ham (illness), OLB Danielle Hunter (illness), S Theo Jackson (illness), CB Patrick Peterson (illness), S Harrison Smith (illness). LIMITED: C Garrett Bradbury (back), T Christian Darrisaw (concussion). FULL: LB Eric Kendricks (shoulder). **DETROIT**: DNP: G Kayode Awoosika (ankle), LB Derrick Barnes (knee), T Taylor Decker (elbow), S DeShon Elliot (ankle), CB Jeff Okudah (illness), C Frank Ragnow (foot), WR Kalif Raymond (illness), QB Nate Sudfeld (illness). LIMITED: G/C Evan Brown (ankle), RB D'Andre Swift (ankle).**NEW YORK JETS at BUFFALO BILLS** — NEW YORK JETS: DNP: DE Micheal Clemons (illness), WR Corey Davis (illness), T George Fant (illness, knee), CB D.J. Reed (illness). LIMITED: T Duane Brown (shoulder), S Ashtyn Davis (hamstring), S Lamaricus Joyner (hip). **BUFFALO**: DNP: FB Reggie Gilliam (ankle), LB Matt Milano (knee), WR Jordan Phillips (shoulder), G Rodger Saffold (knee, NIR-resting player). LIMITED: T Dion Dawkins (ankle), C Mitch Morse (elbow, NIR-resting player), G David Queisenberry (ankle). FULL: QB Josh Allen (right elbow), CB Cameron Lewis (forearm).**PHILADELPHIA EAGLES at NEW YORK GIANTS** — PHILADELPHIA: DNP: LB Shaun Bradley (hamstring). LIMITED: WR Quez Watkins (shoulder) LB Kyzir White (ankle). **NEW YORK GIANTS**: DNP: OL Josh Ezeudu (neck), OL Mark Glowinski (NIR-resting player), DL Adoree Jackson (knee), DL Dexter Lawrence (NIR-resting player), OL Shane Lemieux (toe), DB Julian Love (NIR-resting player), DL Leonard Williams (neck). LIMITED: DB Darnay (shoulder), WR Richie James (knee), DB Nick McCloud (hamstring), DL Henry Mondeaux (knee). FULL: WR Kenny Golladay (illness).**TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS at SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS** — TAMPA BAY: DNP: S Mike Edwards (hamstring), S Antoine Winfield (ankle), T Tristan Wirfs (ankle, knee). LIMITED: CB Sean Murphy-Bunting (quadricep), DT Vita Vea (foot, shoulder). FULL: TE Cameron Brate (illness). **SAN FRANCISCO**: DNP: DE Nick Bosa (hamstring), QB Jimmy Garoppolo (foot), DB Tarvarius Moore (knee), DT Hassan Ridgeway (pectoral), OT Trent Williams (nir-rest). LIMITED: DT Arik Armstead (foot/ankle), G Spencer Burford (ankle), RB Christian McCaffrey (knee), WR Deebo Samuel (quad).**NEW YORK (1)** — Re-signed Anthony Rizzo, 1b, to a \$40 million, three-year contract.**TEXAS (2)** — Announced Martin Pérez, lhp, accepted \$19.65 million qualifying offer; signed Jacob deGrom, rhp, New York Mets, to a \$185 million, five-year contract.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

ARIZONA (1) — Signed Miguel Castro, rhp, New York Yankees, to a \$3.5 million, one-year contract.**LOS ANGELES (2)** — Signed Shelby Miller, rhp, San Francisco, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; re-signed Clayton Kershaw, lhp, to a \$20 million, one-year contract.**NEW YORK (1)** — Signed Justin Verlander, rhp, Houston, to a two-year contract.**PITTSBURGH (1)** — Signed Carlos Santana, 1b, Seattle, to a \$6.75 million, one-year contract.**SAN DIEGO (2)** — Re-signed Robert Suarez, rhp, to a \$46 million, five-year contract; re-signed Nick Martinez, rhp, to a \$26 million, three-year contract.**SAN FRANCISCO (2)** — Announced Joc Pederson, of, accepted \$19.65 million qualifying offer; signed Mitch Haniger, of, Seattle, to a \$43.5 million, three-year contract.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Wednesday's men's scores

EAST

Army 63, NJIT 62

Brown 59, Rhode Island 58

Colgate 81, Binghamton 62

Delaware 77, Delaware St. 69

Fairfield 61, Sacred Heart 59

Georgetown 75, Siena 68

Michigan St. 67, Penn St. 58

Morgan St. 95, Penn St.-Wilkes-Barre 48

Providence 99, Manhattan 59

Quinnipiac 75, Holy Cross 71

Rider 78, Stonehill 67

Seton Hall 82, Lincoln (Pa.) 55

St. Bonaventure 61, Cleveland St. 42

St. John's 86, DePaul 67

Villanova 70, Penn 59

West Virginia 85, Navy 64

SOUTH

Clemson 80, Towson 75

Davidson 72, W. Carolina 64

FAU 85, Florida Gulf Coast 53

Georgia Southern 91, Piedmont 47

Hampton 66, Loyola (Md.) 61

Jacksonville 73, VCU 62

Miami 107, Cornell 105

North Alabama 71, Alabama St. 63

Old Dominion 72, William & Mary 62

SE Louisiana 107, Belhaven 71

Tennessee 84, E. Kentucky 49

UConn 75, Florida 54

UNC-Asheville 122, Warren Wilson 70

VMI 106, Carlow 67

Vanderbilt 75, Pittsburgh 74

Virginia Tech 77, Dayton 49

MIDWEST

Ball St. 76, E. Illinois 59

Drake 78, Omaha 65

Evansville 72, Campbell 66

Fort Wayne 89, SE Missouri 68

Illinois St. 87, E. Michigan 81

Indiana 81, Nebraska 65

Indiana St. 74, S. Illinois 75

Notre Dame 81, Boston U. 75

Purdue 85, Hofstra 66

Robert Morris 71, Cent. Michigan 66

S. Indiana 78, Anderson (Ind.) 47

W. Illinois 84, Iowa Wesleyan 73

SOUTHWEST

Arizona St. 75, SMU 57

Detroit 76, Tulsa 72

Texas A&M-CC 100, Texas Lutheran 63

Texas Tech 78, Nicholls 71

FAR WEST

Cal Baptist 64, Weber St. 52

E. Washington 50, California 48

Fresno St. 65, CS Northridge 56

Loyola Marymount 69, Grand Canyon 65

Sacramento St. 87, Denver 85, OT

Saint Mary's (Cal.) 66, Missouri St. 46

San Francisco 69, Merrimack 51

Santa Clara 66, New Mexico St. 65

Southern Cal 64, Cal St.-Fullerton 50

UNLV 77, Hawaii 62

Utah Valley St. 75, BYU 60

Washington St. 68, N. Kentucky 47

Men's AP Top 25 schedule

Friday's game

No. 18 Gonzaga vs. Washington

Wednesday's women's scores

EAST

Binghamton 54, Navy 51

Boston U. 73, Merrimack 65

Bryant 67, Sacred Heart 56

Buffalo 63, Niagara 58

Canisius 85, St. Bonaventure 47

Colgate 69, NJIT 51

Columbia 84, Stony Brook 68

Duquesne 73, Kent St. 67

Hampton 66, St. Peter's 57

Hofstra 56, Army 53

La Salle 66, Monmouth (NJ) 60

Mass.-Lowell 60, CCSU 47

Mount St. Mary's 88, Pitt.-Johnstown 61

Pittsburgh 78, Loyola (Md.) 42

Providence 62, Brown 44

Quinnipiac 75, Yale 59

Rhode Island 88, Hartford 34

MLB/WORLD CUP



ABBIE PARR/AP

Xander Bogaerts agreed to a blockbuster \$280 million, 11-year contract Wednesday night with the San Diego Padres, who are adding the All-Star slugger to an already deep lineup.

Padres grab SS Bogaerts as teams weigh other options

By JAY COHEN
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Farhan Zaidi got a text message from Aaron Judge's representatives early Wednesday morning. And just like that, it was over.

It was time to move on.

With Judge returning to the New York Yankees on a \$360 million, nine-year contract, the San Francisco Giants are mulling over their next move after they missed the playoffs this year.

"We always knew this was a possible outcome, and so we've done a lot of work on our other options," said Zaidi, the Giants' president of baseball operations.

"We'll kind of re-evaluate our board and still looking for ways to improve the next team."

San Diego also met with Judge before he went back to New York, and the Padres quickly jumped on another bat — reeling in All-Star shortstop Xander Bogaerts with a blockbuster \$280 million, 11-year contract.

The Padres already had Fernando Tatis Jr. at shortstop, but he missed the entire season because of injuries and an 80-game suspension for testing positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

San Diego also met with Aaron Judge and Trea Turner before the big stars opted for different teams. The Padres reached the NL Championship Series this year before losing to the Phillies.

"From our standpoint, you want to explore and make sure we're looking at every possible opportunity to get better," general manager

A.J. Preller said before the Bogaerts deal surfaced. "We've got a real desire to win and do it for a long time."

Zaidi is keeping his cards close to his vest, but there remained plenty of intriguing possibilities on the market as the winter meetings concluded on Wednesday.

All-Star shortstops Carlos Correa and Dansby Swanson are free agents, along with left-hander Carlos Rodón after his terrific year for the Giants. Speedy center fielder Brandon Nimmo could be a nice fit for San Francisco's expansive outfield at Oracle Park.

"We have the support of ownership, but we're not being mandated to get to a certain level payroll-wise," Zaidi said. "We have the flexibility to do that if the opportunities are right."

Judge's contract — baseball's biggest free-agent deal ever — dominated the conversation at the winter meetings Wednesday, but catcher Willson Contreras and pitchers Jameson Taillon, José Quintana and Kenley Jansen all joined new teams, and the Philadelphia Phillies took U.S. Navy aviator Noah Song in the Rule 5 draft.

Taillon joined the Chicago Cubs, agreeing to a four-year contract that is worth roughly \$68 million. A person familiar with the negotiations confirmed the deal to The AP on condition of anonymity because it was pending a physical.

The Cubs haven't formally announced the move, but President of Baseball Operations Jed Hoyer said the team has been looking at

Taillon for a long time.

"I think he's a really good starting pitcher," Hoyer said. "He's been really consistent."

Contreras left the Cubs for NL Central rival St. Louis, which had a need at catcher after Yadier Molina retired. A person familiar with Contreras' \$87.5 million, five-year contract confirmed the move to The AP on condition of anonymity because the deal was pending a physical.

The fiery, strong-armed catcher hit .243 with 22 homers and 55 RBIs in 113 games in his last season with his first major league team. He was on the market this summer — leading to an emotional day at Wrigley Field for what looked like his final home game with Chicago — but he remained with the team after the trade deadline.

Contreras was the best option in a thin market for free-agent catchers that also included Christian Vázquez and Gary Sánchez.

Contreras also has played first base, third base and the corner outfield spots in the majors. The three-time All-Star made 39 starts at designated hitter this year.

Quintana agreed to a \$26 million, two-year contract with the New York Mets, adding another veteran arm to the team's rotation.

Quintana played for Pittsburgh and St. Louis last season, going 6-7 with a 2.93 ERA in 32 starts. The left-hander was terrific after he was traded to the Cardinals in August, posting a 2.01 ERA in 12 appearances for the NL Central champions.

England defender Walker aiming to contain Mbappe

By JAMES ROBSON
Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — With five goals at the World Cup so far, Kylian Mbappe is living up to his reputation as the man best-placed to succeed Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo as soccer's biggest star.

Spare a thought then for Kyle Walker, who is set to mark the France striker when England takes on the defending champions in the quarterfinals on Saturday.

"I do understand what I need to do and that's obviously to stop him," the Manchester City right back said Wednesday.

Walker described Mbappe as "probably" the best player in the world and accepted there is particular focus on how he handles the situation at Al Bayt Stadium. But he believes there has been too much talk about just one player when France has a squad full of world-class talent.

"The game is not England vs. Mbappe. The game is England vs. France," Walker said. "OK, he's a tool they have in their armory that's very good, but there are other very good players and we can't underestimate those players that have won big titles, won big cups. He's a great player, we all know that. That's why all the questions are about him, but let's not forget (Olivier) Giroud, who scored countless goals for France and in the Premier League.

"(Ousmane) Dembele who, for me, is just as good on the other wing, is a very tricky player. Then you've got (Antoine) Griezmann and stuff like this. These players can cause you the problems. OK, we take our hat off to him, he is a great player. For me, all the questions shouldn't be about him."



CHRISTOPHE ENA/AP

Kylian Mbappe celebrates after scoring France's second goal during the round of 16 match against Poland.

World Cup
Quarterfinals

Croatia vs. Brazil. **AFN-Sports, 3:45 p.m. Friday CET; 11:45 p.m. Friday JKT**
Netherlands vs. Argentina. **AFN-Sports, 7:45 p.m. Friday CET; 3:45 a.m. Saturday JKT**

Morocco vs. Portugal. **AFN-Sports2, 3:45 p.m. Saturday CET; 11:45 p.m. Saturday JKT**

England vs. France. **AFN-Sports2, 7:45 p.m. Saturday CET; 3:45 a.m. Sunday JKT**

Mbappe is aiming to win his second World Cup after his starring role when France won the title in Russia four years ago. He scored four goals in that tournament and has already surpassed that number in Qatar with five.

Walker has come up against the Frenchman three times in the Champions League with City against Paris Saint-Germain, winning twice and losing once. Mbappe only managed to score one goal in those three games — and that was in a 2-1 loss in November 2021.

While France won the title in Russia, England was knocked out by Croatia in the semifinals.

Walker believes the team is better placed to go further this time after reaching the final of last year's European Championship, which it lost on penalties to Italy.

France, he said, holds no fear for this England team.

"We take our hats off to them. They are world champions. They have the respect they deserve. They won the last World Cup," Walker said. "But I can assure you that each and every one of us will not be rolling out the red carpet for them to go and perform, thinking it's a theater for them to showcase their great talent. We have also got great talent that we need to be speaking about as well."

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference							
Atlantic Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	25	21	3	1	43	100	53
Toronto	27	16	5	6	38	83	66
Detroit	25	13	7	5	31	81	78
Tampa Bay	25	15	9	1	31	86	79
Florida	26	12	10	4	28	90	88
Montreal	26	13	11	2	28	80	92
Buffalo	26	12	13	1	25	105	96
Ottawa	25	10	14	1	21	77	83

Metropolitan Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
New Jersey	26	21	4	1	43	96	57
Carolina	26	14	6	6	34	77	73
Pittsburgh	26	14	8	4	32	93	79
N.Y. Islanders	27	16	11	0	32	86	73
N.Y. Rangers	28	13	10	5	31	87	81
Washington	28	12	12	4	28	78	86
Philadelphia	27	9	13	5	23	65	89
Columbus	25	8	15	2	18	71	105

Western Conference							
Central Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Winnipeg	24	16	7	1	33	79	61
Dallas	26	14	7	5	33	98	76
Minnesota	25	13	10	2	28	81	79
Colorado	24	13	10	1	27	78	70
Nashville	23	12	9	2	26	63	70
St. Louis	26	12	14	0	24	80	100
Arizona	24	7	13	4	18	63	89
Chicago	25	7	14	4	18	61	91

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	28	19	8	1	39	95	76
Seattle	25	15	7	3	33	90	79
Los Angeles	28	14	10	4	32	97	99
Edmonton	27	15	12	0	30	97	95
Calgary	26	13	10	3	29	81	79
Vancouver	27	12	12	3	27	97	106
San Jose	29	8	16	5	21	87	109
Anaheim	27	7	17	3	17	69	114

NOTE: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

- Wednesday's games**
- Washington 4, Philadelphia 1
 - Buffalo 9, Columbus 4
 - Calgary 5, Minnesota 3
 - Boston 4, Colorado 0
 - Edmonton 8, Arizona 2
 - N.Y. Rangers 5, Vegas 1
 - Vancouver 6, San Jose 5, OT
- Thursday's games**
- Los Angeles at Toronto
 - Nashville at Tampa Bay
 - Detroit at Florida
 - Winnipeg at St. Louis
 - Ottawa at Dallas
- Friday's games**
- Calgary at Columbus
 - N.Y. Islanders at New Jersey
 - Pittsburgh at Buffalo
 - Seattle at Washington
 - Winnipeg at Chicago
 - Minnesota at Edmonton
 - N.Y. Rangers at Colorado
 - Boston at Arizona
 - Philadelphia at Vegas
 - San Jose at Anaheim
- Saturday's games**
- Ottawa at Nashville
 - Detroit at Dallas
 - Florida at Tampa Bay
 - Buffalo at Pittsburgh
 - Calgary at Toronto
 - Los Angeles at Montreal
 - Carolina at N.Y. Islanders
 - Minnesota at Vancouver
- Sunday's games**
- Colorado at St. Louis
 - Los Angeles at Columbus
 - Seattle at Florida
 - Philadelphia at Arizona
 - Washington at Winnipeg
 - Boston at Vegas

Scoring leaders

Through Wednesday

	GP	G	A	PTS
Connor McDavid, EDM	27	24	28	52
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	27	18	26	44
Jason Robertson, DAL	26	23	18	41
Tage Thompson, BUF	26	21	19	40
Nikita Kucherov, TB	25	11	26	37
David Pastrnak, BOS	25	18	18	36
Erik Karlsson, SJ	29	11	24	35
Matthew Tkachuk, FLA	24	12	23	35
Sidney Crosby, PIT	26	15	20	35
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	23	8	26	34
Elias Pettersson, VAN	27	13	21	34
Artemi Panarin, NYR	28	6	27	33
Kirill Kaprizov, MIN	25	17	16	33

4 tied with 32 pts.

Christmas may be new playoff gauge

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

For the better part of two decades since the NHL instituted a salary cap, enjoying turkey, stuffing and mashed potatoes were synonymous with feeling pretty good about making the playoffs.

Dating to 2005-06, with lockout and pandemic-related seasons excepted, 76% of teams in a playoff spot by the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday wound up qualifying. It became such a popular narrative that it began to seep into coaches' offices and locker rooms based on the odds alone.

Maybe not this year. Thanks to the season starting later than normal, many contenders still trying to find a groove amid various injuries and expansion to 32 teams also makes it inherently harder to make the playoffs.

The Christmas break may be a better barometer for who's playing for the Stanley Cup beginning in April.

"This is the year where I don't know if it's going to correlate — I think there might be a little bit of a wrench in that," longtime player and coach Rick Tocchet said. "This is a little goofy season. I don't think you can have that barometer. I think you have to wait a little bit longer."

Already in the week since Thanksgiving, the best eight teams in the Western Conference have changed out, with Calgary and St. Louis for Edmonton and Minnesota. While New Jersey is looking like the real deal, Detroit remains a bit surprisingly in a playoff spot in the East — with Washington, Florida and others on the outside looking in.

Capitals coach Peter Laviolette acknowledged the history of teams riding a good Thanksgiving spot into the playoffs. But, he points out, "I know teams have made it to the playoffs and played for Cups from behind the line."

He did it with Philadelphia in 2009-10, inheriting the 22nd-place



WINSLOW TOWNSON/AP

Colorado Avalanche goaltender Pavel Francouz looks back to see the puck on the goal line during the second period against the Boston Bruins on Saturday in Boston. The play was ruled no goal because the goal had come off its moorings before the puck crossed the line

team in the league in December and taking it to the Final. But the reality of the situation is that's more the exception than the rule.

"There's something to it," Washington center Lars Eller said. "You don't want to be chasing. You want to be in a good position early. You have a bad stretch like we had (recently), you can't have two or three of those a season (or) you're not going to make the playoffs."

Make the playoffs first is the focus of defending champion Colorado, which like Washington and Philadelphia has been ravaged by injuries early in the season.

Coach Jared Bednar's theory is to stay in the mix and keep pushing until reinforcements arrive, and he knows other teams are going through similar struggles and transitions; there were 10 new coaches on the bench as the season began. That's why he thinks the first 15 or so games of the season are not enough to start making

judgments.

"Some teams have a lot of new players, new coaches all around the league," Bednar said. "It takes some time to get dialed in exactly the way you want to go, so I think this year with all the movement through the league now last couple years — lots of coaches moving — I think it can take time for teams to find their footing."

Tocchet, now a Turner Sports analyst, has also pointed to the number of comebacks as a reason for uncertainty. There were 22 multi-goal, third-period comeback wins in the first quarter of

the season, according to NHL Stats, the most at that point in league history.

"Nobody's ever out of it anymore," Tocchet said.

Lengthy winning and losing streaks also play into the fluctuation of standings. The Devils won 13 in a row and Vegas nine, while St. Louis has a seven-game winning streak and an eight-game losing skid already.

"Teams move up in the standings, teams move down," veteran Avalanche forward Andrew Cogliano said. "It's just the parity of the league."



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Los Angeles Kings center Jaret Anderson-Dolan chases the puck while under pressure from Seattle Kraken right wing Daniel Sprong during the third period Nov. 29 in Los Angeles.

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Southern California quarterback Caleb Williams has passed for 4,075 yards this season with an FBS-leading 37 touchdowns and just four interceptions. He has also rushed for 372 yards and 10 touchdowns.

USC QB Williams AP Player of Year

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Southern California quarterback Caleb Williams is The Associated Press college football player of the year, becoming the school's first winner of the award since 2005 with his stellar debut season for the Trojans.

Williams received 32 of the 46 first-place votes and 117 total points from AP Top 25 poll voters to win the award. The Heisman Trophy favorite finished well ahead of TCU quarterback Max Duggan, who came in second with six first-place votes and 64 points.

Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud was third, with Tennessee's Hendon Hooker in fourth and Georgia's Stetson Bennett fifth.

Alabama linebacker Will Anderson Jr., the first repeat SEC Defensive Player of the Year, was the only non-quarterback in this year's top eight vote-getters, finishing sixth after coming in fourth last season.

Stroud and Hooker got two first-place votes apiece, while one first-place vote each went to Bennett, Anderson and star running backs Bijan Robinson of Texas and Blake Corum of Michigan.

The clear favorite was Williams, the elusive passer and runner with an electrifying arm and strong leadership skills. The sophomore followed Lincoln Riley from Oklahoma to the West Coast last winter, and the duo immediately returned USC (11-2) to national prominence with a seven-win improvement on last season's record.

Williams has passed for 4,075

yards with an FBS-leading 37 touchdowns and just four interceptions this season, completing 66.1% of his passes while winning the Pac-12's Offensive Player of the Year award.

His ability to avoid defensive pressure has bordered on the supernatural at times, and he has racked up 372 yards rushing and 10 touchdowns while setting the USC school records for total touchdowns and total offensive yards (4,447) in a season.

"I think he's just elegant in the way he plays the game," USC receiver Kyle Ford said. "That's the only word to describe it. He's out there and he's in the backfield, zig-zagging around and doing spin moves, and he doesn't get touched and has a first down, and he's out of bounds. Stuff like that is amazing to me, stuff that he pulls off during a game. He's a gamer, and he's a winner."

Perhaps most impressively, Williams has played a critical role in bringing cohesion, teamwork and 11 victories to a program returning from a four-win season with a new coaching staff and more than two dozen veteran player additions through the transfer portal.

Although he usually deflects questions about his own play by praising his teammates, Williams admits leadership "means everything" to him.

"I've been trying to lead more," he added. "Being in a position where you can go and do something bigger, or do something that you've always dreamed of as a child, it brings that understanding that the time is right now."

Regret: Winning this game ranks at top of list for Army, Navy players

FROM PAGE 32

been looking forward to the 2022 edition of "America's Game" since he was a high school senior. Bishop grew up in Holland, Pa., about an hour outside of Philadelphia.

Bishop did not play in the 2019 Army-Navy game that was held at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia. The last two meetings between the Black Knights and Midshipmen were played at Michie Stadium on the West Point campus and MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J..

For Bishop, it would mean the world to beat Navy in Philadelphia in front of family and friends in a homecoming of sorts. A victory on Saturday would also enable him to hold his head high as an infantry officer as part of the "Long Gray Line."

"That's something everyone is going to ask you for the rest of your life: What happened in the Army-Navy game your senior year? It's kind of our legacy game and that kind of ups the ante a little bit," Bishop said. "I'm excited to go out there with the rest of this senior class and put on display what we're all about. We've been doing this together for four years now and we want to go out in style."

Navy offensive tackle and tri-captain Kip Frankland feels the same way. He recently received Naval pilot as a service selection and is headed to flight school at Air Station Pensacola. The Tennessee native can already anticipate the questions when other flight officers find out he played football at the academy.

"Army-Navy is the game of all games here, so to go out losing would be absolutely atrocious. You always want to go out on top," Frankland said. "To have that feeling that you took care of business against Army as a senior would be wonderful. That is something you can take out to the fleet and be proud of. You definitely don't want to be someone who lost to Army as a senior."

Outside linebacker John Marshall has experienced both sides of the Army-Navy postgame. As a sophomore in 2020, Marshall walked into the visiting locker room at Michie Stadium and saw seniors sitting with their heads hung and shedding tears.

"It was heartbreaking. I remember being so sad and disappointed for the seniors," Marshall said.

By contrast, Marshall will never forget the joy and jubilation expressed by senior defenders such as Diego Fagot and Michael McMorris after Navy beat Army, 17-13, last season. They and other seniors climbed into the first row of stands at MetLife Stadium to



Niumatalolo



Monken

celebrate with members of the Brigade of Midshipmen then triumphantly sang Blue and Gold in boisterous voices.

"I was really close with the captains from last season and I know how much it meant for them to beat Army as seniors," Marshall said. "That sense of euphoria that they felt is what I want to replicate."

Marshall, Frankland and fellow tri-captain Bijan Nichols set several goals going into this season and almost all have fallen by the wayside. Navy will not capture the coveted Commander in Chief's Trophy and has long since been out of contention for a berth in the American Athletic Conference championship game.

The Midshipmen are guaranteed a losing record and will miss out on a bowl berth for the fourth time in the past five seasons. At this point, only one preseason goal remains in play.

"Our season has not gone how we had hoped as seniors, so this game is a chance to make things right," Marshall admitted. "It would mean everything to be able to beat Army and go out on a high note. If we get this win, it will kind of ease the pain of a tough season. There is no doubt we need this win badly."

Standout safety Marquel Broughton is a four-year letterman and three-year starter at Army. The Georgia native notched three tackles as the Black Knights shut out the Mids, 15-0, in the 2020 game that was supposed to be

played in Philadelphia, but was moved to West Point because of the pandemic.

Broughton played in the 2019 and 2021 Army-Navy games that were both losses for his side. He remembers the seniors breaking down and collapsing on the field as soon as the final horn blew to end last season's contest.

"This is the last time I get to go against the archrival, and that means a lot. There's no do-over, there's no next year. It's now or never, and that brings a real sense of urgency," Broughton said. "I've talked to some of the seniors from last season and that still weighs heavy on their hearts that they didn't get it done their senior year."

Navy coach Ken Niumatalolo notes that his seniors have a chance to complete their careers 3-1 against Army. As far as the 15th-year mentor is concerned, the 2020 loss to the Black Knights comes with an asterisk since it was the crazy COVID season and the contest was not played at a neutral site as usual.

The Midshipmen set a series record by beating the Black Knights in 14 straight seasons. Niumatalolo was an assistant when the streak began in 2002 and was head coach when it ended in 2016. That historic run spawned 11 Navy senior classes that finished 4-0 against Army. Niumatalolo intends to impress upon the current seniors how notable a 3-1 mark would be.

"You want bragging rights for the rest of time. This is their last time playing against the archrival and that means a lot. With a win, you can ride off into the sunset feeling good," Niumatalolo said. "That will be a message for the seniors that they have a chance to write history as a class that went 3-1 against Army."



ADAM HUNGER/AP

Navy players celebrate with the Brigade of Midshipmen after beating Army 17-13 last season in East Rutherford, N.J.

NBA

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	21	5	.808	—
Brooklyn	14	12	.538	7
Toronto	13	12	.520	7½
Philadelphia	12	12	.500	8
New York	12	13	.480	8½
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	13	12	.520	—
Miami	11	14	.440	2
Washington	11	14	.440	2
Charlotte	7	18	.280	6
Orlando	6	20	.231	7½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	18	6	.750	—
Cleveland	16	9	.640	2½
Indiana	13	12	.520	5½
Chicago	10	14	.417	8
Detroit	7	20	.259	12½
Western Conference				
Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New Orleans	16	8	.667	—
Memphis	16	9	.640	½
Dallas	13	11	.542	3
Houston	7	17	.292	9
San Antonio	6	18	.250	10
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Denver	14	10	.583	—
Utah	15	12	.556	½
Portland	13	11	.542	1
Minnesota	12	12	.500	2
Oklahoma City	11	14	.440	3½
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	16	9	.640	—
Sacramento	13	10	.565	2
L.A. Clippers	14	12	.538	2½
Golden State	13	13	.500	3½
L.A. Lakers	10	14	.417	5½

Wednesday's games

Orlando 116, L.A. Clippers 111, OT
 Brooklyn 122, Charlotte 116
 Toronto 126, L.A. Lakers 113
 New York 113, Atlanta 89
 Memphis 123, Oklahoma City 102
 Milwaukee 126, Sacramento 113
 New Orleans 104, Detroit 98
 Chicago 115, Washington 111
 Minnesota 121, Indiana 115
 Utah 124, Golden State 123
 Boston 125, Phoenix 98

Thursday's games

L.A. Clippers at Miami
 Houston at San Antonio
 Denver at Portland

Friday's games

New York at Charlotte
 Toronto at Orlando
 Washington at Indiana
 Atlanta at Brooklyn
 L.A. Lakers at Philadelphia
 Sacramento at Cleveland
 Detroit at Memphis
 Phoenix at New Orleans
 Minnesota at Utah
 Milwaukee at Dallas

Saturday's games

San Antonio at Miami
 Brooklyn at Indiana
 L.A. Clippers at Washington
 Oklahoma City at Cleveland
 Dallas at Chicago
 Boston at Golden State
 Utah at Denver
 Minnesota at Portland

Sunday's games

Phoenix at New Orleans
 Charlotte at Philadelphia
 L.A. Lakers at Detroit
 Sacramento at New York
 Toronto at Orlando
 Chicago at Atlanta
 Milwaukee at Houston

Scoring leaders

Through Wednesday

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Doncic, DAL	23	259	173	756	32.9
Antetokounmpo, MIL	20	235	154	641	32.1
G-Alexander, OKC	23	239	214	715	31.1
Tatum, BOS	25	251	176	763	30.5
Curry, GS	23	233	106	689	30.0
Durant, BKN	26	277	181	776	29.8
Mitchell, CLE	23	233	113	668	29.0
Morant, MEM	21	206	144	595	28.3
Booker, PHO	25	250	140	698	27.9
Davis, LAL	21	217	130	573	27.3

AROUND THE LEAGUE

In the NBA, 100 points no longer assures anything

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
Associated Press

If the NBA has a magic number, it's 100. Wilt Chamberlain's single-game scoring record. A perfect shooting percentage. And the rule pretty much seemed to be that if a team scored 100 points in a game, it was probably going to walk off the floor as a winner.

Not anymore. Put simply, 100 doesn't guarantee anything. Teams with at least 100 points are losing 45% of their games so far this season as of Tuesday, the highest such rate in more than 50 years and nearly 10% higher than the league's all-time average.

Orlando is 4-16 when scoring 100 points. Detroit is 7-14 in those games. Houston is 7-15. It's just not enough to win in this NBA era, where defense might seem optional — teams have insisted that isn't the case — and 20-point scorers appear to be everywhere.

Really. They're everywhere. Right now, there are nearly 50 NBA players on pace to average 20 points this season. A decade ago, only 11 players finished the season with such an average. There will, without question, be more 20-point-per-game guys not getting picked for the All-Star Game this year than ever before, simply because there aren't anywhere near

enough roster spots in that game to accommodate them all.

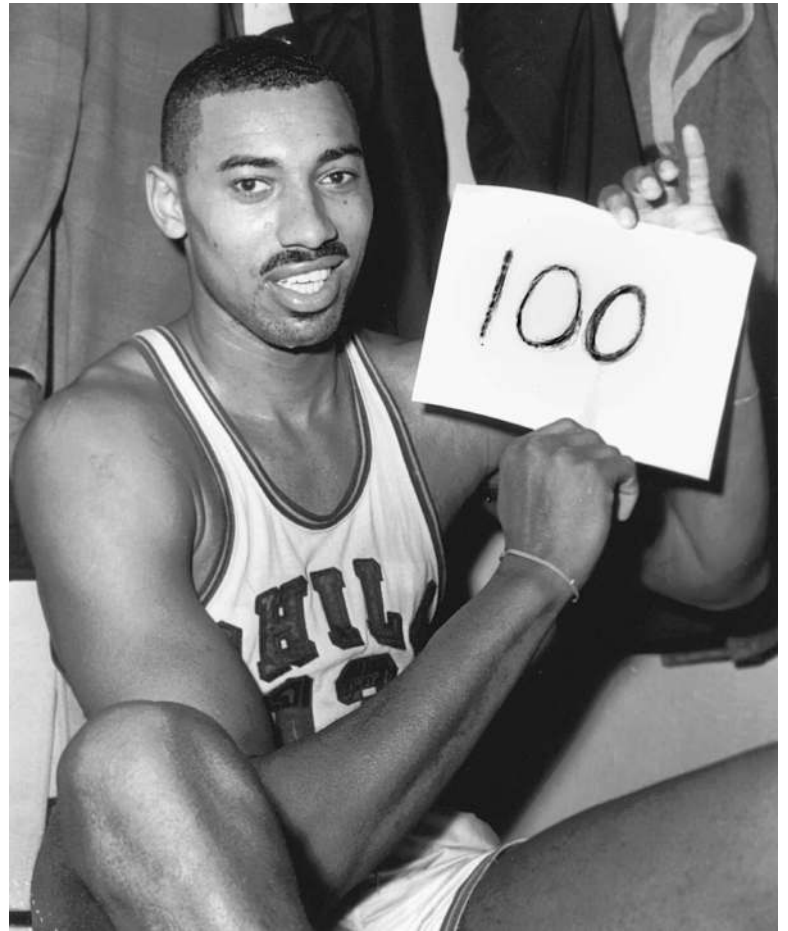
"We've got a lot of threats out there to shoot the ball," said Brooklyn's Kevin Durant, whose current average of 29.9 points per game ranks seventh in the league this season — yet is more than he averaged in two of the four seasons in which he won the league's scoring title. "So that keeps defenses on their heels."

He was speaking of the Nets when he said that, though he could have just as easily been talking about the whole league.

Not since 1969-70 has the NBA seen a season where teams are averaging this many points per game. The league average this season is 113 points per contest; that's up 13 points from eight seasons ago and up almost 17 points from 11 seasons ago. Much of that has to do with the league's ongoing reliance on the three-pointer — a record number of those (30,598) were made last season and this season is on pace for a similar total in that department.

Magic coach Jamahl Mosley has said his definition of a good defensive game in this NBA is simple: holding an opponent to 107 or 108 points tends to make him happy.

"That's the crazy part about it," Mosley said. "You say you're scoring enough to get where you need



PAUL VATSIS/AP

Wilt Chamberlain of the Philadelphia Warriors holds a sign after a game in Hershey, Pa., after he scored 100 points as the Warriors beat the New York Knickerbockers 169-147 on March 2, 1962.

to be, but then defensively, if you're giving up the 120's and the 115's, that's where it becomes tough. That's two or three less turnovers, that's one more rebound, that's knocking down one more shot, that's taking away one more three. You talk about the small gains and the small things you can do to help your defense get better, those are the pieces."

This may be the best and simplest example of how the game has changed. In the 2014-15 season, the Los Angeles Clippers averaged 106.9 points per game, which was second-best in the NBA.

This season, the Clippers are averaging 107.2 per game. That's last in the league.

"I think one of our team's greatest challenges right now is just being consistent on both ends of the floor, especially the defense," Denver coach Michael Malone said.

Every coach in the league could, and probably has, offered a similar assessment. The game just keeps changing and what used to be normal just isn't anymore.

Going into this week, more than half of the league's teams — 16 of the 30 — are on pace to have one of the six highest-scoring seasons in their history. Of the first 351 games played this season, there have been only 10 instances of a team scoring less than 100 points and still winning. Last year, it happened about three times as frequently as it has this season.

Some of the stats out there right now when it comes to scoring are just wacky. Minnesota was 20-0 last season when scoring 126 points; the Timberwolves are 4-3 in those games this season. Miami scored 121 points in regulation and lost a game in Boston last week; the Heat had been 64-6 under coach Erik Spoelstra in such games.

And then there was Nov. 13, when the New York Knicks did something truly historic.

They scored 135 points in regulation that night and lost by double figures anyway, falling 145-135 to the Oklahoma City Thunder. Before that, the most recent time the Knicks scored that many points, without overtime, and lost by double figures was March 2, 1962.

They lost to the Philadelphia Warriors that night, 169-147.

That was the game where Wilt scored 100.



JESSIE ALCHEW/AP

Brooklyn Nets forward Kevin Durant interacts with Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum during the second half Sunday in New York. The Celtics defeated the Nets 103-92.

NFL

Giants eager to face ex-mate Bradberry

By TOM CANAVAN
Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Daniel Jones and Darius Slayton are looking forward to seeing former Giants teammate James Bradberry and to the challenge of going against one of the NFL's top cornerbacks when New York faces the Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday.

The three players spent the previous two years on the Giants under then-coach Joe Judge and went against each other in practice hundreds and possibly thousands of times.

Bradberry knows Jones' throwing habits as a quarterback and Slayton's moves as a receiver. They know his tendencies as a defensive back.

"It goes both ways," Jones said of the challenge, which will feature the NFL-leading Eagles (11-1) against the slipping Giants (7-4-1). "I think we both understand each other's skillsets and that'll be part of the game."

Some Giants fans were troubled when Bradberry was released this spring. He was an outstanding cornerback but his nearly \$22 million salary-cap hit was too much for a team needing a lot of help this season.

General manager Dave Gettleman and Judge were fired after a



ZACH BOLINGER/AP

Eagles cornerback James Bradberry spent the previous two years with New York practicing against Daniel Jones and Darius Slayton, which makes this week's matchup more interesting.

4-13 season in 2021 and GM Joe Schoen and coach Brian Daboll were hired away from Buffalo.

Bradberry signed with the Eagles and he has given them one of the NFL's top cornerback tandems with Darius Slay. Philadelphia has the league's top-ranked passing defense, allowing an average of 178.5 yards.

**Philadelphia Eagles (11-1)
at New York Giants (7-4-1)**
AFN-Sports
7 p.m. Sunday CET
3 a.m. Monday JKT

While he has not spoken to Bradberry in months, Slayton says he remains a good friend.

"It was sad to see him go," Slay-



JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

Giants receiver Darius Slayton said Bradberry and Darius Slay might be the best cornerback tandem he has faced this season.

ton said. "Brad is a good guy, a good football player. But we understand the business part of it. At the end of the day when you have a new coach and a new GM, there is going to be some turnover."

Bradberry is playing well with the Eagles. He has 30 tackles, 14 passes defensed — one behind NFL leader Sauce Gardner of the Jets — and three interceptions, the same number as Slay.

Slayton, who was drafted in

2019 along with Jones, has emerged as the Giants' top receiver in a year marked by injuries and disappointments at the position. He has had at least 86 yards receiving in three of his last four games, highlighted by a season-high 55-yard catch against Washington.

Slayton said Bradberry and Slay might be the best cornerback tandem he has faced this season, but he believes he can get open deep against anyone.

"They understand their games individually," Slayton said. "They're kind of different. Brad is a bit of a bigger, heavier guy, physical. Slay is a little lighter, but he's got great hips (and) good speed."

Eagles coach Nick Sirianni said Bradberry is not the type of player who's going to get overly excited about facing former teammates at MetLife Stadium. He said he told receiver A.J. Brown this past week to focus on his job while preparing to face the Titans, his former team.

Sirianni said he told the same thing to Bradberry on Wednesday but realized it wasn't necessary.

"When I said that to James this morning I said: 'You're probably the last person I have to say this to.' He's so calm and even-keeled. He doesn't get too up and he doesn't get too down."

Seahawks RB depth getting tested entering stretch run

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — Pete Carroll right away gave an honest assessment of where the running back room stands with the Seattle Seahawks.

"Well, we got a little walk-through done so far and Tony Jones (Jr.) looks really good," Carroll said on Wednesday.

As for the rest of Seattle's running backs? Well, that remains a major unknown ahead of Sunday's game against Carolina.

Carroll had only vague updates about the status of starter Kenneth Walker III, and backups DeeJay Dallas and Travis Homer after injuries left Seattle's backfield thin in the second half of last week's win over the Los Angeles Rams.

Walker jammed his ankle late in the first half against the Rams. Carroll said Monday it's not a traditional ankle sprain, but there is inflamed tissue in the area. Whether he's able to get back on the field this week remains unknown.

"He's doing everything he can. He's rehabbing all day long, every day and doing everything that he

**Carolina Panthers (4-8)
at Seattle Seahawks (7-5)**
AFN-Sports2
10:25 p.m. Sunday CET
6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

can do to get right," Carroll said.

Dallas suffered a more traditional sprained ankle and played through the injury in the second half, while Homer wasn't even active while dealing with a knee issue.

Carroll said Homer was practicing on Wednesday while Dallas didn't do any work in the early walk-through.

"(Dallas) was kind of bouncing around today. He didn't take any snaps in walk-through but his attitude is exactly what you want. He's determined to get back. So we'll see what happens," Carroll said.

The injury situation last week left Jones suddenly getting his first action as a ball carrier with the Seahawks since being claimed off waivers in October. His numbers were rather meager, rushing for 14 yards on seven carries, but the need was significant after Walker became unavailable and

Dallas could be used only sparingly.

"Those type of situations, those types of things just see if you were really prepared for the week," Jones said. "I think I did pretty decent. I mean, obviously I think I could do better than what I did. But I just got to build from it this week."

Seattle signed veteran Wayne Gallman to the practice squad to add a little depth, but the entire position is filled with uncertainty ahead of the visit from the Panthers. Exasperating the situation more so for Seattle is the quick turnaround to next week when the Seahawks host the 49ers in a Thursday night game with major implications in the NFC West.

Walker would clearly be the preferred choice, but the rookie has struggled in recent weeks. He was averaging 12 yards per carry on his three rushes before getting hurt against the Rams, although 30 of that came on one run.

Walker was held to 17 yards rushing in Seattle's loss to Tampa Bay and had just 26 yards on 14 carries in its overtime loss to Las Vegas two weeks ago.



KYUSUNG GONG/AP

Seahawks running back Kenneth Walker III had just three carries before being injured against the Rams last Sunday.

NFL



AARON DOSTER/AP

Cincinnati Bengals' Ja'Marr Chase is tackled by Cleveland Browns' Greg Newsome II last year in Cincinnati.

Browns DBs eager to catch up with Bengals WR Chase

By TOM WITHERS

Associated Press

BEREA, Ohio — Some of the Browns' defensive backs were disappointed when Ja'Marr Chase missed the previous game against them because of a hip injury.

They'll finally catch up with the Bengals' uber-confident star wide receiver on Sunday.

It won't be to exchange Christmas cards.

Chase added fuel to an already heated AFC North rivalry this summer when he called out Cleveland cornerbacks Denzel Ward and Greg Newsome II during an appearance on a podcast. His comments — “they all just talk crazy” among others — got back to the Browns, who were anxious to face him on Halloween.

Chase didn't play in Cleveland's shocking 32-13 blowout of Cincinnati, but that doesn't mean the Browns have forgotten what he said.

“It's kind of floating around the building, guys joking around saying it,” safety John Johnson III said Wednesday. “But at the end of the day, we just gotta go out there and compete.”

Chase is healthy after missing four games with a hip injury that took some time to properly diagnose. He was initially hurt in Week 6 against New Orleans and played the following game, catching eight passes for 130 yards and two touchdowns in a win over Atlanta, before the pain became intolerable.

He spent a month resting, and the Bengals went 3-1 without him.

The AP Offensive Rookie of the Year in 2021, Chase returned last

week and had an immediate impact, catching seven passes for 97 yards in the Bengals' 27-24 win over Kansas City in a rematch of last season's conference title game.

Chase's connection with Joe Burrow is as strong as any WR-QB duo in the league, and the Browns (5-7) know they've got their hands full with a receiver who is capable of scoring from any spot on the field.

“He's dynamic,” Browns coach Kevin Stefanski said. “Any time he touches it, he can go. He can catch a slant. He can catch a go ball or they can throw him a wide receiver screen. He can do it all, and he is very, very explosive.”

The Browns, who have won five straight over the Bengals (8-4), frustrated Chase into having a dreadful game last season in Cincinnati. Chase had a first-half fumble and two drops — one in the end zone — in a 41-16 loss.

Early in the game, Ward stepped in front of a pass intended for Chase and returned it 99 yards for a score, setting the tone for Cleveland's lopsided win.

Chase can be emotionally combative and the Browns know it. He was called for a taunting penalty last week against the Chiefs after gesturing toward Kansas City defensive back Justin Reid following a touchdown.

In the days leading into the game, Reid had said he couldn't remember the names of Cincinnati's receivers and that didn't sit well with Chase, who celebrated a TD by teammate Tee Higgins by pretending to peel off dollar bills in Reid's face.

With the Browns facing a win-or-forget-the-playoffs scenario Sunday, Johnson and Ward didn't say anything inflammatory about Chase. While they may not agree with everything he says, there's a level of respect for a player with elite skills.

“He's the heart and soul of that offense,” Johnson said. “He's the guy. They want to get him the ball. He gets the most targets when he's out there, the most receptions. So they're going to scheme him up, try to get him the ball. The want to get him the ball so we gotta be aware of it and lock in on it.”

But with the Bengals, it's more than Chase as Burrow also spreads the ball to his backs along with Higgins and Tyler Boyd.

While Johnson said the Bengals have “talkative guys,” they also have talented ones.

“It's all about competing,” he said. “They're a competitive group. They want to get the better of us and we wanna get the better of them. So it's always a prime matchup and looking forward to it.”

Notes: TE David Njoku returned to practice — he was officially listed as limited — after missing last week's game with a sprained knee. Njoku said he got hurt one play before making a sensational, one-handed TD catch in the final seconds of regulation before the Browns beat Tampa Bay in overtime. ... Ward (ankle/illness), CB A.J. Green (knee) and tackle James Hudson III (illness) didn't practice. ... DEs Myles Garrett and Jadeveon Clowney, WR Amari Cooper and LG Joel Bitonio got rest days.

Defense capable of carrying Ravens if QB Jackson sits out

By NOAH TRISTER

Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — Lamar Jackson's injury may put even more pressure on the Baltimore Ravens' defense.

Lately, that unit has been up to the challenge.

Jackson missed practice Wednesday — no surprise following his knee injury in last week's win over Denver — and it looks more and more like the Ravens will have to rely on backup quarterback Tyler Huntley for at least their game at Pittsburgh on Sunday. Baltimore, however, has held two of its last three opponents without a touchdown. If that keeps up, the Ravens can still win despite their offensive concerns.

“Those guys get paid too over there, to score, so when you keep them from scoring, which is the objective of the game, it feels good for us,” safety Chuck Clark said. “We feel like we did something, but at the end of the day, we know we've got to keep stacking those.”

The Ravens rank 13th in the NFL in total defense, but the advanced stats tell a more promising story. They're ninth on that side of the ball in Football Outsiders' DVOA stat — sixth against the run and 11th against the pass.

Baltimore has come a long way since Tua Tagovailoa and the Dolphins scored 28 points in the fourth quarter to beat the Ravens 42-38 in Week 2. The Ravens have added players like Roquan Smith and Jason Pierre-Paul and welcomed back Tyus Bowser from an injury. In its past nine games, Baltimore has allowed an average of just 288 yards.

“We're very confident with our team and with our defense, and we're coming together,” said Bowser, who missed the first eight games because of an Achilles tendon injury. “We're developing that chemistry, and we're very confident in our defense and what we can do.”

The Ravens signed Pierre-Paul in

late September, but the biggest move came about a month later when Smith arrived in a trade from Chicago. Baltimore's linebacking corps suddenly looked much different when the Ravens beat New Orleans 27-13 on Nov. 7. That was Bowser's first game back and Smith's debut with his new team.

Since then, the Ravens have a 13-3 win over Carolina, a 28-27 loss at Jacksonville and a 10-9 victory over Denver. A poor fourth quarter against the Jaguars is all that prevented this from being a truly exceptional stretch for the defense.

The quality of the competition hasn't been great, but Baltimore isn't about to be picky about where the wins come. The next four teams on the schedule are all under .500, and for however long Jackson isn't playing, the defense will try to pick up the slack. The offense was already in a bit of a rut even before Jackson was hurt.

Smith is one of three defensive players in the league with at least 100 tackles and three sacks this season.

“Roquan has played at a very high level,” coach John Harbaugh said. “All the guys have played at a high level on defense of late. He's obviously been a little bit of a spark for us, too, I think you could say that for sure. I love him. I love the fact that he's here and love his attitude and everything.”

There are other elements of Baltimore's defense that have come on strong lately. The Ravens have 37 sacks, ranking fifth in the NFL, and linebacker Patrick Queen has made big strides in his third season.

Queen was limited in practice Wednesday because of a bruised thigh, but the fact that he was out there at all was a good sign after he was carted off in Sunday's game.

“I could barely walk that day, but every day has been a step forward,” Queen said. “I'm just still getting treatment right now, still hoping to get back out there.”



PATRICK SEMANSKY/AP

Denver Broncos quarterback Russell Wilson gets sacked by, from left to right, Baltimore Ravens linebackers Odafe Oweh, Roquan Smith and Jason Pierre-Paul in the second half Sunday in Baltimore.

SPORTS



Switching teams

Bogaerts leaves Red Sox to sign with Padres » **MLB, Page 26**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



PHOTOS BY ADAM HUNGER/AP

Navy linebacker John Marshall (1) signals an incomplete pass during last year's game against Army in East Rutherford, N.J. Marshall will play in his final Army-Navy game Saturday.



Army senior safety Marquel Broughton is a three-year starter and recorded three tackles in the Black Knights' 15-0 victory over the Navy Midshipmen in 2020.

A lifetime of regret

Army, Navy seniors don't want to be on wrong end of this one

BY BILL WAGNER
The Capital (Annapolis, Md.)

Legendary Navy football player Eddie Meyers went 2-0-1 against archrival Army during his varsity career.

Meyers has fond memories of the 1979 Army-Navy game, the last played at historic John F. Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia. As a sophomore tailback, Meyers set an Army-Navy game record with 278 rushing yards as the Annapolis service academy rolled, 31-7.

Meyers, who still holds the single-game school record for carries, had another big game as a junior in helping the Midshipmen

Army (5-6) vs. Navy (4-7)
at Philadelphia
AFN-Sports
9 p.m. Saturday CET
5 a.m. Sunday JKT

rout the Black Knights, 33-6.

However, what happened in Meyers' senior year was so painful that he absolutely refuses to even discuss it to this day. The 1981 Army-Navy game ended in a 3-3 tie, leaving Meyers with a lingering bitter memory.

Success or failure in the biggest game of the year defines Army and Navy football players long after they graduate. Ninth-

year Army head coach Jeff Monken has learned that lesson, having heard many former players express regret about losing to the archrival as a senior.

"This game is always about the seniors. So much of their career as a Cadet and an Army football player is based on their record in the Army-Navy game and it is particularly important what happens in their senior year," said Monken, who previously spent six seasons as an assistant at Navy. "They feel a strong responsibility as seniors to win this game."

Army starting center Connor Bishop has

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