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COREY DICKSTEIN/Stars and Stripes

Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps Carlos Ruiz waves an American flag at the end of a naturalization ceremony for 60 new American citizens on Tuesday, aboard the USS Bataan. The Navy hosted the ceremony aboard the ship docked in the port of Miami during the city's Fleet Week.

Like being born again

Top enlisted Marine reflects on journey as new Americans become citizens

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

MIAMI — Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps Carlos Ruiz talked Tuesday about becoming a U.S. citizen as he watched 60 new Americans swear allegiance to the United States for the first time aboard the USS Bataan.

“In the ceremony like this, it doesn’t hit you until — you’ll notice the people are all staring at their [naturalization] certificates — you see your name on that certificate, and it feels like you’re just being born again,” Ruiz said, recall-

ing the moment the magnitude of his decision dawned on him. “You feel like now you’re a card-carrying U.S. citizen. You feel like, ‘I am part of it. I could do anything now.’”

The top enlisted Marine smiled wide as he led the newest group of American citizens in the Pledge of Allegiance from a stage set up inside the amphibious assault ship docked at the port of Miami for its first Fleet Week. Some 12 years earlier, it was Ruiz — already a Marine gunnery sergeant and serving as a drill instructor — affirming his allegiance to the Unit-

ed States.

Ruiz continues to carry a copy of his naturalization certificate with him in the form of a photograph on his phone. Just in case, he said, “no one believes I am a U.S. citizen.”

Ruiz and Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro participated in the ceremony Tuesday hosted aboard the Navy ship as symbol of American might for its newest citizens. Like Ruiz, Del Toro is a naturalized citizen, who emigrated from

SEE BORN ON PAGE 7

Lawmakers warn US in Indo-Pacific vulnerable

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. military bases in the Indo-Pacific region are sorely lacking hardened aircraft shelters, leaving them vulnerable to devastating airstrikes in a potential conflict with China, lawmakers warned.

Recent war games show the United States would lose 90% of its aircraft on the ground, rather than in air combat, due to insufficient base protection, a group of Republican lawmakers wrote in a letter to the secretaries of the Air Force and Navy.

“Unclassified analysis suggests China has enough weapons to overwhelm our air and missile defenses protecting those bases,” they wrote. “Strikes on U.S. bases could immobilize vital air assets, disrupt logistical chains and significantly weaken our ability to respond in a conflict.”

Rep. John Moolenaar of Michigan, the chairman of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida and 11 other lawmakers are urging Pentagon leaders to act.

They are calling for the construction of more hardened aircraft shelters, which are reinforced hangars used to protect military aircraft, as well as underground bunkers and other “passive” defenses.

China has built more than 400 hardened aircraft shelters in the past decade, and the U.S. has only constructed 22 on bases in Japan and South Korea, according to recent research. There are no such shelters in the Northern Mariana Islands or Guam, an island commonly referred to as the “tip of the

SEE WARN ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Judge halts plan to lower credit card late fees

Associated Press
LOS ANGELES — A federal judge in Texas temporarily halted a plan by the Biden administration to lower late fees on credit cards to \$8 that was slated to go into effect next week.

The temporary nationwide injunction imposed by Judge Mark Pittman in the Northern District of Texas is a win for the big banks and major credit card companies, which collect billions in revenue each year in late fees and were looking to stop the proposal from going into effect.

It is also a win for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which led the lawsuit on behalf of the banks.

The new regulations that were proposed by Consumer Financial Protection Bureau would have set a ceiling of \$8 for most credit card late fees or require banks to show why they should charge more than \$8 for such a fee.

The rule would bring the average credit card late fee down from \$32. The bureau estimates banks bring in roughly \$14 billion in credit card late fees a year.

White House spokesperson Jeremy Edwards said in a statement Friday night, “We are disappointed that a court sided with House Republicans, big banks and special interests to hit pause on a critical measure to save American families billions in junk fees.”

As part of his reelection campaign, President Joe Biden has tried to highlight his administration’s push to clamp down on what he calls “junk fees,” which are bank-related fees like late fees, ATM fees and overdraft fees.

EXCHANGE RATES			
Military rates			
Euro costs (May 13)	\$1.05	Switzerland (Franc)	.9063
British pound (May 13)	\$1.22	Thailand (Baht)	36.76
Japanese yen (May 13)	152.00	Turkey (New Lira)	32.2716
South Korean won (May 13)	1,334.00	(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	
Commercial rates		INTEREST RATES	
Bahrain (Dinar)	.3769	Prime rate	8.50
Britain (Pound)	1.2526	Interest Rates Discount rate	6.00
Canada (Dollar)	1.3673	Federal funds market rate	5.33
China (Yuan)	7.2268	3-month bill	5.40
Denmark (Krone)	6.9248	30-year bond	4.64
Egypt (Pound)	47.4012		
Euro	.9282		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8138		
Hungary (Forint)	360.04		
Israel (Shekel)	3.7289		
Japan (Yen)	155.86		
Kuwait (Dinar)	.3076		
Norway (Krone)	10.8433		
Philippines (Peso)	57.65		
Poland (Zloty)	3.99		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7503		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3541		
South Korea (Won)	1,371.74		

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PACIFIC

Balikatan scored many firsts in Philippines

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

The annual Balikatan exercise concluded in the Philippines on Friday after more than two weeks of training that underlined U.S. support for its oldest defense ally in the Pacific, one facing Chinese intimidation.

Balikatan — Tagalog for “shoulder to shoulder” — concluded with speeches at the Philippine armed forces headquarters in Manila and with farewells around the country.

The exercise began April 22 and encompassed 11,000 U.S., 5,000 Filipino and a smaller number of Australian and French troops training in and near the South China Sea.

China has claimed virtually the entire sea, a vital commercial waterway, and has territorial disputes with neighboring countries, including the Philippines.

On April 30, a China coast guard ship’s water cannons damaged one of two Philippine coast guard vessels at Scarborough Shoal, a feature controlled by Beijing inside the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone. An escalating number of similar encounters have happened at Second Thomas Shoal, a submerged reef controlled by Manila in the South China Sea.

Balikatan included naval gunnery involving American, French and Filipino ships near Palawan, a Philippine island that’s 150 nautical miles east of Second Thomas Shoal.

The Marine Corps used its new amphibious combat vehicle overseas for the first time during the drills, launching them from the USS Harpers Ferry for a simulated assault on shore targets on Palawan.

Balikatan also included coastal-defense training and a ship-sinking exercise on northern Luzon, and air-assault raids in the Batanes, a group of islands in the Luzon Strait south of Taiwan.

The Army deployed its Patriot missile-defense system to Clark Air Base for the first time during the exercise.

The facility was the largest overseas Air Force base before it was vacated in 1992 following damage from the eruption of Mount Pinatubo.

“Every Balikatan is increasingly more complex,” Philippine exercise director Maj. Gen. Marvin Licudine said at the closing ceremony, according to a U.S. Department of Defense statement Friday.

During the drills, civic assistance teams built classrooms and medical centers at four locations while training medical providers and gifting school supplies. The efforts injected nearly \$50 million into the local economy, the statement said.



PHOTOS BY JONATHAN SNYDER/Stars and Stripes

U.S. soldiers stand next to Cruella, an M777 howitzer, during Balikatan training in Laoag, Philippines, on Wednesday.



Army Spc. Samuel Sosa, a CH-47F Chinook repairer, flies over Batanes, Philippines, on May 5, during the Balikatan exercise.



U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Louis Picciurro inspects an Excalibur 155 mm artillery shell during Balikatan training Wednesday.

U.S. forces operated out of bases that they’ve been authorized to use under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, including Cesar Basa Air Base and Fort Magsaysay, a few hours’ drive from Manila, and Lal-lo Airport and Naval Base Camilo Osias in northern Luzon.

Soldiers involved in the coastal-defense and ship-sinking drills planned to celebrate the exercise’s end with an artillerymen’s dinner at Fort Magsaysay, Lt. Col. Matt Cahill, commander of 3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, said Wednesday at La Paz Sand Dunes in northern Luzon. Troops working at Lal-lo held their own closing ceremony Friday with local officials, said Lt. Col. Matt Schultz, commander of Marines at the airport.

About 100 members of the Hawaii-based Marine Wing Support Squadron 174, which Schultz commands, have been at Lal-lo provid-



A UH-60 Black Hawk lands to pick up 25th Infantry Division soldiers for air-assault practice May 5.

ing fuel, medical and logistics support during the drills, he said.

Another 20 Marines have been on Batan Island, north of Luzon, running a forward arming and refueling point, he said.

“Our purpose was to enable aviation operations and critical logistics for the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade,” he said of another Hawaii-based unit flying CH-47 Chinook and UH-60 Black Hawk

helicopters around the islands. “We demonstrated the potential of this site as a sustainment node for any sort of crisis from humanitarian assistance to other contingencies,” he said.

PACIFIC

Navy probes apparent drone footage of carrier

By ALEX WILSON
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Navy investigated overhead social media imagery of the USS Ronald Reagan but has not concluded that a drone flew over the home of the U.S. 7th Fleet, a base spokesman said.

Aerial photos and videos of the aircraft carrier were posted to X, formerly Twitter, over the past two months by @Xiao_Hao_4. Four photos posted April 4 show the Ronald Reagan, the amphibious command ship USS Blue Ridge, several destroyers and portions of the base's coastline and interior.

Another post on May 8 presented two more photos and a video apparently shot from a drone that flew directly over the aircraft carrier.

The base is aware of the imagery and Naval Criminal Investigative Service "investigated their authenticity," base spokesman Justin Keller told Stars and Stripes in a Thursday email.

The investigation revealed no indication that a drone flew over the Ronald Reagan, Keller added.

He referred additional questions, including whether the images were determined to be real or fake, to NCIS on Friday. A spokesperson for the service did not immediately respond to a comment request that afternoon.

The base and its ships "have several force protection measures in place every day, and at no time was the security" of the base or the crew of the USS Ronald Reagan in question, Keller wrote.

The X account, which predominantly posts in Chinese and claims responsibility for the imagery, describes itself as a "Se-



@Xiao_Hao_4/X

This bird's-eye view of the USS Ronald Reagan, apparently taken by a drone, was uploaded to social media April 4.

cret account for Secret contents." The account holder, who has not been publicly identified, did not respond to a request for comment Friday morning.

On April 2, the account posted similar imagery of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force's base in Yokosuka and a video of the helicopter destroyer JS Izumo docked there. The video was originally posted to the Chinese video sharing website Bilibili in March, but has since been deleted, Yahoo News reported April 2.

Japan has outlawed unauthorized drone flights over military bases.

Japan Defense Minister Minoru Kihara addressed the Izumo video during a Friday news conference and said it's a "high possibility" the footage is authentic.

"The Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces take the results of this analysis extremely seriously, as damages caused by drones to defense-related facilities could seriously impede Japan's defense," he said, according

to a transcript posted on the ministry's website.

Japan plans to take "all possible measures to ensure base security," including the early introduction of new drone counter-measure equipment.

Japan analyzed the video from "various perspectives," such as evaluating whether it was made by artificial intelligence, a Ministry of Defense spokesperson told Stars and Stripes by email Friday.

The spokesperson declined to elaborate further to avoid reveal-

ing "information gathering and analysis capabilities."

The spokesperson said the ministry was aware of the Ronald Reagan imagery and declined to comment on the matter.

"In any case, we have been working closely with the U.S. side on a regular basis, including in matters related to information warfare," the spokesperson said.

It's customary in Japan that some government officials speak to reporters on condition of anonymity.

Jet fuel exposure from spill didn't cause long-term injury, expert testifies

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

HONOLULU — A Navy spouse's exposure to jet fuel-contaminated tap water in 2021 did not result in long-term neurological problems, a neurologist testified Thursday in Hawaii federal court.

Dr. Barry Gordon offered his medical opinion on Nastasia Freeman, one of 17 plaintiffs in the civil suit Feindt vs. United States, as a defense witness for the U.S. government.

Gordon's judgment challenged testimony offered by a medical expert last week that the mother of three sustained neurological injuries from the tainted water.

"I'm saying she does not have any long-term, organic disorders due to exposure," Gordon said under cross-examination by plain-

tiffs' attorney Lyle Hosoda, who questioned the neurologist based on his previously submitted, sworn declaration in the case.

On May 1, Dr. Steven Storage, a psychiatrist appearing on behalf of the plaintiffs, testified that the trauma of exposure to the contaminated water left Freeman with neurological injuries in her frontal lobe.

U.S. District Court Judge Leslie Kobayashi, who is hearing the case without a jury, has reiterated throughout the trial, which began April 29, that she is only trying to determine the cause of the plaintiffs' medical problems and how much they should be compensated.

Freeman had moved to Hawaii in May 2021 with her husband, Koda Freeman, a Navy lieutenant,

and their children.

They lived at Aliamanu Military Reservation, one of the military housing communities closest to the Red Hill well, which became contaminated shortly before Thanksgiving Day 2021 by a jet fuel spill at the Navy's nearby Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility.

For much of her life, Freeman had a condition called temporal lobe epilepsy that sometimes manifested with seizures. Those episodes had been dormant for about two years, but the seizures began again in the wake of exposure to tainted water, Freeman testified last week.

Gordon said in his declaration that he had given Freeman a physical examination, which included observations for things such as level of alertness, facial expressions,

word choice, posture, eye movement and many other physical manifestations.

He also reviewed Freeman's medical record and results from various tests such as blood studies, electroencephalograms, CT scans and MRIs.

"In my opinion, based upon all of the available evidence, Ms. Freeman does not presently have any long-term organic neurologic problems from the alleged exposure(s) at Red Hill, to a reasonable degree of medical probability," Gordon said in his declaration.

Under cross-examination by Hosoda, Gordon acknowledged that jet fuel is a toxin that can cause neurological injury.

Gordon also conceded that he did not undertake quantitative analysis of the extent of Freeman's

exposure to fuel and instead used analysis done by Robyn Prueitt, a toxicologist who appeared on the stand for the defense this week.

Prueitt concluded that medical problems cited by the plaintiffs were not caused by jet fuel exposure.

Gordon's opinion, however, did leave room for the possibility that Freeman could be suffering from a non-organic neurological illness.

"It is well known that having a belief that a disease is present, even if false, such as a belief that neurologic conditions are due to an alleged exposure, can have significant negative consequences for an individual's well-being and behavior," Gordon said in his declaration.

The trial is scheduled to conclude Monday.

MILITARY

Navy tests surface drone that can dive for days

By ALISON BATH

Stars and Stripes

LIBREVILLE, Gabon — The U.S. Navy is testing an autonomous drone that can operate above and below the surface in a bid to help African countries battling piracy, the illicit drug trade and other illegal activities in the Gulf of Guinea.

The TRITON drone's introduction during the Obangame Express multinational exercise is designed to determine whether it's suitable for long-term, sustained use in the region, Rear Adm. Michael Mattis, director of Strategic Effects, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, said Tuesday.

The two-week exercise comes as the U.S. focuses on the partners in West Africa that it's still legally able to work with, especially following a recent coup in Niger, where the U.S. was forced to abandon a \$110 million aerial drone base. Russia and China have made their own inroads in the region.

The exercise, which ends May 17, includes launching and recovering the drone from the expeditionary sea base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams, and conducting vessel boarding, searches and seizures, Mattis said.

Those activities will help determine if TRITON can be used reliably in a region where it isn't easy for the Navy to quickly source supplies and repairs. The testing also will show whether the drone is a good fit for countries like Gabon, Ghana and Cameroon, which have smaller navies and limited resources, Mattis added.

"The idea is that we have long periods of operations, (and) that we push these vehicles to their limits of endurance and sustainability, and we understand where those things are," he said.

The 775-pound, 14½ foot-long TRITON surface drone is manufactured by Gulfport, Miss.-based Ocean Aero. The similarly named MQ-4C Triton aerial drone is



PHOTOS BY ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

The TRITON drone is capable of operating on the surface for longer than two weeks. Underwater, the drone can operate for five days during a mission and loiter for longer. The Navy is fielding the drone during the Obangame Express exercise, which started May 6, in Libreville, Gabon.

made by Northrop Grumman.

The Navy is expanding its use of aerial, surface and underwater drones, which are seen as vital for deterrence and use in future conflicts.

For example, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet operates a fleet of drones, including the TRITON, in the Persian Gulf.

Recently, an MQ-4C Triton aerial drone was deployed to U.S. Naval Air Station Sigonella, Sicily, to work with P-8 Poseidon patrol aircraft in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe area of responsibility.

Drones also allow the service to stretch its reach in regions that are understaffed or seldom visited.

Three Aerosonde aerial drones on Woody Williams are used for intelligence gathering and security. The aircraft, which fly daily, also

are available to West African countries to help monitor territorial waters, according to its Providence, R.I.-based manufacturer.

The opening days of the Obangame exercise already have taught the Navy about TRITON's performance.

During shipment to West Africa, one of the two being used developed a small crack in its hull. That gave the Navy an opportunity to see the manufacturer quickly fix and redeploy it with minimal disruption, Mattis said.

Meanwhile, initial testing in an estuary revealed limited use. The tidal flow of the estuary matched the drone's maximum surface speed of about 6 mph, causing it to drain its batteries.

Mattis sees those problems as valuable lessons.

"We're trying to get something

in the water and learn," he said. "We want to understand where the challenges of these vessels exist so we can tailor our operations appropriately to them."

One of TRITON's more unusual features is its ability to submerge to avoid detection or a collision with another vessel, said Samuel Buras, a field applications engineer for Ocean Aero aboard the Woody Williams on Tuesday.

The drone is propelled while underwater by three thrusters. It can loiter in an area for as many as eight days or be on a mission for up to five, he said.

On the surface, it can operate for two weeks or longer. It can be used for mine countermeasures, anti-submarine warfare and subsurface seabed warfare, among other missions, according to Ocean Aero's website.



Initial testing of the TRITON drone in an estuary revealed limited use. The tidal flow of the estuary matched the drone's maximum surface speed of about 6 mph, causing it to drain its batteries.

After Obangame ends, the drones will stay aboard the Woody Williams. They'll be used during an upcoming U.S. Army exercise in Morocco and may be used at an exercise in Portugal in the fall, Mattis said.

Introduction of the drone continues significant Navy investment in the Gulf of Guinea region. Those efforts include the construction of maritime operational centers and coastal radar systems, and introduction of a web-based program that allows countries to share unclassified information.

The service also has donated surface vessels to African countries, including two former U.S. Coast Guard cutters commissioned into Ghana's navy in September.

"What we are trying to do is equip our partner navies and our partner nations with the tools to handle" the problems they face, Mattis said.

Navy ship gets stuck after leaving African port; no injuries reported

By ALISON BATH

Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Navy ship participating in a military exercise in the Gulf of Guinea ran aground last week as it was leaving a port in West Africa.

The expeditionary sea base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams got stuck around 1 p.m. Thursday, shortly after leaving Libreville, Gabon, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa said Friday in a statement.

The ship broke free at about 5 p.m. Thursday at high tide, said Lt. Cmdr. Jason Tross, a spokesman for NAVEUR-AF.

There were no injuries or major

damage, Tross said.

The Navy did not say how far the ship had transited after leaving the port before running aground or if it was accompanied by a tugboat at the time. It also wasn't stated whether a pilot, often required to help a ship navigate ports, was on board.

A pilot was aboard Woody Williams when it came into the port on May 5. Two tugboats helped the ship, which is slightly shorter than an aircraft carrier in length, through the port and into a berthing.

The Navy said it wouldn't re-

lease further details due to an ongoing investigation.

The ship uses a hybrid crew of about 50 civilian mariners responsible for navigation and maintenance. About three civilians, including a navigator and lookout, typically man the bridge. The ship mostly relies on an automated system for navigation, which can be disengaged if needed.

A complement of about 100 Navy sailors man flight and other operations.

Woody Williams was in Libreville for the kickoff of the multinational Obangame Express exer-



TAKISHA MILLER/U.S. Africa Command

USS Hershel "Woody" Williams pulls into port at Libreville, Gabon, on May 5, to support the Obangame Express exercise.

cise.

It wasn't clear if the grounding would impact the ship's participation. It was scheduled to participate in testing of a surface drone,

among other activities.

Woody Williams is the only Navy ship assigned to U.S. Africa Command. Its homeport is at Souda Bay on the Greek island of Crete.

MILITARY

Navy warship sails in South China Sea after Taiwan Strait

Freedom-of-navigation run made to protest ‘unlawful and sweeping maritime claims’

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes
YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A Navy guided-missile destroyer cruised near a contested island chain in the South China Sea on Friday to protest “unlawful and sweeping maritime claims,” according to the U.S. 7th Fleet.

The USS Halsey sailed past the Paracels, a chain of reefs, shoals and other maritime features about 350 miles south of mainland China and 300 miles east of Vietnam, the command said in a news release Friday.

The Paracels are entirely claimed by China, Vietnam and Taiwan. Beijing, however, maintains about 20 outposts in the islands, according to the CIA’s World Factbook website.

The Halsey came within approximately 13 miles of four maritime features: Money Island, Duncan Island, Passu Keah and Discovery Reef, 7th Fleet spokeswoman Lt. Jamie Moroney told Stars and Stripes by email Friday.

The Chinese navy hailed the ship during operation, but all communications “were consistent with international norms,” she wrote.

The Navy routinely operates near the Paracels and the Spratlys, another contested island chain in the South China Sea, to protest restrictions on innocent passage. In the Paracels, all three claimants require either permission or advance notice before a military vessel travels through the area.

“By engaging in innocent pas-

sage without giving prior notification to or asking permission from any of the claimants, the United States challenged these unlawful restrictions imposed by [China], Taiwan and Vietnam,” 7th Fleet wrote. “The United States demonstrated that innocent passage is not subject to such restrictions.”

The Halsey on Wednesday cruised through the Taiwan Strait, a 110-mile-wide channel that separates mainland China from Taiwan.

Beijing considers Taiwan, a functional democracy, to be a breakaway province that must be reunified with the mainland, by force if necessary.

A state-run Chinese military news website labeled that trip as provocative, but official Chinese sources had not commented on the Halsey’s freedom-of-navigation demonstration as of Friday afternoon.

The Paracels operation coincided with the conclusion of Balikatan, an annual military exercise in the Philippines by 11,500 U.S. and Philippine troops and a smaller number of French and Australians. Portions of that training took place along the Philippine coast of the South China Sea, where Manila and Beijing also have competing claims.

The Halsey’s trip to the Paracels was the first publicly announced freedom-of-navigation operation by 7th Fleet this year. The guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey conducted the last operation Nov. 3, when it sailed past four Chinese outposts in the Spratlys.



PHUCHUNG NGUYEN/U.S. Marine Corps
U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Gavin White, a fixed-wing aircraft loadmaster, runs through his preflight checklist for the KC-130J Super Hercules aircraft at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, on April 21.

Warn: Slow pace of base shelter construction is ‘deeply troubling’

FROM PAGE 1
spear” of U.S. power projection in the Indo-Pacific.

The shelters do not provide complete protection from missile attacks, but they would force China to use more force to destroy each aircraft and increase the survivability of American air assets, lawmakers argued. They acknowledged it might not be feasible or sensible to construct shelters at all U.S. bases in the Indo-Pacific, but described the slow pace of construction as “deeply troubling.”

“The limited investment into hardened aircraft shelters is a symptom of a broader problem within the [Defense Department]: We are spending hardly any money on military construction to improve base resilience in the Indo-Pacific,” lawmakers wrote.

U.S. Indo-Pacific Command has provided Congress with a list of \$11 billion in priorities that are unfunded under the White House’s 2025 defense budget request, in-

cluding \$3.3 billion in military construction. The Pentagon will spend about 2% of its current construction budget on base resilience projects in the region, less than was spent in 2023, according to the letter.

“If our bases in the Indo-Pacific lack the resilience to survive attacks and continue operating, our ability to deter China and respond quickly in the Taiwan Strait will be greatly diminished,” lawmakers wrote.

The U.S. considers China its greatest competitor and threat and believes Beijing is readying for an invasion of Taiwan, an island China considers its rightful territory. Chinese investment in defense has climbed in recent years, as has its fleet of naval and merchant ships.

China’s growing dominance at sea prompted four lawmakers this week to release congressional guidance for a national maritime strategy. The report notes China has 230 times more shipbuilding

capacity than the U.S.

“We must act now, before it is too late, and make a once-in-a-generation investment in the future of America’s maritime power,” said Rep. Mike Waltz, R-Fla.

Underinvestment has reduced the U.S.-flag shipping fleet to fewer than 200 vessels while China boasts more than 7,000 ships, according to the report. America’s maritime industry brings American goods to market but also supports the U.S. military during war-time.

Lawmakers are recommending the U.S. infuse funds into its domestic shipbuilding industry, fully fund and reinvigorate the U.S. Coast Guard and other agencies, prepare for resource competition in the Indo-Pacific with allies and provide the resources necessary to ensure naval forces can defend the freedom of the seas.

“The competition between the United States and Communist China will define the 21st century,” Rubio said.

Experts say gun alone doesn’t justify fatal shooting of airman

Associated Press

On the afternoon of May 3, Roger Fortson opened the door of his Florida apartment with a gun in his hand and was immediately shot six times by a sheriff’s deputy responding to a complaint about an argument.

Fortson’s supporters point to the deputy’s rapid decision to open fire and his mere presence at the apartment — where the Air Force senior airman was apparently alone and FaceTiming with his girlfriend — as proof that it was a blatantly unjustified killing and the latest tragedy involving a Black American being shot

at home by law enforcement. Authorities, meanwhile, have seized on Fortson holding a gun when he answered the door to cast the shooting as a clear-cut case of self-defense for a deputy confronted with a split-second, life-or-death decision.

Investigators will consider these factors when deciding whether to charge the deputy in a case that also reflects the realities officers face every day in a country where millions of people carry guns, including in Florida, one of the largest gun ownership states.

Policing experts have said Fort-

son simply holding a gun when he opened the door wasn’t enough justification to use deadly force, but investigators will also have to consider what information the deputy knew when he responded and whether Fortson showed any behavioral indication that he posed a threat. They have also said the proliferation of legal and illegal firearms is forcing officers throughout the country to have to decide faster than ever what constitutes a deadly threat.

“The speed of the shooting is pretty intense. It’s happening very, very fast,” Ian Adams, an assistant pro-

fessor who studies criminology at the University of South Carolina and a former police officer, said after watching the deputy’s body camera video of Fortson’s shooting.

“The presence of a gun enhances the risk. But mere presence is not at all justification for using deadly force,” Adams said.

Sheriff Eric Aden said the deputy acted in self-defense, and he rejected assertions that the deputy was at the wrong apartment. Ben Crump, an attorney for Fortson’s family, said they remain adamant that the deputy went to the wrong unit be-

cause Fortson had been home alone and on a FaceTime call with his girlfriend.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement is investigating.

Adams said beyond the body camera footage there has to be some behavioral indication that a person intends to cause deadly harm with their gun.

“We also live in a nation with more guns than people. If the mere presence of a gun were the standard for reasonable use of deadly force, we would be awash with police shootings,” he said.

MILITARY

Guard group decries plan to grow Space Force

Governors also want Air Force to drop proposal to transfer some jobs to active-duty

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

An Air Force proposal to transfer some operations jobs from the National Guard to the active-duty force will set the Defense Department back decades and hurt the recruiting and retention of part-time troops trained to fight, a retired Army general warned Thursday.

“We’ve provided nearly half the combat power of the Army, 30% of the combat Air Force power, we’ve been in the fight since 9/11, so why would you now relegate the Guard to this administrative and training role,” said Retired National Guard Maj. Gen. Francis McGinn, president of the National Guard Association of the United States.

He said he opposes the proposal to Congress from Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall to take nearly a dozen units from the Air National Guard that perform space missions and move them into the Space Force. Those troops would have the choice to join Space Force and be subjected to the rigors of active-duty military service or retrain for a new job in the Guard.

“This thing is half-baked at this point,” he said. “They’re asking

them to jump into the abyss right now with a lot of risk. That’s our pushback from our membership.”

Losing the trust of those service members and removing those types of jobs from the Guard, McGinn argued, is coming at a time when the military has struggled for the past two years to meet its recruiting goals. A shrinking number of young Americans meet the standards to serve, and, for those interested in space, civilian jobs can offer higher pay and more flexibility.

As of March, the Air National Guard is about 7% shy of its recruiting goal for fiscal 2024, which ends Sept. 30, according to the Defense Department. In the previous year, the Air National Guard only reached 61% of its goal of 11,745 new members.

For the past month, the Guard association and a bipartisan collection of 140 House members, senators and state governors have campaigned strongly against the Air Force’s proposal. Members of Congress have asked their colleagues on the House and Senate Armed Services committees to pull the proposal from inclusion in this year’s defense spending bill,

where it sits awaiting approval.

An April report analyzing the decision stated readiness for those units will temporarily drop because some people serving in the Guard will not choose to accept membership into the Space Force and will need to be replaced.

Kendall wrote in the report that housing the units outside of Space Force “has created management and leadership issues and uncertainty about their future for the affected units and people.”

Surveys have shown 70% to 80% of Guard members affected would rather retrain or retire instead of joining Space Force.

The report said 578 jobs in nine units spread across six states are affected by the decision. Of those jobs, 224 are full time, and 354 are part time. The estimated cost is \$84.4 million, with about \$50 million spent on transferring units from the Guard to Space Force. The transfer would take about five years, according to the report.

However, the Guard association puts the number of affected personnel closer to 1,000 from 14 units in seven states. More so, airmen assigned in a support position to those units will not be taken into

the Space Force, and the states will be obligated to find a new unit or position for them.

“If you have an F-16 [fighter jet] unit, it’s like saying I’m only going to take the pilots. I’m not going to take the refuelers, I’m not going to take the maintainers. Then you really don’t have an F-16 unit, you’ve got a bunch of pilots,” McGinn said. “I think what they are trying to do is just that.”

The Air Force analyzed two other scenarios for the Air National Guard units, according to its report. The first was to leave the units where they are, and the second was to create a Space National Guard, which has the support of the Pentagon’s National Guard Bureau and the National Guard association. However, Kendall determined these two options are inconsistent with the intent of Space Force’s creation more than four years ago.

Kendall’s proposal to move the units also circumvents the authority that governors have over their state’s National Guard troops. Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, who leads the National Governors Association, and Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, vice chairman of the associa-

tion, have warned the move could set precedent to further exclude governors from Guard decisions.

The governors of all 50 states and five U.S. territories agree on the issue.

“Federal law requires consultation and approval from governors on any decisions to move National Guard units, plain and simple,” Cox and Polis said Thursday in a prepared statement. “Until Air Force leaders withdraw [the proposal], they are in violation of federal law. We cannot have productive conversations on this matter until [the proposal] is set aside. Governors are united on this point.”

The two met with Kendall on Wednesday and said they were disappointed Kendall did not commit to withdrawing the proposal.

“An action like this will violate the trust of the brave women and men who have volunteered to serve our states and our nation,” the governors wrote last month in a letter to Kendall’s boss, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

Cox and Polis said they will continue to engage with Austin in hopes of finding a choice to which all parties can agree.

Born: Ruiz deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan before seeking US citizenship

FROM PAGE 1

Cuba as a child refugee and earned his citizenship in 1978 just before entering the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md.

Del Toro said he wanted to host a naturalization ceremony aboard the Bataan as a reminder that there is a price for America’s freedoms. The ship, he noted, is named in honor of the American prisoners of war who in 1942 were forced by their Japanese captors to endure a brutal 65-mile trek to a prisoner-of-war camp in the Philippines during World War II. Some 1,000 Americans died on the march.

“Freedom does not come cheap,” the Navy secretary said after the ceremony. “It’s not necessarily free. It has to be earned, and it is earned by the citizens of our great country, people who come to this nation from all across the world, you know, to live the American dream and fulfill the American dream.”

Del Toro implored the 60 new Americans who came from 24 countries to find some way to serve and give back to their new country. Perhaps, he joked, they should join the Navy or Marine Corps, telling them he could swear them into the military shortly after the ceremony.

He used his and Ruiz’s experi-



COREY DICKSTEIN/Stars and Stripes

Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro congratulates a new American citizen during a naturalization ceremony Tuesday, aboard the USS Bataan in Miami. Del Toro emigrated from Cuba as a child refugee and earned his citizenship just before entering the U.S. Naval Academy.

ences as examples of what immigrants can accomplish when afforded the opportunities. Del Toro graduated from the Naval Academy in 1983 and served 22 years in the Navy as a surface warfare officer, reaching the rank of commander before retiring. In 2021, he became Navy secretary, the top civilian in charge of the Navy and Marine Corps.

“I’ve come to believe that what

truly makes this country great is you,” Del Toro told the new American citizens. “Every single one of you sitting in those seats — and I don’t care whether you’re a maid working in a hotel room like my mother did for many, many years or you grow up to perhaps become the secretary of the Navy — you and the role that you play in our country is as significant as anyone else in making this great country

the country that it is.”

Ruiz said he hoped some of the new citizens would at least consider military service. Without the Marine Corps, Ruiz said, he doubts he would be an American citizen.

The top enlisted Marine — whose job is to advocate for the enlisted force and advise the Marine commandant on enlisted issues — came to the United States as an 11-year-old from his native Mexico when his parents wanted him to attend better schools and learn English. His mother moved him to Buckeye, Ariz., from where he enlisted in the Corps after graduating high school.

Ruiz served for years — deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan and earning a Bronze Star Medal with combat “V” for valor — before beginning his efforts to become a U.S. citizen.

At times, he considered leaving the Marine Corps and returning to Mexico. But ultimately, he said, the Marines and the United States felt like home. Last year, 29 years into his service, he was selected to become the Corps’ top enlisted Marine.

“I’d like to say that without the Marine Corps I still would have fallen in love with this country anyway, and I would have chosen to stay,” Ruiz said. “But the people

that I met in the service, they are what pulled me toward this, and they made me realize this is pretty awesome.”

Ruiz was inspired to earn his citizenship after his father earned his and as he realized he would need a security clearance — granted only to American citizens — to continue to serve. It was a lot of effort, especially working on earning his citizenship while also working to make new Marines at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

“It’s a long journey,” he said. “And then it happens. And it’s surreal.”

After the ceremony on Tuesday, Ruiz said he would probably flip through his phone to look at his naturalization certificate and relive his efforts to become an American citizen. He said he hoped his adopted country would give the new Americans sworn in Tuesday the kind of opportunities it has provided him.

“Just a kid from Mexico, right, could barely speak English, and somehow here I am,” Ruiz said. “The people here today, they’re going to keep staring at their certificates with their names on it, and I know what they’re feeling. It felt like [I was] watching myself in their chairs. And they’re probably going to go do amazing things.”

MILITARY

On a DC sidewalk, a race to save a general

BY DAN LAMOTHE

The Washington Post

Gen. Eric M. Smith stepped out on a warm, late-afternoon run last fall, pounding the pavement of Southeast Washington on a routine three-mile loop. As the top U.S. Marine, he had spent the morning cheering on participants in the annual Marine Corps Marathon, and wanted to squeeze in his own workout before taking his wife out to dinner.

It was Oct. 29. A few blocks away, Timothy and Joyce LaLonde concluded a celebratory post-race lunch and began the walk back to Joyce's nearby home. The siblings, accompanied by several family members, were shaken by what they encountered: A man facedown on the sidewalk — alone, unresponsive and bleeding from his mouth.

"Tim, come!" Joyce LaLonde recalled yelling to her brother. "Hurry!"

The ensuing scramble saved the life of the Marine Corps commandant, a father of two who had stepped into his new role on the Joint Chiefs of Staff just three months earlier. Smith, who turns 59 in June, suffered cardiac arrest at the tail end of his run, just a block from his home at Marine Barracks Washington — a crisis in which the speed and quality of medical intervention proved vital.

For the first time, those directly connected to Smith's rescue have publicly detailed how he survived, a fortuitous succession of events resulting in an improbable return to the Pentagon after barely four months of recovery. This account is based on hours of interviews with the general and eight others, including Smith's surgeon and the paramedics who administered several electrical shocks to stabilize his heart.

What began with Joyce LaLonde spotting the general sprawled on the brick sidewalk and her brother, a certified CPR instructor, rendering aid ended, all agreed, with the best possible outcome.

"If you were to have this scenario play out 1,000 times, maybe five people ... would survive it like he did," said Smith's cardiac surgeon, Thomas MacGillivray. "It's an unusual thing that somebody gets CPR for that long and not just survives it, but is back to normal life within a couple of few months." Impossible, he added, without everyone having provided the care they did.

On Thursday, Smith thanked Joyce and Timothy LaLonde and Joyce's husband, Nathaniel Birnbaum, in a small ceremony at the commandant's home. Each received the Navy Distinguished Public Service Award for their heroism, and were recognized again Friday along with first responders during an "Evening Parade" event at the barracks featuring marching and music.

"You have really given me a sec-



MATT MCCLAIN/The Washington Post

U.S. Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Eric M. Smith, left, applauds Timothy LaLonde on Thursday. LaLonde, a certified CPR instructor, helped save Smith's life in October after Smith suffered cardiac arrest during a run near his home at Marine Barracks Washington.

ond chance," Smith said, pinning the medal, with its blue and yellow ribbon, to their chests. "I'm grateful to you."

The stricken stranger

The LaLonde family encountered Smith shortly before 5 p.m., with Joyce LaLonde, 28, and her husband, Nathaniel Birnbaum, 28, first to arrive at the general's side, she said. Timothy LaLonde, 33, and their father, Steven LaLonde, 66, were a few paces behind. They turned the stricken stranger on his side before deciding CPR was necessary.

Joyce LaLonde was put on hold initially when she dialed D.C.'s 911 system, she said, prompting her to hang up, call again, and urge her husband to try to find help at a nearby police station. The delay did not prove fateful, but has occurred numerous times in the city, as it struggles with documented staffing shortages. She connected with a dispatcher at 4:58 p.m., relaying her location and the situation's extreme urgency, said Noah Gray, a spokesman for the D.C. fire department.

Timothy LaLonde, of Kirkland, Wash., estimated that he administered CPR for about nine minutes, pumping Smith's chest and checking to see if anything was blocking his airway. Eventually, the general began gasping sporadically, giving the LaLondes hope.

A four-man team with Engine Company 18 arrived about five minutes after the 911 call, said Ryan Crowell, a former D.C. paramedic and firefighter who responded that day. They took over CPR, zapped Smith with an automated defibrillator, loaded him aboard an ambulance, and rolled to the hospital at 5:18 p.m.

No one knew they were working on one of the Pentagon's top generals.

Lt. Holly O'Byrne, a paramedic and supervisor who accompanied the general in the ambulance, said that as it became increasingly clear

Smith was responding to treatment, she administered medication to stabilize his blood pressure and heart rate, intubated him and assisted his breathing by squeezing a handheld air bag. The general's piercing blue eyes caught her attention, she recalled.

MacGillivray, the cardiac surgeon, said that when Smith arrived at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, it appeared the general may have had a heart attack. But his care team soon diagnosed it was aortic stenosis, a condition in which the aortic valve narrows, preventing the normal flow of blood away from the heart. Smith was treated that night with a tiny wire that inflates like a balloon to reopen the valve and a small implanted defibrillator designed to detect any future cardiac arrest or arrhythmia, the surgeon said.

"We stabilized him with the balloon, but that did not solve the problem," MacGillivray said. "That was kind of like throwing someone a life jacket."

Looking for 'John Doe'

A block away from where Smith had collapsed, the general's wife, Patrisha, had been waiting outside for a delivery at the Home of the Commandants, the venerable residence where the top Marine Corps general lives. She could see an ambulance in the distance, she recalled.

"I just remember thinking to myself, 'Oh, they've got their lights on so they're transporting somebody,'" she said. "Little did I know that it was Eric in the back of that ambulance."

For a while, she thought that maybe her husband had stopped to talk to Marines. But as minutes turned to hours, she began to worry. She and the general's staff urgently sought to track him down, visiting two hospitals where unnamed patients — listed as "John Does" — had been admitted. Smith was carrying a government ID, his wife said, but

in the commotion to save his life, it had been missed. They found him at the second hospital.

Patrisha Smith, her voice thickening, said she did not initially realize how critical the situation was. She is grateful that the nurses who allowed her to stay with her husband that night in the intensive care unit did not overwhelm her with details.

"They might have thought that he wasn't going to make it," she said. "But they didn't relay that to me. And I appreciate that because it gave me hope."

'We saved America'

Once the paramedics took over, the LaLondes continued on to Joyce's home. Three of them had blood on their clothes, she said, from having attempted to ensure the general's injured mouth was clear of obstructions. The situation had been intense, and she doubled back to the scene about 20 minutes later, providing her contact information to authorities in case it would be helpful.

The family's first hint that the patient was someone of prominence came a few hours later. While attending a concert by the singer Kesha, Joyce received a call from an agent with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service who wanted to know more about the incident, she said.

Two days later, on Oct. 31, the Marine Corps disclosed that Smith had been hospitalized with a health emergency. D.C. officials linked the situation with the cardiac arrest case that the LaLondes had been involved in, catching the attention of the first responders who were involved.

O'Byrne, the paramedic who had intubated Smith, said she was sent a photograph of Smith and asked if it was the person she had helped. His bright blue eyes were unmistakable, she said.

"My actual comment was, 'Holy s---, we saved America!'" she said. "That became how I told Firefighter Crowell ... 'Hey, guess what: We saved America!'"

Crowell, who has since moved back to his hometown of Syracuse, N.Y., said the incident underscores the unique nature of working emergency calls in D.C.

"You never know," Crowell said, "who the John Doe turns out to be."

'I'll bounce back'

Smith awoke in the hospital last fall remembering he had gone for a run, but nothing after, he said. He was frustrated with the discomfort of his breathing tube, whose presence damaged his vocal cords, and a couple of teeth had been knocked out and his face was scraped from his fall.

"Like all good Marines," Smith joked, "I was complaining about my care."

The seriousness of the situation

soon became clear. While the general had survived cardiac arrest, he still had an aortic bicuspid valve that had failed. The condition, said MacGillivray, is congenital and meant that Smith's aortic valve had only two parts, or "leaflets," pumping blood away from the heart, rather than the customary three.

Valve replacement surgery is common, but often it occurs after a patient experiences chest pain, fatigue and other less severe symptoms that prompt treatment. Smith told MacGillivray that he had been aware of his condition, the doctor said, but he had lived with it for years without issue and could run three miles in about 18 minutes.

The surgeon also was concerned about how Smith's extended emergency and lack of oxygen might affect other parts of his body. Smith initially had some abnormal kidney tests, MacGillivray said, but they improved quickly. The general's overall physical fitness assisted in his recovery, the doctor said, though he required time to heal from the trauma of his resuscitation before undergoing open-heart surgery.

As his recuperation continued, Smith decided he also needed to record a message to show the Marines that he was OK. On Nov. 21, about three weeks after his cardiac arrest, he made a brief video thanking the Marines for their support. Smith wished them a happy Thanksgiving, and vowed he would be back.

"It's not the first time I've been knocked down," he told them, peering at the camera in his green camouflage uniform. "When I was shot in 2004, I bounced back from that, and I'll bounce back from this."

On Jan. 8, Smith underwent surgery to have MacGillivray install a mechanical replacement valve. The procedure, the surgeon said, was a success, and Smith stepped back into his role as commandant without any physical restrictions. The general is back to weightlifting a few times per week, he said, with the tick-tick-tick of his mechanical valve an audible reminder of how far he has come.

Smith said that while he saw his "fair share of combat" in Iraq and Afghanistan, the situation in D.C. last fall was different because he didn't see it as a possibility.

"My mission that day was just to run three miles — just doing my fitness routine," Smith said. "It's very different having that happen and having to rely on so many people to get you healthy again."

Smith said Thursday that meeting his rescuers for the first time was "very strange and very rewarding." He and his wife decided they needed to do something to recognize those involved, he said, and hope it underscores the value of CPR training.

"If Mr. LaLonde had not been a CPR-certified instructor," the general said, "I would not be standing here today."

MIDEAST

Israeli forces push into Rafah, return to north

BY WAFAA SHURAF, JOSEPH KRAUSS AND SAMY MAGDY
Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli forces were battling Palestinian militants across the Gaza Strip on Sunday, including in parts of the devastated north that the military said it had cleared months ago, where Hamas has exploited a security vacuum to regroup.

Israel has portrayed the southern Gaza city of Rafah as Hamas' last stronghold, saying it must invade in order to succeed in its goals of dismantling the group and returning scores of hostages. A limited operation there has expanded in recent days, forcing some 300,000 people to flee and drawing warnings from Egypt, where an official said it is putting the country's decades-old peace treaty with Israel at risk.

But the rest of the war-ravaged territory seems to provide ample opportunities for Hamas. Israel has yet to offer a detailed plan for postwar governance in Gaza, saying only that it will maintain open-ended security control over the coastal enclave, which is home to some 2.3 million Palestinians.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected postwar plans proposed by the United States for the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, to govern Gaza with support from Arab and Muslim countries. Those plans depend on progress toward the creation of a Palestinian state, something to which Netanyahu's government is deeply opposed.

With the two close allies divided, Gaza has been left without a functioning government, leading to a breakdown in public order and allowing Hamas to reconstitute itself in even the hardest-hit areas.

The war began when Hamas and other militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking another 250 hostage. They still hold about 100 captives and the remains of more



TSAFIR ABAYO/AP

Israeli tanks move near the Israeli-Gaza border, as seen from southern Israel, on Sunday. A limited Israeli military operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah has expanded in recent days, forcing some 300,000 people to flee.

than 30, and internationally mediated talks over a cease-fire and hostage release appear to be at a standstill.

Israel's air, land and sea offensive has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures. Israel says it has killed over 13,000 militants, without providing evidence.

Palestinians reported heavy Israeli bombardment overnight in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp and other areas in the northern Gaza Strip, which has suffered widespread devastation and been largely isolated by Israeli forces for months. U.N. officials say there is a "full-blown famine" there.

Residents said Israeli warplanes and artil-

lery struck across the camp and the Zeitoun area east of Gaza City, where troops have been battling Palestinian militants for over a week. They have called on tens of thousands of people to relocate to nearby areas.

"It was a very difficult night," said Abdel-Kareem Radwan, a 48-year-old Palestinian from Jabaliya. He said they could hear intense and constant bombing since midday Saturday. "This is madness."

First responders with the Palestinian Civil Defense said they were unable to respond to multiple calls for help from both areas, as well as from Rafah.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the top Israeli military spokesman, said that in addition to Jabaliya and Zeitoun, forces were also operating in Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun. The two

towns near Gaza's northern border with Israel were heavily bombed in the opening days of the war.

The military "is now going into Jabaliya for the second time and into Zeitoun for the third time, and it will continue to go in and out," columnist Ben Caspit wrote in Israel's Maariv daily, channeling the growing frustration felt by many Israelis more than seven months into the war.

"Hamas' regime cannot be toppled without preparing an alternative to that regime," he wrote, drawing comparisons with the American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. "The only people who can govern Gaza after the war are Gazans, with a lot of support and help from the outside."

The United Nations' agency for Palestinian refugees, the main provider of aid in Gaza, said 300,000 people have fled Rafah since the operation began there. Most are heading to the heavily damaged nearby city of Khan Younis or Mawasi, a crowded tent camp on the coast where some 450,000 people are already living in squalid conditions.

Rafah was sheltering some 1.3 million Palestinians before the Israeli operation began, most of whom had fled fighting elsewhere in the territory.

Israel has now evacuated the eastern third of Rafah, and Hagari said dozens of militants had been killed there as "targeted operations continued." The United Nations has warned that a planned full-scale Rafah invasion would further cripple humanitarian operations and cause a surge in civilian deaths.

Rafah borders Egypt near the main aid entry points, which are already affected. Israeli troops have captured the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing, forcing it to shut down. Egypt has refused to coordinate with Israel on the delivery of aid though the crossing because of "the unacceptable Israeli escalation," the state-owned Al Qahera News television channel reported, citing an unnamed official.

US report not definitive on whether Israel violated humanitarian law

The Washington Post

The Biden administration announced Friday that it was "reasonable to assess" that Israel violated international law using U.S. weapons in its military campaign in Gaza, but found there was insufficient information to draw a firm conclusion in any specific instances, meaning American military aid could continue to flow to the country.

The findings were contained in a convoluted 46-page unclassified report that President Joe Biden ordered this year in response to growing alarm from Democrats in Congress about Israel's conduct in the conflict. Despite clear internal concerns that U.S. weapons may have been used in war crimes, the report concluded that assurances provided by Israel that it is not violating U.S. or international law were credible, a finding at odds with assessments made by the United Nations and major international aid groups.

The report also said that Israeli "action or inaction ... contributed significantly" to the insufficient flow of food and other critical aid to Palestinian civilians. While it cited improvements in recent weeks, the assessment predated the shutdown of aid flows into southern Gaza last week as Israel began an offensive in and around the city of Rafah.

Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., whose pro-

posed legislation propelled Biden to order the report, accused the administration Friday of failing "to do the hard work of making an assessment and duck[ing] the ultimate questions" that it was expected to answer. Van Hollen — who said he was dismayed by the relatively small number of incidents considered in the report and who described the administration's evaluation of whether U.S. weapons have been involved in violations of international law as "woefully inadequate" — also noted the report's many contradictions.

Many Republicans dismissed the entire discussion as a distraction, though they appeared to embrace the bottom line that aid would continue to flow to Israel.

The report "serves no purpose other than to provide political cover to the president with his base," House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul, R-Texas, said in a statement. "This self-imposed reporting requirement is wholly redundant and unnecessary, and only contributes to politically-motivated anti-Israel sentiment."

The report said it was "reasonable to assess" that U.S. defense articles "have been used by Israeli security forces since October 7 in instances inconsistent" with its international humanitarian law obligations "or with

established best practices," according to an executive summary of the report.

The current hostilities trace to that date in the fall, when Hamas militants led a cross-border attack into Israel that killed 1,200. The Palestinian death toll is nearing 35,000, according to local health authorities, who do not distinguish between combatants and civilians but note that most of the dead are women and children.

Israel has taken "some steps" to mitigate harm to civilians, and has the "knowledge" and the "tools" to do so, the report said. But "the results on the ground, including high levels of civilian casualties, raise substantial questions as to whether the [Israel Defense Forces] is using them effectively in all cases."

The finding allows the continued supply of military assistance to Israel, even as Biden has criticized it for the war's staggering Palestinian death toll, and the administration has come under pressure to restrict the flow of American weapons.

Biden recently paused the transfer of some bombs and precision guidance kits as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pushed ahead with the invasion of Rafah, and shut down the border crossing between Egypt and Gaza that is the primary entry point for humanitarian assistance. As tanks

have rolled into Rafah, Biden has threatened further suspension of U.S. arms transfers if Israel mounts a full-scale ground invasion into the city, where roughly half the population has sought refuge. The head of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Samantha Power, and other humanitarian leaders have also warned of a spreading famine in Gaza.

Even as it questioned whether Israel has complied with international law, the report noted that Israel "has had to confront an extraordinary military challenge" and that Hamas has used the civilian population "as human shields."

Despite Biden's criticism and assurances that the administration will continue to assess Israel's activities, Friday's decision amounts to a stamp of approval on the legality of Israeli actions in Gaza, in the face of what critics say is a war that has made little effort to distinguish innocent Palestinian civilians from Hamas fighters. Aid groups say thousands of children have been orphaned, and the United Nations has warned that much of Gaza's population is on the brink of starvation.

Some of Biden's critics — including former members of his own administration — say there is little question that there have been violations of international human rights standards and U.S. laws.

Cohen brings challenge in hush money trial

**BY JENNIFER PELTZ
AND ERIC TUCKER**
Associated Press

NEW YORK — He once said he would take a bullet for Donald Trump. Now Michael Cohen is prosecutors’ biggest piece of legal ammunition in the former president’s hush money trial.

But if Trump’s fixer-turned-foe is poised to offer jurors this week an insider’s view of the dealings at the heart of prosecutors’ case, he also is as challenging a star witness as they come.

There is his tortured history with Trump, for whom he served as personal attorney and problem-zapper until his practices came under federal investigation. That led to felony convictions and prison for Cohen but no charges against Trump, by then in the White House.

Cohen, who is expected to take the stand Monday, can address the jury as someone who has reckoned frankly with his own misdeeds and paid for them with his liberty. But jurors likely also will learn that the now-disbarred lawyer has not only pleaded guilty to lying to Congress and a bank, but recently asserted, under oath, that he wasn’t truthful even in admit-



Michael Cohen, former attorney to Donald Trump, leaves the District Attorney's office in New York, on March 13, 2023.

ting to some of those falsehoods.

And there is Cohen’s new persona — and podcast, books, and social media posts — as a relentless and sometimes crude Trump crit-

ic.

As Trump’s trial opened, prosecutors took pains to portray Cohen as just one piece of their evidence against Trump, telling jurors that

corroboration would come via other witnesses, documents and the ex-president’s own recorded words. But Trump and his lawyers have assailed Cohen as an admitted liar and criminal who now makes a living off tearing down his former boss.

“What the defense is going to want the jury to focus on is the fact that he’s a liar” with a blemished past and a tetchy streak, said Richard Serafini, a Florida criminal defense lawyer and former federal and Manhattan prosecutor.

“What the prosecution is going to want to focus on is ‘everything he says is corroborated — you don’t have to like him,’” Serafini added. “And No. 2, this is the guy Trump chose.”

In testimony, he will need to explain his prior disavowals of key aspects of the hush money arrangements and to convince jurors that this time he is telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Still in the Trump fold when the Daniels deal came to light, he initially told The New York Times that he had not been reimbursed, later acknowledging repayment — as did Trump, who had previously said he did not even know

about the Daniels payout.

Then, in the course of two federal guilty pleas, Cohen admitted to tax evasion, orchestrating illegal campaign contributions in the form of hush money payments, and lying to Congress about his work on a possible Trump real estate project in Moscow. He also pleaded guilty to signing off on a home equity loan application that understated his financial liabilities.

While many types of convictions may be used to question a witness’ credibility, when crimes involve dishonesty, “there’s a treasure trove of stuff there for a cross-examiner,” Serafini said.

To Jeremy Saland, a New York criminal defense lawyer and former Manhattan prosecutor, Cohen’s background is not such a hurdle for prosecutors.

“Where Cohen has the problem is: He doesn’t shut his trap,” Saland said. “He just constantly takes shots at his own credibility.”

Prosecutors will need to persuade Cohen to be forthright, acknowledge his past wrongdoing and rein in his freewheeling commentary, Saland said, or the case can become “the Michael Cohen show.”

Local governments are struggling to distribute opioid settlement funds

BY GEOFF MULVIHILL
Associated Press

Settlement money to help stem the decadeslong opioid addiction and overdose epidemic is rolling out to small towns and big cities across the U.S., but advocates worry that chunks of it may be used in ways that don’t make a dent in the crisis.

As state and local governments navigate how to use the money, advocates say local governments may not have the bandwidth to take the right steps to identify their communities’ needs and direct their funding shares to projects that use proven methods to prevent deaths.

Opioids have been linked to about 800,000 deaths in the U.S. since 1999, including more than 80,000 annually in recent years, with most of those involving illicitly produced fentanyl.

Drugmakers, wholesalers and pharmacies have been involved in more than 100 settlements of opioid-related lawsuits with state, local and Native American tribal governments over the past decade.

The deals, some not yet finalized, could be worth a total of more than \$50 billion over nearly two

decades and also come with requirements for better monitoring of prescriptions and making company documents public.

States alone fought the tobacco industry in the 1990s and they used only a sliver of the money from the resulting settlements on tobacco-related efforts.

“We don’t want to be 10 years down the road and say, ‘After we screwed up tobacco, we trusted small government with opioids — and we did even worse,’” said Paul Farrell, Jr., one of the lead lawyers representing local governments in the opioid suits.

He notes that with settlement money rolling out for at least 14 more years, there’s time for towns to use it appropriately, and resources to help.

The goal, experts say, is to help those who are taking opioids to get treatment, to make it less likely people who use drugs will overdose and to create an environment for people not to take them in the first place.

For many, it’s personal.

Suzanne Harrison and her family launched a nonprofit dedicated to getting New Jersey residents access to treatment and recovery programs after her brother and



Suzanne Harrison, who runs King's Crusade in honor of her brother who died of an overdose in 2016 poses in Evesham, N.J., on April 2.

Navy veteran, King Shaffer Jr., died from a fentanyl and heroin overdose in 2016, days before he was scheduled to try another treatment program.

At the time, he was staying with a sister who lived in Moorestown, N.J.

That town’s administration decided to hand its portion of settlement money over to Burlington County, which has used settlement funds to distribute an overdose antidote and run camps for kids affected by addiction.

The major opioid settlements, which include deals with Walgreen Co., CVS Health, Walmart, Johnson & Johnson and one with OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma that is before the U.S. Supreme Court, require that most of the funds be used to combat the crisis.

Small pro-Palestinian protests rally as college commencements held

BY SUSAN HAIGH
Associated Press

Small pro-Palestinian protests popped up sporadically Saturday as colleges and universities from North Carolina to California held commencement ceremonies, including dozens of graduating students at Virginia Commonwealth University who walked out on an address by Gov. Glenn Youngkin.

While some of the estimated 100 students and family members who left during the Republican governor’s speech showed support for Palestinians, others held signs signaling opposition to Youngkin’s policies on education, according to WRIC-TV.

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a small group of demonstrators staged what appeared to be a silent protest during commencement at Camp Randall Stadium. A photo posted by the Wisconsin State Journal showed about six people walking through the rear of the stadium, with two carrying a Palestinian flag.

Marc Lovicott, a spokesperson for campus police, said the group, which he believed were students because they were wearing caps and gowns, “was kind of guided out but they left on their own.” No

arrests were made.

At the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, pro-Palestinian demonstrators splattered red paint on the steps of a building hours ahead of the school’s commencement ceremony and chanted on campus while students wearing light blue graduation gowns posed for photos, the News & Observer reported. At the University of Texas, Austin, a student held up a Palestinian flag during a commencement ceremony and refused to leave the stage briefly before being escorted away by security.

And at the University of California, Berkeley, a small group of pro-Palestinian demonstrators began waving flags and chanting during commencement and were escorted to the back of the stadium, where they were joined by others, according to the San Francisco Chronicle. There were no major counterprotests, but some attendees voiced frustration.

“I feel like they’re ruining it for those of us who paid for tickets and came to show our pride for our graduates,” said Annie Ramos, whose daughter is a student. “There’s a time and a place, and this is not it.”

NATION



DAVID YEAZELL/AP

President Joe Biden speaks in Wilmington, N.C., on May 2.

Biden often reminds voters of Trump’s record, agenda

Associated Press

SEATTLE — President Joe Biden is running for reelection on a record and an agenda — often Donald Trump’s.

In a hotel ballroom in Seattle, at fancy homes in California and at stops in Illinois and Wisconsin over the past week, Biden has been betting that reminding voters about Trump’s presidency and highlighting his Republican opponent’s latest campaign statements will work to the Democrat’s advantage.

At a Seattle fundraiser Friday night, Biden brought up Trump’s recent interview with Time magazine in which he said states should be left to determine whether to prosecute women for abortions or to monitor their pregnancies.

“I really urge you to read it,” Biden said.

Biden, who headlined another Seattle fundraiser Saturday before returning to the East Coast, has plenty of other Trump material to draw from, too.

The president has highlighted how Trump has promised, if elect-

ed, to be “a dictator on Day 1,” how he has suggested the United States would not necessarily defend allies from aggression and how he has pledged to “totally obliterate the deep state” in the federal bureaucracy, which he blames for blocking his first-term agenda.

“And he said a whole lot more,” Biden said during a Chicago appearance. “But the bad news is he means what he says. He means what he says. Unless you think I’m kidding, just think back to the 6th of January. This guy means what he says,” referring to the riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Biden and his allies think the country needs reminding about Trump’s tenure and his outlandish and often concerning statements, particularly because the Republican is no longer ubiquitous on X, formerly Twitter, nor is he in front of television cameras as often as he once was.

“Chaos is nothing new for Trump,” Biden said in Chicago. “His presidency was chaos. Trump is trying to make the — the country

forget about the dark and unsettling things that he did when he was president. Well, we’re going to not let them forget.”

Biden’s strategy is a gamble. Voters are divided in their views of both men’s presidencies.

An April poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that nearly half thought Trump’s presidency hurt the country on voting rights and election security, relations with foreign countries, abortion laws and climate change. But more than half of U.S. adults thought Biden’s presidency hurt the country on cost of living and immigration.

For all his criticism of Trump, Biden does get around to talking about his agenda and accomplishments. He tells supporters about his work to boost the economy and to bring the country out of the pandemic. He discusses his support for abortion rights even as he highlights how Trump has taken credit for the overturning of Roe v. Wade in part because of his Supreme Court nominations.

Debt tops \$34T as efforts to address it seem to be dead

By KEVIN FREKING
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For Mike Johnson it was effectively a Day 1 priority.

It’s well past time, the newly elected House speaker said in October, to establish a bipartisan commission to tackle the federal government’s growing \$34.6 trillion in debt. “The consequences if we don’t act now are unbearable,” he said, echoing warnings from his predecessor and other House Republicans.

More than six months later, the proposal appears all but dead, extinguished by vocal opposition from both the right and the left.

The collapse underscores an unyielding dynamic in Washington, with lawmakers in both parties loath to consider the unpopular tradeoffs that would be necessary to stem the nation’s swelling tide of red ink — particularly in an election year. Facing the reality that any fiscal commission would almost certainly suggest that Americans pay more or get less from their government, lawmakers have time and again done what they do so well: punt the problem to the next Congress. And they seem poised to do so again.

Many Democrats and left-leaning advocacy groups oppose the commission because they fear it would recommend cuts to Social Security benefits. Some Republicans and right-leaning groups are against it as well, fearing the panel would recommend tax increases. They’ve labeled the commission a “tax trap.”

“I’m disappointed that we haven’t got as much momentum as I thought we would,” said Rep. Jodey Arrington, the Republican chairman of the House Budget Commit-

tee. “The speaker supported it, endorsed it from the outset. But I think there are some outside groups that have weighed in, that have said that this is a backdoor way to raise taxes, and it scared some of my Republican colleagues.”

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., sponsor of the debt commission bill in the Senate, was even more pessimistic.

“No one seems to care,” Manchin said. “It’s a shame, \$34.6 trillion in debt. No one cares about it.”

The debt commission legislation, modeled after previous efforts, would create a 16-member panel to recommend steps that could be taken to balance the federal budget at the earliest reasonable date and improve the long-term fiscal health of Medicare and Social Security. The commission would have 16 members — 12 from Congress, evenly divided by

party, and four outside experts without voting power. The GOP-controlled House Budget Committee advanced the bill in a 22-12 vote.

The fiscal realities that would face any commission are well documented and center to a large extent on Social Security and Medicare, which consume an ever-growing share of the federal budget, and interest payments on the nation’s debt.

For Social Security, the reserves for the The Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund will run out in 2033. At that point, the program will have enough tax revenue coming in to pay about 79% of scheduled benefits. For Medicare, the trust fund covering inpatient hospital stays, hospice care and stays at skilled nursing facilities has sufficient funds to pay full benefits until 2036. At that point, 11% spending cuts would be required to match incoming revenue.



Johnson

US consumer sentiment at 6-month low on inflation, unemployment fears

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. consumer sentiment fell sharply in May to the lowest level in six months as Americans cited stubbornly high inflation and interest rates, as well as fears that unemployment could rise.

The University of Michigan’s consumer sentiment index, released Friday in a preliminary version, dropped to 67.4 this month from a final reading of 77.2 in April.

May’s reading is still about 14% higher than a year ago. Consumers’ outlook has generally been gloomy since the pandemic and particularly after inflation first spiked in 2021.

Consumer spending is a crucial driver of growth. Sour sentiment about the economy is also weighing on President Joe Biden’s reelection bid.

Still, consumer confidence surveys have not always been reliable guides to actual spending, economists note.

“Perceptions don’t always match reality and we think the fundamental backdrop remains strong enough to keep consumers spending,” said Oren Klachkin, an economist at Nationwide Financial, in a research note. “Rising incomes offer a healthy offset and will prevent consumer outlays from retrenching on a sustained basis.”

In the first three months of this year, consumer spending stayed strong even as growth slowed, like-

ly fueled largely by upper-income earners with significant wealth gains in their homes and stock portfolios. The unemployment rate is at a historically low 3.9%, which has forced many companies to offer higher pay to find and keep workers.

Consumer price increases have been stuck at an elevated level this year, after a sharp drop last year from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022 to 3% a year later. In March, prices rose 3.5% compared with a year

ago, up from 3.2% in the previous month. Federal Reserve officials have underscored this month that they will likely keep their benchmark interest rate at a 23-year high for as long as needed to get inflation back to their 2% target.

The consumer sentiment survey found that Americans expect inflation will stay higher over the next year at 3.5%. Before the pandemic, consumers typically expected inflation a year ahead would be below 3%.

NATION

Solar storm puts on brilliant light show

By TOM KRISHER,
JOSH FUNK
AND MARCIA DUNN
Associated Press

A powerful solar storm put on an amazing skyward light show across the globe Friday night but has caused what appeared to be only minor disruptions to the electric power grid, communications and satellite positioning systems.

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said extreme geomagnetic storm conditions continued Saturday, and there were preliminary reports of power grid irregularities, degradation of high-frequency communications and global positioning systems.

But the Federal Emergency Management Agency said that, so far, no FEMA region had reported any significant impact from the storms. The U.S. Department of Energy said Saturday it is not aware of any impact from the storms on electric customers.

NOAA predicted that strong flares would continue through at least Sunday, and a spokeswoman said via email that the agency's Space Weather Prediction Center had prepared well for the storm.

On Saturday morning, SpaceX's



JENNY KANE/AP

People look at the night sky toward the northern lights, or Aurora Borealis, on Friday, in Estacada, Ore.

Starlink satellite internet service said on its website that service had been degraded and its team was investigating. CEO Elon Musk wrote on the social platform X overnight that its satellites were “under a lot of pressure, but holding up so far.”

Brilliant purple, green, yellow

and pink hues of the northern lights were reported worldwide, with sightings in Germany, Switzerland, China, England, Spain and elsewhere.

In the U.S., Friday's solar storm pushed the lights much farther south than normal.

The Miami office of the National

Weather Service confirmed sightings in the areas of Fort Lauderdale and Fort Myers, Fla. Meteorologist Nick Carr said another forecaster who lives near Fort Lauderdale photographed the lights and was familiar with them because he previously lived in Alaska.

People in Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and other Midwestern states were able to capture photos of bright colors along the horizon.

With the solar storm persisting through the weekend, Saturday night offered another chance for many to see the spectacle.

NOAA issued a rare severe geomagnetic storm warning when a solar outburst reached Earth on Friday afternoon, hours sooner than anticipated.

The agency alerted operators of power plants and orbiting spacecraft, as well as FEMA, to take precautions.

“For most people here on planet Earth, they won't have to do anything,” said Rob Steenburgh, a scientist with NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center.

“That's really the gift from space weather: the aurora,” Steenburgh said. He and his colleagues said the best views may come from phone cameras, which are better at capturing light than the naked eye.

Snap a picture of the sky, and “there might be actually a nice little treat there for you,” said Mike Bettwy, operations chief for the prediction center.

Kid-friendly visitation room added to Rikers ahead of Mother's Day

By TED SHAFFREY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — It's probably the last place a mom wants to spend Mother's Day with her kids. But a family visiting space at New York City's notorious Rikers Island jail complex is a little more kid-friendly after a colorful redesign by the Children's Museum of Manhattan.

The jail opened the new preschool play and learning room for the children and grandchildren of female prisoners Tuesday, a few days ahead of the Sunday holiday.

“Mother's Day means everything to me,” said Rikers inmate Nadine Leach, 43, as she watched her 3-year-old granddaughter, Queen, excitedly explore the sound machines, coloring books and toys.

Leach's daughter Lashawna Jones, 27, said the play installation is beautiful compared with her last visit. Before, it was a mostly bare room, with a few books. Jones said the design focused her children's attention on imaginative play, instead of their grandmother being in jail and awaiting trial on a felony drug charge.

“It makes me sad that she's not actually home with us for Mother's Day. Because I feel like a little



TED SHAFFREY/AP

Inmate Nadine Leach, 43, right, visits with her grandchildren and daughter Lashawna Jones, 27, in the newly opened preschool play and learn visitation hub in the Rose M. Singer Center at the Rikers Island jail complex in the Bronx borough of New York, on Tuesday.

sad coming here to visit her here because I'm used to having her physically home with us. Like, right now, I'm being a big girl; I'm holding my tears back,” Jones said.

To get to the facility, families take a bus, go through security and drug screenings, and pass by walls with six layers of razor wire. Outside the new play center, a sign on blue cinder block reads, “Inmates are permitted to hold their children during the visit.”

Lynelle Maginley-Liddie, com-

missioner of the New York City Department of Correction, cut a giant green ceremonial ribbon to open the room.

“We want mothers to have interactions with their kids,” Maginley-Liddie said. “You know, being incarcerated can be very difficult. It can be difficult on the children. It can be difficult on the moms. And it's important for them to have those connections even while they're in our care, so when they are released, that bond has been sustained during incarceration.”

First person to receive genetically modified pig kidney transplant dies

Associated Press

BOSTON — The first recipient of a genetically modified pig kidney transplant has died nearly two months after he underwent the procedure, his family and the hospital that performed the surgery said Saturday.

Richard “Rick” Slayman had the transplant at Massachusetts General Hospital in March at the age of 62. Surgeons said they believed the pig kidney would last for at least two years.

The transplant team at Massachusetts General Hospital said in a statement it was deeply saddened by Slayman's passing and offered condolences to his family. They said they didn't have any indication that he died as a result of the transplant.

The Weymouth, Mass., man was the first living person to have the procedure. Previously, pig kidneys had been temporarily transplanted into brain-dead donors. Two men received heart transplants from pigs, although both died within months.

Slayman had a kidney transplant at the hospital in 2018, but he had to go back on dialysis last year when it showed signs of failure.

When dialysis complications arose requiring frequent procedures, his doctors suggested a pig kidney transplant.

In a statement, Slayman's family thanked his doctors.

“Their enormous efforts leading the xenotransplant gave our family seven more weeks with Rick, and our memories made during that time will remain in our minds and hearts,” the statement said.

They said Slayman underwent the surgery in part to provide hope for the thousands of people who need a transplant to survive.

“Rick accomplished that goal and his hope and optimism will endure forever,” the statement said.

Xenotransplantation refers to healing human patients with cells, tissues or organs from animals. Such efforts long failed because the human immune system immediately destroyed foreign animal tissue. Recent attempts have involved pigs that have been modified so their organs are more humanlike.

More than 100,000 people are on the national waiting list for a transplant, most of them kidney patients, and thousands die every year before their turn comes.

WORLD

Civilians flee northeast Ukraine amid Russia's renewed assault

Associated Press

VILCHA, Ukraine — Thousands more civilians have fled Russia's renewed ground offensive in Ukraine's northeast that has targeted towns and villages with a barrage of artillery and mortar fire, officials said Sunday. The intense battles have forced at least one Ukrainian unit to withdraw in the Kharkiv region, capitulating more land to Russian forces across less defended settlements in the so-called contested "gray zone" along the Russian

border.

By Sunday afternoon, the town of Vovchansk, with a prewar population of 17,000, emerged as a focal point in the battle. Volodymyr Tymoshko, the head of the Kharkiv regional police, said Russian forces were in the outskirts of the town and approaching from three directions.

At least 4,000 civilians have fled the Kharkiv region since Friday, when Moscow's forces launched the operation, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said on a social media. Heavy

fighting raged Sunday along the northeast front line, where Russian forces attacked 27 settlements in the past 24 hours, he said.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Saturday that Moscow's forces had captured five villages on the border of Ukraine's Kharkiv region and Russia. These areas were likely poorly fortified due to the dynamic fighting and constant heavy shelling, easing a Russian advance.

Ukraine's leadership has not confirmed Moscow's gains.



AHN YOUNG-JOON/AP

Lotus Lantern Festival

Buddhists walk past lanterns during the Lotus Lantern Festival, ahead of the birthday of Buddha at Dongguk University in Seoul, South Korea, on Saturday. Despite rain in the forecast, organizers expected a turnout of around 50,000 people. The festival aims to spread the enlightenment of the founder of Buddhism all over the world.

Flash floods sweeps through north Afghanistan, hundreds dead, missing

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Shopkeeper Nazer Mohammad ran home as soon as he heard about flash floods crashing into the outskirts of a provincial capital in northern Afghanistan. By the time he got there, there was nothing left, in-

cluding his family of five.

"Everything happened just all of a sudden. I came home, but there was no home there, instead I saw all the neighborhood covered by mud and water," said Mohammad. 48. He said that he buried his wife and two sons aged 15 and 8

years, but he's still looking for two daughters, who are around 6 and 11 years old.

The U.N. food agency estimated that unusually heavy seasonal rains in Afghanistan have left more than 300 people dead and over 1,000 houses destroyed, most

of them in the northern province of Baghlan, which bore the brunt of the deluges Friday.

"I hope someone has found my daughters alive," he said, holding back tears. "Just in the blink of an eye, I lost everything: family, home, belongings, now nothing is

left to me."

Aid group Save the Children said about 600,000 people, half children, live in the five districts in Baghlan. The group said it sent a "clinic on wheels" with mobile health and protection teams to support children and their families.

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Cruise ship sails into port with dead whale on bow

NY NEW YORK—A cruise ship sailed into a New York City port with a 44-foot dead whale across its bow, marine authorities said.

The whale, identified as an endangered sei whale, was caught on the ship's bow when it arrived at the Port of Brooklyn, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration fisheries spokesperson Andrea Gomez said.

A spokesperson for MSC Cruises said the whale was on the MSC Meraviglia, which docked at Brooklyn before sailing to ports in New England and Canada.

The dead whale was relocated to Sandy Hook, N.J., and towed to shore there to allow for better access to equipment and to conduct a necropsy, Gomez said.

State prohibits use of cell phones while driving

PA HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania will join the majority of states that ban motorists from handling a cell phone for almost any purpose while driving, as backers of the legislation hope to reduce distracted driving accidents and deaths after nearly two decades of pressing the measure.

Gov. Josh Shapiro's office said Thursday that the Democrat will sign the bill, 18 years after he first introduced a similar bill when he served in the state House of Representatives. The ban will take effect a year after he signs it, which is expected in the coming days.

Under the bill, police can ticket a driver who is handling their phone for almost any reason. Drivers can still use their phone to make phone calls or for other functions, such as listening to music, if they are using it hands-free with technology such as a docking station, Bluetooth or speakers.

The ban applies to motorists sitting in traffic or stopped at a traffic light, but does not include drivers parked on the side of the road or another place where the vehicle can remain stopped safely.

Law expands voucher-like K-12 scholarships

MO JEFFERSON CITY — K-12 students from low-income families across Missouri soon will have access to private school scholarships under legislation signed last week by Republican Gov. Mike Parson.

The voucher-like scholarship program, which takes effect Aug. 28, will offer as much as \$6,375 per child for expenses including tuition, textbooks, tutoring, transportation, extracurricular activities and summer school. Scholarship accounts are funded by private donors in exchange for tax credits.

The initiative also promises hundreds of millions of dollars more for public schools, a compro-



GREG EVANS, THE (OWENSBORO, Ky.) MESSENGER-INQUIRER/AP

Working on the big wheel

Israel Garcia with Casey's Rides bolts a rim beam in place while working to set up the Gondola Wheel amusement ride for the BBQ & Barrels festival last week in Owensboro, Ky. The festival celebrates the local traditions of barbecued meat and Kentucky bourbon.

mise made to help the bill pass the Legislature where so-called "school choice" policies have struggled to advance.

Teachers will be paid a minimum of \$40,000 a year under the new law, with additional incentives for long-time teachers with master's degrees.

New rule: Dogs entering US must be 6 months old

DC WASHINGTON — All dogs coming into the U.S. from other countries must be at least 6 months old and microchipped to help prevent the spread of rabies, according to new government rules published Wednesday.

The new rules require vaccination for dogs that have been in countries where rabies is common. The update applies to dogs brought in by breeders or rescue groups as well as pets traveling with their U.S. owners.

The new rules take effect Aug. 1 when a temporary 2021 order expires. That order suspended bringing in dogs from more than 100 countries where rabies is still a problem.

The new rules require all dogs entering the U.S. to be at least 6 months, old enough to be vaccinated if required and for the shots to take effect; have a microchip placed under their skin with a code that can be used to verify rabies vaccination; and have completed a

new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention import form.

Judge OKs discussion of critical race theory

AR LITTLE ROCK — A federal judge has ruled Arkansas cannot prevent two high school teachers from discussing critical race theory in the classroom, but he stopped short of more broadly blocking the state from enforcing its ban on "indoctrination" in public schools.

U.S. District Judge Lee Rudofsky issued a narrow preliminary injunction Tuesday evening against the ban, one of several changes adopted under an education overhaul that Republican Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed into law last year.

His ruling prohibited the state from disciplining the teachers for teaching, mentioning or discussing critical race theory — an academic framework dating to the 1970s that centers on the idea that racism is embedded in the nation's institution.

Facility that mistreated residents nears closure

IA GLENWOOD — An Iowa facility for people with intellectual disabilities is set to permanently close after federal investigators said patients' rights were violated there.

The 28 residents at the state-run

Glenwood Resource Center will be moved out by the end of June and 235 staff members have been notified that they will be laid off, according to reporting by the Des Moines Register. The facility had 152 patients and about 650 staff members when Gov. Kim Reynolds announced in 2022 that it would close.

Scathing reports by the U.S. Department of Justice have condemned Iowa's treatment of people with intellectual and development disabilities. A report in December 2020 found that the Glenwood Resource Center likely violated the constitutional rights of residents by subjecting them to human experiments, including sexual arousal research, some of which were deemed dangerous by federal investigators.

Lawmakers adjourn without gambling vote

AL MONTGOMERY — Alabama lawmakers ended the legislative session Thursday without approving a lottery, slot machines and video poker machines, continuing a 25-year stalemate on the issue of gambling.

Supporters were unable to break an impasse in the Alabama Senate after the measure failed by one vote earlier in the session. The Senate did not take the bill up again on the session's final day, ending hopes of getting the issue

before voters later this year.

Alabamians last voted on the issue of gambling in 1999, when voters rejected a lottery proposed by then-Gov. Don Siegelman. There have been multiple efforts since then for lottery bills, but the measures stalled amid debate over casinos and electronic gambling machines.

Man paralyzed after being hit with taser sues officer

CO DENVER — A man who said he was paralyzed after being hit with a Taser while running from police in Colorado filed a federal lawsuit Thursday against one of the officers, seeking \$100 million in damages.

Lawyers for Jacob Root, who was suspected of stealing a car, allege Officer Robert Comstock fired a Taser at his back without warning that incapacitated him and prevented him from using his hands or arms to break his fall to the ground. Root fell face first and broke his neck after falling off a sidewalk and into the street in the May 16, 2022 incident, according to the suit.

Root can be heard asking officers "I can't move. Is that normal?" soon after the fall, which was recorded on police body camera footage released by Root's lawyers.

FACES



Randy Travis, left, and Mary Davis, Travis' wife, appear May 11, 2023, at the Academy of Country Music Awards in Frisco, Texas. Travis released a new song May 3, "Where That Came From."

An AI-assisted comeback

Computers re-create Randy Travis' singing style, develop new song for Country Hall of Famer more than a decade after singer's stroke

By MARIA SHERMAN
Associated Press

With some help from artificial intelligence, country music star Randy Travis, celebrated for his timeless hits like "Forever and Ever, Amen" and "I Told You So," has his voice back.

In July 2013, Travis was hospitalized with viral cardiomyopathy, a virus that attacks the heart, and later suffered a stroke. The Country Music Hall of Famer had to relearn how to walk, spell and read in the years that followed. A condition called aphasia limits his ability to speak — it's why his wife, Mary Davis, assists him in interviews. It's also why he hasn't released new music in more than a decade, until now.

"Where That Came From," released May 3, is a rich acoustic ballad amplified by Travis' immediately recognizable, soulful vocal tone.

Cris Lacy, Warner Music Nashville co-president, approached Travis and Davis and asked: "What if we could take Randy's voice and re-create it using AI?" Davis told The Associated Press over Zoom, Travis smiling in agreement next to her. "Well, we were all over that, so we were so excited.

"All I ever wanted since the day of a stroke was to hear that voice again."

Lacy tapped developers in London to create a proprietary AI model to begin the process. The result was two models: One with 12 vocal stems (or song samples), and another with 42 stems collected across Travis' career — from 1985 to 2013, says Kyle Lehning, Travis' longtime producer. Lacy and Lehning chose to use "Where That Came From," a song written by Scotty Emerick and John Scott Sherrill that Lehning co-produced and held on to for years. He believed it could best articulate the humanity of Travis' idiosyncratic vocal style.

"I never even thought about another song," Lehning said.

Once he input the demo vocal (sung by James Du-pree) into the AI models, "it took about five minutes

to analyze," says Lehning. "... And it was stunning, to me, how good it was sort of right off the bat. It's hard to put an equation around it, but it was probably 70, 75% what you hear now."

"There were certain aspects of it that were not authentic to Randy's performance," he said, so he began to edit and build on the recording with engineer Casey Wood, who also worked closely with Travis over a few decades.

The pair cherry-picked from the two models, and made alterations to things like vibrato speed, or slowing and relaxing phrases. "Randy is a laid-back singer," Lehning says. "Randy, in my opinion, had an old soul quality to his voice. That's one of the things that made him unique, but also, somehow familiar."

Davis says the "human element," and "the people that are involved" in this project, separate it from more nefarious uses of AI in music.

"Randy, I remember watching him when he first heard the song after it was completed. It was beautiful because at first, he was surprised, and then he was very pensive, and he was listening and studying," she said. "And then he put his head down and his eyes were a little watery. I think he went through every emotion there was, in those three minutes of just hearing his voice again."

"It's a big loss when you lose the voice of someone that you were connected to, and the ability to have it back is a beautiful gift," Lacy said.

The team behind the song hope that it will educate people on the good that AI can do — not the fraudulent activities that so frequently make headlines. "We're hoping that maybe we can set a standard," Davis says, where credit is given where credit is due — and artists have control over their voice and work.

So, will there be more original Randy Travis songs in the future?

"There may be others," says Davis. "We'll see where this goes. This is such a foreign territory. There's likely more on the horizon."

"I think he went through every emotion there was, in those three minutes of just hearing his voice again."

Mary Davis
Randy Travis' wife, describing singer's reaction to hearing new AI-generated song

Jackson, Serkis reuniting for 'The Hunt for Gollum'

The Washington Post

A new Lord of the Rings movie was announced May 9 by Warner Bros., marking a cinematic return to the Oscar-winning film franchise based on the novels by J.R.R. Tolkien.

The new film, the first of two that will explore previously untold stories in the universe, will see Lord of the Rings trilogy filmmaker Peter Jackson back at the helm, along with Andy Serkis, who still star in and direct the first of these films, "The Hunt for Gollum."

"Yesssss, Precious. The time has come once more to venture into the unknown with my dear friends," Serkis said in a statement, playing off the slithery, CGI-rendered Gollum character that he performed to much acclaim in the original film trilogy.

Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav first announced the new films during an earnings call May 9, with "The Hunt for Gollum" tentatively scheduled to release in 2026. The film's script is still being written.

The Lord of the Rings trilogy from Jackson adapted Tolkien's classic novels, originally released in the '50s. Those books — "The Fellowship of the Ring," "The Two Towers" and "The Return of the King" — center on a young hobbit named Frodo and his friends, tasked with bringing a destructive magical ring to its demise in the fiery land of Mordor, with plenty of skirmishes between kings, elves, wizards and orcs along the way.

Gollum — a corrupted hobbit



Writer/director Peter Jackson, left, and actor Andy Serkis have announced they will make two more films within the "Lord of the Rings" universe.

and sometimes villain played by Serkis in a motion-capture suit — became one of the most popular stars of the original movie trilogy. The technology used for the performance was groundbreaking at the time and "changed the course of special effects," according to Vulture.

The three Lord of the Ring films from Jackson earned about \$3 billion combined at the global box office. Jackson also directed a trilogy based on Tolkien's "The Hobbit" novel in the mid-2010s, serving as a prequel to the main LOTR films.

An identically named British fan film "The Hunt for Gollum" was released in 2009 based on appendixes Tolkien wrote expanding the universe of his books. Set near the beginning of the original trilogy, the plot of that film centered on Gandalf sending Aragorn to capture Gollum before he could reveal the One Ring's location to Mordor ruler Sauron.

Danson, Harrelson, Stewart to begin new podcasts in June

From wire reports

Some stars known for their work onscreen — Ted Danson, Woody Harrelson and Jon Stewart — are entering into the world of podcasts.

Danson and Harrelson have signed up for "Where Everybody Knows Your Name with Ted Danson and Woody Harrelson (Sometimes)," which will be launched June 12 by SiriusXM.

The title refers to their years together on the NBC sitcom "Cheers," and to the fact that Harrelson's participation is limited. He'll be on with Danson "when he can find him," SiriusXM said.

The podcast will consist of their conversations with the likes of Will Arnett, Kristen Bell, Laura Dern, Jane Fonda, Conan O'Brien, Nick Offerman and others.

Stewart, who returned to Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" this year to host once a week, will do a podcast called "The Weekly Show," according to Comedy Central. It is expected to launch in

early June.

The podcast is likely to be an extension of the television show, with guests and deeper dives into issues.

Other news

■ **Justin Bieber and Hailey Bieber** (nee Baldwin) are expecting their first child together. A representative for Hailey Bieber confirmed to The Associated Press on May 9 that the model is just over six months pregnant.

■ **Dennis Thompson**, the MC5 drummer known as "Machine Gun" because of his aggressive style of drumming, died May 9 at a long-term care facility in Taylor, Mich., according to his family. He was 75. Thompson was the last remaining member of powerhouse Detroit rock outfit MC5, who were announced as inductees into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in April. The deeply influential rock act was known for its counterculture politics and its rollicking anthem "Kick Out the Jams."

Bizarro



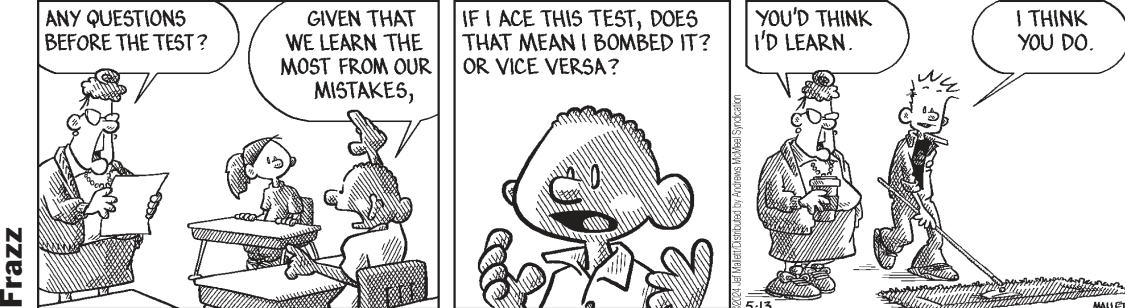
Loose Parts



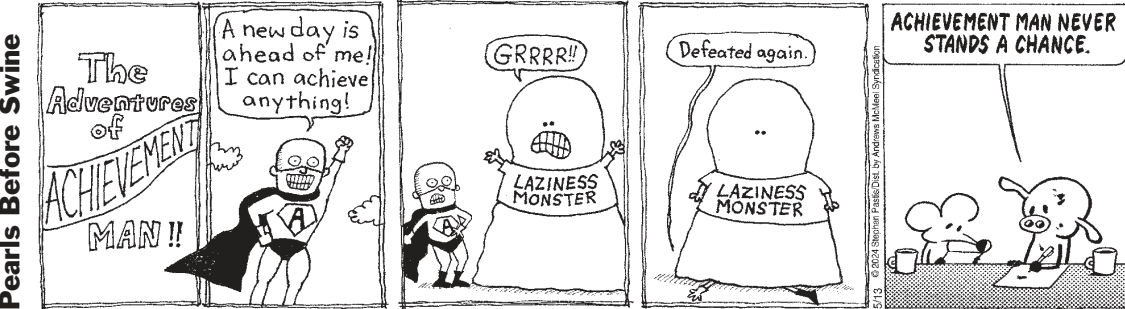
Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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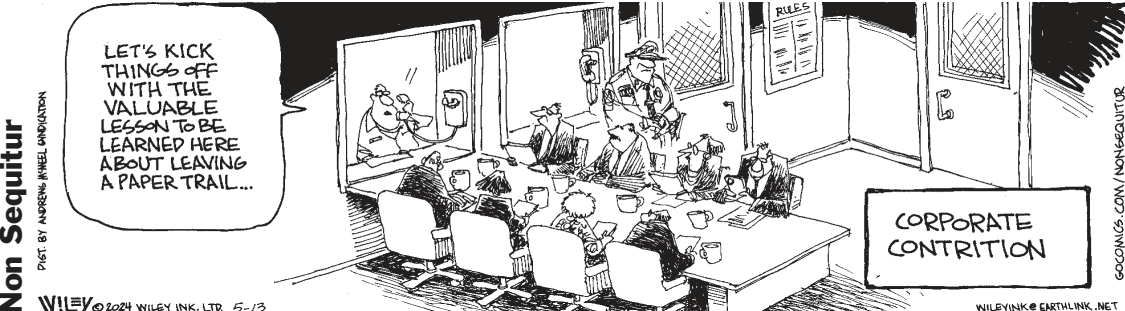
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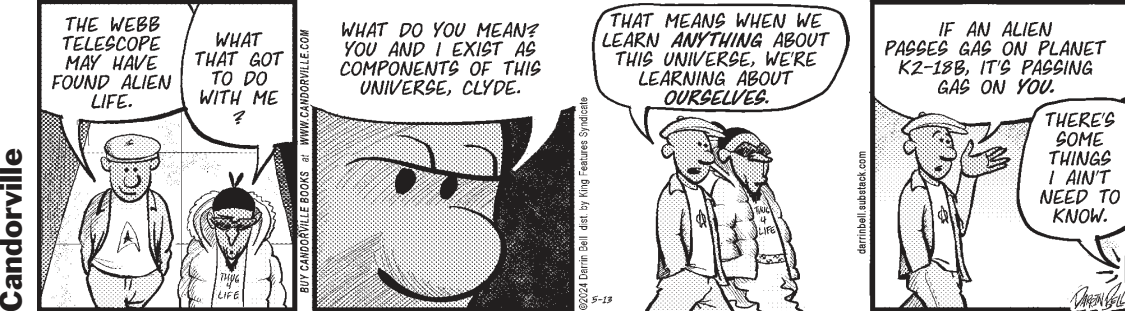
Pearls Before Swine



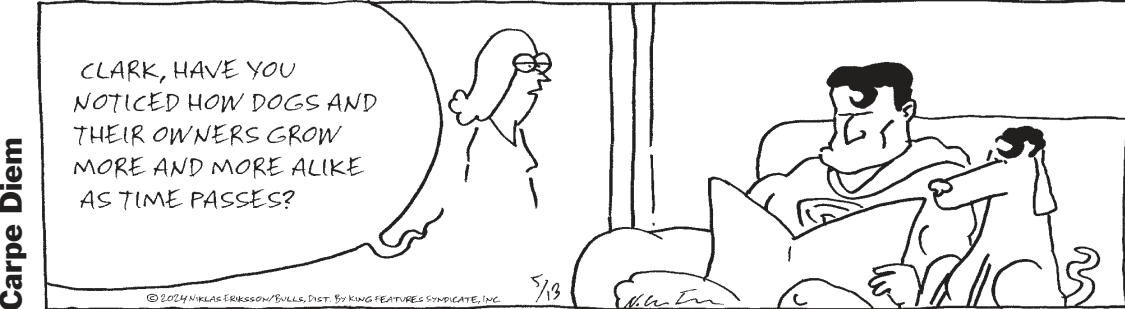
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



- ACROSS
- 1 Grade school basics
- 5 Scale abbr.
- 8 Despot
- 12 Corn seasoning
- 13 "Alley —"
- 14 Tolstoy's Karenina
- 15 Cicatrix
- 16 Ice cream order
- 18 Heavy blow
- 20 Royal headgear
- 21 "Trees," for one
- 23 Naughty child
- 24 Like an LP
- 28 Priests' garments
- 31 "Lion" star Patel
- 32 Eye surgery
- 34 Mork's home
- 35 Ooze
- 37 Like some light bulbs
- 39 — Dawn Chong
- 41 Desires
- 42 Making a choice
- 45 Inform
- 49 Golf group, often
- 51 Bailiwick
- 52 Golfer's warning
- 53 Behold
- 54 Cash drawer
- 55 Go downhill fast?
- 56 Owned
- 57 Villa d'—
- DOWN
- 1 Admin. aide
- 2 One of the three B's
- 3 Hammer part
- 4 Handbag handles
- 5 Observed
- 6 Rock's — Jovi
- 7 Detail, in short
- 8 City near Seattle
- 9 Winter road clearer
- 10 Unsigned (Abbr.)
- 11 Sings like Doja Cat
- 17 Lanka lead-in
- 19 Mattress spring
- 22 Netlike
- 24 Gridiron scores, for short
- 25 Teeny
- 26 Opera opener
- 27 Desperation
- 29 Bikini half
- 30 Firmament
- 33 Vegas game
- 36 Coupled (with)
- 38 Will subject
- 40 USN rank
- 42 Does in, mob-style
- 43 Combine
- 44 "Gee whiz!"
- 46 "Bearded" bloom
- 47 Fedora fabric
- 48 Harvard rival
- 50 "Give — break!"

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

5-13 CRYPTOQUIP

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KDRJTD KPE KFG CTDM ZEVQ

EZ ZDORJ WDTGTDCTQ RV

GMDOW: JDOHJV BEHWEJT.

Saturday's Cryptoquip: UNUSUAL DINOSAUR THAT HAD AN EXTREME LIKING FOR STIMULATING CAFFEINATED DRINKS: TEA REX.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals W



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Lt. Col. Katie R. Fidler, Europe commander
John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
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OPINION

On losing my mother, and finding her again

By Theodore R. Johnson
Special to The Washington Post

A few years ago, the woman who gave me life passed away in the evening hours following Mother’s Day. For two decades, she’d beaten cancer each time it had appeared. She was a walking miracle, an answered prayer. But the fourth battle proved to be the final one. Her death caused me to do the previously unthinkable: doubt the existence — and the utility — of God.

My mom was a special soul. Not because she was mine but because of her compassion, concern and care for others. She was so loving and selfless that I wouldn’t have believed it possible if I hadn’t seen it for myself. And in a world in desperate need of more people like her, she was taken too soon. Robbed from us. How could any benevolent God allow that to happen? And why believe in a callous or disinterested one that would permit it?

Those are big questions. My rearing in the Black church and by the American South taught that you don’t question God and grown folk. But some things demand answers, and there was no one else to ask. Neither of them could help me make sense of any of it. In place of an explanation, there were mostly words meant to comfort and give purpose to tragedy: “The Lord works in mysterious ways.” I lost patience with it all.

It’s a tough experience, losing your mother and your faith all at once. It shakes the core.

Something happens when the beliefs and ideas most fundamental to your worldview are challenged or fractured. The experience invites deep inquiry into identity and the proper order of things. We mature when

we use these moments to take stock of ourselves. Questioning the previously unquestionable and challenging core convictions help separate what we believe from what we’ve been told and assumed to be true. Such introspection can give a certain clarity to the things happening around us, and new ways to see the past.

For the first 20 years of my life, we were in church three times a week. It was more than just religion. It was a community, its own distinct society. Raised in the Southern suburbs of the 1980s, I found in church the only place other than my house where I wasn’t in the minority. There was social and cultural education there, points of deep pride. Kids had responsibilities — in the choir, as ushers, reading a morning passage. Praise dancing and church fans never stopped on Sunday afternoons. My mother was a musician and directed the choir. If you ask me what I believe, I will point to her at that piano, singing at morning service.

But once she was gone, I started to see proof of her everywhere. Not only in my belief system and my lens for viewing a complicated world, but in the smaller things. Like the cardinal that arrives at the bird feeder the moment I look. She is in the aromas of my kitchen, and in the songs she used to sing or play. Increasingly, I see her in my face, my temperament, in how I say certain words. I talk to her often — my inner monologues nodding to her as though she’s in the audience: “Ma, you won’t believe this ...”

I think she’d get a kick out of it. Seeing her firstborn, sitting outside like she did on hot days with a cold tomato in one hand and a saltshaker in the other. Learning the ways and moments and places where those who love her still find her. Knowing that we see

her in the sunsets, at the golden time of day, as she wanted. And in the rainbows, too, received as a mother’s gentle encouragement to live well.

In my refusal to let go of her, a simpler faith emerged. There was no need for mythology. No desire to let grief have the last word or be the strongest memory. She was still around, just differently now. It has been a journey to get to this point, and, admittedly, I still have no answers to those big questions. Sometimes, there is no answer. Faith doesn’t promise miracles and answered prayers; it only promises that they are possible. And they are. I know because my mother was both.

A few days before she passed, I stopped at the nurses’ station outside her hospital room for an update. One of them stood slowly — reverently, it seemed — and gave a rundown of the previous night. The report was positive enough, but the nurse’s eyes confirmed what my heart already knew.

Without thinking, I started singing her praises. I needed them to know she was special, and not just because she was mine. After going on for a bit, struggling to find the right words, I asked, “You know how when someone dies, at the funeral, people only talk about the person’s best qualities and best moments and leave everything else out?”

They all nodded.
“Well, with my mother, there is nothing to leave out. Nothing. She is an angel on this earth.”

Theodore R. Johnson, a contributing columnist for The Washington Post and retired naval officer, writes on issues of race, democracy, and American identity. This essay is adapted from “If We Are Brave: Essays From Black Americana,” to be published in October.

Rep. Greene finally got what she deserved: Defeat

By Patricia Lopez
Bloomberg Opinion

House Republicans delivered a much-needed, no-holds-barred rejection of Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene’s power grab on Wednesday, briskly voting down her attempt to oust Speaker Mike Johnson.

Her public shaming was far too long in coming. And it united a fractious GOP caucus who, with the aid of Democrats, had promised they would be in Johnson’s corner. In the end, only 11 Republicans stuck with Greene. Another 196 Republicans, aided by 32 Democrats, voted to table Greene’s motion to vacate, putting an end to her latest stunt.

Johnson had tried to reconcile his differences with Greene in meetings on Monday and Tuesday, but she responded by treating him like her lackey. She then sent out a fundraising letter on Wednesday accusing House Republicans of being hypocrites. When she brought up a motion she hadn’t bothered alerting them to in advance, her colleagues heartily booed her — prompting her to dismiss their taunts as mere naysaying from “the Uniparty.”

Republicans, speaking to a reporter on the Capitol steps before the vote, had already excoriated Greene. “Moscow Marjorie has clearly gone off the deep end,” New York Rep. Mike Lawler said. “It may be the result of a space laser. This type of tantrum is absolutely unacceptable.” (Lawler was referring to Greene’s claim that a Jewish cabal ignited

the 2018 California wildfires using space lasers.)

Greene has been a self-aggrandizing agent of chaos ever since she assumed office about three years ago. After cozying up to former Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who was ousted last October, she appeared determined to force Johnson to toe her line on such issues as blocking budget bills and ending Ukraine aid. She ingratiated herself to former President Donald Trump, professing her loyalty while also claiming to have an “in” with him.

But Trump sided with Johnson in this fight, making his preference clear at a recent event at Mar-a-Lago. “I stand with the Speaker,” he said, noting that Johnson was “doing a really good job under very tough circumstances.” And that was after Johnson pushed through an aid package to Ukraine that Greene opposed.

There was mounting evidence that Trump may have been losing patience with Greene. He reportedly called her and suggested she back off. The Washington Post obtained audio from a donor luncheon in which Trump could be heard praising Johnson for “doing a very good job” and advising others to “leave him alone.”

Greene should be a spent force at this point. She was booted from the House Freedom Caucus last summer for attacking fellow Republicans. Her working relationships with most Republicans are in tatters, including in the Senate. North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis recently called her a “waste of

time” and a “horrible leader.”

She has also alienated many in the broader Republican conference through her continued disregard for preserving a slim GOP majority in the House and her indifference to protecting her party’s vulnerable swing state members.

Greene’s humiliation on Wednesday should remind House Republicans that they can unify and put down agitators within their ranks when needed. The truce that brought the GOP and key Democrats together won’t last, of course. They stand on opposite sides on nearly everything. But they did come together against a common foe when it mattered, prioritizing the need for an orderly House. Both parties aren’t likely to forget that, at least.

Johnson should now fully assume the reins of power, bolstered by his support from a majority of the chamber. His fruitless meetings and pointless run-ins with Greene should make him hesitant about trying to appease his party’s anarchists.

As Republican Rep. Kevin Hern of Oklahoma put it, “I don’t have a problem with him listening, but what I will have a problem with, and we had this problem with Speaker McCarthy, is when you start making special deals and hidden deals. And then people, not just conservatives, but moderates and everybody else, says ‘Where’s my deal?’ ”

Patricia Lopez is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering politics and policy. She is a former member of the editorial board at the Minneapolis Star Tribune, where she also worked as a senior political editor and reporter.

TENNIS/AUTO RACING

Djokovic, Nadal out early at Italian Open

Associated Press

ROME — Novak Djokovic’s performance was so poor on Sunday that even the 24-time Grand Slam champion admitted it was “concerning.”

Djokovic put on one of his worst displays at one of his favorite tournaments as he was upset by 29th-seeded Alejandro Tabilo in the third round of the Italian Open.

It was Djokovic’s first match since accidentally getting knocked on the head by a water bottle while signing autographs after his opening win on Friday.

“I managed to sleep okay. I had headaches. The next day or yesterday was pretty fine, so I thought it’s okay. Maybe it is okay. Maybe it’s not,” Djokovic said.

“I mean, the way I felt on the court today was just completely like a different player entered into my shoes. Just no rhythm, no tempo, no balance whatsoever on any shot. It’s a bit concerning.”

Djokovic started off with a double-fault and it didn’t get much better for the six-time Rome champion.

The top-ranked Djokovic lost his first two service games and went on to lose the match 6-2, 6-3 in just 68 minutes, handing Tabilo the victory when he double-faulted — his fifth of the match — amid boos at the Foro Italico.

“I’m trying to soak it all in and wake up right now,” Tabilo said after the biggest win of his career. “I was just trying to keep my nerves in and keep swinging. Towards the end my arms were getting tired but I was trying not to think about it.

“It’s crazy, I just can’t believe what’s happened. I can’t believe it right now. I don’t think anyone can believe it.”

The third-round loss marked Djokovic’s worst performance at the Italian Open. He had lost only

once before to an opponent outside the top 10 in Rome, where he had never gone out before the quarterfinals.

Djokovic followed Rafael Nadal to an early exit after the record 10-time Rome champion lost his third-round match to Hubert Hurkacz 6-1, 6-3 on Saturday.

While Djokovic had said he was “fine” after the water bottle incident, it was an unusually off-key performance from the Serb as he tries to step up his game on clay before attempting to defend his title at the French Open, which starts on May 26.

“I was going for kind of easy training yesterday. I didn’t feel anything, but I also didn’t feel the same,” Djokovic said.

“Today under high stress, it was quite bad — not in terms of pain, but in terms of this balance. Just no coordination. Completely different player from two nights ago ... I don’t know. I have to do medical checkups and see what’s going on.”

Djokovic had 12 unforced errors to Tabilo’s four and produced 14 winners to his opponent’s 22. It was also a rare occasion when he had zero break-point chances.

He was broken four times in the match, including in the final game, and Djokovic could only shake his head when another unforced error handed Tabilo match point.

Djokovic is still without a title this year — the first time he’s reached May without a trophy since 2018, when he was returning from a right elbow injury.

In the women’s tournament, second-seeded Aryna Sabalenka eased through to the fourth round with a 6-4, 6-2 win over Dayana Yastremska.

American Sofia Kenin was upset by Slovakian qualifier Rebeka Sramkova 6-4, 4-6, 6-4.



Alessandra Tarantino/AP

Novak Djokovic reacts during his loss to Alejandro Tabilo at the Italian Open in Rome on Sunday.



Darron Cummings/AP

Alex Palou, of Spain, celebrates after winning the Indianapolis Grand Prix race at Indianapolis Motor Speedway on Saturday. Palou retook the IndyCar points lead.

Palou pulls away from Power for Indy GP win, points lead

By Michael Marot

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Alex Palou’s first Indianapolis Grand Prix title fueled his second IndyCar Series title run.

He’s hoping another dominant victory on Indianapolis Motor Speedway’s road course produces a similar result — perhaps even a more monumental win in two weeks.

The Spaniard beat his top two challengers off pit row on his final stop Saturday and outmaneuvered three-time race winner Will Power on the race’s only restart to beat Power to the yard of bricks by 6.6106 seconds.

Christian Lundgaard finished third, more than eight seconds behind Palou on the 14-turn 2.439-mile course.

“It’s tough but it’s one of those races that you’re not really limited on the tires, so you can just go hard,” he said. “I would say last year we had a lot more advantage last year than this year, but I would still say the fact we can go 100%, pushing every single lap, maybe that’s why we see a bigger differences.”

For Palou, it was another milestone moment in his fifth IndyCar season.

The 27-year-old led a race-high 39 of 85 laps, captured his 10th career win, and his first official win this season.

Palou did win March’s exhibition all-star race, giving Chip Ganassi Racing three wins in the last four IndyCar events, and he became the first back-to-back Indy GP winner since Power in 2017 and 2018.

The victory also put Palou atop the season standings, 12 points ahead of Power, with the season’s biggest race up next.

Power earned his 31st career runner-up finish, which is sixth all-time. But the Australian with Team Penske still hasn’t won a race since June 2022.

But he was at a significant disadvantage with two team members — strategist Ron Ruzewski and engineer Robbie Atkinson — each serving a two race suspension for a cheating scandal. And yet David Faustino, who made the calls Saturday, still had Power racing near the front until Power’s used red tires wore down during the race’s final stint.

“Just didn’t quite have enough on that restart,” Power said. “I had to lift coming into the last corner, just had too much push. Had to lift, otherwise it would have been an interesting battle into Turn 1. I didn’t know whether to go for the inside or the outside but he made it very clear he was going to blow up the inside, so I kind of went the outside.”

It marked the second straight year Palou dominated the race, though he didn’t come close to matching last year’s victory margin of nearly 17 seconds.

Still, he had more than enough to hold off Power’s last strong challenge and then spent the rest of the racing padding his lead.

“He had the shorter first gear, so his restart was a little bit better than mine,” Palou said of his move on the restart. “I just saw it coming and I had to defend. I didn’t want to give up the lead.”

Two of Palou’s teammates —

six-time series champ Scott Dixon and Marcus Armstrong — rounded out the top five. It was a career-best finish for Armstrong.

“I think Alex was just fast today. He was fast here last year in May, in August,” Lundgaard said. “He’s fast wherever we go, really.”

The mistake

Power defended his team after the race for the cheating scandal that led to a series of penalties for Team Penske.

Defending Indy 500 champ Josef Newgarden was stripped of his season-opening win, Scott McLaughlin was stripped of his third-place finish at St. Petersburg, all three drivers were docked 10 points and fined \$25,000 and the strategist and engineers for Newgarden and Power were suspended.

“When you’re a top team like Penske, people certainly like to blow everything up and make a big deal of it, although it was just a mistake,” said Power, who was cleared of wrongdoing. “It was actually a mistake. I know, I was testing when the software was put in.”

Airing a complaint

Colton Herta fell from first to third in the points after qualifying 24th and finishing seventh. And while he was the biggest mover of the day, he wasn’t happy with Andretti Global teammate Marcus Ericsson. Herta made those thoughts known on the broadcast’s post-race interview.

“Your teammate’s leading the championship and you race him. ... I don’t know what you’re thinking,” Herta said.

MLB

Skenes makes highly anticipated debut

Rookie Pirates hurler hits triple digits 17 times, strikes out seven in no-decision

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Paul Skenes’ stuff was as electric as advertised. A fastball that reached at least 100 mph 17 times. A slider that left major leaguers shaking their heads. An invention called a “splinker” that is a hybrid of a splitter and a sinker and dips and dives unlike any pitch anywhere in baseball.

Yet even at age 21, the Pittsburgh Pirates rookie knows all the “oohs” and “ahs” and knee buckles a ball that at times seems to explode out of his right hand can produce won’t matter if he can’t control it.

So while there were some positive takeaways from his major league debut on Saturday — seven strikeouts over four-plus innings and much, much later a 10-9 victory over the Chicago Cubs — the top overall pick in last year’s draft understands there is more work to be done.

He needed 84 pitches to get 12 outs, issued a couple of walks, hit a batter and was charged with three runs. For a player whose workload will be closely monitored, that’s not nearly as efficient as he’d like.

Yes, there were moments of brilliance in front of a crowd of 34,924 that included his famous girlfriend, LSU gymnast and social media influencer Olivia Dunne.

There were also moments when

Cubs offered a reminder that for all his talent, Skenes is still a rookie who has been a full-time pitcher for less than two years. And it will take more than testing the limits of the radar gun to succeed at baseball’s highest level.

Pirates manager Derek Shelton blamed Skenes’ inconsistency on the kind of nervous energy every player feels when he reaches the majors. Skenes, who posted a 0.99 ERA in seven starts for Triple-A

Indianapolis before being called up this week, declined to get into specifics.

“You can chalk it up to a number of things,” Skenes said. “But it just wasn’t as sharp as it’s been.”

Skenes still became the first Pirates pitcher age 21 or younger to record at least seven strikeouts in his major league debut since Nick Maddox fanned 11 against the St. Louis Cardinals in 1907 — 95 years before Skenes was born.

Maddox played just four seasons. Expectations are decidedly higher for Skenes.

The Pirates teased his call-up on Wednesday and his highly anticipated arrival gave PNC Park a playoff-like atmosphere, or at least as much as it can feel like October in mid-May for a team that hasn’t reached the postseason since 2015.

Fans lined up two and three deep behind the Pirates’ bullpen beyond the center field fence to



Dunne



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

Pirates starting pitcher Paul Skenes delivers during the first inning of his major league debut Saturday against the Chicago Cubs in Pittsburgh. Skenes pitched four innings and got a no-decision.

try to catch some of Skenes’ pre-game routine. Nearby, the team store under the left field bleachers did a brisk business, with some ponying up \$200 for jerseys with Skenes’ No. 30 stitched on the back.

It’s been a dizzying rise for Skenes from somewhat anonymous Air Force Academy cadet to College World Series MVP at LSU to a record \$9.2 million signing bonus to possible franchise cornerstone. And yet he looked plenty comfortable.

Skenes, black socks pulled up high against his white pants, confi-

dently strolled out of the dugout and bounded over the third-base line to start what he has likened to the end of one portion of his life and the beginning of another.

A significant portion of the crowd stood while Skenes warmed up as “Cue Country Roads” by Charles Wesley Godwin blared over the speakers.

Then Chicago designated hitter Mike Tauchman stepped into the batter’s box, and hype gave way to reality. Skenes unfurled his 6-foot-6 frame and with his funky delivery fired a 101 mph fastball to Trautman that plate umpire Paul

Clemons called a ball.

Tauchman led off the fifth with a double and Suzuki followed with an infield single. Shelton then made his way to the mound to take Skenes out.

Skenes spent the next several hours — including a 2-hour, 20-minute rain delay — trying to decompress. He hung out in the dugout with a few of his teammates, some of whose big league careers began when he was in grade school.

On Sunday, he’ll try to slip into the rhythm of the season and begin preparing for his next start.

Stay: Hitting, pitching have been equally impressive for Phillies

FROM PAGE 24

need to. No matter who comes through at the right time or who comes through each night.”

Want consistent hitting? Third baseman Alec Bohm this week just wrapped up an 18-game hitting streak. Perfect pitching? Ranger Suárez is 7-0 record and 1.50 ERA and 55 strikeouts.

“You’ve got to internally create your own energy,” manager Rob Thomson said. “We have a good group of people that can do that. Stubbs, Marsh, they tend to bring that every day.”

Some of the super stats tell the story. The Phillies are 28-12 and their .700 winning percentage is tops in baseball.

They won 11 straight home games before Wednesday’s loss to Toronto, one shy of matching the Citizens Bank Park record. They have won 13 of 15 games overall and 28 of their last 38. Harper has hit three times this season with the bases loaded — and has two grand slams. They are 24-1 when leading after six innings and 25-0 when leading after the eighth.

Philadelphia’s biggest accomplishment,



MATT SLOCUM/AP

Phillies starting pitcher Ranger Suarez is 7-0 with a 1.50 ERA and 55 strikeouts.

though, just might be this: The Phillies are leading — yes, leading — the NL East by two games over the Atlanta Braves.

The Phillies ended each of the last two seasons among baseball’s best. Led by a homer-happy, bat-spiking offense, the Phillies lost the 2022 World Series in six games to the Houston Astros. Last season, the Phillies took a 3-2 series lead into Game 6 of the NL Championship Series before losing the final two games at home to the Arizona Diamondbacks and bowed out.

What’s not forgotten in Philly is the long climb it took for the Phillies to reach October.

They were 25-30 at the end of last May. The Phillies opened 2022 at 22-29 when they fired manager Joe Girardi and promoted Thomson. Slow starts and sizzling Junes — 18-8 last year; 19-8 in 2022 — had become the norm for the Phillies.

This year’s team does have unfinished business in the postseason. The first World Series championship since 2008 remains the ultimate goal. But a great wire-to-wire regular season and even the division title that has eluded it is on the table this year.

Anchored by Wheeler and Suárez, the Phillies boast the best rotation in baseball. One hiccup is two-time All-Star shortstop Trea Turner will miss at least six weeks with a strained left hamstring. Turner had started all 30 games this season and was hitting .343 with two homers, 10 doubles, nine RBIs and 10 stolen bases. Without him, the Phillies are still 6-1.

“I think what happened the last two years at the end is really motivating for this group,” Thomson said. “It’s not just Bryce that’s competitive. I think the entire room is competitive. They feed off of each other that way. These guys, they come to play every day. They are tough. And they have fun at the same time. It’s just a really good group, a special group.”

On the stat sheet, the Phillies are better than those ’22 and ’23 teams.

That won’t matter much come October. But if Harper again goes on a late-season tear and Wheeler keeps shutting teams down, the Phillies are primed to make another World Series run.

Well, they can just as long as they remember to stay loose and sexy, baby.

MLB

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	26	12	.684	—
New York	26	15	.634	1½
Boston	20	19	.513	6½
Tampa Bay	20	20	.500	7
Toronto	18	21	.462	8½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	24	16	.600	—
Minnesota	23	16	.590	½
Kansas City	24	17	.585	½
Detroit	20	19	.513	3½
Chicago	12	28	.300	12
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Texas	22	19	.537	—
Seattle	21	19	.525	½
Oakland	19	22	.463	3
Los Angeles	15	25	.375	6½
Houston	14	25	.359	7
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	28	12	.700	—
Atlanta	24	12	.667	2
Washington	19	19	.500	8
New York	18	20	.474	9
Miami	10	31	.244	18½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	24	15	.615	—
Chicago	23	17	.575	1½
Pittsburgh	18	22	.450	6½
Cincinnati	17	22	.436	7
St. Louis	15	24	.385	9
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	27	14	.659	—
San Diego	21	21	.500	6½
Arizona	18	22	.450	8½
San Francisco	18	23	.439	9
Colorado	11	28	.282	15
Friday's games				
Houston 5, Detroit 2 N.Y. Yankees 2, Tampa Bay 0 Minnesota 3, Toronto 2 Washington 5, Boston 1 Baltimore 4, Arizona 2 Chicago White Sox 6, Cleveland 3 Colorado 4, Texas 2 Kansas City 2, L.A. Angels 1 Seattle 8, Oakland 1 Chicago Cubs 7, Pittsburgh 2 Atlanta 4, N.Y. Mets 2 Philadelphia 8, Miami 2 Milwaukee 11, St. Louis 2 San Diego 2, L.A. Dodgers 1 Cincinnati 4, San Francisco 2				
Saturday's games				
Toronto 10, Minnesota 8 Boston 4, Washington 2 Tampa Bay 7, N.Y. Yankees 2 Baltimore 5, Arizona 4, 11 innings Detroit 8, Houston 2 Chicago White Sox 3, Cleveland 1 Colorado 8, Texas 3 L.A. Angels 9, Kansas City 3 Oakland 8, Seattle 1 Philadelphia 8, Miami 3 Atlanta 4, N.Y. Mets 1 Pittsburgh 10, Chicago Cubs 9 San Francisco 5, Cincinnati 1 Milwaukee 5, St. Louis 3 L.A. Dodgers 5, San Diego 0				
Sunday's games				
Arizona at Baltimore Washington at Boston Minnesota at Toronto Houston at Detroit N.Y. Yankees at Tampa Bay Cleveland at Chicago White Sox Texas at Colorado Kansas City at L.A. Angels Oakland at Seattle Chicago Cubs at Pittsburgh Philadelphia at Miami St. Louis at Milwaukee Cincinnati at San Francisco L.A. Dodgers at San Diego Atlanta at N.Y. Mets				
Monday's games				
Toronto at Baltimore Miami at Detroit Tampa Bay at Boston Washington at Chicago White Sox Cleveland at Texas Oakland at Houston St. Louis at L.A. Angels Kansas City at Seattle Philadelphia at N.Y. Mets Chicago Cubs at Atlanta Pittsburgh at Milwaukee Cincinnati at Arizona Colorado at San Diego L.A. Dodgers at San Francisco				

ROUNDUP

Braves lose no-hitter on HR in 9th

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Atlanta’s Max Fried and two relievers combined for a no-hitter through 8½ innings before New York’s J.D. Martinez homered to spoil the bid as the Braves beat the Mets 4-1 on Saturday.

Fried opened with seven no-hit innings and Joe Jiménez worked around a pair of walks in the eighth before Raisel Iglesias retired the first two batters of the ninth. Martinez homered just over the wall in right field on the next pitch off Iglesias, who walked Jeff McNeil and allowed an infield single to Harrison Bader before retiring Brett Baty on a fly to center.

“Giving it up with a homer is better than an infield single,” Braves catcher Travis d’Arnaud said with a grin.

The Braves have not thrown a no-hitter since Kent Mercker’s gem against the Los Angeles Dodgers on April 8, 1994. The no-hitter drought is the fourth-longest in the majors.

The Braves have the second-most wins and second-lowest ERA in baseball since 1994, a span in which Hall of Famers Tom Glavine, Greg Maddux and John Smoltz pitched for the team.

Fried walked three in his seven innings, throwing 109 pitches, one shy of his career high. The 30-year-old left-hander retired the first eight batters he faced before issuing consecutive walks to Tomas Nido and Brandon Nimmo. He then set down 11 straight before walking Pete Alonso with one out in the seventh.

Blue Jays 10, Twins 8: Ernie Clement broke an 8-all tie with a bases-loaded single in the seventh inning and host Toronto overcame a six-run deficit to beat Minnesota.

Danny Jansen hit a two-run home run while Bo Bichette and Davis Schneider each hit solo homers for the Blue Jays, who came in having lost six of eight.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. went 4-for-5 with three RBIs in his 11th multihit game of the season as the Blue Jays used a season-best 16 hits to cool off the Twins, who had won 16 of 18.

Guerrero tied it at 8-all with a two-run, two-out single off Steven Okert in the sixth inning.

Carlos Santana hit a three-run home run and Ryan Jeffers had a solo homer for the Twins, whose seven-game road winning streak was snapped.

Red Sox 4, Nationals 2: Rafael Devers hit a tiebreaking, two-run double in the eighth inning to lift host Boston to a victory over Washington.

The Red Sox snapped a three-game losing streak with just their



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

The Braves’ Max Fried didn’t allow a hit in seven innings against the Mets on Saturday, and Atlanta relievers got within one out of finishing off the no-hitter before New York’s J.D. Martinez homered.

second victory in eight games.

Devers hit his two-out double over the head of left fielder Eddie Rosario off Robert Garcia (0-2) after Tyler O’Neill was intentionally walked with Rob Refsnyder on second.

Rays 7, Yankees 2: Randy Arozarena homered and drove in four runs, Yandy Díaz hit a leadoff shot, and host Tampa Bay beat New York.

Arozarena put the Rays ahead 4-2 with a three-run homer in the third inning off Nestor Cortes (1-4). The 2023 All-Star has struggled this season — he went 2-for-3 to raise his average to just .154 — but has gone deep four times in his last eight games.

Díaz homered on Cortes’ first pitch of the game. Díaz and Arozarena had RBI doubles in a three-run seventh.

Phillies 8, Marlins 3: Bryson Stott hit a tiebreaking, bases-loaded triple in the sixth inning, and major league-best Philadelphia beat host Miami.

Stott finished with two hits and four RBIs. Catcher J.T. Realmuto had a run-scoring single and threw out two baserunners trying to steal for the Phillies, who have won 13 of 15 to improve to 28-12.

Phillies starter Taijuan Walker (3-0) allowed one run in six innings. He gave up eight hits and struck out four.

Orioles 5, Diamondbacks 4 (11): Jordan Westburg flicked a game-ending single inside the right field line in the 11th inning for his fourth hit of the day, and host Baltimore beat Arizona.

Gunnar Henderson tied the major league lead with his 12th homer of the season for the AL East-leading Orioles, and Anthony Santander went deep in the eighth to tie the game at 4-all.

Craig Kimbrel (4-1) worked a scoreless 11th after a rough stretch in which the veteran closer failed to convert four of five save opportunities. He also worked a scoreless seventh in Friday night’s 4-2 win.

Tigers 8, Astros 2: Mark Canha hit a grand slam in a seven-run second inning, Kerry Carpenter homered twice and host Detroit beat Houston.

Tarik Skubal (5-0) gave up two runs on seven hits and two walks while striking out seven over 6½ innings.

Cristian Javier (2-1) allowed seven runs on five hits and four walks in 1½ innings, making his first start since going on the injured list because of neck discomfort nearly a month ago.

White Sox 3, Guardians 1: Mike Clevinger combined with three relievers on a four-hitter, and host Chicago topped Cleveland for its season-high fourth consecutive victory.

Clevinger permitted one run and four hits in 4½ innings in his second major league start of the season. The right-hander, who signed a \$3 million, one-year contract with Chicago on April 4, struck out five and walked none.

Cleveland wasted a sharp performance by Triston McKenzie (2-3), who pitched 6½ innings of four-hit ball.

Giants 5, Reds 1: Matt Chapman hit a grand slam in the first in-

ning to lead struggling San Francisco to a victory over visiting Cincinnati.

The Giants had lost eight of 11 games coming into the contest and were averaging less than three runs in their past 15 before Chapman provided more than that with one big swing in the first against Nick Lodolo (3-2).

Brewers 5, Cardinals 3: Rhys Hoskins hit a go-ahead three-run home run in the seventh inning and host Milwaukee handed St. Louis its seventh straight loss.

The NL-Central leading Brewers have eight straight wins over the Cardinals, dating to last season.

St. Louis, last in the division and nine games behind Milwaukee, has the longest current losing streak in the majors.

Rockies 8, Rangers 3: Elias Díaz had two hits, including a tie-breaking single in a six-run seventh inning, Ryan McMahon tied a career high with four hits, and host Colorado won its first series of the season with a victory over Texas.

The Rockies, who had lost 11 of their first 12 series and split the other, won their third straight game for the first time this season.

Jacob Stallings had a two-run single and Charlie Blackmon had a two-run double in the seventh, when the Rockies scored all six runs with two outs.

Dodgers 5, Padres 0: Teoscar Hernández hit a grand slam, James Paxton tossed six scoreless innings to remain undefeated and visiting Los Angeles defeated San Diego.

Freddie Freeman hit a solo homer for the Dodgers, who have won eight of their last nine games.

Paxton (5-0) was masterful while allowing four hits with four strikeouts and no walks.

Angels 9, Royals 3: Jo Adell hit a three-run homer and Kevin Pillar had three hits and three RBIs in host Los Angeles’ victory over Kansas City.

Tyler Anderson (3-4) yielded three runs and seven hits in 6½ effective innings for the Halos, ending his five-start winless skid. The left-hander retired 12 straight at one point.

Athletics 8, Mariners 1: Rookie starter Joey Estes struck out five in five solid innings for his first major league win after being called up earlier in the day, and visiting Oakland beat Seattle.

Abraham Toro and Brent Rooker hit run-scoring singles in the third inning. Max Schuemann added a three-run double in the eighth and JJ Bleday had a two-run homer in the ninth as Oakland snapped a two-game losing streak. The A’s had lost five of six following a six-game winning streak.

NHL PLAYOFFS

Skjei's goal keeps Hurricanes alive

BY AARON BEARD
Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Carolina Hurricanes turned their last stand into a season-extending victory. Incredibly, it was the struggling power play that got them there.

Brady Skjei scored on the power play with 3:11 left to help the Hurricanes beat the New York Rangers 4-3 on Saturday night, staving off a sweep by winning Game 4 of the second-round playoff series.

Skjei's shot from the point came off a feed from Tuevo Teravainen, with the puck zipping past Igor Shesterkin to catch the upper-right corner of the goal and bang into the net. That was Carolina's first goal with the man advantage in 17 tries in the series, and it finally pushed Carolina ahead for good on a night when the Hurricanes squandered a two-goal lead.

"I don't care," coach Rod Brind'Amour said of whether there was extra significance to getting the winner with the man advantage. "Not tonight. We've just got to get Ws at this time of year."

The Rangers get another close-out chance Monday night with the 3-1 lead when the series returns to Madison Square Garden for Game 5.

Evgeny Kuznetsov, Stefan Noesen and Sebastian Aho each scored for Carolina, while Frederik Andersen finished with 22 saves as the Hurricanes try to become the fifth team to rally from a 3-0 deficit to win a playoff series and first since 2014.

Everything started with Carolina showing plenty of jump in the first period, running out to 2-0 and 3-1 leads to build momentum.

"Obviously we played a lot of aggression," said Aho, who finished a feed from Jake Guentzel from near the slot for the 3-1 lead with 4:31 left in the first period. "We kind of did what we needed to do. That was a strong start. We want to do that again (in Game 5)."



The Hurricanes' Brady Skjei, right, is congratulated Saturday by teammates Bradly Nadeau, center and Teuvo Teravainen after his goal during the third period of Game 4 against the Rangers in Raleigh, N.C.

The Hurricanes tweaked their power-play unit to put Skjei on the top group. And roughly 30 seconds after a tripping penalty by Ryan Lindgren, Skjei converted the winner to send Teravainen and Aho rushing over to hug him and have a tense home crowd roaring in glee. Even if Skjei felt "definitely celebration" instead.

"I feel like going into every game, you try to feel confident and feel you can be the guy to do it," Skjei said. "Obviously it doesn't happen every night or that often. But that's kind of our mindset going forward here, just win the day."

Will Cuyll, Barclay Goodrow and Alexis Lafreniere scored for the Rangers, while Shesterkin finished with 27 saves.

"It's tough. We dug ourselves a hole early," Rangers coach Peter Laviolette said. "I don't think it was because we weren't ready to play. ... We've got to come out a little bit sharper than that."

"We were competing, we were working, we were trying to do our job offensively. But there's some things defensively that I thought we could've been a little bit better in the first period."

New York had won its first seven playoff games after sweeping Washington in Round 1 and taking the first three of this series, and had a chance to become the first team to reach 8-0 in a postseason since Edmonton won its first nine games on the way to claiming the Stanley Cup in 1985.

The series began with the potential for heavy drama considering the Metropolitan Division-winning Rangers also won the Presidents' Trophy as the league's top regular-season team, while the Hurricanes — in the playoffs for the sixth straight season — finished three points behind and entered the NHL playoffs as the favorite to win the Stanley Cup, according to Bet MGM Sportsbook.



Dallas Stars goaltender Jake Oettinger stops a Colorado Avalanche shot during the third period of Game 3 of their second-round playoff series Saturday in Denver. Oettinger stopped 29 of 30 shots.

Oettinger shuts down Avs as Stars take series lead

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
Associated Press

DENVER — Tyler Seguin and Logan Stankoven scored two goals each and goaltender Jake Oettinger thwarted Colorado's high-powered offense, stanching the Avalanche's third-period comeback prowess in a 4-1 win Saturday night that gave the Dallas Stars the upper hand in their Western Conference second-round series.

"I don't think a coach has ever seen a perfect game, but I'll tell you that's as close to a perfect road game as you can play, in my mind, in this situation," Stars coach Peter DeBoer said after Dallas took a 2-1 series lead.

"We knew they going to come out guns blazing in the first period. You knew their home record. They had challenged their best players, their coach had, after the last game," DeBoer said. "So, we knew we were going to get a lot thrown at us early in that game. And our composure throughout the night I thought was outstanding."

The Stars have yet to play from behind in this series against Colorado's high-octane offense led by Cale Makar, Valeri Nichushkin, Nathan MacKinnon and Mikko Rantanen.

Dallas killed three power plays for the second straight game and Seguin scored the tiebreaking goal in the second period for a 2-1 lead that Oettinger held up — he stopped 29 of 30 shots — with a pair of empty netters in the closing minutes finally giving Dallas some breathing room.

"We knew coming into this rink,

Scoreboard

Second round	
(Best-of-seven; x-if necessary)	
EASTERN CONFERENCE	
Florida 2, Boston 1	
Boston 5, Florida 1	
Florida 6, Boston 1	
Florida 6, Boston 2	
Sunday: at Boston	
Tuesday: at Florida, AFN-Sports2, 1 a.m.	
Wednesday CET; 8 a.m. Wednesday JKT	
x-Friday: at Boston	
x-Sunday, May 19: at Florida	
N.Y. Rangers 3, Carolina 1	
N.Y. Rangers 4, Carolina 3	
N.Y. Rangers 4, Carolina 3, 2OT	
N.Y. Rangers 3, Carolina 2, OT	
Saturday: Carolina 4, N.Y. Rangers 3	
Monday: at N.Y. Rangers, AFN-Sports2, 1 a.m. Tuesday CET; 8 a.m. Tuesday JKT	
x-Thursday: at Carolina	
x-Saturday, May 18: at N.Y. Rangers	
WESTERN CONFERENCE	
Dallas 2, Colorado 1	
Colorado 4, Dallas 3, OT	
Dallas 5, Colorado 3	
Saturday: Dallas 4, Colorado 1	
Monday: at Colorado, AFN-Sports2, 3:30 a.m. Tuesday CET; 10:30 a.m. Tuesday JKT	
Wednesday: at Dallas	
x-Friday: at Colorado	
x-Sunday, May 19: at Dallas	
Vancouver 1, Edmonton 1	
Vancouver 5, Edmonton 4	
Edmonton 4, Vancouver 3, OT	
Sunday: at Edmonton	
Tuesday: at Edmonton, AFN-Sports2, 3:30 a.m. Wednesday CET; 10:30 a.m. Wednesday JKT	
Thursday: at Vancouver	
x-Saturday, May 18: at Edmonton	
x-Monday, May 20: at Vancouver	

how these guys play. And we also know how we play on the road," Seguin said. "So we knew it'd be a big challenge. I think next game is going to be a bigger challenge."

Game 4 is Monday night at Ball Arena, where the Avalanche are now 33-10-1, including 2-1 in the playoffs. The Stars were an NHL-best 26-10-5 on the road during the season and have won three of four playoff games away from home.

The Avs pulled goaltender Alexander Georgiev with just under 2 minutes remaining and Se-

guin scored an empty-netter with 1:37 to go and Stankoven added a second empty-netter with 28 seconds remaining.

"That was one of the best third periods we've played the whole postseason," Oettinger said. "Just being smart and not taking penalties. I don't think they had many scoring chances in the third so we learned from our mistakes in Games 1 and 2."

The Stars regained home-ice advantage in the best-of-seven series by throttling Colorado's high-powered offense that entered the night averaging five goals a game in their first seven playoff games.

Nichushkin was held scoreless for the first time in these playoffs. He was looking to become the third player in NHL history to have an eight-game goal streak during the playoffs.

The Stars took a 2-1 lead into the third period after breaking the tie on an odd-man rush with just under five minutes left in the second. Evgenii Dadonov skated down the left side and sent a pass through the slot that Seguin redirected past Georgiev, who had 19 saves on 21 shots.

Colorado's only breakthrough came when MacKinnon stickhandled through three Stars players and lifted a backhand that Oettinger stopped. The rebound landed in the crease behind Oettinger, and Rantanen tapped it in to tie it 1-all midway through the second.

"We did a lot of great things," MacKinnon said, "had a lot of chances, a lot of good looks, just Oettinger was great and we made a couple of big errors that cost us."

NBA PLAYOFFS

Tatum, Celtics regain control of series

By TOM WITHERS
Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Green uniforms. Big shots. Championship-level intensity.

The Boston Celtics looked much more like themselves in Game 3.

Jayson Tatum scored 33 points, Jaylen Brown added 28 and the No. 1-seeded Celtics bounced back from a stumble at home, beating the Cleveland Cavaliers 106-93 on Saturday night to take a 2-1 lead in the Eastern Conference semifinals.

The Celtics didn't mess around after dropping Game 2 on their home parquet floor by 24 on Thursday. They couldn't.

"We don't come to Cleveland for the weather, so let's go," said Brown, who went 13-for-17 from the field. "There's nothing complicated about it: Play defense and the rest will take care of itself. We could have done better, but we kept them under 100."

The lackluster performance — Boston was favored by double digits — in Game 2 was reminiscent of the first round, when the Celtics lost the second game against Miami before winning three in a row to eliminate the Heat.

"Tonight was a great test, an opportunity for us to come out and respond, and play better and harder," said Tatum, who added 13 rebounds and six assists. "There was a purpose behind every play. We did a good job communicating our



Celtics forward Jayson Tatum celebrates a dunk against the Cavaliers during the second half of Game 3 of the second-round playoff series.

actions."

Tatum scored on a three-point play and the Celtics opened the second half with 14 straight points to take a 23-point lead.

That was way too much for the Cavs.

"We felt like trying to punch them in the face right away was the right option," said Jrue Holiday, who scored 15 of his 18 points in the first half. "J.B. (Brown) told us it wasn't over and we knew that. We've been up 20 in the fourth quarter here and they came back and won."

Donovan Mitchell scored 33 points for Cleveland, but the All-Star guard aggravated a left knee injury in the fourth quarter and

was labored. With Boston up 13 and in control, Mitchell left the court with 1:19 left and walked directly to the locker room.

Afterward, Mitchell didn't say anything about the injury, but bemoaned Cleveland's slow start after halftime.

"It changed the game," he said. "Give them credit. They came out with a sense of urgency. It's tough to come back from that. They came out with an intention."

Cleveland got within nine three times in the fourth but the Celtics, who went just 8-for-35 on 3-pointers in Game 2, got back-to-back 3s from Payton Pritchard and Derrick White to slow the Cavs' comeback.

Game 4 is Monday in Cleveland.

"We need everybody to be on the same page and everybody to come out with the same effort," Brown said. "The rest will take care of itself because we've got enough talent in this locker room."

Down by 23 and unable to stop Tatum, the Cavs clawed back.

They cut Boston's lead to 15 by the end of the third, and scored the first six points in the fourth, sending their towel-waving crowd at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse looking for another upset into a frenzy.

But whenever the Celtics needed a bucket, they went to either Tatum or Brown, who broke down Cleveland's defense for layups or made tough, contested jumpers.

"When they get going, that's who

Scoreboard

Second round

(Best-of-seven; x-if necessary)

Eastern Conference

New York 2, Indiana 1

New York 121, Indiana 117
New York 130, Indiana 121
Indiana 111, New York 106
Sunday: at Indiana
Tuesday: at New York, **AFN-Sports, 2 a.m. Wednesday CET, 9 a.m. Wednesday JKT**
x-Friday: at Indiana
x-Sunday, May 19: at New York
Boston 2, Cleveland 1

Boston 120, Cleveland 95
Cleveland 118, Boston 94
Saturday: Boston 106, Cleveland 93
Monday: at Cleveland, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Tuesday CET, 8 a.m. Tuesday JKT**
Wednesday: at Boston
x-Friday: at Cleveland
x-Sunday, May 19: at Boston

Western Conference

Dallas 2, Oklahoma City 1

Oklahoma City 117, Dallas 95
Dallas 119, Oklahoma City 110
Saturday: Dallas 105, Oklahoma City 101
Monday: at Dallas, **AFN-Sports, 3:30 a.m. Tuesday CET, 10:30 a.m. Tuesday JKT**
Tuesday: at Oklahoma City
x-Saturday, May 18: at Dallas
x-Monday, May 20: at Oklahoma City
Minnesota 2, Denver 1

Minnesota 106, Denver 99
Minnesota 106, Denver 80
Denver 117, Minnesota 90
Sunday: at Minnesota
Tuesday: at Denver, **AFN-Sports, 4:30 a.m. Wednesday CET, 11:30 a.m. Wednesday JKT**
x-Thursday: at Minnesota
x-Sunday, May 19: at Denver

they are," Mitchell said. "We fought and we clawed back but that start of the third quarter, that's what did it."

Evan Mobley added 17 points and Darius Garland and Caris LeVert 15 apiece for the Cavs, who lost for the first time at home in these playoffs.

Irving, Doncic help Mavs turn back Thunder again

By SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

DALLAS — Luka Doncic already had a balky right knee and an achy left ankle when he fell hard on his back while battling his primary defender, Lu Dort, for a loose ball.

Not only did Doncic win the ensuing jump ball, the NBA scoring champion tracked down the loose ball that followed with his Dallas Mavericks clinging to a late lead.

"Everything," Doncic said when asked what hurt, a few minutes after walking gingerly to the locker room with Dallas having beaten Oklahoma City 105-101 on Saturday to secure a 2-1 lead in the Western Conference semifinals. "I'm just battling out there."

The same could be said for plenty of others.

Kyrie Irving scored 22 points, including a running left-hander in the lane in the final minute to help the Mavs hold on.

Doncic also had 22 points to go with 15 rebounds, and P.J. Washington Jr. scored 27, just two shy of his playoff high from Dallas' Game 2 victory.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 31 points, 10 rebounds and four blocks, but was called for a charge with Doncic defending on a drive with 29 seconds left and the Thunder trailing by five.

Chet Holmgren, who scored 13 points, also had four blocks as Oklahoma City fin-

ished with 10. But the Thunder were out-rebounded 16-5 on the offensive glass by the scrappy Mavs, who had a 16-9 edge in second-chance points.

Top-seeded Oklahoma City has lost consecutive games after starting 5-0 in the playoffs. Game 4 is Monday night in Dallas.

"It's extremely competitive," Holmgren said. "Both teams really want it. If you take the result out of it, it's everything that you want to be going through in a basketball game."

Irving bounced back from just the third single-digit scoring game of his lengthy playoff career with 14 points in the second half, including six consecutive Dallas points in the fourth quarter that helped the Mavs to their biggest lead of the final period at nine.

The Dallas lead was three after a missed 3-pointer from Gilgeous-Alexander when Irving drove across the lane and hit a runner for a 104-99 lead with 39 seconds to go.

The eight-time All-Star, coming off just eight shots and nine points when Dallas evened the series in Oklahoma City, was 10-for-17 from the field and had seven assists to lead the team for the second game in a row.

"One of my coaches just came up to me and said I waited too long, so obviously I've got to be better on my end," said Irving, who made all four of his fourth-quarter shots. "We're going against a young team. So we just want to continue to do the things that get



Mavericks Kyrie Irving, left, and Luka Doncic celebrate Dallas' win in Game 3 of the second-round playoff series against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Saturday.

us these W's, and it starts on the defensive end."

Washington had a 19-point first half for the second consecutive game, once again finishing three points shy of the combined total before the break for Irving and Doncic. Washington was 3-for-6 from 3-point range in the first half and 5-for-12 for the game.

"He's hooping," Gilgeous-Alexander

said. "We've got to turn that water off if we want to win this series, for sure."

Oklahoma City coach Mark Daigneault decided to foul Dereck Lively II intentionally in the fourth quarter, and the rookie center missed three of the first four free throws. But he hit the next four in a row, the last putting Dallas up 100-95 with 3:06 to go.

Lively, who shot 51% from the line in the regular season and came in 11-for-21 in the playoffs, finished 8-for-12 on free throws and had 12 points and eight rebounds.

Mavericks center Daniel Gafford, who dealt with a dislocated pinkie finger in Game 2, exited in the second quarter after injuring his left shoulder in an inadvertent collision with Josh Giddey.

Gafford returned to the court for the second half with the shoulder in a large wrap, but took it off and was still in the starting lineup. He was limited to six minutes after the break, finishing with eight points.

Oklahoma City's Jalen Williams stayed down for almost 30 seconds of live action in the third quarter, ending in a 3-pointer by Irving, after injuring his left ankle. Williams went to the locker room briefly but returned early in the fourth quarter and finished with 16 points and eight assists.

Isaiah Joe had his playoff career best for a game with 10 points before halftime, hitting a 3 just before the buzzer to give Oklahoma City a 52-51 lead at the break. Joe finished with 13.

SPORTS



Celtics regain control of series

Boston wins Game 3 in Cleveland for 2-1 lead » **NBA playoffs, Page 23**

MLB

‘Stay Loose and Sexy, baby’



PHOTOS BY MATT SLOCUM/AP

Above: Outfielder Brandon Marsh coined the phrase that fans have adopted as the Phillies’ motto this season. Right: Bryce Harper has already hit two grand slams, his last coming on May 7 against Toronto.

Phillies are red-hot, loving life as one of top teams in majors

By DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The Phillies are hot, that much is certain, with Bryce Harper and Zack Wheeler powering and pitching the team to the best record in baseball and a recent home winning streak that nearly matched the franchise record.

Hot, yes. But sexy, too?

Well, no team has been quite as alluring to the packed crowds at Citizens Bank Park as the Phillies. Just ask them.

Brandon Marsh, the outfielder with the Rip Van Winkle whiskers, was mic’d up for an ESPN Sunday night game when he was relayed a fan question from social media by the broadcast booth: If you had to start a rock band, who would you take from the team and what’s the band name?

Marsh rattled off catcher Garrett Stubbs, slugger Kyle Schwarber and outfielder Cristian Pache as his fellow band members, then as he hustled off the field after making a catch, blurted out the name that has since launched a blossoming business of the catchphrase T-shirts.

“Stay Loose and Sexy, baby,” Marsh said.

Marsh said he has his own band shirt — which he has yet to reveal — and the Phillies have revealed this week in the attention the fictional name has stirred.

Stubbs — the backup catcher/clubhouse DJ/ Bud box hat fashionista — wants in as guitarist and backup singer. Of note, he does not play guitar or sing much more than on team karaoke nights.

“Pretty electric from Marshy,” Stubbs said.

Taking center stage as an MLB headline act, the Phillies are about as plugged in to playing good baseball as a team can be these days. Just take a look at their greatest hits — such as Harper’s three-run homer in a Monday win over San Francisco. For an encore? Harper smashed a grand slam the next night against Toronto.

“As a team, any given night, everyone’s going to do their job,” Harper said. “We’re not really worried about our numbers as individuals. We’re just going out there trying to win the games we

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