Culture wars collide with budget battle

House GOP could bring politically charged social issues into defense bill negotiations

By Abigail Hauslohner, Marianna Sotomayor and Dan Lamotte
The Washington Post

The Republican-led House is expected to vote as soon as this week on an $886 billion bill that aims to shape Pentagon policy next year, but its path to passage faces a potentially messy partisan battle over abortion access, LGBTQ+ rights, efforts to promote diversity in the military and other politically charged social issues. The House version of the National Defense Authorization Act includes increased investment in precision missiles, warships and newer technologies like artificial intelligence and hypersonics — core bipartisan priorities as the Pentagon directs greater attention toward China. It also authorizes a 5.2% base pay increase for military personnel and expanded support for their families through housing improvements, and broader access to child care, health care and education benefits.

“The threat posed by China is real, and it represents the most pressing national security challenge,” a senior defense official said. “We’re going to have to have a strong, capable defense.”

The Ukrainian and American presidents also met privately along with their advisers, and Biden pledged later that “the United States is doing everything we can to get you what you need.” He acknowledged that Zelenskyy is sometimes “frustrated” by the

SEE BUDGET ON PAGE 7

SEE UKRAINE ON PAGE 9
Officials: 3 firms shared sensitive data about taxpayers

WASHINGTON — A group of congressional Democrats reported Wednesday that three large tax preparation firms sent “extraordinarily sensitive” information on tens of millions of taxpayers to Facebook parent company Meta over the course of at least two years.

Their report urges federal agencies to investigate and potentially go to court over the wealth of information that H&R Block, TaxAct and Tax Slayer shared with the social media giant.

In a letter to the heads of the IRS, the Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission and the IRS watchdog, seven lawmakers say their findings “reveal a shocking breach of taxpayer privacy by tax prep companies and by Big Tech firms.”

Their report said highly personal and financial information about sources of taxpayers’ income, tax deductions and exemptions was made accessible to Meta as taxpayers used the tax software to prepare their taxes.

That data came to Meta through its Pixel code, which the tax firms installed on their websites to gather information on how to improve their own marketing campaigns. In exchange, Meta was able to access the data to write targeted algorithms for its own users.

In a letter to the heads of the IRS, the Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission and the IRS watchdog, seven lawmakers say their findings “reveal a shocking breach of taxpayer privacy by tax prep companies and by Big Tech firms.”

Their report said highly personal and financial information about sources of taxpayers’ income, tax deductions and exemptions was made accessible to Meta as taxpayers used the tax software to prepare their taxes.

That data came to Meta through its Pixel code, which the tax firms installed on their websites to gather information on how to improve their own marketing campaigns. In exchange, Meta was able to access the data to write targeted algorithms for its own users.

In a letter to the heads of the IRS, the Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission and the IRS watchdog, seven lawmakers say their findings “reveal a shocking breach of taxpayer privacy by tax prep companies and by Big Tech firms.”

Their report said highly personal and financial information about sources of taxpayers’ income, tax deductions and exemptions was made accessible to Meta as taxpayers used the tax software to prepare their taxes.

That data came to Meta through its Pixel code, which the tax firms installed on their websites to gather information on how to improve their own marketing campaigns. In exchange, Meta was able to access the data to write targeted algorithms for its own users.
**By Rose L. Thayer**
*Stars and Stripes*

More than 30 Air Force jobs no longer qualify for special pay based on their level of difficulty, according to an annual service review.

An Air Force board that reviews pay for special-duty assignments looked at more than 100 career fields and determined there are 70 specialties that will still receive the monthly bonus in fiscal 2024, which begins Oct. 1. That’s down from 103 in the previous year.

Bonuses pay for these jobs ranges from $75 to $450 monthly and varies based on skill level, assignment location and training levels, the Air Force said.

The jobs losing the bonus pay include cryptologic language analyst, flight attendant, diagnostic medical sonographer, defense courier, dog handler, airborne mission system operator and some weather support jobs, according to a list of changes confirmed by the Air Force.

The service said last month that these decisions were made separate from budget considerations, though its proposed 2024 budget included a reduction of about 3,700 airmen receiving the special bonus pay at a savings of more than $4 million.

These cuts were made to "maintain parity with specialties of similar duties, responsibilities and training," the service said in a statement about the bonus changes.

The Air Force also added four new jobs to the list, increased pay for 11 positions and decreased pay for seven.

The new jobs receiving special-duty pay are material management, bomber airborne maintenance support, enlisted faculty in instructor at the Air Force Academy, and special missions support.

This review did not include pilot incentives and bonuses, which are handled separately.

The Space Force conducted the same board review for the first time since the military branch was created. The service inherited its bonus pay structure from jobs that it acquired from the Air Force, and last month announced it will remove three of the 14 jobs receiving special pay and add two new ones.

**By Kelly Agee**
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps have apparently become the first U.S. service branches to implement the Brandon Act, a set of policies that provide service members with a confidential evaluation and greater access to mental health care.

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro signed the instruction Monday, according to the parents of Brandon Castera and a USNI News report Tuesday. President Joe Biden signed the measure into law in December 2021 as part of the fiscal 2022 National Defense Authorization Act.

The act is named for Petty Officer 3rd Class Brandon Castera, an aviation electrician. Castera, 21, died by suicide June 25, 2018, at Naval Station Norfolk, Va. A command investigation found that a combative and toxic leadership contributed to his death.

Brandon’s parents, Teri and Patrick Castera, two months after his death started a push to get the measure passed, passing through a battle of phone calls and trips to the Pentagon, Patrick Castera told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

"He will forever be saving lives and his death meant something, as tragic as it was," his father said. "I know he’s smiling at us. He had a smile and made everyone want to smile.”

The Brandon Act allows service members to seek confidential help for any mental health issue, at any time, in any environment, thereby reducing the stigma associated with seeking mental health treatment.

The act requires a mental health evaluation as soon as service members report self-report, according to the brandonact.org, a website the Casteras created. The Brandon Act “will also allow Americans serving in uniform to seek help confidentially and, if necessary, outside of the chain of command,” according to the bill.

The measure also mandates annual training from the Department of Defense on recognizing members who may need a mental health evaluation.

Under the law, commanders and supervisors must ensure that service members understand the procedure for requesting a mental health evaluation, ensure they are referred as soon as possible, maintain privacy protections and not seek the results of evaluations among other requirements.

Del Toro called the Casteras as they drove to their Poorman, Ariz., home with word that he had signed the order to implement the act, Patrick Castera said. Del Toro read the policy over the phone brandonact.org.

"This is to erase the stigma out there about mental health, it is OK to seek help,” Patrick Castera said.

The process could take weeks or months.

"There’s a saying the Navy has: ‘Ship, shipmate, self,’ which to me is completely backwards,” said Nicolle Turzii. "I can’t take care of myself first, how can I take care of my shipmates or my ship? When I told my command about my view on the issue, my command pushed back.”

The Navy recorded 72 suicides in fiscal 2022, according to the Defense Department.

"It is to erase the stigma out there about mental health, it is OK to seek help,” Patrick Castera said.

**By Jennifer H. SVN**
*Stars and Stripes*

Human error caused a U.S. Air Force MQ-9 Reaper to crash last summer near an air base in Romania, ending in a loss of more than $14 million, an investigation found.

The drone smashed into a cornfield outside the 71st Air Base in Campia Turzii on July 14, 2022, according to local media reports.

No injuries and minimal damage to civilian property were reported, according to the Air Combat Command investigation report, which was released last week. The Reaper had a value of about $14.6 million.

Investigators determined pilot error “based on cashed-out attitude” and “poor airmanship” were to blame.

The report said the unmanned aircraft system, assigned to the 432nd Wing at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., came down at an undisclosed location in Europe.

The pilot and sensor operator tried to land the drone when its control system network began malfunctioning shortly after taking off during a training mission, according to the report.

The pilot singularly focused on a “stuck (engine) torque” after an electrical anomaly caused the engine indicators to freeze on the pilot’s display, the report stated. As a result, he misidentified the proper emergency procedure and he and the sensor operator failed to run through an emergency engine failure checklist, the report said.

When the Reaper arrived overhead at the designated airfield, the pilot and operator in effect shut down the engine to try and safely glide it to a landing, the report said.

But because of the malfunction, the cockpit display suggested the engine was still running. Air Combat Command said in a statement issued with the investigation findings.

Based on the erroneous belief the engine was running, the team tried to abort the landing and go-around for another attempt.

Soon afterward, the pilot said he couldn’t control the drone. It stalled it eight times before the Reaper ran out of energy, according to the report.

The Air Force has flown drone missions from Romania since 2021, when the service moved 90 MQ-9s there and an unspecified number of MQ-9 Reapers to Campia Turzii.

The Reapers help with surveillance and reconnaissance in the Black Sea region, where the U.S. regularly has accused Russia of dangerous intercepts of aircraft.

"The process could take weeks or months. "There’s a saying the Navy has: ‘Ship, shipmate, self,’ which to me is completely backwards," said Nicolle Turzii. "I can’t take care of myself first, how can I take care of my shipmates or my ship? When I told my command about my view on the issue, my command pushed back."
N. Korea tests ICBM days after threatening US

By David Choi and Hana Kusumoto
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korea fired an intercontinental ballistic missile off its eastern coast around 10 a.m. Wednesday, according to military authorities in South Korea and Japan.

The missile was launched from the P'yongyang area at a high angle and flew about 620 miles before splashing down in the Sea of Japan, or the East Sea, South Korea's Joint Chiefs said in a message to news reporters.

“North Korea’s launch of a long-range ballistic missile is a serious provocation that undermines the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and the international community,” the message said.

Japan's military detected an ICBM being fired from near Pyongyang at 9:59 a.m. that flew for 74 minutes before splashing into the sea about 153 miles west of Okushiri Island, beyond the country's exclusive economic zone, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said at a news conference Wednesday.

The missile flew at a maximum altitude of 3,730 miles, Matsuno said. No damage was reported as of Wednesday afternoon.

“The missile landed safely and without incident,” Lt. Col. Jared Patterson, commander, said in the PACAF record.

It has not yet been recovered, according to KCNA.

South Korea's military has denied the claim and said its joint aerial reconnaissance operations with the U.S. were routine.

Washington echoed Seoul's and the North's “recent statements that U.S. flights above its claimed exclusive economic zone are unlawful and are unfounded,” State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said at a press conference Tuesday.

Prior to Wednesday's launch, North Korea had fired 14 ballistic missiles in 10 separate days of testing so far this year. The most recent launch was June 15, when the North fired two short-range ballistic missiles off its eastern coast.

North Korea has been prohibited by the U.N. Security Council from “all ballistic missile activities” since 2006, when the organization unanimously adopted resolutions to punish the regime for its first nuclear test in 2006.

B-52 makes landing in Tokyo due to maintenance issue

By Seth Robson
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A B-52 Stratofortress bomber diverted to the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo on Wednesday morning due to an in-flight maintenance issue.

The aircraft, assigned to the 5th Bomb Wing at Minot Air Force Base, N.D., arrived at Yokota at 10:22 a.m., according to an 11:06 a.m. post on the base’s website.

“It landed safely and without incident,” the post said.

The B-52 is in the Indo-Pacific region to support a training exercise, a Pacific Air Forces spokesman, Maj. Christopher Merian, told Stars and Stripes by email that afternoon.

PACAF records show the last time a B-52 landed at Yokota was in 1989 during the Japanese-American Friendship Festival, he added.

The Yokota incident occurred a week after four B-52s arrived at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, as part of the Air Force’s ongoing bomber task force missions intended to project U.S. air power in the region.

Those planes are assigned to the 20th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron at Barksdale Air Force Base, La., PACAF said in a news release Tuesday.

The Minot-based 23rd Bomb Squadron has also deployed to Guam with four more Stratofortresses, Andersen’s 36th Wing said in an email Wednesday afternoon, without stating when these planes arrived.

In total, there are eight B-52s and 385 airmen deployed to Guam in support of the bomber task force missions, the wing said.

“Each mission flown further demonstrates our ability to provide agile combat ready forces and long-range strike capabilities to combatant commanders across the globe,” Lt. Col. Jared Patterson, the bomb squadron’s commander, said in the PACAF release.

The B-52s on Guam will train while integrating alongside allies and partners throughout the region, the release said.

“From those maintaining or flying these bombers to those behind the scenes enabling the mission, our ability to credibly assure Allies and deter adversaries requires every Airman out here,” Patterson said.

Retired soldier accused of stealing, crashing Humvee at Fort Stewart

By Corey Dickstein
Stars and Stripes

ATLANTA — The man accused of crashing a Humvee into the front entrance of the 3rd Infantry Division’s headquarters building at Fort Stewart is a retired soldier and Iraq war veteran, officials at the Georgia Army post said Tuesday.

Treameleon D. Lacey was charged Monday by Army investigators with theft of government property and destruction of government property after they arrested him at the scene of the crash, said Kevin Larson, a Fort Stewart spokesman.

Lacey was being held in the Liberty County jail near Fort Stewart as of Tuesday afternoon, jail records show.

Lacey, 39, retired from the Army as a staff sergeant in July 2013 after serving more than a decade as a wheeled vehicle mechanic, according to the Army.

He served two combat deployments to Iraq.

Fort Stewart military police de- tained Lacey after he crashed the Humvee at about 10 a.m. into the glass front doors of the 3rd ID headquarters, known as Building 180, on the post.

No one was injured in the crash, but it destroyed the building front entrance, Larson said.

The suspect’s status as a retired veteran gave him access to the in- stallation, Larson said. He declined further comment on the in- cident.

Officials have not said when La- cey allegedly stole the Humvee or whether he believed he crashed it intentionally into the division headquarters, which houses the 3rd ID’s commanding general, his deputies and much of the division staff.

Lacey had yet to appear in court as of Tuesday afternoon, jail rec- ords show.

His case was expected to be handled by federal prosecutors with the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Georgia, according to the Army.

The incident marked the second theft of an Army Humvee in about one week.

Someone stole a Humvee from the California Army National Guard’s Santa Rosa armory on Ju- ly 3.

It has not yet been recovered, according to California officials.

ắt thong tin chi tiết
MILITARY

Carbon filters reduced PFAS contamination at US Navy bases

BY ALEX WILSON AND HANA KUSUMOTO  
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Newly installed water filters appear to have reduced toxic PFAS compounds in wastewater at two U.S. bases in Japan, according to Navy and Japanese authorities.

Samples taken over the past year at Yokosuka and Naval Air Facility Atsugi, both southwest of Tokyo, revealed high levels of PFOS and PFOA, two common PFAS compounds that are suspected of causing significant health issues. The samples showed the toxins present in some cases at 258 times Japan’s provisional limit of 50 parts per trillion.

However, survey results released Monday by Kanagawa prefecture indicate that granular activated carbon filters installed by the Navy have reduced the contamination to less than 1/10th of Japan’s limit, according to a news release from the prefecture.

PFAS — per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances — are manufactured chemicals commonly found in fire-extinguishing foam used at airports, factories and military bases, and in household products such as electronics, paint and water-repellent clothing.

The Environmental Protection Agency refers to PFAS as “forever chemicals” because they “break down very slowly and can build up in people, animals and the environment over time.” Current research shows high levels of exposure can lead to fertility issues, developmental effects, increased risks of cancers and other health concerns.

On Sept. 22, a fire-suppression system inside a NAF Atsugi hangar accidentally released about 1,850 gallons of fire-extinguishing foam that reached a retention pond on the base, according to the prefecture. October water samples showed combined PFOS and PFOA present at 530 to 910 parts per trillion, the release states.

The combined concentration dropped to as low as 4.6 parts per trillion after the base installed the filters, according to the release. Water damage caused the foam release, which was mostly contained inside the hangar, Naval Forces Japan spokeswoman Cmdr. Katie Corezo told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday.

Only a “small amount” of the foam reached the base’s stormwater system and the retention pond, she said, and the water was “successfully treated” with the filters.

Last year, several wastewater tests at Yokosuka, about 25 miles southeast of NAF Atsugi, also showed high levels of PFOs and PFOA at a wastewater treatment plant, with the highest levels around 12,900 parts per trillion.

PFAS are manufactured chemicals commonly found in fire-extinguishing foam widely used at airports, factories and military bases, and in household products such as electronics, paint and water-repellent clothing.

The base installed the carbon water filters in November and removed the fire-extinguishing foam containing PFAS. By December, water sampling by U.S. Forces Japan and the Japanese government showed levels between 1.8 and 3.2 parts per trillion, according to the prefecture.

Further surveys on March 20 showed levels of 2.9 to 3.8 parts per trillion, the release said.

Corezo declined to say whether the source of Yokosuka’s contamination has been identified but said no more high PFAS concentrations have been reported, making a “one-time, inadvertent input into the system” the “likely source.”

Recent tests showed no detectable PFAS levels at Yokosuka, she said, and Naval Forces Japan remains “committed to environmental stewardship at all of our installations.”

U.S. Forces Japan does not intend to provide further test results unless the levels exceed Japan’s 50 parts-per-trillion provisional limit, according to Kanagawa prefecture.

Cerezo said Japan Environmental Governing Standards establishes a 50 parts per trillion limit on drinking water but has no established limit for wastewater.

“The latest testing shows no detectable level of PFOS in the wastewater treatment plant,” she wrote in her email. “Since it is at the non-detect level, the need to continue to report is no longer warranted.”

Cerezo said Japan Environmental Governing Standards establishes a 50 parts per trillion limit on drinking water but has no established limit for wastewater. 

“Since it is at the non-detect level, the need to continue to report is no longer warranted.”


cerezo.Alex@stripes.com 
Twitter: @AlexMNWilson

---

Royal Hawaiian HOLOKU BALL

Witness as we turn back the hands of time and take a peek into a Golden Era, when Hawaii was under Monarchial rule. The Iolani Palace was often the gathering center of the people and the Band took place in the Throne Room, with The Royal Hawaiian Band performing. These are still held annually in Hawaii and now you too can experience a Holoku Ball right here at The New Sanno Hotel.

AUG 12 SAT  
DOORS OPEN 1830
Royal Hawaiian Band Live Music, 
Hawaiian Cultural Dance & Entertainment, 
Authentic Hawaiian Buffet
Adult 65.00

SEP 23 SAT
Cultural Dance Performance by 
Folk Dance Group Inrayog
DOORS OPEN 1830
Theme Buffet Dinner featuring Native Filipino Dishes from Different Regions 
Live Music Entertainment 
Education | Exploration | Enjoyment
Adult 65.00

Limited Room & Event Packages are Available 
Visit our Website for updates at www.thenewsanno.com 
229-8003 or 03-6868-2311 EXT. 8003

---

The New Sanno Presents
BEATLES NIGHT 
COSTUME PARTY

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND 
WEAR YOUR BEST COSTUME FROM THE 60’S, 70’S, ...ROCK & ROLL!

OCT 21 SAT  
DOORS OPEN 1830
ADMISSION, THEMED BUFFET, 
FABULOUS ENTERTAINMENT AND ATMOSPHERE 
70.00 PER PERSON

---

The New Sanno Presents
THE PARROTS
Army seeks AI to predict enemy’s next step

By J.P. Lawrence

The Army wants artificial intelligence that can predict what an enemy will do next, and it’s looking for outside help to turn this wish into reality.

The service published a notice last week saying it seeks software for its intelligence analysts that can run simulations and predict how the situation on a battlefield could evolve.

The notice to the defense industry spells out the Army’s wish list for the system, which Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and service leaders have said is a top tech modernization priority.

Issued by troops based at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, the request for information assumes a future in which human and artificial intelligence systems work hand in hand to enhance decision-making and vehicles guided by AI.

Those tech-driven wars will require commanders to learn new ways of fighting rapidly. The war in Ukraine and an earlier armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan are cited as examples.

In both instances, tactics changed so quickly that intelligence analysts struggled to predict what the enemy would do, the notice said.

Ideally, the AI system created for the service would analyze disparate bits of intelligence, forecast what the enemy is doing and predict vulnerabilities, all while running on a laptop and being easy to learn and use, the notice said.

The request follows several years of multimillion-dollar investment by the Army in artificial intelligence.

Military leaders say AI can help commanders understand the voluminous amounts of intelligence data garnered on the battlefield. In addition to the U.S., Russia and especially China have emerged as deep-pocketed investors in AI technologies.

Defense companies that have the ability to build a prototype AI are asked in the notice to send the Army information about what they can do and how much money and time it would take to build the software.

lawrence.jp@stripes.com
Twitter: @JPLawrence3

Greece, Turkey pledge to ‘reset’ ties

Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — Greece is ready to “reset” relations with neighbor Turkey in an effort to bypass decades-old disputes between the two NATO members, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said Wednesday.

Mitsotakis held an hourlong meeting Wednesday with Turkish President Reccep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of a NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, and told reporters they had agreed to continue high-level contacts.

“Our problems have not been magically resolved,” Mitsotakis said. “But today’s meeting confirmed my intention and that of President Erdogan to reset Greek-Turkish relations.”

Cabinet ministers from the two sides are due to meet after the summer in the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki, Mitsotakis said.

Wednesday’s talks were held a day after Turkey dropped its objections to Sweden’s membership in NATO and signaled further willingness to lower tensions with Western nations, including Greece.

Turkey and Greece remain at odds over maritime boundaries in the eastern Mediterranean, a dispute that affects illegal migration into the European Union, mineral rights, and the projection of military power.

Both NATO members are seeking to upgrade their air forces with assistance from the United States: Ankara wants new and upgraded F-16 fighter jets, while Athens is keen to join the F-35 program.

The defense ministers of Greece and Turkey, Nikos Dendias and Yasar Guler, held a separate meeting in Vilnius on Wednesday.

Family has witnessed century of sub history

By Caitlyn Burchett

The Virginia-Pilot

The Wills, Alex said, have always had a “military thing. But we never said, ‘It’s our family’s thing.’”

A diesel boat guy, he is an engineer, he grew up listening to his father, retired Capt. Alex Will, a retired captain and third-generation submariner.

“I wanted to go to the Naval Academy, and when I was accepted in 1985, Ipor told the family, ‘You can go to college. I’ve got a great-grandfather’s dolphins, I’ve got a great-grandfather’s gold-plated dolphins, and if you ever go wrong, I’ll go wrong with you.’”

In 1989, John Will Jr. told The Beacon: “I know I’m prejudiced, but I feel the nuclear submarine fleet is the current backbone of the Navy … Not to take anything away from carriers or battle groups, but I think subs are slowly growing in prominence.”

John Will Jr. went on to be the first commanding officer of the USS Puffer (SSN 652), putting it in commission in 1968. He then served the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations as head of submarine warfare and returned to the Pentagon as a military advisor to the Department of Defense’s Office of Naval Warfare.

“We are all submariners but it is an interesting distinction because my great-grandfather was a diesel boat guy, but in the ‘90s my grandfather shifted and spent his entire career as a nuclear officer,” Adam said. “And then my dad and I followed that directional shift and became nuclear officers.”

In 1985, Alex Will was commissioned as an officer and assigned to fast attack submarine USS Silversides, continuing what was affectionately dubbed “a family tradition.” Alex served aboard the Norwegian-based submarine for three years before completing two years of shore duty and transitioning to the Navy Reserve. He retired as a captain in 2016 after a 30-year career.

While Alex left the active duty force, he still worked closely with submariners. He spent many years in the SSNG Program Office, overseeing the conversion of the capabilities of four Ohio-Class guided-missile submarines from launching nuclear missiles to launching guided missiles.

“The Wills, Alex said, have always been drawn to subsurface warfare. “It seems our family has always been connected to the submarine force in some way, shape or form,” Alex said. “Even my oldest brother, he is an engineer, he works on acoustic programs. That is very important to the submarine force because our eyes and ears down there are the acoustics. There are no windows. Listening is all you’ve got.”

Even so, it came as a surprise to him when his son asked about pursuing a Navy Reserve Officers Training Corps scholarship before heading to the University of Virginia in 2014. The program offers college tuition to qualifying students who sign on to be commissioned as a Navy officer upon graduation.

“We have never pushed the military to our boys,” Alex said. “It was my thing, and it was my dad’s thing. But we never said, ‘Hey, why don’t you go into the military?’

“So when Adam was applying to colleges and writing essays, he said he might go for a ROTC scholarship, and we were like, ‘Where did that come from?’ Joining the military had not been uttered by him up until that point.’”

Adam graduated from UVA in 2018 and went through two years of intensive nuclear training before he was commissioned in 2020. He was pinned with his dolphins in 2021.

“The Washington has a colloquial name — the Blackfish — and when we get pinned under way, we get pinned with black fish (dolphins), instead of silver or gold,” Adam said. “But because I was pinned with my great-grandfather’s dolphins, I was the only one with gold dolphins.”
Budget: Bill includes plan to reinstate troops who defied vaccine order

FROM PAGE 1

Tangle we’ve faced in decades,” House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mike Rogers, R-Ala., told colleagues in remarks Tuesday. The defense bill, he added, was designed “with that underlying goal to deter China.”

But it is the country’s intensifying culture-war battles, not any specific approach to U.S. national security, likely to attract the most vociferous debate as lawmakers consider amendments to the bill in the coming days. While it is widely considered one of the few must-pass pieces of legislation Congress takes up each year, some members and their staffs have warned that inserting contentious issues like abortion into the bill could derail the process entirely, complicating U.S. defense strategy and funding for the coming year.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., on Tuesday seemed to concede that the rancor surrounding some amendments could lead to delays. “We’re going to get it passed,” he said, adding, “It doesn’t have to be on a specific time.”

“It’s not how you start,” he said. “It’s how you finish.”

The Senate has yet to schedule a vote on its version of the bill. The two chambers will ultimately meet to reconcile any differences before the legislation can move to President Joe Biden for approval. The White House has criticized aspects of the House measure, which has converged in some key ways from the proposal that the administration sent to Congress. The bill, approved last month by the House Armed Services Committee on a 38-1 vote, succeeds in “pushing back against the radical woke ideology being forced on our servicemembers and women,” according to a summary of the legislation released last month by committee Republicans.

The House bill would ban drag shows and the teaching of critical race theory in the military while rolling back initiatives, passed by the Democratic-controlled House in previous years, meant to foster diversity and inclusion within the Defense Department. That includes eliminating the department’s chief diversity officer position and a department working group designed to counter extreme views if they reach the House.

Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., has put a hold on top-level military promotions because of the Pentagon’s abortion policies.

MAGA agenda — referring to “Make America Great Again,” a rallying cry among conservatives loyal to former President Donald Trump. Democrats have sought to portray “MAGA Republicans” as espousing the party’s most polarizing and dangerous views, including those concerning abortion, equality and LGBT+ rights.

“We’ve taken some steps over the four years that we were in the majority to get the Pentagon to make sure that they did a better job of recruiting and making sure that people in historically marginalized communities — primarily LGBTQ women and people of color — know that they’re welcome within the military, because historically they have not been,” Smith said, referring to Republican proposals to repeal those measures.

The country’s armed forces are facing a major recruiting challenge, Smith noted, and eliminating diversity and inclusion initiatives hinders the military’s ability to recruit talented individuals from marginalized groups.

Lawmakers are divided — though not always along party lines — over the administration’s approach to China and Ukraine. More than 60 amendments concern U.S. policy toward China, Chinese people or Chinese entities, including some that Democrats say appear to be racist.

Republicans also submitted nearly 20 separate amendments to cut back on or eliminate U.S. security assistance to Ukraine and NATO — proposals that stoked debate Tuesday and are likely to expose intraparty tensions if they go to the House floor.

“We should not be devoting time and resources and putting the people of Ukraine over American citizens,” Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., said, urging her colleagues to consider three proposals she introduced to defund the war effort in Ukraine.

Leading Republicans in the Armed Services Committee on Tuesday urged their Rules Committee colleagues to stick to relevant amendments, with Rogers imploring them to focus on those “that advance the security of our nation and the needs of our service members.”

In the Senate, the partisan rift over abortion access has had enormous implications for the military’s promotion process. For the past seven months, Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., has blocked military confirmations and promotions in the Senate Armed Services Committee in a bid to pressure the Pentagon to abandon its policy.

As a consequence, the Marine Corps this week witnessed the departure of its top general without a Senate-confirmed successor.

Vigorous floor debate is important, Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va., said in an interview Tuesday. But ultimately, “all of us need to look at getting behind a bill that ensures that our men and women of the military will have the tools they need to be the most lethal and effective fighting force in the world.”

Committee members in both parties have sought to emphasize the legislation’s bipartisan wins, including its robust funding to bolster the defense industrial base — a deepening concern as the Pentagon has raider its stocks of artillery munitions to aid Ukraine — and modernize the military by retiring outdated aircraft, ships and weapons systems while investing in the development of advanced satellites, drones and munitions.

Contact CustomerHelp@stripes.com to get your free copy of Welcome to the Pacific magazine!
Could Ukraine war create chance to resolve Moldova’s many Transnistria issues?

By Svetlana Shkolnikova

CHISINAU, Moldova — The breakaway Russian-speaking territory of Transnistria on Ukraine’s western border is part of Moldova but refuses to join it. It’s occupied by Russian troops but not recognized by Moscow. Residents like Aurel want to keep it that way.

A 68-year-old, who declined to provide his last name, is a 50-year resident of Bender, a border town in Transnistria. He said he has no qualms with the state of limbo established by a pro-Russian uprising in 1992 and had no desire for Transnistria, a 250-mile stretch of land still steeped in imagery from its Soviet past, to integrate with Moldova or officially become one with Russia.

“Tiraspol, once having the upper hand due to its support from Moscow, has been forced into a different reality.”

But the war raging in Ukraine and its outcome will likely upend the status quo Transnistria’s some 300,000 residents have grown accustomed to, potentially providing an opportunity to resolve a frozen conflict that has stalled at the negotiation table for decades, officials and analysts say.

“The war is the right time to start preparing and for both sides to start thinking about what they want from a settlement,” said a senior international official, speaking on condition of anonymity un­der rules of their organization.

“The conflict has created conditions in which both sides should start preparations for a future settlement.”

A girl in 2021 sits atop a Soviet-era T-34 tank installed as a monument in Tiraspol, capital of Transnistria, a breakaway region and disputed territory unrecognized by the international community, in Moldova.

A fire in 2021 sits atop a Soviet-era T-34 tank installed as a monument in Tiraspol, capital of Transnistria, a breakaway region and disputed territory unrecognized by the international community, in Moldova.

For the first time in 30 years, the power dynamics between Chisinau and Tiraspol, Transnistria’s capital, have flipped, the official said. Tiraspol, once having the upper hand due to its support from Russia, has been forced into a more submissive position since Ukraine shut its border with the rebel state last year.

The closures cut off Transnistria from its main trading partner, blocked access to a vital seaport in the Ukrainian city of Odessa and forced all Transnistrian imports, exports and people to solely pass through Moldovan border crossings.

“They’re kind of stuck and it’s a good thing for negotiations,” said U.S. ambassador to Moldova Kent Flenchea, speaking on condition of anonymity.

A fire in 2021 sits atop a Soviet-era T-34 tank installed as a monument in Tiraspol, capital of Transnistria, a breakaway region and disputed territory unrecognized by the international community, in Moldova.

After a U.S. official told Moldova’s deputy prime minister for reintegration, Flenchea, the former Moldovan deputy prime minister for reintegration. When asked if they can work together all the pieces necessary for reintegration, Flenchea said.

“Old people that are poor are left,” he said. “They get their pensions from Russia so that’s why they want to be with Russia. They pray that nothing happens, that everything is good for them. Their gas is cheap, their salaries are low but they live calmly.”

The soldiers are ill-equipped, poorly trained and have “zero capability” of combat operations, said Alexandru Flenchea, a former Moldovan deputy prime minister for reintegration and now director of the Initiative 4 Peace Prevention Center in Vienna.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine last year, and a series of explosions reported in Transnistria a few months later, raised the specter of Russia pushing its southern offensive into Transnistria. Those fears largely passed as the Kremlin’s forces struggled to make gains in Ukraine though the head of Moldova’s spy agency warned in December that Russia will try again this year, with a possible aim of seizing a Soviet-era ammunition depot in Transnistria.

The stockpile of 20,000 tons of arms and munitions is one of Eastern Europe’s largest and the possibility that an errant missile will detonate it remains a constant worry, said the senior international official.

There is much less concern that Russia will draw Transnistria into the war or recognize the region as an independent republic, as it did with occupied territory in Ukraine, said Flenchea.

“As much as [Russian President Vladimir] Putin wants to restore the Soviet Union in one shape or form, Moldova does not have that symbolic value for Russia as Ukraine does,” he said.

Transnistria “is the single one without a production of natural gas but is still reliant on electricity from a power plant in Transnis­tria.”

Transnistrian authorities have at times echoed Russian claims of attempted Ukrainian provocations on their territory and often announce snap military training exercises but are otherwise loath to bring the war home, according to the senior international official.

Chisinau too has swatted away Ukrainian offers to help Moldova and Moldovan residents have frayed over the decades but remain strong. Minibuses travel frequently between Chisinau and Tiraspol, with most people heading to Moldova’s capital, said a bus driver who declined to be named.

“Many Transnistrians come to work, shop and see family and friends in Chisinau.”

The number of passengers has dropped in recent years as the region, like the rest of Moldova, continues to lose residents to wealthier European nations, the driver said.

“Old people that are poor are left,” he said. “They get their pensions from Russia so that’s why they want to be with Russia. They pray that nothing happens, that everything is good for them. Their gas is cheap, their salaries are low but they live calmly.”

Polling in Transnistria, though conducted in a repressive political environment, indicates a lot of sympathy and loyalty to Russia as well as sympathy for Ukraine, said Flenchea, the former Moldovan deputy prime minister for reintegration.

When asked if they can one day envision Transnistria being a part of Moldova, many Transnistrian residents answer “yes.”

“Russia is far away and Ukraine is right there, behind the fence, and Moldova is also right there,” Flenchea said.

He believes the best time to make headway in negotiations was in the first three to six months of the war, when Transnistria’s leadership felt “particularly vulnerable and exposed.” That opportunity was missed due to Moldova’s preoccupation with the aftershocks of Russia’s invasion but a final settlement is still possible, he said.

Moldova must triple its work with partners in the United States and Europe to lay out a vision for the country’s future and put together all the pieces necessary for reintegration, Flenchea said.

“There will be no restoration of the status quo in Transnistria even if there’s a deep freeze in the Uk­raine war,” he said. “It will be a different reality.”
Zelenskyy: Cluster bombs necessary for Ukraine defense

By John Vander

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy offered reassurances Wednesday that controversial American-made cluster bombs will be used with caution, adding Ukraine’s access to the weapon is “all about fairness.”

“Russia is constantly using cluster shells in our area. It fights exclusively on our land, killing our people … we are defending ourselves,” Zelenskyy said moments before joining world leaders for security talks at NATO’s two-day summit in Vilnius, Lithuania.

After months of debate, President Joe Biden last week decided to send Ukraine cluster munitions, which are banned by many allies and other nations.

The munitions pose a risk to civilians because they may scatter widely and sometimes fail to detonate on impact. Unexploded bombs may remain live for many decades after a war ends.

However, the weapon can be effective on the battlefield. Gen. Christopher Cavoli, NATO’s supreme allied commander and head of U.S. European Command, during testimony in April said such munitions could be put to use against Russian forces.

“It’s very effective against mass targets of personnel and equipment, especially when those targets are gathered into dense formations,” Cavoli said. “It is happening today … and it happens on most battlefields when one force goes into the offense. So, as a strictly military matter, it is useful and very effective munition.”

Zelenskyy said Ukrainian forces will direct the bombs at occupied territories in Ukraine.

“It is absolutely controlled and will not be used anywhere else,” he said. “And it also came justice. Look, there is no justice in this, that the aggressor has occupied us.”

Zelenskyy’s comments came on the final day of NATO’s two-day summit, where he attended the inaugural meeting of the newly formed Ukraine-NATO Council.

The Ukrainian president said a stir a day earlier when he blasted NATO for not presenting a definitive timeline for when Ukraine could join the alliance. Instead, NATO agreed Ukraine eventually will become a member, but only after the war has ended and certain government reforms have been achieved.

But speaking alongside NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg Wednesday, Zelenskyy put a positive spin on the agreement. Notably, Ukraine no longer will be required to complete a Membership Action Plan that is normally a prerequisite for new members to join the alliance.

“This will change Ukraine’s membership path from a two-step process to a one-step process,” Stoltenberg said Wednesday. “And we will issue an invitation for Ukraine to join NATO when all allies agree that conditions are met.

In the end, Zelenskyy called the summit a success for Ukraine, although it fell short of hopes that the gathering would generate a more direct path into the alliance.

“We can state that the results of the summit are good, but if there was an invocation, it would be perfect,” he said.

Turkey won’t ratify Sweden NATO bid before October

Associated Press

VILNIUS, Lithuania — Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said Wednesday that Sweden’s NATO membership bid would not be ratified by Turkey’s parliament before October.

He said at a news conference at the NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, that the process would have to wait until after lawmakers return from a summer recess.

“The parliament is not in session for the upcoming two months … but our target is to finalize this matter as swiftly as possible,” he said.

Turkey on Monday withdrew its objections to Sweden joining the alliance, a step toward the unity that Western leaders have been eager to demonstrate in the face of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The decision by Erdogan was a significant move toward Sweden’s membership and came after days of intensive meetings.

Finland has already become the 31st member of the alliance; Sweden is on deck to become the 32nd.

The action plan is usually a key step in the process that involves advice and assistance for countries seeking to join. Symbols of support for Ukraine are common around Vilnius, where the country’s blue-and-yellow flags hang from buildings and are pasted inside windows. One sign cursed Russian President Vladimir Putin. Another urged NATO leaders to “hurry up” their assistance for Ukraine.

However, there was caution inside the summit itself, especially from Biden, who has explicitly said he doesn’t think Ukraine is ready to join NATO. There are concerns that the country’s democracy is unstable and its corruption remains too deeply rooted.

Under Article 5 of the NATO charter, members are obligated to defend each other from attack which could swiftly draw the U.S. and other nations into direct fighting with Russia.

Defining an end to hostilities is no easy task. Officials have defined to declare the goal, which could suggest a negotiated ceasefire or Ukraine reclaiming all occupied territory. Either way, Putin would essentially have veto power over Ukraine’s NATO membership by prolonging the conflict.

British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace warned Wednesday of bubbling frustration over Zelenskyy’s demands, adding that “people want to see gratitude” for Western military support. Wallace also said he’s heard “grumblings” from some U.S. lawmakers that “we’re not Amazon.”

“I mean, that’s true,” Wallace said, according to multiple British media outlets. He recalled telling the Ukrainians the same thing when he visited the country last year and was presented with a list of weapon requests. “I’m not Amazon.”

Ukraine: Move seen as bridge toward eventual NATO membership

FROM PAGE 1

pace of military assistance.

Zelenskyy thanked Biden, saying that “you spend this money for our lives,” and said shipments of controversial cluster munitions would help Ukraine’s fight against Russia.

It was a marked shift in tone from Zelenskyy’s complaints a day earlier that it was “unprecedented and absurd” to avoid setting a timeline for Ukraine to join NATO.

On the final day of NATO’s summit, the alliance launched a new forum for deepening ties with Ukraine: the NATO-Ukraine Council. It’s intended to serve as a permanent body where the alliance’s 31 members and Ukraine can hold consultations and call for meetings in emergency situations.

The setting is part of NATO’s effort to bring Ukraine as close as possible to the military alliance without actually joining it. On Tuesday, the leaders said in their communiqué summarizing the summit’s conclusions that Ukraine could join “when allies agree and conditions are met.”

“This is a multilateral process that will be gradual and generate a more direct path to the alliance,” Zelenskyy said, through a translator. He added that joining NATO would be ‘“a serious motivating factor for Ukrainian society” at it resists Russia.

“NATO needs us just as we need NATO,” he said alongside Stoltenberg.

Ukraine’s future membership was the most divisive and emotionally charged issue at this year’s summit. In essence, Western countries are willing to keep sending weapons to help Ukraine do the job that NATO was designed to do — hold the line against a Russian invasion — but not allow Ukraine to join its ranks and benefit from its security during the war.

“We have to stay outside of this war but be able to support Ukraine. We managed that very delicate balancing act for the last 17 months. It’s to the benefit of everyone that we maintain that balancing act,” Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said.

Amanda Sloat, senior director of European affairs for the U.S. National Security Council, defended the summit’s decisions.

“I would agree that the communique is unprecedented, but I see that in a positive way,” she told reporters.

Sloat noted that Ukraine will not need to work through a “membership action plan” as it seeks to join NATO, although she said “there are still governance and security sector reforms that are going to be required.”

The action plan is usually a key step in the process that involves advice and assistance for countries seeking to join.

Symbols of support for Ukraine are common around Vilnius, the capital, where the country’s blue-and-yellow flags hang from buildings and are pasted inside windows. One sign cursed Russian President Vladimir Putin. Another urged NATO leaders to “hurry up” their assistance for Ukraine.

However, there was caution inside the summit itself, especially from Biden, who has explicitly said he doesn’t think Ukraine is ready to join NATO. There are concerns that the country’s democracy is unstable and its corruption remains too deeply rooted.

Under Article 5 of the NATO charter, members are obligated to defend each other from attack which could swiftly draw the U.S. and other nations into direct fighting with Russia.

Defining an end to hostilities is no easy task. Officials have defined to declare the goal, which could suggest a negotiated ceasefire or Ukraine reclaiming all occupied territory. Either way, Putin would essentially have veto power over Ukraine’s NATO membership by prolonging the conflict.

British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace warned Wednesday of bubbling frustration over Zelenskyy’s demands, adding that “people want to see gratitude” for Western military support. Wallace also said he’s heard “grumblings” from some U.S. lawmakers that “we’re not Amazon.”

“I mean, that’s true,” Wallace said, according to multiple British media outlets. He recalled telling the Ukrainians the same thing when he visited the country last year and was presented with a list of weapon requests. “I’m not Amazon.”

MEDIA
Vermont recovers after being hit by flood

By Lisa Rathke
ANDOVER, Vt. — Floodwaters receded in Vermont cities and towns pummeled by a storm that delivered two months of rain in two days, enabling residents to focus on recovering from a disaster that trapped residents in homes, closed roads and choked up businesses with mud and debris.

The water drained off in the capital city of Montpelier, where streets were flooded Tuesday by the swollen Winooski River, and lingering concerns about a dam just upstream eased as water levels there appeared to stabilize.

“It looks like it won’t breach. That is good. That is one less thing we have to have on our front burner,” Montpelier Town Manager Bill Fraser said.

Fraser said the city of 8,000 has shifted into recovery mode, with public works employees removing mud and debris downtown and building inspections to come as businesses begin clearing up their properties. Brown water from the Winooski reached the tops of parking meters downtown, inundating basements and ruining the contents of lower floors.

Similar scenes played out in neighboring Barre and in Bridgeport, and building inspections to come public works employees removing mud and debris.

Town Manager John Montes, regional disaster officer. Red Cross volunteers from across the Northeast were arriving to help with everything from disaster assessment to handing out clean-up kits to homeowners, he said.

“There’s more rain coming tomorrow, so it’s best for us to be leaning forward and be ready,” Montes said. “We can handle any additional impacts we get from the weather this week.”

Gov. Scott said floodwaters sur passed levels seen during Tropical Storm Irene. Irene killed six people in Vermont in August 2011, washing homes off their foundations and damaging or destroying more than 200 bridges and 500 miles of highway.

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, even before these floods, this year has seen 12 confirmed weather/climate disaster events with losses exceeding $1 billion in the United States.

This slow-moving storm dumped between 7 and 9 inches of rain on parts of New England, New York and Connecticut. New York’s Hudson River Valley was hit hard, and towns in southwest New Hampshire and western Massachusetts also had heavy flooding and road washouts.

Much of that water was flowing through Connecticut, carrying debris including entire trees on its way south to Long Island Sound.

Major waterways including Connecticut River overflowered their banks, and were expected to crest Wednesday at up to 6 feet above flood stage, closing roads and riverside parks in multiple cities.

By mid-day Wednesday, all the rivers in Vermont crested and water levels were receding, although at least one river was 20 feet above normal, said Peter Banacos, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

One woman died in Fort Montgomery, New York, as she tried to escape her flooded home with her dog.

About 12 Vermont communities, including the state capital, were under a boil-water alert due to the floods.

The American Red Cross of Northern New England succeeded in getting food and water to its shelters in Barre, Rutland and White River Junction.

Manson follower Van Houten released from prison

Los Angeles — Charles Manson follower Leslie Van Houten, a former homecoming princess who at 19 helped carry out the shocking killings of a wealthy Los Angeles couple at the direction of the violent and manipulative cult leader, walked out of a California prison Tuesday after serving more than 50 years of a life sentence.

Van Houten, now 73, “was released to parole supervision,” the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation said in a statement.

She left the California Institution for Women in Corona, east of Los Angeles, in the early morning hours and was driven to transitional housing, her attorney Nancy Tetreault said.

“Her’s still trying to get used to the idea that this really happened,” Tetreault told The Associated Press.

Days earlier Gov. Gavin Newsom announced he would not fight a state appeals court ruling that Van Houten should be granted parole. He said it was unlikely the state Supreme Court would consider an appeal.

The 1969 slayings and subsequent trials captivated the nation during an era of strife marked by the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement and the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy.

At a parole hearing in 2016, Van Houten said the murders were the start of what Manson believed was a coming race war he called “Hel ter Skelter,” after the Beatles song. He had his followers prepare to fight and learn to can food so they could go underground and live in a hole in the desert, she added.

Van Houten was sentenced to death in 1971 for helping Manson’s group carry out the killings of Leno LaBianca, a grocer in Los Angeles, and his wife, Rosemary. Her sentence was later commuted to life in prison when the California Supreme Court overturned the state’s death penalty law in 1972.

She is the first Manson follower who took part in the killings to walk free.

Van Houten is expected to spend about a year at a halfway house.

Cargo ship fire put out after nearly a week

Newark, N.J. — Crews extinguished the intensely burning fire aboard a cargo ship docked in New Jersey after nearly a week and are now beginning their investigation into the blaze that killed two firefighters, officials said Tuesday.

We can officially declare the fire is out,” Coast Guard Capt. Zeita Merchant said during a news conference in Port Newark.

The blaze started late Wednesday and left two Newark firefighters dead. Authorities are now also beginning a salvage operation for the Grande Costa D’Avorio, which could take up to two months.
Iowa Republicans pass bill banning most abortions after about 6 weeks

**By Hannah Fingernut**

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Iowa’s Republican-led Legislature passed a bill banning most abortions after roughly six weeks of pregnancy during a marathon special session Tuesday that continued late into the night. Gov. Kim Reynolds immediately said in a statement she would sign the bill on Friday.

The bill passed with exclusively Republican support in a rare, one-day legislative burst lasting more than 14 hours over the vocal — and sometimes tense — objections from Democratic lawmakers and abortion advocates protesting at the Capitol. Just after 11 p.m., lingering protesters in the gallery booted and yelled “shame” to state senators in the minutes after the bill was approved.

Reynolds ordered the rare session after the state Supreme Court declined in June to reinstate a practically identical law that she signed in 2018.

“The Iowa Supreme Court questioned whether this legislation would pass the same law they did in 2018, and today they have a clear answer,” Reynolds said in a statement. “The voices of Iowans and their democratically elected representatives cannot be ignored any longer, and justice for the unborn should not be delayed.”

Abortion is currently legal in Iowa up to 20 weeks of pregnancy. The legislation will take immediate effect with the governor’s signature Friday. It will prohibit almost all abortions once cardiac activity can be detected, which is usually around six weeks of pregnancy.

Preparations were already underway to quickly file legal challenges in court.

“The ACLU of Iowa, Planned Parenthood, and the Emma Goldman Clinic remain committed to protecting the reproductive rights of Iowans to control their bodies and their lives, their health, and their safety — including filing a lawsuit to block this reckless, cruel law,” ACLU of Iowa Executive Director Mark Stringer said in a statement.

There are limited circumstances under the measure that would allow for abortion after that point in a pregnancy where cardiac activity is detected — such as rape, if reported to law enforcement or a health provider within 45 days; incest, if reported within 145 days; or if the fetus has a fatal abnormality “incompatible with life;” and if the pregnancy is endangering the life of the pregnant woman.

Still, the cost of services, like restaurant meals, car insurance, child care and dental services, continues to rise rapidly. Auto insurance, on average, now costs 17% more than it did a year ago.

Inflation falls to 3%, lowest level in more than 2 years

**Associated Press**

WASHINGTON — After two years of record-high prices, inflation in the United States has reached its lowest point in more than two years — 3% in June compared with 12 months earlier — a sign that the Federal Reserve’s interest rate hikes have steadily slowed price increases across the economy.

The inflation figure the government reported Wednesday was down sharply from a 4% annual rate in May, though still above the Fed’s 2% target rate. Over the past 12 months, gas prices have dropped, grocery costs have risen more slowly and used cars have become less expensive.

From May to June, overall prices rose 0.2%, up from just 0.3% in the previous month but still comparatively mild.

At the same time, underlying inflation remained persistently high, a nagging concern for the Fed, which is all but certain to increase its key interest rate again when it meets in two weeks. The Fed has raised its benchmark rate by a substantial 5 percentage points since March 2022, the steepest pace of increases in four decades.

The year-over-year inflation figure for June marked the mildest such increase since March 2021, when the current bout of painfully high inflation got underway, and tossed around out of the pandemic recession.

Yet with most measures of inflation still uncomfortably high, the Fed hardly appears ready to halt its rate hikes. Its expected hike later this month will follow the central bank’s decision to pause its rate increase last month after 10 consecutive hikes. The Fed’s policymakers have signaled that they could hike rates again after that when they next meet in September.

Some economists have suggested, though, that if inflation keeps slowing and the economy shows sufficient signs of cooling, the July increase could be the Fed’s last.

Used-car prices, for example, have been falling. Automakers are producing more cars as supply shortages have abated. New-car prices, too, have begun to ease as a result.

A sustained slowdown in inflation could bring meaningful relief to American households that have been squeezed by the price acceleration that began two years ago. Inflation spiked as consumers ramped up their spending on items like exercise bikes, standing desks and patio furniture, fueled by three rounds of stimulus checks. The jump in consumer demand overwhelmed supply chains and ignited inflation.

Many economists have suggested that President Joe Biden’s stimulus package in March 2021 is partly to blame for the inflation surge. At the same time, though, inflation also jumped overseas, even in countries where much less stimulus was put in place. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine also triggered a spike in energy and food prices globally.

Now, though, gas prices have fallen back to just under $3.50 a gallon on average, nationally, down from a $5 peak last year. And grocery prices are rising more slowly.

Still, spending categories, like restaurant meals, car insurance, child care and dental services, continue to rise rapidly. Auto insurance, on average, now costs 17% more than it did a year ago.

Pence alone in backing ban on abortions when pregnancies aren’t viable

**By Jill Colvin**

Associated Press

NEW YORK — In a Republican presidential field full of abortion rights opponents, Mike Pence stands out in his embrace of the cause.

The former vice president, who is seeking the White House in 2024, is the only major candidate who supports a federal ban on abortion at six weeks, before many women know they’re pregnant. He has advocated pulling up the market a widely used abortion pill that has a better safety record than penicillin and Viagra.

And he’s implored his Republican rivals to back a 15-week federal ban as a minimum national standard, which several have not done.

In a recent interview, Pence went even further, saying abortion should be banned when a pregnancy isn’t viable. Such a standard would force women to carry pregnancies to term even when doctors have determined there is no chance a baby will survive outside the womb.

“I’m pro-life. I don’t apologize for it,” Pence said in the interview. “I just have heard so many stories over the years of courageous women and families who were told that their unborn child would not go to term or would not survive. And then they had a healthy pregnancy and a healthy delivery.”

That position places Pence firmly to the right of the rest of the 2024 presidential field and alone among GOP candidates, who largely declined to take a stance on the issue. And it drew alarms from obstetricians and doctors who specialize in high-risk pregnancies and say nonviable pregnancies are far more common than people realize. They range from ectopic pregnancies, when an embryo implants somewhere other than the uterus, to deadly birth defects and other severe pregnancy complications.

Banning abortions in these cases, doctors say, leads to outcomes that are both cruel and put women’s lives and mental health at risk.

“One of the things that you cannot understand is the difficulty for a woman to carry a nonviable pregnancy,” said Alan Peaceman, professor emeritus of obstetrics and gynecology at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine. “It is psychological torture to go out in the world, for people to see your pregnancy— and people will come to you and want to talk about your pregnancy. And that puts the woman in a terrible position that nobody should be in unless they chose to be in that position.”

Spokespeople for former President Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis declined to say whether they back Pence’s position. Though he is the early front-runner, has repeatedly said he backs exceptions in cases of rape, incest and the life of the mother and has blamed hard-line abortion stances for costing the party in last year’s midterm elections. DeSantis, who is polling a distant second, signed a six-week ban in Florida that includes an exception for fatal fetal abnormalities, along with rape, incest and to save the mother’s life. He has declined to say whether he supports a federal ban.
Senators call for Supreme Court to follow ethics code

Associated Press

The chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, responding to Associated Press investigative stories on the Supreme Court, said Tuesday that it was time for the justices to bring their conduct in line with the ethical standards of other branches of government.

“If they just establish the basic standards of every other branch of government, it would give us much more confidence in their integrity,” Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said. He commented in Vilnius, Lithuania, where he was attending the NATO summit as part of the U.S. delegation.

The AP published stories showing that Justice Sonia Sotomayor, aided by her staff, has advanced sales of her books through college visits over the past decade; that universities have used trips by justices as a lure for financial contributions by placing them in event rooms with wealthy donors; and that justices have taken expenses-paid teaching trips to attractive locations that are light on actual classroom instruction.

The series comes after stories over the past six months that have raised ethical concerns about the activities of the justices.

Durbin and other lawmakers in Washington have announced a vote next week on legislation that would require the court to adopt an ethics code. While the measure is unlikely to pass, it sends a signal of discontent about the court.

The nation’s highest court operates without an ethics code, in steady violation of the ethical standards justices are expected to bring their conduct to the court.

“The chief justice really ought to be taking these into account for the sake of the court and the country because the Supreme Court will no longer exist as a truly viable institution if it continues the failure to face the need for a code of ethics,” he said.

In contrast, Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, another member of the Judiciary Committee, said he believes Congress should leave the ethics issue to the court and that the Democrats’ pursuit of ethics reform “is part of a long-standing assault against the court that the left feels is undermining a lot of things they’ve accomplished over the years by judicial action. To me, that’s the motivating factor.”

“I think it’s a co-equal branch of government we don’t have jurisdiction over. Secondly, I think this is part of a false narrative that the court is out of control and needs Congress to save it,” Cornyn said.

Space Force member jailed for murder after chasing suspected thieves

The Denver Post

A 27-year-old Aurora, Colo., man, charged with investigation of first-degree murder after police said he chased down two teenagers suspected of trying to steal his wife’s car is an active duty U.S. Space Force member and war veteran who served two tours in Afghanistan, court documents show.

Thieves had apparently tried to steal the white Hyundai Elantra twice before at his home, the documents show.

They heard another car alarm going off nearby and saw taillights as the teens sped away in an apparent attempt to steal his wife’s car.” He called again and told a dispatcher that he had “shot back at them.”

Aurora police said Schur, who was armed with a Glock 19 9 mm handgun, followed them.

He called 911 at 11:23 p.m., the affidavit said, telling a dispatcher that “there had been shots fired and he had been shot at while he was chasing some car thieves who had attempted to steal his wife’s car.” He called 911 again and told a dispatcher that he had chased down the thieves, who had crashed, and that he had “shot back at them.”

But police didn’t find evidence supporting the claim that anybody fired at Schur, according to the affidavit.

The Kia crashed into a backyard fence nearby on East 58th Circle. Police said they found five bullet casings in the Hyundai and that Schur shot both teens. Reaching the scene around 11:30 p.m., police saw one teen down with gunshot wounds in his back and head. He was pronounced dead of his wounds after paramedics took him to University Hospital shortly after midnight.

The other teen, a 13-year-old, ran to a relative’s house nearby and was taken to Children’s Hospital Colorado with a gunshot wound in his back and underwent surgery.
Veterans in an 80,000-person study experienced higher than expected mortality rates and greater risks of heart attacks and strokes if they lived in a historically segregated neighborhood.

Published Tuesday in the Journal of the American Medical Association, the study looked at data from veterans receiving care for preexisting cardiovascular disease at Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals nationwide from Jan. 1, 2016, to Dec. 31, 2019.

Researchers from Case Western Reserve University, University Hospitals and the Cleveland VA Medical Center examined the health records of veterans living in historically segregated neighborhoods.

The study used color-coded zones that were set out decades ago as part of redlining, a discriminatory housing practice that was used in the United States from the 1930s to the 1960s.

Authors of the study aimed to gauge the impact of racist housing policies that were outlawed as a result of judicial rulings and federal legislation generations ago.

“A century-old practice like redlining still affects our nation’s health today,” said Salil Deo, a cardiac surgeon at the VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System and one of the authors of the report.

Living in a historically redlined neighborhood came with a 13% greater rate of death from all causes and a 14% higher risk of stroke or heart attack among subjects, according to the study.

That elevated risk was present even after researchers took into account known cardiovascular risk factors as well as race and ethnicity.

“This study builds on emerging literature linking redlining with a host of present-day health issues,” Sadeer Al-Kindi, another author of the report, said in a statement this week issued by Case Western Reserve University. During the Great Depression, the federal government began insuring private mortgages to help people buy homes. These efforts included the creation of color-coded maps of U.S. cities based on perceived foreclosure risk.

Green areas, rated A, were seen as safe investments. Red areas, rated D, were seen as hazardous and ineligible for an insured mortgage, author Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote in a 2014 history of redlining.

The practice separated neighborhoods based on race or ethnicity, led to segregation and discouraged people from investing, Coates wrote in “The Case for Reparations,” a long-form article published in The Atlantic in 2014.

People who live in redlined neighborhoods are more likely to have coronary artery disease, stroke and chronic kidney disease, according to a previous study published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology in 2021 as well as another published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 2022.

The authors of the study published this week said their findings might not apply to nonveterans, as their subjects were mostly men who had health insurance. They said the specific reasons for the poor health results needs further research.
Microsoft reports breach by Chinese hackers

By Zen Soo

HONG KONG — China called a Microsoft report that a China-based hacking group breached government-linked email accounts “disinformation,” saying Wednesday that the accusation was meant to divert attention from U.S. cyber activities.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin, said a statement from U.S. officials claiming Storm-0558 also breached unclassified email accounts linked to the U.S. government. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin, said the accusation was “disinformation” aimed at diverting attention from U.S. cyberattacks on China.

“A Washington Post report cited a statement from U.S. officials claiming Storm-0558 also breached unclassified email accounts linked to the U.S. government. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin, said the accusation was ‘disinformation’ aimed at diverting attention from U.S. cyberattacks on China. “No matter which agency issued this information, it will never change the fact that the United States is the world’s largest hacker empire conducting the most cyber theft,” Wang said in a routine briefing. “Since last year, the cybersecurity organizations of China and other countries have issued many reports exposing the cyberattacks on China by the U.S. Government over a long period of time, but the U.S. has not made a response so far,” he said.

The Storm-0558 hackers used forged authentication tokens — pieces of information used to verify the identity of a user — required to access the email accounts, Microsoft said. It said it has dealt with the attack and informed affected customers.

Indonesia seizes Iranian tanker for suspected illegal oil transfer

Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Indonesian authorities said Wednesday they seized an Iranian tanker and arrested its crew members for illegally transferring oil to another vessel in the country’s exclusive economic zone.

The Iranian-flagged — MT Arman 114 — transporting 2.3 million barrels of crude oil worth $305 million was seized on Friday while carrying out illegal transshipment of oil to the Cameroon-flagged tanker — MT S Tinos — in Indonesia’s exclusive economic zone near Natuna waters, said Aan Kurnia, Indonesia’s Coast Guard chief.

An Indonesian Maritime Security Agency patrol ship inspects the Iranian-flagged MT Arman 114 and Cameroon-flagged tanker MT S Tinos near Natuna waters, Indonesia.

An Indonesian Maritime Security Agency patrol ship inspects the Iranian-flagged MT Arman 114 and Cameroon-flagged tanker MT S Tinos near Natuna waters, Indonesia.

Kosovo to pull some special police officers from Serb-majority areas

Associated Press

PRISTINA, Kosovo — Kosovo’s government on Wednesday will reduce the number of special police officers stationed outside four municipal buildings in ethnic Serb-majority areas, a bid to defuse tensions with neighboring Serbia that flared anew in May.

Kosovar Prime Minister Albin Kurti said that one-fourth of the special police forces would be moved away from the sites “taking into consideration that the situation at the municipal buildings has been comparatively much quieter in the last two weeks.” He added that more officers would be withdrawn based on the continuous evaluation of the situation. It wasn’t immediately clear when the reductions would take place, and where the officers would be reassigned to.

Kosovo’s government and Kosovo’s ethnic Serbs want special police forces to leave the northern area, while Kosovo’s government insists the refusal will be gradually reduced.

Kurti said the government would make a formal statement on holding new elections in the four municipalities, which have an ethnic Serb-majority population.

“Both sides are necessary to create a proper environment to make possible holding of the (electoral) campaign, political pluralism, participation of the local communities and also so guaranteeing vote inviolability,” he added.

The decisions were made after Kurti’s deputy met with European Union envoy Miroslav Lajčák in Bratislava, Slovakia, earlier this week, according to Kurti.

Ethnic Serbs in northern Kosovo boycotted mayoral elections in the four municipalities in April as part of a campaign for greater autonomy, and they now object to the ethnic Albanian mayors chosen in the polls. Neighboring Serbia has backed calls for the mayors to step down.

Spain sweating out sultry nights as heat wave bakes Europe

Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain — Spain sweltered under an unrelenting heat wave Wednesday as temperatures started to build toward what is forecast to be a torrid weekend across southern Europe.

Spain’s weather service said thermometers could potentially hit 113 Fahrenheit in southeastern areas of the Iberian Peninsula, which are under alert for extreme heat. That mark of was reached Monday in the village of Loja near Granada at the start of the heat wave that is causing restlessness across the country.

Over 100 weather stations registered temperatures of at least 95 F as early as 6 a.m. Wednesday, according to meteorologist Rubén del Campo of Spain’s national weather agency.

“On Wednesday we expect temperatures to fall overall with the arrival of cool winds from the North and East, with the exception of the southeast and southern Andalusia, where hot winds blowing from the interior will cause temperatures to soar,” Del Campo said.

While some relief is in store in the coming days for the Iberian Peninsula, other European countries will sweat through the weekend.

In Italy, 10 cities were put on heat alert for older people and other vulnerable populations from Bolzano in the north extending southward to Bologna, Florence and Rome. Temperatures are expected to reach 101 F in the Sardinian inland Wednesday.

Temperatures were also starting to tick up in Greece, where a heat wave was forecast to reach up to 111 F in some parts of the country in the coming days. Authorities banned access to nature reserves and forests to reduce the risk of wildfires, while municipalities were opening air-conditioned areas in public buildings for people to shelter from the heat.

Greece’s agriculture ministry issued restrictions on the transportation and working hours of animals such as horses and donkeys offering rides in tourist areas during the heat wave. Working animals will not be allowed to work between noon and 5 p.m. on days where temperatures are between 95-102 F in the shade, while they will not be allowed to work at any time of the day when temperatures exceed that range.

Scientists report that heat-related deaths soared in 2022 in Europe, when Spain had a record hot year. The Mediterranean region is expected to see temperatures rise faster than many other areas of the globe due to climate change.

Indonesia’s agriculture ministry issued restrictions on the transportation and working hours of animals such as horses and donkeys offering rides in tourist areas during the heat wave. Working animals will not be allowed to work between noon and 5 p.m. on days where temperatures are between 95-102 F in the shade, while they will not be allowed to work at any time of the day when temperatures exceed that range.

Scientists report that heat-related deaths soared in 2022 in Europe, when Spain had a record hot year. The Mediterranean region is expected to see temperatures rise faster than many other areas of the globe due to climate change.

Indonesia’s agriculture ministry issued restrictions on the transportation and working hours of animals such as horses and donkeys offering rides in tourist areas during the heat wave. Working animals will not be allowed to work between noon and 5 p.m. on days where temperatures are between 95-102 F in the shade, while they will not be allowed to work at any time of the day when temperatures exceed that range.

Scientists report that heat-related deaths soared in 2022 in Europe, when Spain had a record hot year. The Mediterranean region is expected to see temperatures rise faster than many other areas of the globe due to climate change.

Indonesia’s agriculture ministry issued restrictions on the transportation and working hours of animals such as horses and donkeys offering rides in tourist areas during the heat wave. Working animals will not be allowed to work between noon and 5 p.m. on days where temperatures are between 95-102 F in the shade, while they will not be allowed to work at any time of the day when temperatures exceed that range.
NEW YORK — A man accused of killing an 86-year-old and injuring three other people in a series of apparently random shootings while riding a scooter in New York City was arraigned Monday on charges including murder and attempted murder, prosecutors said.

Thomas Abreu, 25, was arraigned in a hospital in five shootings that occurred in Queens over about 10 minutes late Saturday morning, a spokesperson for Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said. An additional person was shot and injured in Brooklyn.

Witnesses identified Abreu as the gunman who shot Hamod Saeidi, 86, just before 11:30 a.m., prosecutors said. Family members said Saeidi, who died, had been on his way to a mosque to pray.

Plea deal reached in burning of abortion clinic

CHEYENNE — A college student who authorities said admitted to setting fire to a building slated to become Wyoming's only full-service abortion clinic has reached a plea agreement with prosecutors, federal court documents showed Monday.

Details of the proposed plea deal for Lorna Roxanne Green weren't available to the public pending a judge's approval of the agreement.

Green, 22, pleaded not guilty to an arson charge in U.S. District Court in Cheyenne in June. Green faces up to 20 years in prison and a $250,000 fine.

Green told investigators she opposed abortion and was experiencing anxiety and having nightmares over the Wellspring Health Access clinic that was to open in Casper last year, so she decided to burn it, according to court documents.

Investigators say Green set the clinic ablaze on May 25, 2022. The clinic was scheduled to open a few weeks later but was not able to begin seeing patients until April because of the fire damage.

Sex charges dismissed against reality TV doctor

NEWPORT BEACH — A California judge has dismissed sex charges against a reality TV show doctor and his girlfriend who had been accused of drugging and raping women in a case that drew international attention.

The case drew international attention in 2018 when Robicheaux and Riley were charged in connection with up to seven victims who authorities said were plied with drugs and sexually assaulted at the pair's home in Newport Beach when they were incapable of resisting.

Additionally, Bratton was convicted on one count of felony theft and possession of controlled dangerous substances, the state Attorney General's office said in a news release. Bratton was recently reelected as chief of police in Grayson, a village of just more than 500 people in Caldwell Parish.

It is unclear if Bratton is currently serving as chief of police. Officials for Grayson or the village's police department could not immediately be reached for comment.

While serving as chief of police, Bratton was personally responsible for more than $10,000 in narcotics funds that went missing between 2016 and 2019, the release said.

Additionally, Bratton was convicted on one count of felony theft related to monies taken from a mother and son during the course of an arrest.

"That money was their COVID stimulus and had been set aside for home expenses. As a result of this theft, that family was unable to pay their bills, lost their home, and are still homeless to this day," the news release stated.

City seeks more time to clear encampment

PHOENIX — Phoenix is making progress in complying with a court order to close a large homeless encampment known as “The Zone,” but it will take more time to clear, clean and keep people from setting up tents again in the area, a lawyer representing the city said at a trial Monday.

Attorney Justin Pierce said during opening statements that portions of the encampment on the edge of downtown Phoenix have been cleared since a judge declared the area to be a public nuisance, but other blocks still need to be addressed. He said the process takes time, including making sure those who live there have somewhere else to go.

The city is developing a space nearby with tents and temporary restroom facilities as an alternative, has increased the number of police officers working in the area and has nearly tripled its funding on confronting issues of homelessness, Pierce said.

The purpose of the trial is to examine the city’s efforts to comply with a March 27 order that concluded the city had stopped enforcing certain laws in the area and required the city to lessen the public nuisance.

Mayor resigns over posts in police Facebook group

NEWPORT — The mayor of a city on the Oregon coast has apologized and resigned over offensive content he posted in a private Facebook group for current and retired police officers.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reported that Newport Mayor Dean Bratton resigned Monday, three days after the media outlet revealed that since 2016, Sa­wyer had been sharing memes and posts denigrating women, immi­grant­ants, non­English­speakers and the LGBT+ community in the Facebook group with 39,000 members.

A local LGBT+ pride group held a demonstration over the weekend at City Hall, with more than 100 people demanding that Sa­wyer leave office.

"I now realize that some of my actions and my words have hurt people I love and care about," Sawyer said.

Sawyer was a Newport police officer for three decades before he was elected mayor in 2018.

From The Associated Press

AMERICAN ROUNDPUP

Court sides with Amish families on ‘gray water’

MINNEAPOLIS — Members of a deeply conservative Amish community in Minnesota don’t need to install septic systems to dispose of their “gray water,” the state Court of Appeals ruled Monday in a long-running religious freedom case that went all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court.

A three-judge panel ruled that the government “failed to demonstrate a compelling state interest” to justify overriding the religious freedom of the Amish families that challenged state regulations governing the disposal of gray water, which is water that’s been used for dishwashing, laundry and bathing, but not toilet waste.

The Schwartzerbrenzer Amish in southeastern Minnesota are among the most traditional Amish groups in the country, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch noted in a 2021 ruling. It sent the case back to Minnesota courts for reconsideration in light of a high court decision a month earlier in a different religious freedom case. That ruling went in favor of a Philadelphia-based Catholic foster care agency that said its religious views prevented it from working with same-sex couples.

Fillmore County in 2013 started requiring homes to have modern septic systems to dispose of gray water. The Schwartzerbrenzer Amish sought an exemption, saying their religion prohibits that technology.

Hanging out of the hangar

A Cessna plane sits nose-first after crashing into the roof of a hangar at the Long Beach Airport in California on Monday. Authorities say the pilot escaped with only minor injuries.

A local LGBTQ+ pride group is holding a demonstration over the weekend at City Hall, with more than 100 people demanding that Sawyer leave office.

"I now realize that some of my actions and my words have hurt people I love and care about," Sawyer said.

Sawyer was a Newport police officer for three decades before he was elected mayor in 2018.
OPINION

US debt tsunami meets with a bipartisan shrug

By George F. Will
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON verrett Dirksen, R-III, the Senate majority leader for nearly 11 years until his death in September 1969, had a famously foh ingin voice with which he supposedly intoned, “A billion, a billion, and then pretty soon you’re talking about real money.” Some people say he actually said “a million here, a million there…” Either way, or neither (the Dirksen Congressional Center in his hometown of Peoria, Ill., finds no evidence of his saying either), Dirksen’s supposed attempt at alarming the nation about government spending seems prehistoric.

A million seconds ago was about 11 days and 14 hours ago. Someone who is now 31½ years old was born a billion seconds ago. A trillion seconds was 31,688 years ago, about 19,000 years before the invention of farming, a prerequisite for civilization.

Speaking of the distant past, you might remember the May drama surrounding raising the debt ceiling. If the ceiling was not raised, it was suspended until after the next election, which was prudent, considering the velocity of the red ink torrent. Last month, the debt soared past the $32 trillion mark, up from $31 trillion on Dec. 30. As May said, “As Macau-McGuiness, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, says, “We can’t even get through a single fiscal year anymore without adding a trillion dollars in debt.”

The pace probably will accelerate as the growth of borrowing puts upward pressure on interest rates, and as debt service becomes an ever-larger portion of the federal budget — around 29%, larger than the defense budget.

By 2051, interest will be the largest item in the budget, a consequence of fiscal mismanagement, makes itself worse by increasing spending on entitlements with benefits index to inflation. Inflation can usually be cured by a recession, but that would make the debt worse by depressing revenue.

The budget was last balanced in fiscal 2001 and probably will not be again in this century. Federal spending was 17.7% of GDP in 2020 and is 24.2% today. The Cato Institute’s George Edwards calculates that if average annual spending growth in this century had merely equalled average nominal GDP growth of 4.2%, today’s budget would be balanced. Spending actually grew at an average annual rate of 5.7%.

Social Security and Medicare drive the growth of debt but will not provide a political solution. Social Security contributes roughly 25% to the deficit, and the Medicare part A premium will increase again. Social Security is financed through payroll taxes, whereas Medicare has a general revenue funding component.

The Economist reports that the U.S. deficit has exceeded 6% of GDP only three times — during World War II, the 2008 financial crisis and the pandemic lockdowns. This is, however, on the way to becoming normal.

In February, the Congressional Budget Office projected that under current law, interest costs would amount to $10.5 trillion from 2024 through 2053. Alan J. Auerbach and William Gale, authors of the Brookings Institution’s federal budget outlook report, that assuming certain probable adjustments of current law (including making permanent some temporary provisions), debt would be 240% of GDP by 2053.

The Peter G. Peterson Foundation, a splendiferous organization, estimates that if the deficit is not reduced, it will exceed 50% of GDP by 2053. The deficit is projected to be 5% of GDP this year, 6% next year, and 7% in 2024. The deficit was 4.7% in 2019.

How’s everyone enjoying their politicized heat waves?

By Rachel Marsden
Trubute Content Agency

PARIS fresh off the latest French riots, the country didn’t even have time to catch its breath before being bombarded with numerous state heat-wave alerts. I just sat in my air-conditioned apartment, chilling away from the heat. The city is being impervious to air-conditioning-related guilt trips.

In addition to panic over pretty typical summer heat, the season has also become a time to dredge up tales of heat-related mass casualties like the “deadly summer of 2003” when the French had all taken off for their usual paid vacations, leaving the elderly in non-air-conditioned homes vulnerable to an intense heat wave.

Given that incident occurred 20 years ago, you’d think we’d have stopped talking about this. It’s estimated that 15,300 people are killed each year by heat. One hallmark of human evolution has always been the ability to adapt to our environment. In the case of extreme heat, that would logically mean we’d all be wearing the available modern technological tools to cool off.

Personally, that means two portable air conditioners for my Paris apartment which I turn on as soon as the heat kicks in. I can feel the coolness of the conditioned air. haywire needs to be in the home — sort of. But there’s just no way that anyone could possibly control the temperature of the earth’s atmosphere. The question is: how do we manage climate change? One possibility is to have 100 percent mastery of planetary temperature control, which provides instant personal relief from the heat.

By mid-April, with a dozen appropriations bills voted on separately before the fiscal year begins Oct. 1. This was last accomplished in 1996, after the 1994 midterm elections ended the majority party’s control of both House and Senate. Representatives. Virtue did not become habitual, so there is a philosophic-seemly-puzzle: Can we speak of “regular order” that regularly does not occur?

The Economist reports that the U.S. deficit has exceeded 6% of GDP only three times — during World War II, the 2008 financial crisis and the pandemic lockdowns. This is, however, on the way to becoming normal.

In February, the Congressional Budget Office projected that under current law, interest costs would amount to $10.5 trillion from 2024 through 2053. Alan J. Auerbach and William Gale, authors of the Brookings Institution’s federal budget outlook report, that assuming certain probable adjustments of current law (including making permanent some temporary provisions), debt would be 240% of GDP by 2053.

The Peter G. Peterson Foundation, a splendid foundation, noted that if the deficit is not reduced, it will exceed 50% of GDP by 2053. The deficit was 4.7% in 2019.

How’s everyone enjoying their politicized heat waves?

By Rachel Marsden
Trubute Content Agency

PARIS fresh off the latest French riots, the country didn’t even have time to catch its breath before being bombarded with numerous state heat-wave alerts. I just sat in my air-conditioned apartment, chilling away from the heat. The city is being impervious to air-conditioning-related guilt trips.

In addition to panic over pretty typical summer heat, the season has also become a time to dredge up tales of heat-related mass casualties like the “deadly summer of 2003” when the French had all taken off for their usual paid vacations, leaving the elderly in non-air-conditioned homes vulnerable to an intense heat wave.

Given that incident occurred 20 years ago, you’d think we’d have stopped talking about this. It’s estimated that 15,300 people are killed each year by heat. One hallmark of human evolution has always been the ability to adapt to our environment. In the case of extreme heat, that would logically mean we’d all be wearing the available modern technological tools to cool off.

Personally, that means two portable air conditioners for my Paris apartment which I turn on as soon as the heat kicks in. I can feel the coolness of the conditioned air. haywire needs to be in the home — sort of. But there’s just no way that anyone could possibly control the temperature of the earth’s atmosphere. The question is: how do we manage climate change? One possibility is to have 100 percent mastery of planetary temperature control, which provides instant personal relief from the heat.

By mid-April, with a dozen appropriations bills voted on separately before the fiscal year begins Oct. 1. This was last accomplished in 1996, after the 1994 midterm elections ended the majority party’s control of both House and Senate. Representatives. Virtue did not become habitual, so there is a philosophic-seemly-puzzle: Can we speak of “regular order” that regularly does not occur?

The Economist reports that the U.S. deficit has exceeded 6% of GDP only three times — during World War II, the 2008 financial crisis and the pandemic lockdowns. This is, however, on the way to becoming normal.

In February, the Congressional Budget Office projected that under current law, interest costs would amount to $10.5 trillion from 2024 through 2053. Alan J. Auerbach and William Gale, authors of the Brookings Institution’s federal budget outlook report, that assuming certain probable adjustments of current law (including making permanent some temporary provisions), debt would be 240% of GDP by 2053.

The Peter G. Peterson Foundation, a splendid foundation, noted that if the deficit is not reduced, it will exceed 50% of GDP by 2053. The deficit was 4.7% in 2019.

How’s everyone enjoying their politicized heat waves?

By Rachel Marsden
Trubute Content Agency

PARIS fresh off the latest French riots, the country didn’t even have time to catch its breath before being bombarded with numerous state heat-wave alerts. I just sat in my air-conditioned apartment, chilling away from the heat. The city is being impervious to air-conditioning-related guilt trips.

In addition to panic over pretty typical summer heat, the season has also become a time to dredge up tales of heat-related mass casualties like the “deadly summer of 2003” when the French had all taken off for their usual paid vacations, leaving the elderly in non-air-conditioned homes vulnerable to an intense heat wave.

Given that incident occurred 20 years ago, you’d think we’d have stopped talking about this. It’s estimated that 15,300 people are killed each year by heat. One hallmark of human evolution has always been the ability to adapt to our environment. In the case of extreme heat, that would logically mean we’d all be wearing the available modern technological tools to cool off.

Personally, that means two portable air conditioners for my Paris apartment which I turn on as soon as the heat kicks in. I can feel the coolness of the conditioned air. haywire needs to be in the home — sort of. But there’s just no way that anyone could possibly control the temperature of the earth’s atmosphere. The question is: how do we manage climate change? One possibility is to have 100 percent mastery of planetary temperature control, which provides instant personal relief from the heat.

By mid-April, with a dozen appropriations bills voted on separately before the fiscal year begins Oct. 1. This was last accomplished in 1996, after the 1994 midterm elections ended the majority party’s control of both House and Senate. Representatives. Virtue did not become habitual, so there is a philosophic-seemly-puzzle: Can we speak of “regular order” that regularly does not occur?

The Economist reports that the U.S. deficit has exceeded 6% of GDP only three times — during World War II, the 2008 financial crisis and the pandemic lockdowns. This is, however, on the way to becoming normal.

In February, the Congressional Budget Office projected that under current law, interest costs would amount to $10.5 trillion from 2024 through 2053. Alan J. Auerbach and William Gale, authors of the Brookings Institution’s federal budget outlook report, that assuming certain probable adjustments of current law (including making permanent some temporary provisions), debt would be 240% of GDP by 2053.

The Peter G. Peterson Foundation, a splendid foundation, noted that if the deficit is not reduced, it will exceed 50% of GDP by 2053. The deficit was 4.7% in 2019.
Latin, K-pop artists help music streams hit 1 trillion in 2023 in second time

From wire reports

Is non-English language music the future of the music business? Perhaps.

The global music industry surpassed 1 trillion streams at the fastest pace ever in a calendar year, Luminate’s 2023 Midyear Report has found. The number was reached in three months, a full month faster than 2022.

Global streams are also up 30.8% from last year, reflective of an increasingly international music marketplace.

Additionally, Luminate found that two in five — or 40% — of U.S. music listeners enjoy joy in music in a non-English language. And a whopping 69% of U.S. music listeners enjoy music from artists originating outside of the U.S.

According to the report, Spanish, French, Japanese, Korean, Italian, German and Arabic are the most popular languages for non-anglophonic music among U.S. music listeners, with Latin genres and K-pop leading the charge.

“Specifically, our streaming data shows that Spanish and Korean language music are the most popular when taking a look at the top 10,000 most streamed songs (audio and video combined) during the first half of 2023,” says Jaime Marconette, Luminate’s senior director of music insights and industry relations. “Furthermore, Spanish-language music’s share of that top 10,000 has grown 3.6% since 2021, while English-language music’s share has dropped 4.2% in that same time.

That is reflected in Luminate’s 2023 Midyear Top Albums chart, where Bad Bunny’s spring 2022 album “Un Verano Sin Ti” still breaks the top 10 a year later (the chart factors in a combination of album sales, on-demand audio/visual sales and digital track sales).

Bad Bunny’s “Un Verano Sin Ti” has also become the most-streamed album of all time on Spotify, the streaming platform confirmed to the L.A. Times. The title was previously held by Ed Sheeran’s 2017 album “Divide.”

When “top albums” are defined by physical and digital sales exclusively, K-pop dominates, taking up six of the top 10 spots.
**PRO SOCCER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Pts</th>
<th>GF</th>
<th>GA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC Dallas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Louis</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando City</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.C. United</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF Montréal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter Miami</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CYCLING**

**Thursday, July 13, 2023**

- Portland 5 9 7 22 29 31
- Minnesota 6 8 6 22 29 31
- FC Dallas 8 9 5 24 25 31
- Saint Louis 12 7 2 8 24 24
- New England 10 4 7 36 27 27
- Atlanta 9 5 8 40 35 35
- Philadelphia 10 7 4 35 25 25
- Orlando City 9 6 7 32 27 27
- D.C. United 8 9 6 32 30 30
- CF Montréal 8 1 | 1 | 2 | 20 | 20 |
- New York 6 | 7 | 8 | 20 | 21 | 21 |
- Chicago 6 | 7 | 8 | 27 | 31 | 31 |
- Inter Miami CF 5 | 13 | 18 | 22 | 33 |

**W L T Pts GF GA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Conference</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Pts</th>
<th>GF</th>
<th>GA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC Dallas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Louis</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando City</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.C. United</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF Montréal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter Miami CF</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DEALS**

**Thursday’s transactions**

- **BASEBALL**
  - **Major League Baseball**
    - **Tampa Bay Rays**
      - Re-signed 3B Josh Lowrie.
    - **National League**
      - **Cincinnati Reds**
        - Signed LHP Michael Maris out of Louisville (IL).
      - **Pittsburgh Pirates**
        - Signed two first-round draft picks.
      - **San Francisco Giants**
        - Signed two first-round draft picks.
        - Re-signed SS Gokuhle Hlongwane.

**Hockey**

- **Montreal Canadiens**
  - Signed 21-year-old RW Brendan Lemieux.

**Basketball**

- **Miami Heat**
  - Reinstated 3B Josh Lowrie.
  - Reinstated 3B Josh Lowrie.

**BRIEFLY**

- **HONOLULU** — Mikala Jones, a Hawaiian surfer known for shooting awe-inspiring photos and videos from the inside of massive, curling waves, has died after a surfing accident in Hawaii. She was 44.

- Jones had gone out into the ocean Sunday morning during a trip to the Mentawai Islands off the western coast of Sumatra when his surfboard fin cut his femoral artery, said his father.

- Jones’ Instagram account shows stunning images of waves curling around him from above while he crouches on his board. In some shots, a sunset or sunrise is visible through the curved wave opening in front of him.

- Surfer photographer Woody Woodworth, who said Jones took the best overall surf photo he had ever seen, said cuts from surfboard fins are common.

- Some surfers like to keep their fins sharp because they believe doing so will help them ride waves more precisely — but a fin can be like an axe or a cleaver when combined with a wave’s power, he said.

- “All the fins that I see are certainly sharp enough with the force of the wave, and plenty enough with the force of the wave, that slicing through somebody else’s leg would be very easy,” Woodworth said.

- Born in Kailua, Hawaii, Jones started surfing at about seven or eight years old and began competing in the 12-and-under “men’s” age group a few years later.

- He won two national championships as an amateur.

- Later, he took on sponsorships and traveled to surf spots in Tahiti, Fiji, South Africa and the Galapagos Islands. Photographers shot images of him and other surfers on the waves which appeared in photo spreads in surf magazines. Manufacturers of surf clothing and gear featured them in their advertisements.

- Northwest Sports

- **EVANSTON, Ill.** — Northwestern has decided to retain its assistant coaches and support staff for the 2023 season after it fired head coach Pat Fitzgerald amid a hiring scandal.

- Athletic director Derrick Gragg informed the coaches and staff of the decision during a meeting on Thursday. There was no announcement by the school when it comes to the leadership of the program after Fitzgerald’s dismissal.

- The first game of the season is Sept. 3 at Rutgers.

- Fitzgerald, 48, was fired on Monday by Northwestern President Michael Schill, who wrote in an open letter to the university community that an investigation by an outside law firm detailed hazarding that “was widespread and clearly not a secret within the program.”

- The “culture in Northwestern Football, while incredible in some ways, was broken in others,” Schill wrote.

- Fitzgerald was an All-American linebacker on the 1995 Northwestern team that won the Big Ten and played in the Rose Bowl after years of losing.

- He went 110-101 in 17 seasons as the head coach at his alma mater. He led the Wildcats to Big Ten West championships in 2018 and 2020, plus five bowl victories. They went 4-20 over his last two seasons.

**Associated Press**

- Mikala Jones holds a surfboard made of material from the agape plant at Surf Ranch in Lemoore, Calif. Jones has died at the age of 44.
By Ben Nuckols

WASHINGTON — Saudi Arabia’s sovereign wealth fund has agreed to invest more than $1 billion in a new commercial entity controlled by the PGA Tour, and Greg Norman will be ousted as the CEO of LIV Golf if the business deal between the Saudis and the tour is finalized, a tour executive told Congress on Tuesday.

The agreement between the Saudi Public Investment Fund, the primary funder of LIV Golf, and the PGA Tour shocked the golf world when it was announced last month and led to probes by the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which summoned tour officials to the Capitol to testify under oath, and the Justice Department, which is looking into potential antitrust violations.

Among the subcommittee’s findings were that representatives of the tour and the Saudis discussed giving Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy their own LIV Golf teams, a proposal that apparently never reached either player. There was no indication during Tuesday’s hearing that Congress would block the tour from going into business with the Saudis.

The subcommittee chairman, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said he was troubled by the geopolitical implications of Saudi investment in American sports and efforts by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi leader, to whitewash the kingdom’s human rights abuses. Republicans on the committee, however, were more sympathetic to the PGA Tour and the existential threat it faced from the PIF, which controls $600 billion in assets — roughly 500 times what the tour is worth.

“We’re here because we’re concerned about what it means for an authoritarian government to use its wealth to capture an American institution,” Blumenthal said.

The PGA Tour and the Saudis announced on June 6 that they agreed to drop all lawsuits against each other and combine their commercial interests into a new for-profit company while maintaining the tour’s nonprofit status. Asked by Blumenthal how much money the Saudis have committed to the new venture, Ron Price, the PGA Tour’s chief operating officer, testified the amount was “north of $1 billion.”

Blumenthal repeatedly pressed Price and Jimmy Dunne, a PGA Tour board member and a key negotiator of the Saudi deal, on why the tour did not seek alternative sources of funding to compete with the PIF. Price and Dunne said going into business with outside investors would not prevent LIV Golf and the PIF from continuing to compete with the tour and use its vast resources to sign top players.

“My entire concern here is to put this divisive period behind us, and for the sake of players, fans, sponsors and charities, unite the game of golf again,” said Dunne, a New York investment banker who is well connected with the sport’s leaders.

Critics of the Saudi investment in golf have pointed to the kingdom’s poor human rights record and the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, which U.S. intelligence concluded was likely approved by the crown prince, an allegation he has denied. The PIF has bought its way into other sports including Camille foxed at Oxford United of the English Premier League — and Formula One racing.

“There is something that stinks under this path that you’re on right now because it is a surrender, and it is all about the money, and that is the reason for the backlash that you’re seeing, Mr. Price,” Blumenthal said. “The equity ownership interest that the Saudis will have ... gives them financial dominance. They control the purse strings.”

But Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., a harsh critic of the Saudi regime, said Congress should not interfere with a private enterprise doing business with the Saudis. He proposed instead that the United States reduce arms sales to Saudi Arabia. And the committee’s ranking member, Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., suggested that Saudi involvement in sports could ultimately improve human rights in the kingdom.

“If the kingdom’s involvement in golf and other sports helps it to modernize or offer rights to women, wouldn’t that be a good thing?” Johnson said.

Sabalenka, Medvedev reach semifinals after ban last year

By Chris Lehourite

WIMBLEDON, England — Aryna Sabalenka reached the semifinals at Wimbledon for the second straight time, with a one-set victory in 2021. “Hopefully I can do better,” said Sabalenka, who missed her second semifinal at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club.

Sabalenka, a Belarusian who is seeded second at the All England Club, had to sit out last year’s competition along with other players from her country and from Russia because of the war in Ukraine. She advanced Wednesday by beating Madison Keys 6-2, 6-4 on No. 1 Court.

“It really feels amazing to be back in the semifinals. I can’t wait to play in my second semifinal at Wimbledon,” said Sabalenka, who lost to runner-up Karolina Pliskova in 2021. “It was tough to do better than I did last time.”

Another player who was banned last year, Daniil Medvedev, reached the semifinals in his second men’s tournament. The second-seeded Russian beat American player Christian Eubanks 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (4) 6-1 on the same court.

Sabalenka’s victory improved her record to 17-1 at major tournaments this year. She won the Australian Open and reached the semifinals at the French Open before her five wins so far on the grass at Wimbledon.

Sabalenka, the only former major champion remaining in the women’s tournament, also improved her record to 6-4 in Grand Slam quarterfinal matches, and she did so despite much of the cheering going toward Keys on Wednesday.

“Thank you so much for the atmosphere, even though you supported her more,” Sabalenka said on court. “I still enjoyed playing in front of you guys.”

Sabalenka will next face Ons Jabeur, a sixth-seeded Tunisian who beat defending champion Elena Rybakina 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-1 on Centre Court in a rematch of last year’s final.

“I wish we can exchange this match from finals last year,” said Jabeur, who lost to Rybakina in three sets in 2022.

Jabeur won eight of the last nine games to reach the semifinals at a major tournament for the third time. She is 2-2 in the previous two, also reaching the final at last year’s U.S. Open.

“I’m going to keep the spirit on the court and hopefully the crowd will be with me,” Jabeur said of the match against Sabalenka.

Jabeur will play Sabalenka in the second match on Centre Court on Thursday for a spot in Saturday’s final. Elina Svitolina will face Marketa Vondrousova in the early match.

Medvedev won the U.S. Open in 2021 and will be playing in the semifinals of a Grand Slam tournament for the sixth time — and first time at Wimbledon.

Later Wednesday in the other men’s quarterfinal match, top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz was playing Holger Rune on Centre Court. Olympic champion Cilic retired in the third set on Day 10 of the tournament, about a week after Kate, the Princess of Wales, sat in the Royal Box.
New baseballs could rid sticky stuff issue

By Ronald Blum

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Pristine white baseballs that would not require rubbing are under consideration by Major League Baseball as a way to solve the issue of pitchers using sticky substances for better grip.

“Every time I come here the fans are passionate, they’re really into the game. So it’s very impressive.”

Shohei Ohtani

Angels pitcher/designated hitter

Cleveland Guardians starting pitcher Shane Bieber rubs a baseball after the Atlanta Braves’ Ozzie Albies homered July 4 in Cleveland.

By Tim Booth

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Shohei Ohtani had an entire stadium asking him in unison to come to Seattle during free agency.

“Come to Seattle!”

By Tim Booth

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Shohei Ohtani had an entire stadium asking him in unison to come to Seattle during free agency.

“Never experienced anything like that, but I definitely heard it,” the two-position star said through his interpreter. “But I was trying to focus on my at-bat.”

Ohtani was the biggest star of the All-Star Game on Tuesday night, even if his appearance was rather uneventful. Ohtani struck out and walked in his two at-bats as the American League’s nine-game winning streak ended with a 3-2 loss to the National League.

It was what happened while Ohtani was in the batters’ box that became notable.

With the Seattle crowd aware of Ohtani’s pending free agency this offseason, the stadium broke out into loud chants of “Come to Seattle! Come to Seattle!”

“Every time I come here the fans are passionate, they’re really into the game. So it’s very impressive,” Ohtani said. “I actually spent a couple of offseasons in Seattle. So I like the city. It’s beautiful.”

They were impossible to miss and a little different than the loud pop he received during pregame introductions that was only topped by Seattle’s three representatives in the game.

“I did talk to him a little bit but nothing specific about him coming to Seattle, just asked him a couple of questions,” Seattle star Julio Rodríguez said. “But that was cool. That was a pretty interesting thing to see how the whole city came (together).”

Ohtani’s free agency this offseason was the buzz of the All-Star Game, with some pondering whether a deal in the $600 million range could be possible for the two-way star.

“I think a lot of people are lobbying for Shohei, to tell you the truth. And that was a sign of affection and that they wanted him,” AL manager Dusty Baker said.

His future could become a topic sooner than later if the Angels continue to fade with Mike Trout sidelined by injury. The Angels entered the All-Star break losers of five straight and nine of 10 to drop below .500. The Angels said they have no intention of dealing Ohtani prior to the trade deadline, but that could change over the next few weeks.

“I’m not really going to change anything personally, just keep it the same,” Ohtani said. “I know we have a lot of injuries right now and we’re in a tough spot, but we need to hang in there because we got guys coming back soon. So try to hang in there and get as many wins until all the guys come back.”

The American League’s Shohei Ohtani, of the Los Angeles Angels, acknowledges the crowd after receiving the trophy for leading vote-getter during the All-Star Game in Seattle on Tuesday.
Díaz earns unlikely MVP award

First-time All-Star at age 32 enjoys surreal moment

By Ronald Blum
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Elias Díaz may be the most unlikely All-Star MVP.

Just 3½ years after Pittsburgh failed to offer a contract and allowed him to become a free agent, Díaz hit a go-ahead, two-run homer off Félix Bautista in the eighth inning to lift the National League over the American 3-2 on Tuesday night.

A first-time All-Star at age 32, the Colorado catcher put his name on an award won by Willie Mays, Joe Morgan, Frank and Brooks Robinson, both Ken Griffeyss and Mike Trout.

“I honestly can’t believe that my name is going to be next to some of those names,” Díaz said through a translator, clutching the crystal bat awarded the MVP. “Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that I would be in this position.”

After five years with the Pirates, Díaz found out from his agent in December 2019 he had been non-tendered.

“When they let me go, I didn’t allow myself to feel defeated,” Díaz said. “I maintained my confidence and stayed positive.”

He got a minor league deal with Seattle in 2020 and earned a $1.2 million big league contract for 2021. He hit .246 with 18 homers and 44 RBIs, then batted .277 with nine homers and nine RBIs last year, then

“I threw way more pitches than I wanted under the manual scoreboard being held on the field. The 20th pinch-hit homer in All-Star history was a no-doubter. Díaz took three small steps and watched before starting his trot.”

He’s really improved in every phase of his game,” said NL manager Rob Thomson of the Philadelphia Phillies. Thomson had called Rockies catcher Bud Black to learn about Diaz.

“He said, ‘This is one of the finest people you’ll ever meet. He’s a complete team player,’” Thomson related. “Do anything you want. If he doesn’t play, that’s fine. If he does play, that would be great.”

He’s just happy to be there.”

With the AL leading 2-1, Nick Castellanos worked a nine-pitch walk against Bautista leading off the eighth. Díaz batted for Jorge Soler and with a 2-2 count drove a splitter 360 feet, where it landed under the manual scoreboard behind the left-field wall. The 20th pinch-hit homer in All-Star history was a no-doubter. Díaz took three small steps and watched before starting his trot.

“A splitter that stayed up in the zone,” said Bautista, who had given it to the Rangers made All-Star history when left it to the Rays’ social media staff to give them a proper announcement. The pair jogged in on their own and skipped over during pregame introductions. The second half begins with Atlanta having the best record in baseball at 60-29 and an 8½-game lead in the NL East. Tampa Bay has the best record in the American League at 58-35, two games better than Baltimore.

Díaz jumped as he approached the dugout and exchanged slaps with teammates. Geraldo Perdomo doused him with water. A short while later, he became the first Venezuelan to earn All-Star MVP since Dave Concepción in 1972. Diaz’s jersey is going to the Hall of Fame.

“The ninth inning in the dugout was just a lot of fun to experience,” said San Diego’s Josh Hader, who pitched the eighth for the AL.

Yandy Diaz hit a solo homer in the second and Bo Bichette’s sacrifice fly in the sixth gave the AL a 2-1 lead.

J.D. Martinenez doubled and scored on Luis Arraez’s single in the fourth against Seattle’s George Kirby, tying it 1. Lourdes Gurriel Jr. appeared to tie the game again in the seventh when his shot down the left-field line was originally ruled a homer but was overturned as a foul ball on replay.

The All-Star Game returned to Seattle for the first time since 2001 when the Mariners were in the middle of their magical 116-win regular season, Cal Ripken Jr. said goodbye to the All-Star stage and Tommy Lasorda took a tumble.

Gerrit Cole became the first New York Yankees pitcher to start the All-Star Game since Roger Clemens in that 2001 game. He needed a pair of spectacular leaping catches from Adolis García and Randy Arozarena near the wall to escape the first inning unscathed.

Pitching was the story of the night. Only nine balls were hit over 100 mph. There were 20 combined strikeouts, including Camilo Doval silencing the home crowd with a strikeout of Rodriguez in the seventh inning when four of the five pitches topped 100 mph.

Six pack

The Rangers made All-Star history when Nathan Eovaldi took the mound in the second. That marked the third time in an All-Star Game when there were six players from the same team on the field at the same time. It also occurred with the 1939 Yankees and 1951 Dodgers.

The Baseball Hall of Fame said a ball signed by all six players in the game would be headed to Cooperstown.

“That’s got to be one of the cooler moments in sports when you’ve got half the team on the field is your team, especially under these circumstances,” catcher Jonath Heim said. “It’s really special and I was glad I got to share it with these guys today.”

The Tampa Bay Blue Jays announced they were invertebrally skipped over during pregame introductions. The second half begins with Atlanta having the best record in baseball at 60-29 and an 8½-game lead in the NL East. Tampa Bay has the best record in the American League at 58-35, two games better than Baltimore.

FROM PAGE 24

“I threw way more pitches than I wanted to on an off day,” Kimbrel joked.

Wander Franco led off with a fly ball to the warning track and Kimbrel nudged two-out walks to Kyle Tucker and Seattle star Julio Rodríguez.

The 22-year-old Rodriguez was in position to close it out in front of his home crowd.

“I was definitely trying to win it. But it was a situation where I had to pass the baton,” he said.

Kimbrel recovered to strike out José Ramírez to end it. Kimbrel also pitched in the previous NL win, recording two outs in 2012.

“The ninth inning in the dugout was just a lot of fun to experience,” said San Diego’s Josh Hader, who pitched the eighth for the NL.

Yandy Diaz hit a solo homer in the second and Bo Bichette’s sacrifice fly in the sixth gave the AL a 2-1 lead.

J.D. Martínez doubled and scored on Luis Arraez’s single in the fourth against Seattle’s George Kirby, tying it 1. Lourdes Gurriel Jr. appeared to tie the game again in the seventh when his shot down the left-field line was originally ruled a homer but was overturned as a foul ball on replay.

The All-Star Game returned to Seattle for the first time since 2001 when the Mariners were in the middle of their magical 116-win regular season, Cal Ripken Jr. said goodbye to the All-Star stage and Tommy Lasorda took a tumble.

Gerrit Cole became the first New York Yankees pitcher to start the All-Star Game since Roger Clemens in that 2001 game. He needed a pair of spectacular leaping catches from Adolis García and Randy Arozarena near the wall to escape the first inning unscathed.

Pitching was the story of the night. Only nine balls were hit over 100 mph. There were 20 combined strikeouts, including Camilo Doval silencing the home crowd with a strikeout of Rodriguez in the seventh inning when four of the five pitches topped 100 mph.

Six pack

The Rangers made All-Star history when Nathan Eovaldi took the mound in the second. That marked the third time in an All-Star Game when there were six players from the same team on the field at the same time. It also occurred with the 1939 Yankees and 1951 Dodgers.

The Baseball Hall of Fame said a ball signed by all six players in the game would be headed to Cooperstown.

“That’s got to be one of the cooler moments in sports when you’ve got half the team on the field is your team, especially under these circumstances,” catcher Jonath Heim said. “It’s really special and I was glad I got to share it with these guys today.”

Skipped over

The Tampa Bay duo of Shane McClanahan and Wander Franco were invertebrally skipped over during pregame introductions. The second half begins with Atlanta having the best record in baseball at 60-29 and an 8½-game lead in the NL East. Tampa Bay has the best record in the American League at 58-35, two games better than Baltimore.

Up next

The post-All-Star break portion of the schedule starts Friday with every team in the league in action. San Diego at Philadelphia is the first game scheduled for Friday. The second half begins with Atlanta having the best record in baseball at 60-29 and an 8½-game lead in the NL East. Tampa Bay has the best record in the American League at 58-35, two games better than Baltimore.

Late: For most of evening, All-Star Game was pitchers’ duel
Rodman could be poised for breakout in US debut

BY NOAH TRIST
Associated Press

Trinity Rodman collected the ball just outside the penalty area and needed just one more touch to send it into the lower left corner of the net.

About a month shy of her 20th birthday, she’d scored her first goal for the U.S. women’s national team.

That was April 2022, in a blowout victory over Uzbekistan. Now, a far greater stage awaits at the World Cup.

“Trin has had a lot of expectations, but obviously that will always be in the back of my head. I mean, that was just in my mind. I think for me, trying to block the outside noise has been difficult, but also doable,” she said.

“Obviously, coming off of the rookie year that I had, it was more than I ever expected it to be, but that obviously opened up the doors for a lot of attention and a lot of expectations moving into the second season and so on.”

Mark Parsons, Rodman’s coach with the Spirit, has tried to keep the pressure on her.

The Reggae Girlz felt compelled to speak out at a time when the Women’s World Cup Federation to address “subpar conditions.”

As quickly as she’s become a force for the Washington Spirit, the league’s highest-paid player.

She’s dealt with that in various forms throughout her short career, and now she’s ready for this next challenge.

“I’m so honored, proud and just excited for this opportunity,” she said. “At this age, there’s so much time to accomplish things, but to experience it this early has been so amazing, and I’m just so excited.”

The daughter of basketball Hall of Famer Dennis Rodman, Trinity has become a force for the Washington Spirit of the NWSL.

Her confidence and deft footwork make her a highlight waiting to happen, and it feels like only a matter of time before Rodman follows in the footsteps of great American attacking players like Abby Wambach, Carli Lloyd and Alex Morgan.

The question is whether she’s ready for that kind of responsibility now, at age 21. On a team that may need her to play a major role, no less.

“‘I think for me, trying to block the outside noise has been difficult, but also doable,’ she said.

“Obviously, coming off of the rookie year that I had, it was more than I ever expected it to be, but that obviously opened up the doors for a lot of attention and a lot of expectations moving into the second season and so on.”

Mark Parsons, Rodman’s coach with the Spirit, has tried to keep the pressure on her.

Rodman could be poised for breakout in US debut.

By Anne M. Peterson
Associated Press

As the Women’s World Cup approached, Jamaican players started to panic.

They were uncertain about training camps, accommodations and even pay heading into what for many would be the biggest tournament of their careers.

So they took to social media. A number of the Reggae Girlz, as they are affectionately known, went public with their concerns, pleading with the Jamaican Football Federation to address “subpar conditions.”

The mother of one player took it a step further: She started a GoFundMe page to raise money to make sure the team and the support staff are provided what they need to be successful — such as adequate hotels and compensation.

“These girls deserve better. They have proven themselves on an international platform that they belong. And they need support, whether it’s from parents, friends or fans, to let them know that we see what they’ve accomplished, and we’re proud of them,” said organizer Sandra Phillips-Brower, the mother of midfielder Havana Solaun.

The World Cup always draws attention to the inequities between men’s and women’s soccer. But it also highlights the inequity within the women’s game itself.

Teams like the United States and England, with greater support from their federations, enjoy the best that money can buy: Things like sports psychologists, massage therapists and team chefs.

Other teams, like Jamaica and South Africa, are uncertain they’ll even get paid. So they’re using social media and collective action to draw attention to their plight.

“All the teams are using their voices a lot more. We know these things because players are talking about it,” U.S. forward Megan Rapinoe said. “Even when they’re subjected to the discrimination and unequal treatment, they’re still speaking out. They’re still using their voice. That’s really important.”

The Reggae Girlz felt compelled to speak out at a time when their attention should be solely focused on competing in the World Cup.

“On multiple occasions, we have sat down with the federation to respectfully express concerns resulting from subsan planning, transportation, accommodations, training conditions, compensation communication, nutrition and accessibility to proper resources,” players said in a post on social media.

“We have also showed up repeatedly without receiving contractually agreed upon compensation. We were told that all out requests and concerns would be resolved in a timely manner.”

The GoFundMe site has raised more than $45,000, and Phillips-Brower was figuring out how to distribute the funds to best serve the players and staff.

The Jamaican Football Federation did not respond to emails seeking comment.

Jamaica hasn’t gone as far as South Africa’s women, who cobbled a preparation match against Botswana near Johannesburg.

Thulaganyo Gaoshubelwe, the president of the South African Football Players Union, said the incident was partly caused by poor pay for the players.

“Their fight is for their rights,” Gaoshubelwe said in a video posted on his union’s Twitter account. “SAFA doesn’t want to include money in their contracts. We must fight for the rights of these players.”

A foundation set up by African soccer president and billionaire businessman Patrice Motsepe responded by creating a fund to be shared by the players.
Elias Díaz hit a two-run homer off Félix Bautista in the eighth inning, and the NL snapped a nine-game losing streak in the All-Star Game with a 3-2 win over the American League on Tuesday night.

The NL won for the first time since an 8-0 victory in 2012 in Kansas City, and Díaz became the first Rockies player to win the All-Star MVP award.

“It feels incredible. When we all got here, we all talked about how we were going to bring home the win,” said Díaz, who was non-tendered by the Pirates at the end of 2019. “I just didn’t realize it was going to be me to bring home the win.”

Díaz drove a 2-2 pitch from Baltimore’s hard-throwing closer deep to left to put the NL in front. Díaz was the lone representative for Colorado in his first All-Star Game.

“It does matter. We wanted to win, the American League we wanted to win,” Bautista said through an interpreter. “But overall I think that it’s an experience I’ll never forget and just wish that would have been a little bit different.”

Díaz has nine homers this season, but hadn’t hit a long ball since June 23 against the Los Angeles Angels.

For most of the night, the All-Star Game was a pitchers’ duel highlighted by a couple of big hits and some excellent defense.

It got nervous for the NL with Philadelphia closer Craig Kimbrel on the mound in the ninth.

SEE LATE ON PAGE 22

INSIDE
New baseballs may get rid of sticky substances
Page 21

The National League’s Elias Diaz, of the Colorado Rockies, celebrates his two-run home run with Ozzie Albies, of the Atlanta Braves, during the eighth inning Tuesday in Seattle.