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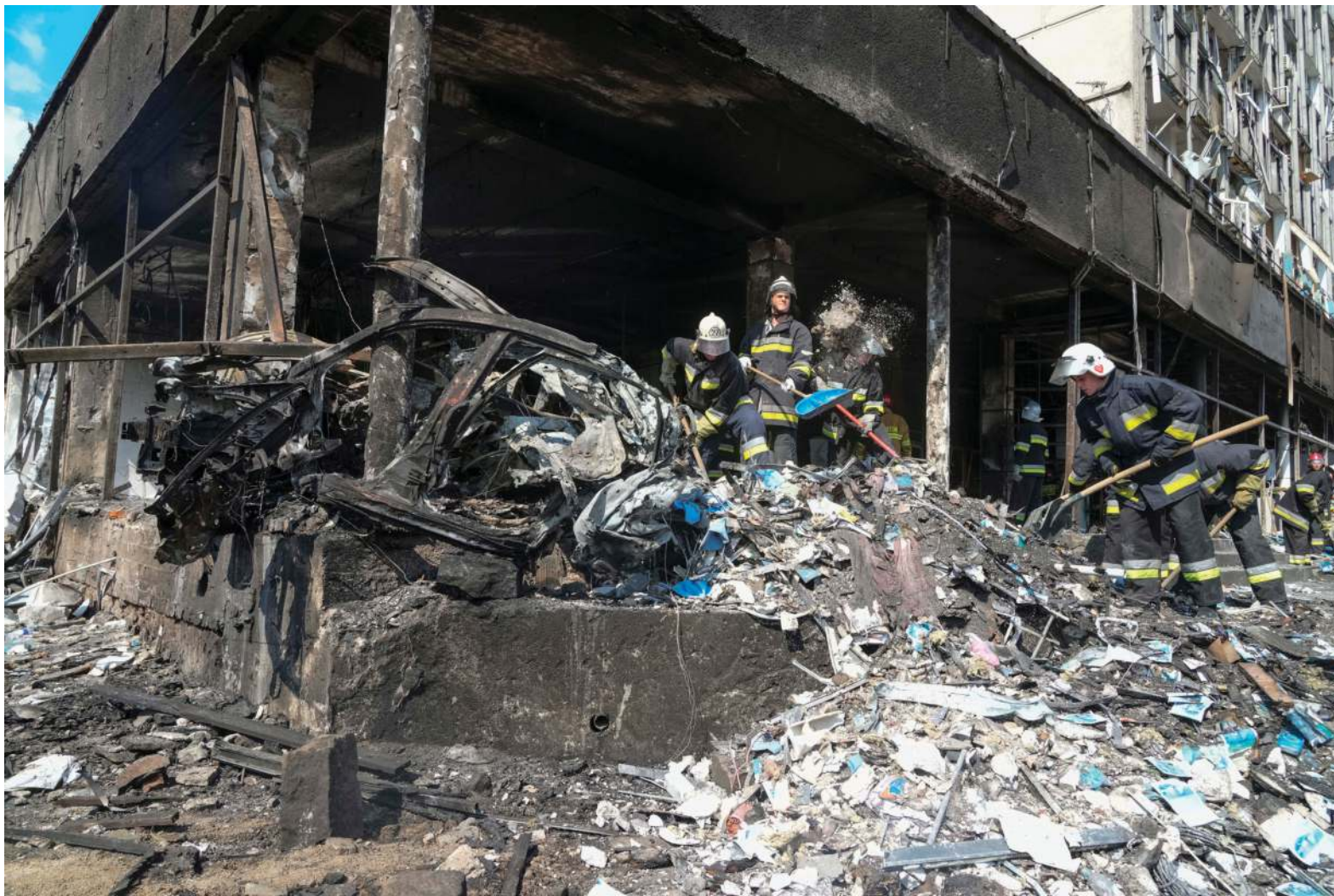
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CONTINGENCY EDITION

SATURDAY, JULY 16, 2022

Free to Deployed Areas



PHOTOS BY EFREM LUKATSKY/AP

Rescuers work at the scene of a building that was damaged by a deadly Russian missile attack in Vinnytsia, Ukraine, on Thursday.

Searching for survivors

Ukrainian rescuers hunt for missing people
after deadly Russian attack in Vinnytsia

By HANNA ARHIROVA
Associated Press

VINNYTSIA, Ukraine — Rescue teams with sniffer dogs combed through the debris Friday in a central Ukrainian city looking for people still missing after a Russian missile strike a day earlier killed at least 23 people and wounded over 100 others.

Russian forces, meanwhile, pounded other sites in a relentless push to wrest territory from Uk-

raine and try to soften the unbending morale of its leaders, civilians and troops as the war nears the five-month mark.

Thursday's cruise missile strikes on the Ukrainian city of Vinnytsia launched by a Russian submarine were the latest incidents to take civilian lives and fan international outrage since Russian President Vladimir Putin

SEE ATTACK ON PAGE 6



A baby stroller lies by a road after the missile attack in Vinnytsia.

Air Force expands enlistment bonuses

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force announced it has expanded big bonus payments for recruits who enlist in certain high-priority specialties, offering more than \$50,000 to some willing to ship quickly as the service fights through tough times attracting troops.

The Air Force will now provide enlistment bonuses ranging from about \$3,000 to \$58,000 to some recruits who enlist into 22 active-duty specialties through Sept. 30, the end of the 2022 fiscal year, the service said in a statement issued Wednesday. Service officials said the Air Force needs to send thousands more troops to basic training in the coming weeks to meet its 2022 recruiting goal of about 26,000 new recruits.

Military officials from the Air Force — as well as the other service branches — have described fiscal 2022 as the toughest recruiting year in decades. Officials have blamed historically low unemployment levels, the lingering impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and a shrinking population of young Americans eligible to serve for physical, academic or other reasons.

The Pentagon has said among the 31.8 million 17- to 24-year-olds in the United States, only about 9.1 million meet the basic physical requirements to serve in the military and only about 4.4 million of those physically eligible meet minimal academic requirements to enlist.

The Air Force's top recruiter, Maj. Gen. Ed Thomas, said Wednesday that the military must then compete with private sector,

SEE BONUSES ON PAGE 3

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Toyota's Japan flagship Crown car to debut globally

Associated Press

TOKYO — Toyota's flagship model in Japan, the Crown, is going on sale around the world for the first time, including in the U.S.

"I'm so excited to announce today that this new Crown family of vehicles will be offered not just in Japan but globally for the very first time," its Chief Executive Akio Toyoda told reporters Friday. "A car that could very well be our crowning achievement."

The 16th generation Crown, set to begin production in January,

comes in four varieties — a crossover with a hybrid system; a sedan that is most similar to the Crowns seen on Japanese streets; a SUV and a wagon crossover called the "estate," the company said.

The Crown will go on sale in 40 nations, with Toyota Motor Corp. aiming for 200,000 vehicles in annual global sales. The cheapest version starts at \$31,000 in Japan.

Toyota, Japan's top automaker, sells about 10 million vehicles globally a year. It has a successful global luxury lineup called Lexus,

whose cheapest models sell for about \$35,000 in the U.S.

The Crown's history parallels the rise of Toyota and of the modern Japanese economy, with the first sedan going on sale in Japan in 1955. "Some day a Crown," was a tagline over the years. But the cars are not well-known abroad.

Toyoda called the Crown "the pride of Japan." Company founder Kiichiro Toyoda said, "Nothing will make me happier than Japan's Crown becoming loved by everyone around the world."

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		South Korea (Won)	1326.26
Euro costs (July 18)	\$0.98	Switzerland (Franc)	0.9790
Dollar buys (July 18)	0.9696	Thailand (Baht)	36.72
British pound (July 18)	\$1.15	Turkey (NewLira)	17.4344
Japanese yen (July 18)	135.00	(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	
South Korean won (July 18)	1291.00	INTEREST RATES	
Commercial rates		Prime rate	4.75
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770	Interest Rates Discount rate	2.25
Britain (Pound)	1.1854	Federal funds market rate	0.08
Canada (Dollar)	1.3047	3-month bill	2.38
China (Yuan)	6.7602	30-year bond	3.11
Denmark (Krone)	7.3929		
Egypt (Pound)	18.8797		
Euro	0.9930		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8500		
Hungary (Forint)	400.08		
Israel (Shekel)	3.4738		
Japan (Yen)	138.78		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3081		
Norway (Krone)	10.1944		
Philippines (Peso)	56.38		
Poland (Zloty)	4.75		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7549		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.4015		

WEATHER OUTLOOK



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MILITARY

Army implements sexual assault policies

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army is implementing two new policies taking aim at sexual assault and other serious crimes a year after a Pentagon-ordered commission report found the military was ill-equipped to address such issues properly.

The policies — one that creates a new prosecution office focusing on 11 crimes including rape and child pornography, and another that makes it easier for victims to report sexual assault — come as a result of the July 2021 Pentagon report that made 80 recommendations to help the military tackle pervasive problems with sexual assault and harassment in the ranks.

The first initiative creates an Office of Special Trial Counsel that will solely prosecute specific offenses: murder, manslaughter, rape, sexual assault, child rape, sexual assault of a child, “other sexual misconduct,” kidnapping, domestic violence, stalking, retaliation, child pornography and “wrongful broadcast,” according to the Army.

Lt. Gen. Stuart Risch, the judge advocate general, will certify select active-duty attorneys to serve as “special trial counsel,” who will focus their caseloads on those involving the specified crimes. He will later appoint a certified special trial attorney to become the



CAITLIN WILKINS/U.S. Army

Staff Sgt. Taylor Pruss and 1st Lt. Aniko Austin set up displays for Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., on April 1.

first general officer to lead the new special trial office.

The new office is a result of the recommendation in the Pentagon report to separate the prosecution of sexual assault cases from the chain of command, an issue that was hotly debated before being codified in the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, which establishes military priorities and budgets for the Defense Department.

“Only prosecutors have the technical training to make the purely legal decisions that affect victims’ access to justice,” the Pentagon report concluded.

Previously, unit commanding officers decided whether a report of sexual assault should be sent to trial. That will now change after the report found a commander’s position within a unit leads to an inherent appearance of a conflict of interest.

“Commanders are not lawyers, and they do not receive adequate training regarding victimization, implicit bias and the impact these concepts have on the administration of justice,” according to the report.

The second initiative implements the Pentagon’s newly established Safe-to-Report policy meant to encourage troops to report sexual assaults by protecting them from being disciplined for minor misconduct in which they might have participated while they were victimized.

The initiative is designed to encourage victims to report their assaults without fear of punishment for “collateral misconduct” that might be discovered in an ensuing investigation, such as an underage drinking, curfew violations or having an “unprofessional relationship” with the accused, according to the policy.

The Navy also recently implemented the same policy.

Pentagon studies have shown that service members consider disciplinary action against them to be a “significant barrier” to reporting sexual assault, Army Resilience Directorate director James Helis said in a statement Thursday.

“This directive helps reduce the stigma associated with reporting, so offenders can be held accountable for their actions and victims can get the support they need to

heal,” he said.

Senior Army commanders are now required to assess whether a victim’s associated misconduct is considered minor or non-minor “based on their analysis of aggravating and mitigating circumstances” before determining whether to punish them, the service statement said.

Aggravating circumstances include whether the action threatened a military mission or objective, harmed others or damaged government property. Aggravating factors will not necessarily require the victim be disciplined for the misconduct but should be used to determine whether punishment should be issued.

Mitigating circumstances include the victim’s age, whether the perpetrator had authority over the victim, and whether the victim engaged in the misconduct after the assault, “which may be related to symptoms of trauma,” according to the policy.

While commanders now have the discretion not to prosecute victims’ minor misconduct, they may still refer such victims to substance abuse screening, mental health or other medical providers to determine the soldier’s fitness for duty or temporarily suspend them from certain critical positions, the policy states.

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Bonuses: Incentives range from \$3,000 to \$50,000 for careers

FROM PAGE 1

higher education and other government jobs for those young Americans eligible to serve, calling the current recruiting environment “a battle for talent.” Young Americans should see value beyond a paycheck in enlisting in the service, he added.

“Our Air Force value proposition is about far more than pay or compensation. It’s primarily about opportunity and joining a community with an unmatched sense of purpose,” Thomas said. “But in a highly competitive labor market, enlistment incentives can help ensure we get the additional airmen required to fill our ranks and serve the nation.”

This week, the Air Force added maintenance-related specialties to its list of those eligible for bonuses. Those who sign up to maintain missile and space systems, facilities, military vehicles, refueling and bomber aircraft, fuel systems and aircraft armament are now eligible for a \$3,000 bonus for signing a four-year contract or a \$6,000 bonus for a six-year enlistment.

The service is offering the most cash to those willing to enter special operations or explosive ordnance disposal. Those specialties come with a \$50,000 signing bonus for a six-year enlistment.

Those who enlist for six years to become survival,



DAKOTA LEGRAND/U.S. Air Force

Maj. Katie Moorkamp administers the oath of enlistment to Army and Air Force recruits June 18, during the Northern Thunder Air and Space Expo at Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D.

evasion, resistance and escape specialists are eligible for a \$40,000 bonus.

The service is also paying bonuses for cyber specialties. Those who enlist for six years into network operations, systems operations, security operations or client systems operations can receive \$12,000 to \$20,000 enlistment bonuses, based on their existing cyber certifications, according to the service.

The service is also offering up to an \$8,000 bonus to recruits who can fill so-called “short-notice” slots to ship to basic training within five days of signing a contract, officials said.

The Air Force has paid more than 179 such quickship bonuses to recruits since announcing that program in April, according to the service.

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Texas Guard soldier dies while deployed at border

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — A Texas Army National Guard soldier assigned to a state-sponsored mission at the border with Mexico died Thursday in an incident not related to the deployment, state military officials said.

The soldier’s death is under investigation and the name of the deceased is being withheld until 24 hours after next-of-kin notification.

Officials for the Texas Military Department did not respond to questions about where the death occurred or the circumstances. They also did not say what agency is investigating the soldier’s death.

Nearly 6,000 troops are deployed on the state mission known as Operation Lone Star, Maj. Gen. Thomas Suelzer, commander of the Texas National Guard, told state lawmakers this week. The mission is under the command of Gov. Greg Abbott and began in March 2021. At its peak earlier this year, 10,000 troops were as-

signed to the mission.

The troops work alongside state police to patrol the border for illegal activity such as trespassing, drug smuggling or human trafficking. Troops are also building fences along the border.

The Texas National Guard has confirmed the deaths of two other soldiers this year — one was related to the mission and the other was not.

Spc. Dajuan Lester Townes, 19, died in February in the town of Brackettville after being accidentally shot with a personally owned firearm.

Sgt. Bishop Evans, 22, died in April while on duty along the Rio Grande in the city of Eagle Pass. The soldier jumped into the river to rescue a migrant who was struggling to swim and he was swept away too. Guard officials later confirmed Evans did not have access to water safety equipment or a flotation device because it was on back order.

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VETERANS

Iwo Jima hero Williams honored in US Capitol

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — As Mike Turner stepped up to pay his respects to former Marine Hershel “Woody” Williams on Thursday, he closed his eyes and prayed.

“I said, ‘God, you’ve got to give us the courage and the integrity and the commitment that [Williams] had to get us through these times,’” Turner said, choking up. “That’s really, really important.”

A retired Air Force colonel, Turner said he despaired about the “tough times in this country” and he saw Williams and his heroism in the battle for Iwo Jima as the embodiment of the best that America has to offer.

“I kind of feel like all of us that ever wore a uniform owe Woody this day,” he said.

Turner was among the throngs of lawmakers, military officials and members of the public who gathered at the U.S. Capitol on Thursday to remember and thank Williams as he lay in honor in the Capitol Rotunda, a tribute reserved for the most distinguished Americans and previously afforded to just six others.

Williams was the last survivor of the 472 servicemen from World War II who earned the Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest military award. He died June 29 in Huntington, W.Va., at 98 years old.

Uniformed pallbearers carried Williams’ casket Thursday in a solemn procession up the steps of the



CARLOS BONGIOANNI/Stars and Stripes

As a crowd of onlookers circle around, Sen Jon Tester, D-Mont., observes a moment of silence as he pays his respects before the casket of World War II Medal of Honor recipient Hershel Woodrow “Woody” Williams, who was lying in honor at the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Thursday.

Capitol as onlookers bowed their heads. The casket, draped in an American flag, came to rest in the center of the Rotunda, atop a black catafalque constructed in 1865 for Abraham Lincoln.

“With Woody’s passing, we have lost a deeply selfless American and a vital link to our nation’s greatest generation,” said House

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. “His story echoes the service of so many Americans who faced the horrors of war so that liberty might triumph over fascism.”

John Digilio, Jr., a retired Army general, said he and his group, State Funeral for World War II Veterans, lobbied for Williams to lie in honor as a final salute to the

16 million men and women who served in the U.S. armed forces between 1941 and 1945.

Standing in front of Williams’ casket on Thursday was emotional, he said.

“The courage, the tenacity, his heroism was truly outstanding,” Digilio said. “He saved lives and that’s perhaps the most important

part.”

The 36-day fight to capture Iwo Jima and its two critical airfields was already underway when the 21-year-old Cpl. Williams landed on the Japanese island on Feb. 21, 1945 with the 21st Marines of the Third Marine Division.

Days later, Williams moved ahead of his unit and eliminated a series of Japanese machine gun positions. Facing small-arms fire, he fought for four hours, repeatedly returning to prepare demolition charges and obtain flamethrowers. President Harry Truman awarded him the Medal of Honor, the military’s highest decoration, later that year.

Despite his small stature, Williams became a “force of nature” in the military, said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

Williams remained in the Marine Corps as a reservist, retiring as chief warrant officer in 1969. He worked as a counselor for the Veterans Administration and created the Woody Williams Foundation to serve Gold Star military families.

“The thing that drew a farm boy from West Virginia to a lifetime of patriotic service could best be described as gravitational pull,” McConnell said. “Even his improbable safe return from dangerous combat couldn’t convince him that he’d actually done enough.”

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Desert Storm vets welcome recognition with ceremony for new memorial on Mall

BY SHIFRA DAYAK
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — As retired Gen. Rhonda Cornum stood in the blazing sun Thursday morning, looking out over hundreds of veterans, their family members, international ambassadors and others, she recalled the day her Black Hawk helicopter was shot down in Iraq during Operation Desert Storm.

It’s the day she was captured as a prisoner of war, suffering several broken bones and a gunshot wound.

“We’ve heard a lot of things about Desert Storm, but there’s one thing that really stands out,” Cornum said. “It’s that it was a demonstration of all the good things that can happen when there’s an unambiguous and positive moral mission like liberating Kuwait from a brutal invasion.”

Cornum was one of the 697,000 American troops that served during Desert Storm in 1991. In the 30-plus years since the conflict, those troops have not been recognized among the many other service members memorialized in Washing-

ton, D.C.

But now, as the nation approaches the 32nd anniversary of Operation Desert Storm and its preceding ground offensive Operation Desert Shield, a memorial is finally taking shape.

The National Desert Storm War Memorial Association broke ground Thursday on a memorial at the corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue, not far from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial.

At the groundbreaking, where over 100 veterans and their family members gathered, Scott C. Stump, NDSWM’s CEO, emphasized the long journey that the group has taken to make the memorial a reality.

“The road getting here has been fraught with obstacles, impediments and the need for our team to constantly improvise, adapt and overcome,” he said.

The effort to build a memorial in honor of Desert Storm has been ongoing since 2013, when former Rep. Phil Roe, D-Tenn., introduced legislation in Congress to allow construction on federal land in



SAMUEL WEINSTEIN/Stars and Stripes

The official groundbreaking for the National Desert Storm Memorial on the National Mall in Washington on Thursday.

Washington, D.C.

President Barack Obama authorized construction of the memorial in 2014, and President Donald Trump signed legislation in 2017 allowing for the memorial to be built near the National Mall.

The memorial will lie just over a block from the U.S. Department of State — a location that Derek Chollet, Counselor of

the U.S. Department of State, called “fitting.”

“It’s fitting because the international coalition that acted to liberate Kuwait was one of the great triumphs of American diplomacy, harnessing the power of America’s alliances of America’s partnerships in organizations like the United Nations,” Chollet said.

MILITARY

Lawmakers propose group to combat targeted scams

By SARA SAMORA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A joint task force to combat consumer fraud targeting service members and veterans was introduced by House lawmakers as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, the annual must-pass bill that sets policy and spending priorities for the Defense Department.

“The task force would issue regular recommendations to Congress about how we can better warn service members and veterans about the risk of financial scams and frauds, as well as strengthen our enforcement mechanisms and toughened criminal penalties for those who would seek to take advantage of our men and women in uniform,” Rep. Stephen Lynch, D-Mass., said Wednesday during a hearing of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform subpanel on national security.

Lynch said the task force would be led by the secretaries of the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs in coordination with representatives from the veteran service organizations and other

nongovernmental partners.

Service members and veterans are 40% more likely to be exploited by financial fraud, including robocalls, suspicious texts and scam offers, than their civilian counterparts, according to a recent AARP survey. More so, four out of five service members and veterans surveyed in 2021 reported they were targeted by scams directly related to their military service or benefits. One in three reported they lost money because of those scams, the survey found.

The Federal Trade Commission said service members, veterans and their families have reported more than \$267 million in financial losses due to scams or frauds in 2021. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau reported service members submitted more than 42,700 complaints in 2021, a 5% increase compared to 2020 and a 19% increase compared to 2019.

“Younger service members and their families are especially susceptible to exploitation, given their relative lack of financial experience and understandable need for assistance amid frequent relocations, overseas deployments, and the eventual transition

back to civilian life,” Lynch said. “Meanwhile, America’s veterans remain vulnerable to financial scams seeking to defraud them of their pension, disability, and other service-connected benefits that they have earned through their dedicated service to our nation.”

If enacted, the task force must be established within 90 days and the group must meet no less than three times a year, said Deni Kamper, the press secretary of the House committee. The task force would also submit a report within 180 days of the law being enacted and submit reports annually.

“There’s not a requirement for the agencies to implement recommendations made by the task force,” Kamper said. “Depending on the substance of the recommendation[s], the agencies may have the authority to implement them on their own, or they may require action from Congress.”

Jim Rice, the assistant director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s Office of Servicemember Affairs, said during the House subpanel hearing that the bureau was concerned service members are subject to increased risk of identity theft. His office re-



DOD GRAPHIC BY REGINA ALI

A joint task force to combat consumer fraud targeting troops and veterans was introduced by House lawmakers Wednesday, as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act.

ported service members submitted more than 17,000 credit or consumer complaints, making it their number one complaint category.

Rice said when issues with credit reporting are not resolved, the consequences for service members and their families can include additional costs to get a car loan and a more difficult time finding suitable housing. Negative credit can also result in denial of a security clearance and even separation from service.

Additionally, Rice said his office found issues with medical billing. In 2021, the office saw

more than 1,500 complaints related to incorrect medical bills on credit reports.

“Despite the assumption that military service means full medical coverage, we find that service members experience a wide range of debt collection and credit reporting on medical expenses,” he said. “While the national credit reporting companies agreed to remove most medical billing and credit reports by 2023, service members can’t afford to wait.”

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Navy reservist’s app to deploy forces faster wins contest

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Navy Reserve Lt. Cmdr. Jonathan Calhoun said he was buried in paperwork for a mass mobilization exercise when he had the idea for a cell phone app that could streamline the process.

“It was very high intensity on the administrative side, filling out forms from scratch, many of which were very duplicative in nature and that it was the same information — name, address, date of birth, etc. — on each form,” he said of the training exercise held earlier this year.

In addition, they must be completed on computers that belong to the military or use Common Access Card readers, something unavailable to most reservists on a daily basis.

Calhoun, who is assigned to U.S. Fleet Forces Command Maritime Operations Center in Norfolk, Va., said he thought shifting many of the required forms to a secure mobile platform would make the process faster and more efficient. He submitted his idea to the Navy Reserve’s inaugural i3 Waypoints program, a new invention competition that allows reservists of all ranks to pitch ideas to top brass.

Calhoun’s idea placed first in the contest, winning a trophy and the opportunity to “work with our technology leaders to bring his idea to reality,” said Capt. Colette Murphy, a Reserve spokeswoman.

Not only will the envisioned, encrypted



MCC ELISANDRO T. DIAZ

Navy Reserve Lt. Cmdr. Jonathan Calhoun holds the i3 Waypoints trophy after his “Leveraging Mobile Technology to Streamline Mobilization” was announced the winning entry.

app allow reservists to securely complete necessary mobilization documents from a personal mobile device, but it will also use artificial intelligence to autofill duplicative data fields, such as names and other basic information, across multiple documents, he said.

The app, which has not yet been named,

will also “provide real-time transparency and progress status for members and leadership throughout the process, and enable clear and customizable reviews and reports,” Murphy said.

Vice Adm. John Mustin, chief of the Navy Reserve, said the service is “already moving out on the design” for Calhoun’s idea, which he said will accelerate the mobilization process and get reservists where they’re needed faster.

“[Calhoun’s] idea to add mobile technology to our distributed activation process helps us achieve our goal of mobilizing the entire selected reserve force of 50,000 in 30 days, if required,” Mustin said in a statement.

The i3 Waypoint competition will now be an annual event, which Mustin introduced to “fast-track transformative ideas from across the Navy directly to the highest levels of the Navy Reserve, without filters or bureaucratic barriers,” Murphy said.

The competition is named after the three “I” approaches that reservists can take to create a concept: invent something entirely new; improve something that’s already established; or integrate several ideas, products or processes into a single system. This year, there were more than 100 ideas submitted.

Calhoun said the competition made him think highly of Navy leadership for putting together an event “to actually source ideas” from reservists.

“When you’re in the trenches on a day-to-

day basis, you have these ideas, but the implementation is very hard on a micro scale,” he said. “Being able to have this platform to really engage directly with Navy leadership who’s soliciting ideas... [and then they] say, ‘Yes, not only do we agree with that, but we’re willing to put the time and the money, the effort in order to get through to fruition’ [is exciting.]”

Other finalists in the competition included:

■ Lt. Brian Adornato of Naval Sea Systems Command’s Surge Maintenance Sacramento, whose idea involved creating a new civilian technicians category of personnel.

■ Cmdr. Bobby Hsu, the Naval Operations director of staff, Cmdr. Scott Mericle of Navy Reserve Operations, Plans and Policy for the Navy’s 2nd Fleet, who suggested creating an official Navy Reserve YouTube Channel. Mericle’s concept was to “improve [the] active-to-reserve transition.”

■ Cmdr. Sarah McGann of Navy Personnel Command and Lt. Josh Didawick of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations for Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education, whose idea involved creating a “new policy for Reserve retirement education across the career continuum.”

While there is one winner, the concepts from the four finalists also could be implemented.

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EUROPE

Russia info war expanding in Eastern Europe

By DAVID KLEPPER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As bullets and bombs fall in Ukraine, Russia is waging an expanding information war throughout Eastern Europe, using fake accounts and propaganda to spread fears about refugees and rising fuel prices while calling the West an untrustworthy ally.

In Bulgaria, the Kremlin paid journalists, political analysts and other influential citizens 2,000 euros a month to post pro-Russian content online, a senior Bulgarian official revealed this month. Researchers also have uncovered sophisticated networks of fake accounts, bots and trolls in an escalating spread of disinformation and propaganda in the country.

Similar efforts are playing out in other nations in the region as Russia looks to shift the blame for its invasion of Ukraine, the ensuing refugee crisis and rising prices for food and fuel.

For Russia's leaders, expansive propaganda and disinformation campaigns are a highly cost-effective alternative to traditional tools of war or diplomacy, according to Graham Brookie, senior director at the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, which has been tracking Russian disinformation for years.

"Stirring up these reactions is the low-hanging fruit for Russian information operations," Brookie said. "Their state media does audience analysis better than most of the media companies in the world. Where these narratives have succeeded are countries where there is more weaponization of domestic discourse or more polarized media markets."

Bulgaria was long counted a stalwart Russian ally, though the country of 7 million residents has turned its attention westward in recent decades, joining NATO in 2004 and the European Union three years later.

When Bulgaria, Poland and other former Warsaw Pact nations sided with their NATO allies in support of Ukraine, Russia responded with a wave of disinformation and propaganda that sought to exploit public debates over globalization and westernization.

For Poland, that took the form of anti-Western propaganda and conspiracy theories. One, spread

by a Russian-allied hacking group in an apparent effort to divide Ukraine and Poland, suggested that Polish gangs were harvesting the organs of Ukrainian refugees.

Russia's onslaught comes as Eastern European governments, like others around the world, grapple with dissatisfaction and unrest caused by rising prices for fuel and food.

Bulgaria is in a particularly vulnerable position. Pro-Western Prime Minister Kiril Petkov lost a no confidence vote last month. Concerns about the economy and fuel prices only increased when Russia cut off Bulgaria's supply of natural gas last spring. The upheaval prompted President Rumen Radev to say his country was entering a "political, economic and social crisis."

The government's relationship with Moscow is another complication. Bulgaria recently expelled 70 Russian diplomatic staffers over concerns about espionage, prompting the Kremlin to threaten to end diplomatic relations with it.

The same week, Russia's embassy in Sofia posted a fundraising appeal urging Bulgarian citizens to donate their private funds to support the Russian army and its invasion of Ukraine.

Bulgaria's government reacted angrily to Russia's attempt to solicit donations for its war from a NATO country.

"This is scandalous," tweeted Bozhidar Bozhanov, who served as minister of e-government in Petkov's cabinet. "It is not right to use the platform to finance the aggressor."

The embassy also has spread debunked conspiracy theories claiming the U.S. runs secret biolabs in Ukraine. Embassies have become key to Russia's disinformation campaigns, especially since many technology companies have begun restricting Russian state media since the invasion began.

Fake accounts remain a valued part of the arsenal. Researchers at the Disinformation Situation Center uncovered what they believe is a network of fake Facebook accounts pushing Kremlin talking points and disinformation to Bulgarian audiences. The DSC, based in Europe, is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization of disinformation researchers working around the world.



UKRAINIAN EMERGENCY SERVICE/AP

Firefighters work to extinguish the fire at a building damaged by shelling, in Vinnytsia, Ukraine, Thursday.

Attack: Amid fighting, countries make progress on deal to ship grain, ease crisis

FROM PAGE 1

launched the invasion on Feb. 24.

Even as the fighting raged, Russia noted signs of progress in talks on a possible deal to allow Ukraine to export millions of tons of grain via the Black Sea that could help feed a world facing higher food prices.

Alluding to talks in Istanbul this week among Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Nations, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said a final document had been prepared and Russian proposals to help ease grain shipments through Ukrainian ports have been "largely supported" by other participants.

He said work on a document called "Black Sea initiative" was set to be completed "in the nearest time." The Russian proposal would allow shipments of food "while excluding the use of those logistical chains for the deliveries of weapons and military equipment" to Ukraine. He also said the plan seeks to "prevent any provocations."

About 22 million tons of grain have been stuck in Ukraine because of the war.

That was the most extensive Russian comment yet on the grain talks, which mostly involved military officials. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Russia and Ukraine had taken "a critical step" to ensuring exports of the desperately needed grain to help ease a global food crisis — but said more technical work toward finalizing a deal was needed.

Russia's military campaign now has been focusing on Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, but Russian forces regularly fire upon targets in many other parts of the country too.

Ukraine's Interior Ministry said Friday that Russian forces had

conducted more than 17,000 strikes on civilian targets during the war, killing thousands of fighters and civilians and driving millions from their homes. The invasion has also rippled through the world economy by hiking prices and crimping exports of key Ukrainian and Russian products like grain, fuel and fertilizer.

More than 73 people — including four children — remained hospitalized and 18 people were missing after Thursday's strike, said Oleksandr Kutovyi, spokesman for the emergency service in the Vinnytsia region. Search teams were poring over two sites on Friday — an office building with a medical center and a concert hall near an outdoor recreation area where mothers with children often stroll. Vinnytsia Gov. Serhiy Borzov said only 10 people among the dead had been identified so far.

"Russia deliberately hit civilians and all those responsible for the crime must be brought to account," he said, denouncing the "barbaric behavior by Russia that tramples on international humanitarian law."

Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a deputy head of the Ukrainian president's office, said three missiles were used.

"There is no answer to the question why yesterday, and why in Vinnytsia," Tymoshenko said. "We expect every second and minute that this could happen in any corner of Ukraine."

After initial silence after the strikes on Vinnytsia, Russia's Defense Ministry said Friday that its forces had struck an officers' club — which the concert hall was known for back in Soviet times.

Konashenkov, the Russian Defense Ministry spokesman, said the Kalibr cruise missiles landed as "that military facility hosted a

meeting between Ukrainian air force command and representatives of foreign weapons suppliers." He said attendees were discussing prospective supplies of warplanes and weapons as well as work to repair Ukrainian aircraft.

"Participants of the meeting were eliminated in the strike," Konashenkov said.

His claim couldn't be independently verified. Ukrainian authorities have insisted the site had nothing to do with the military.

Overall, Ukraine's presidential office said Friday morning that 26 civilians were killed and another 190 were wounded by Russian shelling over the past 24 hours. That included three other victims in the Donetsk region, which along with neighboring Luhansk — nearly totally controlled by Russian forces — makes up the broader Donbas region.

"The situation in the Donetsk region is exacerbating every day, and civilians must leave because the Russian army is using scorched-earth tactics," Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said. It appeared that the cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk were next in line for Russian forces, but it wasn't at all clear how soon such a push could begin.

Elsewhere, authorities in Mykolaiv said there were at least 10 explosions in the southern city overnight, accusing Russia of hitting universities. Vitaliy Kim, the head of Mykolaiv's military administration, posted a video of smoke rising over the strikes.

Separately, the Russian news agency Tass, citing Russian-backed separatists, reported Friday that two civilians were killed and six others were injured after Ukrainian forces allegedly shelled a bus terminal in the city of Donetsk a day earlier.

NATION



NAM Y. HUH/AP

A customer checks price tags while shopping at a retail store in Schaumburg, Ill., on June 30.

Retail spending up 1% in June as shoppers show resilience

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Consumers picked up their spending from May to June, underscoring their resilience despite painfully higher prices at the gas pump and in grocery aisles and easing fears that the economy might be on the verge of a recession.

U.S. retail sales rose 1% in June, from a revised decline of 0.1 % in May, the Commerce Department said Friday.

The figures aren't adjusted for inflation and so largely reflect higher prices, particularly for gas. But they also show that consumers are still providing crucial support for the economy, and are spending on discretionary items such as furniture, restaurant meals and sporting goods.

At the same time, last month's spending gain is modest enough that it likely won't encourage the Fed to raise interest rates even more aggressively. Stock futures rose after the report's release.

"People did not fold in the face of the Ukraine shock and the subsequent surge in food and energy prices," said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. "Instead, they ran

down a small part of their pandemic savings in order to keep up their discretionary spending."

Consumers still have significant savings, on average, bolstered by pandemic-era government relief checks and strong hiring and pay gains. JPMorgan executives said Thursday that their customers are still breaking out their credit and debit cards at a healthy pace.

Excluding business from gas and autos, sales still posted a solid 0.7% gain last month.

The report showed consumers' ongoing appetite for non-essentials like gadgets and furniture. In fact, sales at furniture stores rose 1.4%, while consumer electronics stores rose 0.4%. Online sales showed resurgence, posting a 2.2% increase. Business at restaurants was up 1%. But department stores took a hit, posting a 2.6% decline.

The solid spending came even as shoppers were confronted with high prices in all areas. U.S. inflation surged to a new four-decade high in June because of rising prices for gas, food and rent, squeezing household budgets and pressuring the Federal Reserve to

raise interest rates aggressively — trends that raise the risk of a recession.

The government's consumer price index soared 9.1% in June compared with a year ago, the biggest yearly increase since 1981, with nearly half of the increase due to higher energy costs. The year-over-year leap in consumer prices last month followed an 8.6% annual jump in May. From May to June, prices rose 1.3%, following a 1% increase from April to May.

Some economists believe inflation might be reaching a short-term peak. Gas prices, for example, have fallen from \$5 a gallon reached in mid-June to an average of \$4.57 nationwide Thursday — still far higher than a year ago.

Accelerating inflation is a big problem for the Federal Reserve, too. The Fed is already involved in the fastest series of interest rate hikes in three decades, which it hopes will tame inflation by tamping down borrowing and spending by consumers and businesses.

The U.S. economy shrank in the first three months of the year, and many analysts believe the trend continued in the second quarter.

House passes bill to restore abortion rights

BY FARNOUSH AMIRI
AND MARY CLARE JALONICK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House voted to restore abortion rights nationwide Friday in Democrats' first legislative response to the Supreme Court's decision overturning Roe v. Wade.

The bill has little chance of becoming law, with the necessary support lacking in the 50-50 Senate. Yet voting marks the beginning of a new era in the debate as lawmakers, governors and legislatures grapple with the impact of the court's decision.

The legislation passed 219-210. The House was also voting on a separate bill to prohibit punishment for a woman or child who decides to travel to another state to get an abortion.

"Just three weeks ago the Supreme Court took a wrecking ball to the fundamental rights by overturning Roe v. Wade," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ahead of the votes, gathering with other Democratic women on the steps of the Capitol. "It is outrageous that 50 years later, women must again fight for our most basic rights against an extremist court."

Republicans spoke forcefully against the bills, praising the Supreme Court's decision and warning that the legislation would go further than Roe ever did when it comes to legalizing abortion.

Urging her colleagues to vote no, Washington GOP Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers called abortion "the greatest human rights issue of our generation."

She said the Democratic legislation "has nothing to do with protecting the health of women. It has everything to do with forcing an extreme agenda on the American people."

By overturning Roe, the court has allowed states to enact strict abortion limits, including many that had previously been deemed

unconstitutional. The ruling is expected to lead to abortion bans in roughly half the states.

A number of GOP-controlled states have moved to curtail or outlaw abortion, while states controlled by Democrats have sought to champion access. Voters now rank abortion as among the most pressing issues facing the country, a shift in priorities that Democrats hope will reshape the political landscape in their favor for the midterm elections.

This is the second time the House has passed the bill, which would expand on the protections Roe had previously provided by banning what supporters say are medically unnecessary restrictions that block access to safe and accessible abortions.

It would prevent abortion bans earlier than 24 weeks, which is when fetal viability, the ability of a human fetus to survive outside the uterus, is generally thought to begin. It allows exceptions for abortions after fetal viability when a provider determines the life or health of the mother is at risk.

The Democrats' proposal would also prevent states from requiring providers to share "medically inaccurate" information, or from requiring additional tests or waiting periods, often aimed at dissuading a patient from having an abortion.

The bill that would prohibit punishment for traveling out of state would also specify that doctors can't be punished for providing reproductive care outside their home state. Democratic Rep. Lizzie Fletcher of Texas, one of the bill's authors, said the threats to travel "fail to reflect the fundamental rights that are granted in our Constitution."

Democrats have teed up more bills for passage. Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said Friday that the House will vote next week on legislation guaranteeing a right to contraception.

Deposition of Trump, 2 children delayed after Ivana's death

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former President Donald Trump and two of his children got their questioning postponed Friday in a New York civil investigation into their business dealings, a delay that follows the death of Trump's ex-wife Ivana.

The ex-president, son Don Jr. and daughter Ivanka had been scheduled for depositions — a term for out-of-court questioning under oath — starting as soon as Friday.

But New York Attorney General Letitia James' office said it had agreed to postpone them because

of Ivana Trump's death, which occurred on Thursday.

"We offer our condolences to the Trump family," attorney general's office spokesperson Delaney Kempner said in a statement.

There are no new dates yet for the depositions.

James alleges that the ex-presi-

dent's company, the Trump Organization, inflated the values of skyscrapers, golf courses and other holdings in order to get loans, insurance and other benefits.

Trump has denied the allegations, saying that it's common in the real estate industry to seek the best valuations.

The Republican has dismissed the investigation as part of a politically motivated "witch hunt" by Democrats such as James.



Ivana Trump

NATION

Manchin rejects energy and tax acts in package

By ALAN FRAM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Joe Manchin has said he'll oppose an economic measure he's been negotiating with Democratic leaders if it includes climate or energy provisions or higher taxes on the rich and corporations, a Democrat briefed on the conversations said late Thursday, delivering a stunning blow to one of the party's top election-year priorities.

The official said Manchin told Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., on Thursday that he will only support a new measure if it is limited to curbing pharmaceutical prices and extending federal subsidies for buying health care coverage. Manchin abruptly derailed his party's bigger and wider-ranging social and environment package last December after months of negotiations and after the measure had already passed the House.

Manchin's demands leave the future of the latest measure unclear, seemingly upending the hopes of President Joe Biden and Democratic leaders' for a more sweeping package they could push through Congress by August. That would have let them show Democratic voters that they were addressing a range of party priorities like curbing climate change and taxing the rich and draw a contrast with Republicans, who are expected to oppose the legislation unanimously.

However, containing the costs

of prescription drugs and extending subsidies for people buying health insurance under former President Barack Obama's 2010 health care law are also top Democratic priorities. Manchin's stance puts his party in the position of having to decide whether it should reluctantly declare victory by solely addressing some of its health care goals, as opposed to demanding more but potentially ending up with nothing.



Manchin

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated that provisions Democrats have already agreed to curbing prescription drug costs — like letting Medicare negotiate prices for pharmaceuticals it buys — would save \$288 billion over the coming decade.

That would be more than enough to pay for extending government subsidies for people who buy private healthcare coverage, assistance that expires in January.

Manchin spokesperson Sam Runyon issued a statement that reiterated the senator's assertions that he did not want any measure that emerged to worsen inflation. The government reported this week that consumer costs last month grew by an annual level of 9.1%, the highest figure in four decades.



KEITH SRAKOCIC/AP

Pennsylvania Lt. Governor John Fetterman, the Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania, greets supporters at a campaign stop, May 10, in Greensburg, Pa.

Fetterman absence raises stakes for Democrats in key Senate race

By MARC LEVY
Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Democrat John Fetterman posted a massive \$11 million fundraising haul during the second quarter. He's on an advertising spree that's made him a near-constant presence on television in Pennsylvania. And he grabs attention with snarky, irreverent social media posts.

The only thing missing from one of the most competitive U.S. Senate races this year is the candidate himself.

Fetterman, 52, has yet to return to the campaign trail in a significant way since a May 13 stroke required surgery to implant a pacemaker with a defibrillator and prompted a revelation that he had a serious heart condition.

The advertisements currently on the air were recorded before

the stroke. He hasn't fielded questions from the press. And when the hoodie- and shorts-wearing Fetterman did make a campaign appearance, it was under tightly controlled circumstances and without advance notice to reporters.

Democratic hopes to maintain — or even expand — their fragile Senate majority hinge on the party's ability to capture the seat being vacated by the retiring Republican Sen. Pat Toomey. And with barely two months until voters can begin casting mail-in ballots, Fetterman is absent from traditional retail campaigning.

But in an otherwise anxiety-provoking election year for Democrats, party officials in Pennsylvania say they're no longer worried about Fetterman's campaign and that they are being told repeatedly that he'll be fine.

"The campaign told me they figured mid-July he'd start getting out," said Joe Foster, who recently retired as party chair in heavily populated Montgomery County.

Fetterman's campaign has provided little detail about Fetterman's health since early June, though it acknowledges he has not completely recovered from the stroke and sometimes struggles to speak smoothly. But they don't intend to wait for a full recovery and say Fetterman will be on the campaign trail soon.

Next up may be a July 21 fundraiser scheduled with Democratic Jewish Outreach Pennsylvania. Fetterman, the state's lieutenant governor, had been expected to speak there, though his campaign hasn't said whether those remarks will be delivered virtually or in person at the event in suburban Philadelphia.

Governor: Uvalde video 'shocking' account of police response

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on Thursday again said he was initially misled about the police response to the Uvalde school massacre, calling newly leaked video of officers hesitating for more than an hour "shocking" and not what he had been told when he originally lauded officers for a swift and brave confrontation.

"None of the information in that video was shared with me on that day," Abbott told reporters in Houston when asked about his reaction to the video published this week. "And so it was shocking."

Multiple inaccurate and conflicting statements given by officials since the May 24 tragedy at

Robb Elementary School have compounded the grief and anger over a gunman killing 19 children and two teachers. Seven weeks later, there remains an incomplete account of why heavily armed police officers waited so long to take action and who was in charge.

A nearly 80-minute school surveillance video published this week by the Austin American-Statesman put in full view the bewildering inaction by law enforcement as the massacre unfolded. Abbott said Thursday it was "disgusting to see what happened."

A day after the attack, Abbott had commended police, saying at the time that officers "showed amazing courage by running to-

ward gunfire" and that it was "a fact that because of their quick response" lives were saved. Two days later, Abbott said he had been misled during an initial briefing and was "livid."

Abbott has not said who provided the misinformation. Renae Eze, an Abbott spokeswoman, said in an email Thursday that it came from a briefing in which "different accounts were spun" by a room of law enforcement and public officials. His office has not provided names.

At a Uvalde City Council meeting in June, Mayor Don McLaughlin said the briefing that preceded Abbott's inaccurate remarks was given by Victor Escalon, a regional commander with the Texas De-

partment of Public Safety. McLaughlin has been increasingly critical of state police since the shooting, accusing DPS leaders of minimizing the involvement of their own troopers and deflecting blame on local officers.

The department's officials do not dispute that Escalon led the briefing but said it was based on information provided by local law enforcement. Agency spokesman Travis Considine said those in the room included McLaughlin, Uvalde School District police Chief Pete Arredondo and officials from Uvalde police, the local sheriff's department and the Border Patrol. All "were present at the briefing and had the opportunity to clarify anything they

deemed inaccurate," Considine said in an email Thursday.

Considine said it was not until Texas Rangers, a division of the Department of Public Safety, began their investigation that discrepancies emerged.

An investigative committee led by Texas lawmakers is expected to release findings Sunday about the slow law enforcement response after interviewing more than 40 witnesses over the past several weeks. The U.S. Justice Department and Texas Rangers also have launched separate investigations that are ongoing.

"The families of the victims deserve to know what happened. And they will know what happened," Abbott said.

NATION

Long lines back at food banks as inflation surges

**BY ANITA SNOW
AND EUGENE GARCIA**
Associated Press

PHOENIX — Long lines are back at food banks around the U.S. as working Americans overwhelmed by inflation turn to handouts to help feed their families.

With gas prices soaring along with grocery costs, many people are seeking charitable food for the first time, and more are arriving on foot.

Inflation in the U.S. is at a 40-year high and gas prices have been surging since April 2020, with the average cost nationwide briefly hitting \$5 a gallon in June. Rapidly rising rents and an end to federal COVID-19 relief have also taken a financial toll.

The food banks, which had started to see some relief as people returned to work after pandemic shutdowns, are struggling to meet the latest need as federal programs provide less food to distribute, grocery store donations wane and cash gifts don't go nearly as far.

Tomasina John was among hundreds of families lined up in several lanes of cars that went around the block one recent day outside St. Mary's Food Bank in Phoenix. John said her family had never visited a food bank before because her husband had easily supported her and their four children with his construction work.



ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

A volunteer fills up a vehicle with food boxes at the St. Mary's Food Bank, June 29 in Phoenix. Food banks are struggling to meet the growing need as federal programs provide less food to distribute, grocery store donations wane and cash gifts don't go nearly as far.

"But it's really impossible to get by now without some help," said John, who traveled with a neighbor to share gas costs as they idled under a scorching desert sun. "The prices are way too high."

The same scene is repeated across the nation, where food bank workers predict a rough summer keeping ahead of demand.

The surge in food prices comes after state governments ended COVID-19 disaster declarations

that temporarily allowed increased benefits under SNAP, the federal food stamp program covering some 40 million Americans.

"It does not look like it's going to get better overnight," said Katie Fitzgerald, president and chief operating officer for the national food bank network Feeding America. "Demand is really making the supply challenges complex."

Charitable food distribution has remained far above amounts given away before the coronavirus

pandemic, even though demand tapered off somewhat late last year.

Feeding America officials say second quarter data won't be ready until August, but they are hearing anecdotally from food banks nationwide that demand is soaring.

The Phoenix food bank's main distribution center doled out food packages to 4,271 families during the third week in June, a 78% increase over the 2,396 families

served during the same week last year, said St. Mary's spokesman Jerry Brown.

More than 900 families line up at the distribution center every weekday for an emergency government food box stuffed with goods such as canned beans, peanut butter and rice, Brown said. St. Mary's adds products purchased with cash donations, as well as food provided by local supermarkets like bread, carrots and pork chops for a combined package worth about \$75.

Distribution by the Alameda County Community Food Bank in Northern California has ticked up since hitting a pandemic low at the beginning of this year, increasing from 890 households served on the third Friday in January to 1,410 households on the third Friday in June, said marketing director Michael Altfest.

At the Houston Food Bank, the largest food bank in the U.S. where food distribution levels earlier in the pandemic briefly peaked at a staggering 1 million pounds a day, an average of 610,000 pounds is now being given out daily.

That's up from about 500,000 pounds a day before the pandemic, said spokeswoman Paula Murphy.

Murphy said cash donations have not eased, but inflation ensures they don't go as far.

Northern Calif. fire destroys 12 structures, forces evacuations

Associated Press

ANDERSON, Calif. — Challenging terrain and weather hampered firefighters in Northern California as a blaze grew quickly Thursday afternoon, forcing evacuations as the flames destroyed homes, scorched vegetation and threatened a tortoise sanctuary, authorities said.

The blaze broke out around mid-afternoon in Shasta County, just south of Redding, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire.

The fire quickly grew to 304 acres, Cal Fire said. The Redding Record Searchlight newspaper reported that at least three homes burned. The blaze was 25% contained shortly before 8:30 p.m.

Cal Fire reported Thursday night that 12 structures had been destroyed, though it was not immediately clear how many were residences.

Firefighters aggressively attacked the blaze from the ground and the air, Cal Fire said in a



DAMON ARTHUR, THE RECORD SEARCHLIGHT/AP

Flames from the Peter Fire destroy a home in Shasta County near Anderson, Calif., Thursday.

news release, and crews were expected to work overnight to strengthen containment lines and mop up around structures.

An evacuation center was set up at a high school in Anderson, home to about 11,000 residents. Officials didn't immediately say how many people were under evacuation orders.

Flames briefly threatened Tor-

toise Acres, a sanctuary dedicated to turtles and tortoises in Anderson, co-owner Katie Hoffman told the San Francisco Chronicle. Hoffman said she managed to evacuate with her horses before receiving word that the property was spared, with the only damage some singed fencing.

The cause of the Peter Fire was under investigation.

More doses of vaccine for monkeypox coming

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Thousands more doses of monkeypox vaccine are expected to soon begin shipping to the U.S. after federal health officials said they had completed an inspection of the overseas plant where they were manufactured.

The update from the Food and Drug Administration comes amid growing frustration about limited access to the two-dose vaccine as thousands of people in New York City, California and other parts of the U.S. await a chance to get the shot.

The U.S. government has purchased more than 1.1 million completed doses of the vaccine produced by Bavarian Nordic in Denmark. But the company said earlier this week it needed authorization from an on-site FDA inspection before it could begin sending most of them to the U.S.

An FDA spokeswoman said late Wednesday that regulators "expedited and completed an inspection of the company's plant."

"We do not expect any delay in vaccine availability due to this

process," she said in an emailed statement.

Bavarian Nordic has already shipped 300,000 doses that were made at a third-party facility that had previously been inspected by the FDA.

State and local officials in the U.S. say the limited vaccine supplies aren't keeping pace with the growing number of people seeking appointments, a gap that is fueling anxiety about the virus.

"The demand has been very, very high — overwhelming, at this point," said Dr. Mary Foote, of the New York City health department. "We just want to make clear: If we have the vaccine, we can administer it. The critical issue here right now is supply."

Earlier this week, New York city's system for scheduling vaccination appointments crashed due to online traffic.

The U.S. government has shipped 132,000 doses of the vaccine to health departments, including more than 21,000 to New York City and 44,000 to California.

NATION

US, Saudi Arabia meeting begins with fist bump

BY AAMER MADHANI,
ELLEN KNICKMEYER
AND CHRIS MEGIERAN
Associated Press

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia — A crucial meeting to repair one of the world's most important diplomatic relationships began with a fist bump Friday as Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman welcomed U.S. President Joe Biden at a royal palace.

The first encounter, captured by Saudi television, occurred as Biden stepped out of his presidential limousine in Jeddah for a visit that is intended to reset their countries' long-standing partnership.

There was little evidence of any warmth between the leaders, and none of the backslapping or smiles that Biden or the crown prince usually display when greeting other leaders.

Until now, Biden had refused to speak to Prince Mohammed, the presumed heir to the throne currently held by his father, King Salman. Biden has harshly criticized the oil-rich kingdom for its human rights abuses, particularly the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a U.S.-based journalist.

But those concerns have since been eclipsed by other challenges, including rising gas prices and Iranian aggression in the Middle East. At the same time, Saudi Arabia is looking to bolster its security relationship with the United States and seeking investments to transform its economy into one that's less reliant on pumping oil.

The Saudis held a subdued welcome for Biden at the airport in Jeddah, with none of the ceremony that accompanied his stop this week in Israel.

Biden was greeted by Mecca's



SAUDI PRESS AGENCY/AP

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman greets President Joe Biden, with a fist bump after his arrival in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Friday.

governor, Prince Khalid bin Faisal, and Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the U.S., Princess Reema bint Bandar, and then walked down a lavender carpet that led to the limousine that whisked him to the palace.

The president was scheduled to sit down with King Salman, the 86-year-old monarch who has suffered from poor health, including two hospitalizations this year. Then he was to participate in a broader meeting including Prince Mohammed, the presumed heir to the throne who is known by his initials MBS.

The future of the region, including the possibility of closer ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel, as

well as the ebb and flow of the world's oil supply could depend on the relationship between the 79-year-old U.S. president and the 36-year-old Saudi royal.

The visit may already be seen as a win for Prince Mohammed. His rise to power has ushered in a new era for the kingdom as it works to build a homegrown military and weapons industry, wean itself from reliance on oil for revenue and build ties with Israel and other nations as a hedge against the perception that the U.S. is a less reliable security partner.

The meeting with Biden could bestow greater legitimacy on the crown prince's plans and his path to the throne.

There's been considerable speculation about both the choreography and the substance of how Biden, who had vowed as a presidential candidate to treat the Saudis as a "pariah" for their human rights record, would go about interacting with Prince Mohammed. Asked if Biden would shake hands with him, a senior administration official demurred and noted the White House is "focused on the meetings, not the greetings."

Last year Biden's administration approved the release of a U.S. intelligence finding that determined the crown prince likely approved Khashoggi's killing. The release of the report caused a further rupture in U.S.-Saudi rela-

tions.

"My views on Khashoggi have been absolutely, positively clear. And I have never been quiet about talking about human rights," Biden has said. "The reason I'm going to Saudi Arabia, though, is much broader. It's to promote U.S. interests — promote U.S. interests in a way that I think we have an opportunity to reassert what I think we made a mistake of walking away from: our influence in the Middle East."

Biden arrived in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah on the third day of a four-day swing through the Middle East. He spent the first two days meeting with Israeli officials and traveled to the West Bank on Friday to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and others before flying to Saudi Arabia.

The Saudis took a step toward normalization of relations with Israel before Biden's visit, announcing early Friday that it was opening its airspace to "all air carriers," signaling the end of its strict limits on Israeli flights flying over its territory.

Biden hailed the decision as "an important step towards building a more integrated and stable Middle East region," adding that the decision "can help build momentum toward Israel's further integration into the region, including with Saudi Arabia."

Biden also was to take part in a Saturday gathering of leaders from the Gulf Cooperation Council — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — before returning to Washington. The leaders of Mideast neighbors Egypt, Iraq and Jordan were also expected to attend.

Wildfires ravage forests in France near Atlantic

Associated Press

PARIS — A thousand firefighters with 10 water-dumping planes struggled Friday to contain two wildfires in the Bordeaux region of southwest France that have forced the evacuation of 10,000 people and ravaged pine forests near the Atlantic coast.

High temperatures and strong winds have complicated firefighting efforts in the region, one of several around Europe scorched by wildfires this season. No victims have been reported so far in the French fires, though some homes and cars have been damaged.

One of the French fires is in woodlands just south of the Atlantic resort town of Arcachon, a major attraction for visitors from around France and beyond during the sum-

mer season. The other is in parkland not far from valleys dotted with vineyards that have struggled with hotter, drier weather than usual this year that authorities link to climate change.

More than 17,000 acres of land have been consumed by the fires, according to the regional emergency service. As the fires stretched into a fourth day Friday, one of the fires was partially contained, it said, but warned that hotter temperatures and winds coming from inland over the weekend could further complicate the efforts.

Some of the firefighting planes and equipment that were supposed to be displayed in Thursday's Bastille Day parade in Paris was diverted for use on the Bordeaux region fires.

Sri Lankan prime minister sworn in as interim president

Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Sri Lanka's prime minister was sworn in Friday as interim president until Parliament elects a successor to Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled abroad and resigned after mass protests over the country's economic collapse.

Lawmakers were to convene Saturday to choose a new leader who would serve the remainder of Rajapaksa's term, which ends in 2024.

A tenuous calm was restored in the capital of Colombo on Thursday after protesters who had occupied government buildings retreated, but with the political opposition deeply fractured, a solution to Sri Lanka's many problems

seemed no closer.

As people celebrated in the streets, Parliament speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana promised a swift and transparent political process that should be done within a week.

The new president could appoint a new prime minister, who would then have to be approved by Parliament. After Rajapaksa resigned, pressure on the prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, was rising.

In a televised statement, Wickremesinghe said he would initiate steps to change the constitution to curb presidential powers and strengthen Parliament, restore law and order and take legal action against "insurgents."

It was unclear to whom he was referring, although he said true protesters would not have gotten involved in clashes near Parliament on Wednesday night, when many soldiers reportedly were injured.

"There is a big difference between protesters and insurgents. We will take legal action against insurgents," he said.

Wickremesinghe became acting president after Rajapaksa fled Sri Lanka on Wednesday, flying first to the Maldives and then to Singapore.

The prime minister's office said Wickremesinghe was sworn in Friday as interim president by Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Some residents yelling at tourists over parking

AZ JEROME — More than 1 million people a year visit the small town of Jerome, the former home to one of Arizona’s largest copper mines and now a hub for artists.

But police have a problem these days. They say some residents are yelling at tourists over parking in the 504-acre town that has a population of about 450.

“It has come to our attention that some people visiting our town on short visits and using lawful short term parking passes are being yelled at or having notes left on their cars by local residents,” police said on the department’s website Monday. “Yelling at, or leaving notes could, in some cases, constitute harassment under Arizona Revised Statutes.”

If any resident feels there may be a parking violation, they are being asked to notify the police department to investigate.

Pet caught after weeks on the run at airport

MA BOSTON — A family’s beloved pet cat that’s been dodging airport personnel, airline employees, and animal experts since escaping from a pet carrier at Boston’s Logan International Airport about three weeks ago was finally caught Wednesday.

“Whether out of fatigue or hunger we’ll never know, but this morning she finally let herself be caught,” an airport statement said.

Rowdy was given a health check and will be returned to her family.

“She looks great, is happy to be with people and I am sure will be happy to be reunited with us,” pet owner Patty Nolet Sahli posted on Facebook.

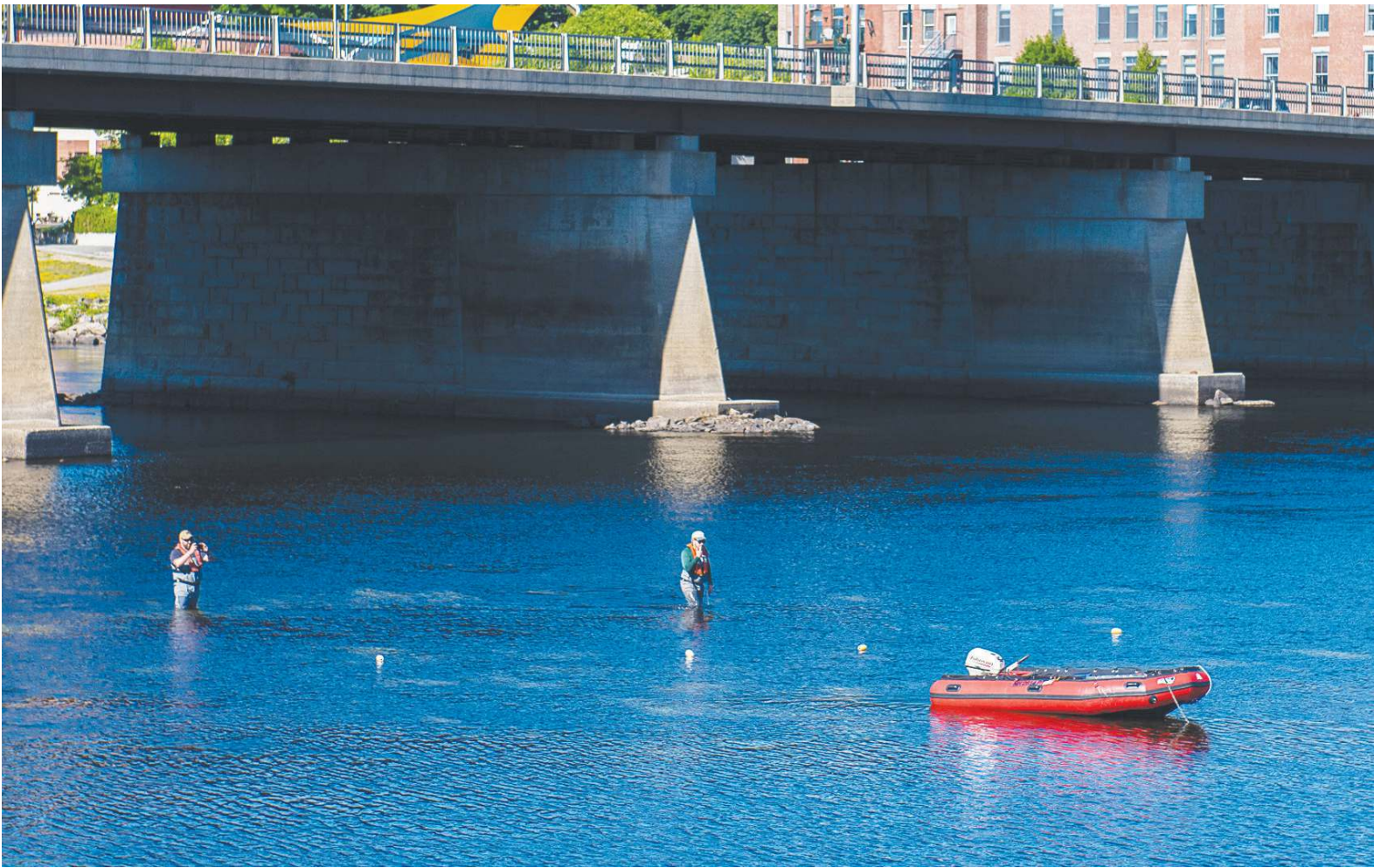
Sahli previously posted that the family was returning to the U.S. after an assignment to Germany with the Army, but when their Lufthansa flight landed on June 24 the 4-year-old black female cat with green eyes escaped her cage and went to chase birds.

That set off a massive search that involved airport and Lufthansa personnel, construction workers, and animal welfare advocates, as well as the use of wildlife cameras and safe-release traps.

3 charged in connection with fire at church

WV SHADY SPRING — Three people have been arrested in connection with a fire that destroyed a historic church in West Virginia, state police said.

Braxton Allan Miller, 18, of Charleston; James Dean Elmore, 19, of Beckley; and a juvenile boy were charged in connection with the fire at St. Colman Catholic Church in the Shady Spring area of Raleigh County, police said Wednesday.



RUSS DILLINGHAM, SUN JOURNAL/AP

River work

Staff from Normandeau Associates, a leader in providing science-based environmental consulting services, place buoys below Great Falls on the Androscoggin River in Maine on Wednesday as part of ongoing water quality and aquatic habitat studies.

The fire was reported Sunday morning but had started the night before, police said.

Miller and the juvenile were charged with arson and conspiracy, while Elmore was charged with accessory after the fact and conspiracy.

5 workers hospitalized after power line incident

IL GRAND RIDGE — Three workers were hospitalized in critical condition and two others in serious condition Tuesday after an aluminum gutter came into contact with a power line while working on a northern Illinois home, fire officials said.

The five workers were erecting an aluminum gutter when it came into contact with a power line in Grand Ridge, officials said.

The workers, from a company based in Roanoke, Ill., were all on aluminum ladders and touching portions of the house when the gutter became electrified, sending them tumbling 25 feet from the ladders to the ground, officials told WLS-TV.

Ski resort announces new Saskadena Six name

VT SOUTH POMFRET — A small ski area in Vermont announced Wednesday that it has changed its name from Suicide Six to Saskadena Six amid an increased awareness about mental health and concerns about the nature of the original name.

“Saskadena” means “standing

mountain” in the Abenaki language, the ski area in South Pomfret, near Woodstock, said on its website.

“It was chosen by the resort team to honor the original inhabitants of the land and the mountain’s multi-generational legacy and values of community, inclusion, adventure, discovery, and fun,” the ski area said in a statement. “The name sends a powerful message of connection both to the deeper history of the mountain with the Abenaki nation and to the present-day community at large.”

700 animals seized after complaint about neglect

ND ROLLA — Sheriff’s officials say 700 animals have been seized following a complaint about neglect in Rolette County.

Acting on an anonymous tip, sheriff’s deputies with assistance from the North Dakota Stockmen’s Association and the North Dakota State Veterinarian’s Office, went to a property in Rolette County armed with a search warrant early last month.

In a Facebook post, the sheriff’s office says deputies found dead cattle and an insufficient amount of feed for hundreds of other animals. The conditions of about 500 head of cattle were documented and instructions given to their owner on their well-being.

Rolette County deputies continued to monitor the herd and returned late in June and determined the livestock, as well as 200

head of cattle owned by the same person in other counties, needed to be seized.

The sheriff’s office said it has contracted third-party individuals to care, feed and monitor the animals, which will be sold.

Company's test balloons prompt calls of concern

SD SIOUX FALLS — Citizens who called the National Weather Service concerned about some “silvery objects” in the sky around Sioux Falls this week prompted the agency to tweet that the objects were not aliens, but rather test balloons launched by a South Dakota aerospace subsidiary.

“Sorry, not aliens,” the NWS tweeted in response to the calls it received.

The high altitude balloons were launched by Raven Aerostar, a subsidiary of Raven Industries.

“As a South Dakota company and the world leader in stratospheric balloon technology, our team conducts stratospheric balloon flights throughout the year, and many of them are launched from our dedicated hangar near Baltic, SD,” said Aerostar president Jim Nelson. “Two of our Thunderhead Balloon Systems are currently over Sioux Falls.”

The balloons, which look like hot air balloons, operate miles above the surface of the earth. Once the balloon reaches the stratosphere, it changes from a teardrop to a pumpkin shape, South Dakota Public Broadcast-

ing reported.

Man sent to prison for \$2.5 million tax fraud

NC CHARLOTTE — A North Carolina man is going to prison following his conviction stemming from a \$2.5 million tax fraud scheme based on the preparation and filing of false tax returns, according to federal prosecutors.

Court documents and statements said Joseph Octave, 49, of Charlotte was the leader of a multi-year, multimillion-dollar tax fraud scheme involving hundreds of fraudulent tax returns, according to a news release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office. Octave owned and operated a tax preparation business in Charlotte.

From 2014 through 2019, Octave used his business for a scheme in which he directed his employees to file fraudulent tax returns, prosecutors said. He also trained his employees on how to create the fraudulent returns to avoid IRS detection and provided them with scripts and cheat sheets.

Also, Octave instructed his employees not to give clients copies of their own tax returns and not to share any details beyond the total refund amount, the news release said.

In addition to the term of imprisonment, a judge ordered Octave to serve two years of supervised release and to pay approximately \$2.5 million in restitution.

FOOD

A morning cup with an assist from mold

Koji, a fungus used in fermentation, is the latest trend in specialty coffee

By KAT ODELL
Bloomberg News

Chefs generally want to keep mold out of their kitchens, but they make an exception for koji. For around a decade, the fungus has been a secret weapon for trailblazing chefs like Rene Redzepi at Noma in Copenhagen, used to ferment grains, cure proteins and impart umami to dishes both sweet and savory.

Now, the culinary world's most popular mold is poised to become the biggest trend in the specialty coffee world. Enterprising producers believe the multipurpose ingredient can improve on mediocre coffee beans, and produce a better-tasting caffeinated cup.

It's an opportune time to maximize coffee bean quality. The price of Arabica beans, the most popular in the world, has more than doubled in the past year and a half.

"The biggest thing that makes koji great is the potential to grow sweetness in coffees that are lacking, or to enhance a coffee to a higher grade," says Mason Salisbury, co-founder of Nevada-based Luminous Coffee, one of the country's first koji coffee adopters. Salisbury started selling his fermented beans this spring; a 200-gram bag goes for \$30.

A handful of specialty coffee shops around the world have begun releasing bags of koji coffee, including Ohio's Phoenix Coffee, The Netherlands' Manhattan Coffee Roasters and Hatch, in Ontario, Canada. Manhattan Coffee Roasters sold out of stock quickly, moving 220 pounds

of koji coffee in 72 hours.

Whether brewed via the filter method or pour-over, part of the appeal of the koji process is that, when done right, it doesn't add a flavor of its own. For industry professionals, the coffee is revolutionary for its ability to boost the quality of a basic bean and turn it into a better version of itself. For the consumer, koji means a rounder, silkier, sweeter brew.

The process garnered serious attention after Finnish barista Kaapo Paavolainen of Helsinki's One Day Coffee brewed the unconventional koji beans in public for the first time at the World Barista Championship in Milan in October.

"The championships ... are so big that it can define entire crops of coffee for years to come," Paavolainen says.

El Vergel Estates, a boutique coffee farm in Colombia that's known for high-end, exotic cultivars, is credited with producing the first successful batch of koji-treated beans. The farm collaborated with a team of koji enthusiasts to use the mold — a strain of the *aspergillus oryzae* fungus, best known for its ability to turn rice into sake and soy beans into miso paste — for coffee. They included Salisbury; Christopher Feran, director of Phoenix Coffee; chef Jeremy Umansky (his Cleveland deli, Larder, sells products like koji-cured pastrami); and Koichi Higuchi, a seventh-generation koji spore producer based in Osaka, Japan.

The process is deceptively simple. It starts by sprinkling freshly picked coffee cherries with yellow-white koji powder —



HATCH COFFEE/TNS

At Hatch in Ontario, Canada, koji coffee is on the menu. Koji, a type of mold used in the fermentation process for many foods, is the latest trend in coffee. Producers believe the process improves an otherwise mediocre bean and creates a better-tasting beverage.

a substance that looks like flour — then gently mixing with a paddle. The berries then sit for two days, producing a fluffy white fur, before being sun-dried for two to three weeks. They're milled to remove the outer husk, and shipped to open-minded roasters.

The process, which Feran dubbed the Koji Supernatural Protocol, led to the world's first koji-processed coffee beans in 2020. Paavolainen brewed the second harvest on stage during last year's World Barista Championship.

Following the demo, "there was massive amounts of interest for the processing amongst my colleagues," says Paavolainen. Many were incredulous that a coffee

bean's quality could be improved with mold.

Koji coffee's accentuated sweetness is created when fermentation produces enzymes that break down proteins in the coffee cherry into amino acids, and the starches into fermentable sugars, Feran says. These help "increase a coffee's perception of sweetness, fruitiness and complexity," he says.

Koji has "the power to transform even the most mundane of ingredients," Umansky says. The process allows coffee to "become more brilliant than the original bean," says Rabi Aouam, founder of Spain's Kima Coffee, another early adopter.

Fans eager to try the brew can

expect a slightly pricier cup of joe. In general, koji coffee costs around twice as much per pound compared with regular coffee, which amounts to \$5 to \$7 per cup in most shops. The coffee is now creeping onto menus at places like Luminous in Brooklyn; in Bristol, England, Sweven Coffee occasionally stocks the beans. And as koji-processing has expanded to farms in Colombia, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Thailand, China, Vietnam, Brazil and Indonesia, the fermented coffee is set to become more widely available worldwide this fall.

For Paavolainen, the transformative potential of koji coffee is easy to encapsulate: "Be all that you can be," he says.



MOVIES

Bringing the marsh to life

Location is as significant a character as any other in 'Where the Crawdads Sing'

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

The coastal marshlands of North Carolina take on a mythic quality in Delia Owens' "Where the Crawdads Sing." They are where the protagonist, Kya, grows up alone after her family leaves. They are also both the source of her artistic inspiration and her social isolation from the people in the nearby town of Barkley Cove.

"Marsh is not a swamp," Owens' book begins. "Marsh is a space of light, where grass grows in water, and water flows into the sky. Slow-moving creeks wander, carrying the orb of the sun with them to the sea, and long-legged birds lift with unexpected grace — as though not built to fly — against the roar of a thousand snow geese."

It is a character as important as any in the book, and the filmmakers behind the big-screen adaptation, now in theaters nationwide, were not going to take any chances re-creating that environment on a soundstage. They too would take to the marsh — oppressive heat, swarming bugs, looming alligators, unpredictable weather, flash floods, lightning storms and all — to bring the story to life. New Orleans plays coastal North Carolina in the film.

Reese Witherspoon and producer Elizabeth Gabler ("Life of Pi," "Hidden Figures") were both early champions of "Where the Crawdads Sing," which became an unlikely publishing phenomenon, with more than 12 million copies sold and a record-breaking 191 weeks on the best-seller list. They set out to make a feature film and enlisted Oscar-nominated "Beasts of the Southern Wild" screenwriter Lucy Alibar to take a stab at adapting the lyrical novel, which is at turns a romance, a coming-of-age tale, a courtroom drama, a mystery and a celebration of the

natural world.

Director Olivia Newman had already decided she had to avoid the book when she heard there was an adaptation in the works. She wanted to preemptively spare herself the heartbreak of not getting to direct it herself. Then her agent told her that they were still searching for a director. She read it in two days, put a pitch together, and with an image of Terence Malick's "The New World" in her head, she landed the dream job.

"We really wanted it to feel timeless," Newman said. "Even though the book is really grounded in a specific time and place in American history that was so important for us to capture authentically, the story of 'the marsh girl' also felt to me like a bit of folklore."

The story follows "the marsh girl" Kya from age 6, when her mother leaves suddenly and her siblings and father go soon after, to her teen years through adulthood, capturing her evolution as an artist and several romances. Her freedom and future are put into jeopardy when one of her suitors is found dead and she's assumed to be the cause. Daisy Edgar-Jones, the English actor who broke out as Marianne in "Normal People," was cast to play Kya.

"I feel very lucky that I've been able to play women that are real and complicated," Edgar-Jones said. "Kya and Marianne aren't just one thing. They are both vulnerable and kind people, but they're also incredibly spiky at times and flawed in many ways as well."

Edgar-Jones immersed herself in Kya's world, which required her to adopt a mid-century Carolina accent, learn how to navigate a boat through the marsh and often be barefoot outdoors, which was mostly fine save for the red ants everywhere. Upon arriving in New Orleans, she found herself transported by the



PHOTOS BY SONY PICTURES/AP

Daisy Edgar-Jones (Kya), left, and Taylor John Smith (Tate) in a scene from "Where the Crawdads Sing." Of working on location, Smith said, "It was great that we were able to play around in that environment."

environment and its natural beauty and wildness. One of her fondest memories, she said, was the first time she saw the shack that production built in a nearby state park for Kya's house.

"It felt like it was really lifted from my imagination," Edgar-Jones said.

Filming was scheduled to catch the spring greenery before the rains came. They planned to shoot exteriors in May and interiors in June, but nature had other plans. A record May rainfall had the production constantly having to rearrange, sometimes on the spot, when there were sudden lightning storms. There were also unique challenges in shooting a good portion of the film on water, which had the entire production — from actors and cameras to props and port-a-potties — on small boats in the marsh.

"It was stressful at times," said Taylor John Smith, who plays Kya's friend and first love Tate. "But being out in the humidity when the air is super thick and hearing the cicadas and the frogs croaking and seeing snakes and gators come up next to you in the middle of a scene? It was great that we were able to play around in that environment."

Newman said she has a bit of PTSD from the experience, from chasing the daylight to running from storms. And it felt like a cruel trick when after the rains, they had five days of gorgeous weather but couldn't film any-



The marsh is a character in its own right in the film.

thing they needed to because of all the flooding.

"It was very challenging ... But at the same time, there was absolutely no way to tell the story without being right there in the environment. It's as beautiful as it is because we shot on location and dealt with the elements and captured that landscape exactly as it is," Newman said. "We wanted to lean into the natural beauty of her world, of the marsh, of the swamps and really highlight how beautiful that landscape is without touching it, using natural light and just picking the right time of day to shoot."

The team spent nine months editing the film and everyone is excited about finally releasing it to the world on the big screen. Newman was heartened to know

that Sony Pictures always intended for it to be a theatrical release, which is more and more of a rarity from major studios focused on franchises, tentpoles and superheroes — especially in the summer months.

"I think there's a real thirst for these kinds of big dramas, romances and suspense movies," Newman said. "We need more stories like this, and we need more movies like this in the theater."

"I think that there's a lot to take away from a character like Kya," she continued. "I think we've all felt underestimated. We've all felt sort of ostracized for different reasons. She gives us a bit of hope that we're stronger than we think. This is a time when women especially need to be reassured."

"It was very challenging ... But at the same time, there was absolutely no way to tell the story without being right there in the environment. It's as beautiful as it is because we shot on location and dealt with the elements and captured that landscape exactly as it is."

"Where the Crawdads Sing" director Olivia Newman

VIDEO GAMES



Nintendo photos

In *Fire Emblem Warriors: Three Hopes*, you play as a mercenary named Shez, fighting for one of three houses in the land of Fódlan.

Newcomers beware

Fire Emblem Warriors: Three Hopes is a grind that only previous adherents of the Japanese RPG will appreciate

BY SHANNON LIAO
The Washington Post

Fire Emblem *Warriors: Three Hopes* is the latest Japanese role-playing game to arrive on the Nintendo Switch. Like *Persona 5 Strikers* and the *Zelda* spinoff *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity*, *Three Hopes* takes a beloved franchise and storyline — in this case, *Fire Emblem* — and adds hack-and-slash combat to it.

Three Hopes would be a dissatisfying title if it were enjoyed on its merits alone and not connected to the *Fire Emblem* franchise; in short, it's a grind. On the other hand, it's a game totally designed for eager fans, who will get exactly what they want from it — whether that's dating old flames, an electrifying soundtrack or the chance to see powerful characters' attacks adapted into the Musou fighting genre popularized by developer Omega Force and its *Dynasty Warriors* series.

Three Hopes is set before and during the events of 2019's *Fire Emblem: Three Houses*. As in *Three Houses*, you play a mercenary, this time by the name of Shez. Shez fights alongside one of the three houses of the player's choosing in the fantasy land of Fódlan. The three houses are pitted against each other in an exhausting war fought with magic, melee weapons and shape-shifting abilities.

Just like in the original game, Shez needs to earn the trust of their peers and level up their bonds by completing chores together, cooking delicious food, training countless hours and teaming up in battle.

How exactly Shez and *Three Hopes* fit into the grander lore of *Three Houses* is a confusing mystery that only gets somewhat clearer the more hours you sink into the game. Shez often faces off against the protagonist of *Three Houses*, Byleth —

now referred to as “Empress” or “the Ashen Demon” — who always aides an enemy house.

The game clocks in at roughly 40 hours for one playthrough, but can easily span the course of 100 hours for completionists looking to experience each storyline and max out relationships.

At times, playing *Three Hopes* is similar to playing chess. You order around soldier units on the battlefield, telling them to seize the advantage and defend weak points. Once arriving at their destinations, where the player takes the reins to fight alongside other characters, these units can send dozens of enemies flying into the sky in what are often absurd-looking animations, common in the Musou genre. My personal favorite is fighting as the Death Knight, Jeritza, who will tell his enemies in a booming voice, “Stand, coward. Your life is forfeit.” It's also clear that Shez and the leaders of the three houses have the best combat design and most satisfying skills.

The game's many, many battles are interspersed with the same heartwarming character stories that made *Fire Emblem: Three Houses* so compelling, and helped spawn a plethora of fan art and fan fiction. The characters' stories are kept consistent with the original game, which makes it feel like revisiting old friends.

Three Hopes leans into a weird contrast between focusing on armies of cherished characters where anyone can die, and idyllic scenes where you get to know specific characters better. It kind of works, as scenes where characters spend their downtime are even more precious and heart-rending when the brevity of their lives is underscored by the war raged across Fódlan.

The game never fails to remind you of



Three Hopes never fails to remind players of the tolls of the game's war.

the tolls of this war. Even if you play Edelgard's house, easily the most warmongering of the three, she still eventually admits that her cause has cost too many lives and she's made mistakes. As the player, you can help her make fewer mistakes, choosing to recruit allies instead of killing them. Sometimes that means waiting around in battle instead of immediately destroying all enemies, and then slowly enacting strategies to force the opponent to surrender. It's an intriguing idea in a genre that is mostly about killing — why not stop, and add another friend to the roster instead?

Often, a new ally is added so late into the game that you'd have to go out of your way to level up their bonds with other characters. But since all the characters' levels and powers get carried over to future playthroughs, you can start back up where you left off on another playthrough.

This is a long, repetitive game. Thankfully, it gets easier and more satisfying the more hours that you've invested, and some storylines are more interesting than others.

A lot of the dialogue in the Blue Lions route felt predictable and unimportant. But siding with the Black Eagles house, which the other houses revile, means getting more behind-the-scenes access to world domination plans and plotting against traitors.

When you're not fighting or talking, the game has a lot of busywork for you — upgrading facilities with resources, upgrading units with better gear, sending allies to clean the campgrounds — in addition to many side missions and side quests, which are optional but grant such a significant power boost that you might as well do them. Unfortunately, *Three Hopes* has fewer perks that made such busywork fun in the original game. There's no fishing; fish just magically appear in your inventory. There's no growing of herbs. There's no marriage or romantic endings, though you can ask characters out on dates and they may even flirt. And the setting of constantly being on a battleground can be draining, compared to the beautiful and cozy backdrop of Garreg Mach Monastery in the original game.

For what the game is — a sequel to *Three Houses* with real-time Musou combat — it delivers what it promised. There's a mystery to *Three Hopes* that can only be unraveled with dozens of hours of combat and cutscenes, and the game assumes substantial preexisting knowledge of *Three Houses*. Fans will enjoy reuniting with their favorite characters, but the derivative plot and built-in grind make it a tougher sell to anyone else.

Platform: Nintendo Switch

Online: tinyurl.com/y3xzvj6x

HEALTH & FITNESS

Want to live longer? Eat like these mice

Scientists think their experiment on fasting in alignment with the circadian cycle could also yield clues for human lifespans

BY ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN
The Dallas Morning News

New research from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center suggests that not only what we eat, but also when we eat it, could play a role in how long we live.

The idea that reducing the amount of calories you eat can extend your lifespan has been around for a while.

But recently, a team led by UT Southwestern neuroscience professors Joseph Takahashi and Carla Green discovered that caloric restriction extended mice's life spans the most when the mice chowed down in accordance with their circadian clocks: internal timekeeping devices that make sure our cells are primed for food, sleep and activity. Their work was published in the journal *Science* in May.

"It really cemented this idea that aligning your eating with your circadian rhythms is so important to overall health," said Green, who is also a distinguished scholar of neuroscience at UT Southwestern.

While the research was performed on mice, future studies could yield clues about how human eating habits factor into our lifespans as well.

Both Takahashi and Green have studied circadian rhythms for years. Takahashi, who is chair of the department of neuroscience and an investigator in the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at UT Southwestern, identified the first gene known to control circadian clocks in mammals in 1997 with his lab. He and Green, who are married, have worked together on research projects in the past.

Eight years ago, the two of them pored over previous research on caloric restriction in mice, and discovered something surprising. The mice in these experiments were being fed exclusively during the day, even though mice are nocturnal. Further, the mice were only being fed three times a week.

"That's kind of an unusual feeding protocol, because mice don't eat every other day," Takahashi said.

This outdated feeding protocol avoided requiring the scientists to come into work at odd hours to feed their mice, but it wasn't a good representation of how mice would normally grab their meals.

So, Green and Takahashi decided to test how important caloric restriction was to mice's lifespans when the mice ate according to their normal daily rhythms.



PHOTOS BY JUAN FIGUEROA, DALLAS MORNING NEWS/TNS

This automated feeder was used to feed mice as part of an experiment at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Hamon Biomedical Research Building in Dallas.

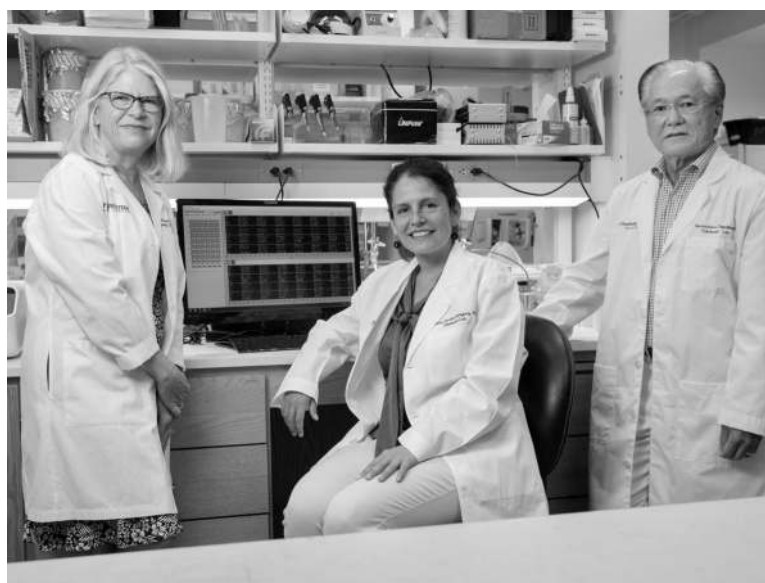
"It's the same amount of food, the same calories. It's when the mice eat that could have a huge impact on how long they live. For me, this was crazy."

Victoria Acosta-Rodriguez
author of the study and postdoctoral researcher in Joseph Takahashi's lab

Green and Takahashi set up their experiment with several different groups of mice. They varied what and when the mice could eat, using three different feeding factors.

The first was calorie number. In the researchers' control group, the mice's diet wasn't calorie-restricted. In the remaining five groups, the mice's calories were restricted by 30%.

The second was circadian rhythm alignment: how the mice's feeding schedule aligned with when they normally ate. Some of the mice ate only at night, like they were used to, and



Carla Green, Victoria Acosta-Rodriguez and Joseph Takahashi pose July 6 by the computer that controls and monitors the automated feeders used to regulate food intake for the mice.

others ate only during the day.

The third was fasting time, or how long the mice weren't eating. In the day and night groups, some of the mice were given their food spaced out over 12 hours, and fasted for the remaining 12 hours. The other mice were given their day's meal all at once, and binge-ate it in two hours. A final group of mice was given their food over 24 hours, with no fasting at all.

When it came to actually feeding the mice, though, the researchers hit a roadblock. To manually feed groups of mice during the day and night, they needed to be in the lab at all

hours, every day, for the mice's entire lifespan.

"We quickly realized that this would be an incredibly difficult experiment to do," Takahashi said.

Green and Takahashi's labs solved this problem by creating their own feeders. They designed a set of 500 feeders — one for each mouse — to dispense food pellets at a pre-programmed time. The process of creating and testing the feeders took almost two years.

Once the tech was ready, the team measured how long all the mice lived, and took a look at

what genes were expressed in each mouse over time.

They found that the mice that ate fewer calories, but over a period of 24 hours — with no circadian rhythm alignment — lived only 10% longer than the control mice.

The calorically-restricted mice that ate at night over a 12-hour period lived 35% longer than the control group.

"It's the same amount of food, the same calories," said Victoria Acosta-Rodriguez, a postdoctoral researcher in Takahashi's lab and an author of the study. "It's when the mice eat that could have a huge impact on how long they live. For me, this was crazy."

Roman Kondratov, a professor of biology at Cleveland State University, said the research provided compelling evidence for the role of fasting in extending lifespan.

"In my opinion, they provided the first direct evidence that fasting is an essential component of caloric restriction," said Kondratov, who was not involved with the UT Southwestern study. "Reduction of ... calories has positive effects, but in combination with fasting, it's even better."

The mice who lived longest in the study ate from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., standard time. For humans, that would look like restricting eating to any 12-hour period while we're awake during the day. Takahashi said there's evidence it's better to begin that interval earlier in the day instead of skipping breakfast.

Both Takahashi and Acosta-Rodriguez have begun applying the study's results to their own eating habits.

"In Argentina, I will have dinner at, like, 10 p.m.," Acosta-Rodriguez said. "Here, I'm trying to do it at 7 p.m., and after this, trying not to get calories. Kind of like shortening the feeding windows."

Green and Takahashi's research provides some answers as to how what and when we eat factors into how long we live.

Now the researchers look at a crucial follow-up question: Why? Figuring out exactly which clock-regulating molecules or genes in mice helped them live longer in this study could be the key to applying these findings to humans.

"Going forward, it's going to be really interesting to look at the exact mechanisms of what aspect of this is really the critical feature that promotes longevity and the health of these animals," Green said.



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OPINION

GOP boycott of Jan. 6 committee is backfiring

By JONATHAN BERNSTEIN
 Bloomberg Opinion

Tuesday's hearing of the House committee investigating the assault on the U.S. Capitol of Jan. 6, 2021, provided a stark reminder of how the boycott by all but two Republicans has set the context of the proceedings. Remember: After Speaker Nancy Pelosi vetoed Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy's suggestions for Republicans to serve on the panel, McCarthy pulled all Republican participation, leaving Pelosi to name two Republican adversaries of former President Donald Trump who defied the boycott.

The hallmark of these hearings — seven this summer and one last year — has been that they've run smoothly. They start on time. There is no partisan sniping. No motions made and argued over. The use of taped segments — from depositions and from other evidence — has been professional and effective. The hearings even appear to end on time.

The committee has been shockingly effective at teasing each session in advance without giving away the bulk of their story. There's even a ritual at the end in which Rep. Liz Cheney, of Wyoming, the senior of the two Republicans, previews the next hearing and drops a bombshell, supplying the media with a sidebar story and keeping everyone's interest up to the last moment. Tuesday's Cheney surprise was the revelation that Trump tried (unsuccessfully) to contact a committee witness.

It's not unusual for a lot of what happens in congressional hearings to be scripted; indeed, it's pretty normal. But even when partisanship is minimized and members are cooperative (and yes, even in these days of partisan polarization, there's plenty of cooperation), representatives almost always read off their own individual scripts, with no more than halting

coordination even within the parties. For a hearing to be centrally scripted ... that's highly unusual.

Some of this would have been possible had there been additional, dissenting Republicans on the committee. But it would have been a lot harder. Even if the other Republicans had been pro-democracy and acted in good faith — unlikely, but let's suppose — they probably would have appealed to the impulse of many journalists to hold both parties responsible for any disputes that break out. More likely, they would have deliberately provoked fights to make the story about committee squabbling, rather than the evidence presented. They also could have selectively leaked things from the depositions to take the steam out of the hearings. But even just adding minority member time would have broken up the force and the effectiveness of the presentations.

To be sure, it would also have given critics a chance to expose weak points in the committee's argument. Tuesday's session demonstrated how. The topic was actions taken by Trump after losing the 2020 election, from mid-December up to Jan. 6, with the committee trying to pin the eventual violence on Trump himself.

If the committee's goal was simply to prove that Trump was aware of the potential for violence, including violence by organized militia-like groups, and even encouraged it, it was successful. However, I thought it was less successful at tying Trump directly to those groups. Overlap between the extended Trump camp and the extremist groups was exposed — Trump confidant Roger Stone, in particular, was involved with both — but a few skeptics on the committee could have pushed the majority harder about whether there was more to Trump's involvement than simply inspiring anyone who was willing to follow him

Ruling gives Congress an opening to reform regulation

By HUGH HEWITT
 Special to The Washington Post

Will Congress meet the challenge thrown down by the Supreme Court in June? In a sweeping opinion by Chief Justice John Roberts, the high court declared an end to the era of bureaucratic freelancing. A fair but short summary of the change is that every federal agency proposing to regulate any activity by an individual or business must find a clear basis for it in a statute passed by Congress and signed by the president.

Last month's 6-to-3 decision in West Virginia v. Environmental Protection Agency did not, as some have argued, resurrect the "non-delegation" doctrine, which would have neutered many agencies of most of their powers, or signal a return to a laissez faire era that saw the court strike down law after law that attempted to regulate business. What the new case holds is simply that Congress must get to work. If Congress and the president want an existing agency to regulate a new issue or even a new agency to regulate a specific set of problems, they must say so.

There are major areas where both parties agree legislation is needed and new regulations — and probably new agencies — must be stood up. Congress and the president need only articulate a specific intent to delegate regulatory authority to stop the courts from erasing final regulations. There are two obvious — indeed, pressing — areas of regulatory expertise to which Congress should delegate impor-

tant work, and quickly.

The first concerns social media and data collection giants — Big Tech, as they are collectively known. "Oversight of the dominant digital platforms' broad effects on society is not possible within the existing federal regulatory structure," a Brookings Institution review of the regulatory vacuum concluded in 2021. Both Republicans and Democrats fear the untrammelled powers of Silicon Valley.

Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., wants to create a regulatory agency to govern many aspects of the tech sector. His Digital Platform Commission Act would stand up the "Federal Digital Platform Commission," which would have five commissioners appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo., is pushing the same concept in the upper chamber. They have many allies among the GOP.

Two concerns should shape Congress' direction and the scope of any new agency's work. First: national security — is Big Tech selling powerful tools of repression and total surveillance marked "made in the USA" to our enemies? Second: Who owns an American's digital footprint and their data? The individual or the company that collects it? No agency currently exists with the requisite understanding, expertise or powers to answer these questions even if Congress put them on the table. A new agency must be created to proceed from an articulated congressional intent.

Washington understands that Big Tech's hidden powers are increasingly part of our na-

to commit mayhem.

I don't mean to minimize what the committee did demonstrate, which was certainly more than enough to produce a legitimate impeachment and conviction if Trump was still president, and may now be enough for indictment and conviction. And the committee has said that it hasn't yet revealed all the evidence it has gathered. But the feel of the hearing would have been different had there been someone present to poke holes at the conclusions drawn by the current members. Different, but perhaps not weaker; after all, one defense Trump can now trot out on the political stage is that no one is standing up for him in the committee, which is true even if the bulk of what is being presented is irrefutable.

One thing that is clear after eight hearings: Pelosi was correct to veto the Republican attempt to add committee members who were deeply involved in Trump's plotting. But that still left McCarthy with plenty of options, including strong Trump supporters who didn't get involved in planning to overturn the election and, in doing so, to overthrow the legitimate U.S. government.

Because if there's one thing that's been obvious starting on Election Day 2020 and is even more obvious now that we've seen hours of evidence, not to mention 18 months of Trump's public behavior, it's that overthrowing the government is exactly what Trump and his allies were attempting to do. Unfortunately, it seems that there are only two Republicans in the entire House of Representatives willing to side with democracy and against the former president. But they've made the committee a lot more effective.

Jonathan Bernstein is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering politics and policy. This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

tional defense posture. Silicon Valley fears ill-informed regulations pouring out of creaky agencies set up decades ago. Both government and business should rally to a new, bipartisan independent commission with broad powers to correct excesses, advance our cyberwar advantages and protect the nation's and its citizens's data.

Similarly, climate change is real but the Environmental Protection Agency is not the place to tackle it. New experts with a broader mandate must be charged with advancing mitigation and adaptation strategies. A first step: unleashing a new era of safe, climate saving, clean-power generating nuclear plants combined with common-sense controls on any emissions that warm the planet. The U.S. cannot cripple itself and its economic productivity with gestures to climate absolutists while ignoring China's unrestrained emissions that will overwhelm all other efforts.

A closely divided Congress (and one very likely to see the GOP take the majority in one or both houses in November) with a Democratic president presents the right conditions for compromise on sane regulatory initiatives. Stand up the new agencies. Send them off to accomplish big, but specific, tasks. The courts will then stand aside, as the Constitution directs they almost always should when Congress and the president have agreed.

Hugh Hewitt, a Washington Post contributing columnist, hosts a nationally syndicated radio show on the Salem Network. He is also a professor at Chapman University School of Law.

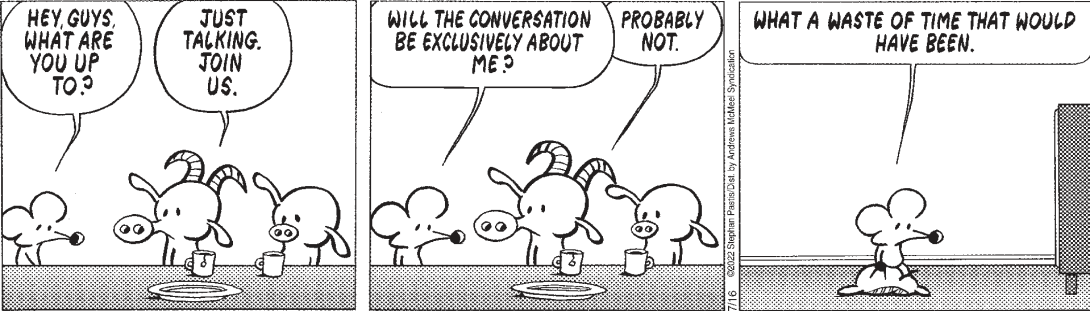
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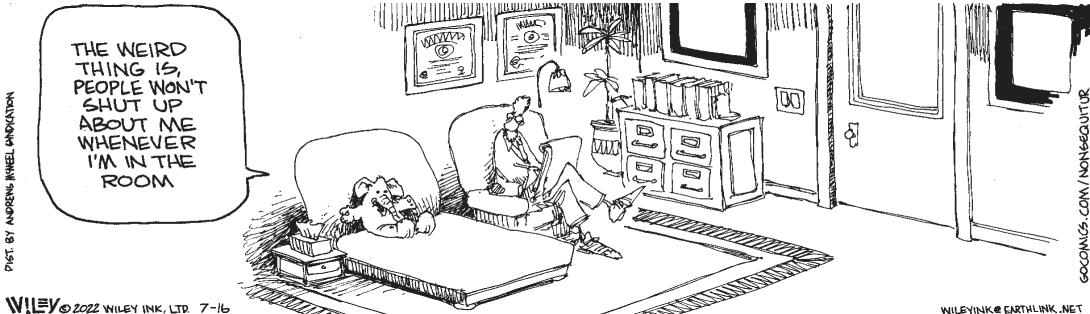
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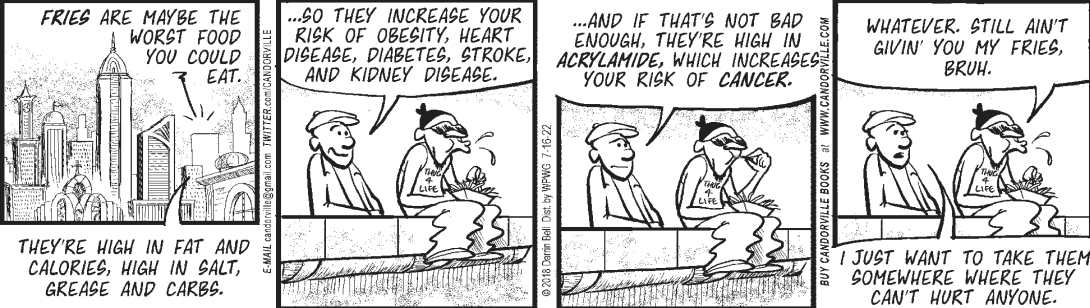
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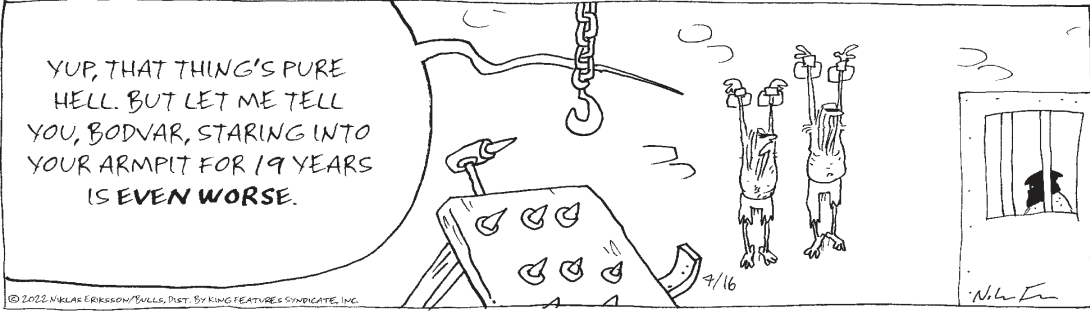
Non Sequitur



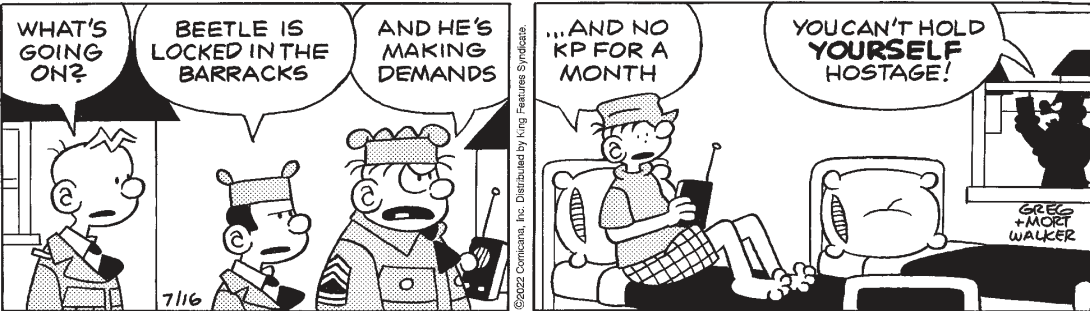
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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

- ACROSS
- 1 Costa —

5 Crib cry

9 Gal. fractions

12 Colorado resort

13 Russian river

14 Motor City labor org.

15 Alike (Fr.)

16 Eyelid woe

17 Lyricist Gershwin

18 Santa's runway

19 Sly chuckle

20 Per person

21 British verb ending

23 Right angle

25 Exaggerated pride

28 Affliction

32 Look of disdain

33 Edition

34 Agreed silently

36 Goddess of wisdom

37 Half of bi-

38 Mont. neighbor

39 Army transport

42 Cagers' gp.

44 Till bills

48 Internet address

49 Eye drop

50 Bryant of hoops fame

51 Three, in Rome

52 Saharan
- 53 Japanese noodle

54 Computer key

55 Pixels

56 Cooped (up)
- DOWN
- 1 KOA patron

2 Shakespeare villain

3 Pisa farewell

4 Super-motivated

5 Urges dogs on snow

6 Museo display

7 Chaos

8 Ginger —

9 Witticism

10 Poi base

11 Trade

20 #1 Elvis Presley song
- 22 Ambulance sound

24 Non-clergy

25 QVC alternative

26 Popular card game

27 Nap site

29 Enzyme suffix

30 Press for payment

31 Verily

35 Moolah

36 Prizes

39 Burlap fiber

40 Messes up

41 Power co. supply

43 Lure

45 Central point

46 Black, in verse

47 Dispatched

49 Smidgen

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

7-16

CRYPTOQUIP

UL NADFJ FWJRA LRBMF RBWD

NFKD F ZFAAUD TSFO F

IRDLQSSO ZFM ADKUDI, MUM

TDJDA TFB “TDJDA TFB”?

Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: WEIGHTY BOOK REVEALING ACTOR BEATTY’S BEST-KEPT SECRETS TO ACHIEVING SERENITY: “WARREN PEACE.”

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: T equals P

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IN

SEVEN

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Scoreboard

PRO SOCCER							
MLS							
EASTERN CONFERENCE							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
Philadelphia	9	2	9	36	31	14	
NYCFC	10	4	5	35	38	21	
New York	9	5	6	33	30	21	
CF Montréal	9	8	2	29	33	35	
Orlando City	8	7	5	29	25	29	
Cincinnati	7	7	6	27	32	35	
Charlotte FC	8	10	2	26	23	24	
Columbus	6	5	8	26	25	22	
New England	6	6	7	25	31	32	
Atlanta	6	8	5	23	28	30	
Inter Miami CF	6	9	4	22	19	29	
Chicago	5	10	5	20	20	27	
Toronto FC	5	11	4	19	26	38	
D.C. United	5	10	3	18	25	39	
WESTERN CONFERENCE							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
Austin FC	12	4	4	40	41	23	
LAFC	12	4	3	39	38	21	
Nashville	8	6	6	30	26	25	
Real Salt Lake	8	6	6	30	25	26	
Minnesota	8	8	4	28	27	25	
FC Dallas	7	6	7	28	30	24	
LA Galaxy	8	8	3	27	28	25	
Seattle	8	9	2	26	26	23	
Portland	6	6	8	26	32	29	
Vancouver	7	9	4	25	22	33	
Houston	6	10	4	22	25	28	
San Jose	5	7	7	22	32	39	
Colorado	5	8	6	21	22	27	
Sporting KC	5	11	5	20	19	35	
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.							
Saturday's games							
Toronto FC at CF Montréal New England at Philadelphia Seattle at Chicago Charlotte FC at Miami D.C. United at Minnesota LA Galaxy at Colorado Austin FC at FC Dallas							
Sunday's games							
Orlando City at Atlanta New York City FC at New York Cincinnati at Columbus Los Angeles FC at Nashville Sporting Kansas City at Real Salt Lake Houston at San Jose Vancouver at Portland							
NWSL							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
SD Wave FC	6	3	3	21	19	11	
Chicago	5	1	5	20	19	12	
Portland	4	1	6	18	24	10	
OL Reign	4	2	5	17	11	8	
Angel City FC	5	4	2	17	10	11	
Houston	4	4	3	15	16	13	
Kansas City	4	4	3	15	11	14	
Gotham FC	4	5	0	12	7	13	
Orlando	3	5	3	12	12	26	
Louisville	2	5	4	10	13	18	
Washington	1	5	6	9	11	15	
North Carolina	2	5	2	8	14	16	
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.							
Friday's games							
Angel City FC at North Carolina Louisville at San Diego Wave FC							
Saturday's games							
Chicago at Houston Gotham FC at Portland							
PRO BASKETBALL							
WNBA							
EASTERN CONFERENCE							
	W	L	Pct	GB			
Chicago	18	6	.750	—			
Connecticut	15	8	.652	2½			
Washington	15	11	.577	4			
Atlanta	10	13	.435	7½			
New York	9	15	.375	9			
Indiana	5	20	.200	13½			
WESTERN CONFERENCE							
	W	L	Pct	GB			
Las Vegas	17	7	.708	—			
Seattle	16	8	.667	1			
Dallas	11	13	.458	6			
Phoenix	11	15	.423	7			
Los Angeles	10	14	.417	7			
Minnesota	9	16	.360	8½			
Thursday's games							
Las Vegas 108, New York 74 Dallas 92, Minnesota 87 Phoenix 80, Washington 75 Chicago 80, Los Angeles 68							
Friday's games							
Minnesota at Indiana Connecticut at Atlanta							
Saturday's games							
Chicago at Dallas							

CYCLING	
Tour de France	
Thursday 12th Stage	
A 165.5-km (102.8-miles) Briançon to Alpe d'Huez	
- Thomas Pidcock, Great Britain, Ineos Grenadiers, 4:55:24. - Louis Meintjes, South Africa, Inter-marche-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux, :48 behind. - Chris Froome, Great Britain, Israel-Premier Tech, 2:06. - Neilson Powless, United States, EF Education-EasyPost, 2:29. - Tadej Pogacar, Slovenia, UAE Team Emirates, 3:23. - Jonas Vingegaard, Denmark, Jumbo-Visma, 3:23. - Geraint Thomas, Great Britain, Ineos Grenadiers, 3:23. - Enric Mas, Spain, Movistar Team, 3:26. - Sepp Kuss, United States, Jumbo-Visma, 3:26. - Giulio Ciccone, Italy, Trek-Segafredo, 3:32.	
Also	
- Joe Dombrowski, United States, Astana-Qazaqstan, 12:16 behind. - Matteo Jorgenson, United States, Movistar Team, 19:40. - Brandon McNulty, United States, UAE Team Emirates, 27:38. - Neilson Powless, United States, EF Education-EasyPost, 26:44. - Quinn Simmons, United States, Trek Segafredo, 27:38.	
Overall Standings	
- Jonas Vingegaard, Denmark, Jumbo-Visma, 46:28:46. - Tadej Pogacar, Slovenia, UAE Team Emirates, 2:22 behind. - Geraint Thomas, Great Britain, Ineos Grenadiers, 2:26. - Romain Bardet, France, Team DSM, 2:35. - Adam Yates, Great Britain, Ineos Grenadiers, 3:44. - Nairo Quintana, Colombia, Team Arkea-Sasmic, 3:58. - David Gaudu, France, Groupama-FDJ, 4:07. - Thomas Pidcock, Great Britain, Ineos Grenadiers, 7:39. - Enric Mas, Spain, Moviestar Team,	
Thursday's transactions	
BASEBALL	
Major League Baseball American League	
BOSTON RED SOX — Placed RHP Josh Winckowski on the COVID-19 list. Recalled LHP Darwinzon Hernandez from Worcester (IL).	
CLEVELAND GUARDIANS — Claimed LHP Kirk McCarty off waivers from Baltimore.	
DETROIT TIGERS — Optioned RHP Drew Carlton to Toledo (IL). Recalled RHP Elvin Rogers from Toledo.	
KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Placed RHPs Dylan Coleman, Brad Keller and Brady Singer, OFs Kyle Isbel, Andrew Benintendi and Michael A Taylor, Cs M.J. Melendez and Cam Gallagher, INFs Whit Merrifield and Hunter Dozier on the restricted list. Selected the contracts of Cs Nate Eaton and Freddy Fermin, INF Michael Massey and OF Brewer Hicklen from Omaha (IL). Recalled C Sebastian Rivero, LHP Angel Zerpa and INF Maikel Garcia from Arkansas (TL). Recalled INF Nick Pratto from Omaha.	
NEW YORK YANKEES — Acquired INF/OF Tyler Wade from Los Angeles Angels in exchange for a player to be named later or cash considerations and optioned him to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL). Reinstated RHP Jonathan Loaisiga from the 15-day IL. Placed RHP Luis Severino on the 15-day IL. Selected the contract of RHP Ryan Weber from Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. Optioned LHP JP Sears to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.	
SEATTLE MARINERS — Optioned LHP Danny Young to Tacoma (PCL).	
TAMPA BAY RAYS — Placed RHP Shane Baz on the 15-day IL, retroactive to July 13. Recalled RHP Luke Bard from Durham (IL).	
TEXAS RANGERS — Selected the contract of OF Elier Hernandez from Round Rock (PCL). Optioned OF Steven Duggar to Round Rock.	
National League	
CHICAGO CUBS — Reinstated INF Frank Schwindel from the 10-day IL. Placed INF Andrelton Simmons on the 10-day IL, retroactive to July 11.	
CINCINNATI REDS — Placed INF Mike Moustakas on the 10-day IL. Recalled INF Max Schrock from Louisville (IL).	
COLORADO ROCKIES — Reinstated OF Kris Bryant from the paternity list. Optioned INF Elehuris Montero to Albuquerque (PCL).	
LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Recalled RHP Reyes Moronta from Oklahoma City (PCL). Placed RHP Brusdar Graterol on the 10-day IL, retroactive to July 11.	
NEW YORK METS — Named Nancy Elder chief communications officer. Reinstated INF/OF Jeff McNeil from the paternity list. Designated OF Ender Inciarte for assignment.	
PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Sent RHP Michael Kelly outright to Lehigh Valley (IL).	
PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Sent LHP Cam Veleaz outright to Indianapolis (IL).	
ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Reinstated OF Tyler from the 10-day IL. Optioned INF Lars Nootbaar to Memphis (IL).	
SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Placed LHP Jake McGee on unconditional release waivers. Claimed LHP Aaron Fletcher from Pittsburgh and optioned him to Sacramento (PCL). Transferred LHP Jose Alvarez from the 10-day IL to the 60-day IL.	
WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Reinstated	

DEALS

RHP Anibal Sanchez from the 10-day IL. Transferred RHP Stephen Strasburg from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Optioned RHPs Mason Thompson and Tanner Rainey to Rochester (IL).

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
TORONTO RAPTORS — Signed F Ron Harper Jr. to a two-way contract.
FOOTBALL
National Football League
DALLAS COWBOYS — Signed LB Malik Jefferson. Released RB JaQuan Hardy.
WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Signed DB DeJuan Neal. Waived DBs Nijuel Hill and Devin Taylor.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League
ANAHEIM DUCKS — Signed LW Chase De Leo and D Colton White to two-year, two-way contracts and LW Justin Kirkland and D Austin Strand to one-year, two-way contracts.
ARIZONA COYOTES — Named Nathaniel Brooks skill development coach. Signed F Jean-Sebastien Dea to a two-year, two-way contract. Signed D Lukas Klok to a one-year entry level contract.
CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS — Signed RW Dylan Sikura to a one-year, two-way contract.

DALLAS STARS — Signed F Riley Barber to a one-year, two-way contract.
DETROIT RED WINGS — Signed D Mark Pysyk to a one-year contract.
FLORIDA PANTHERS — Signed F Rudolfs Balcers to a one-year contract.
MONTREAL CANADIENS — Signed C Filip Mesar to a three-year, entry-level contract.
NASHVILLE PREDATORS — Signed Ds Jordon Gross, Roland McKeown and Kevin Gravel to two-year, two-way contracts. Signed Fs Kiefer Sherwood and Mark Jankowski to one-year, two-way contracts. Signed F Cole Smith to a one-year, two-way contract. Signed G Kevin Lankinen to a one-year contract.
NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Signed D Simon Nemc to a three-year, entry-level contract and F Ondrej Palat to a five-year contract.

NEW YORK RANGERS — Signed C Ryan Carpenter to a one-year contract.
OTTAWA SENATORS — Signed G Antoine Bibeau and D Jacob Larsson to one-year, two-way contracts.
ST. LOUIS BLUES — Signed LW Josh Leivo to a one-year contract.
SAN JOSE SHARKS — Signed G Aaron Dell to a one-year contract.
SEATTLE KRAKEN — Signed F John Hayden to a one-year, two-way contract.
TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Signed Ds Victor Mete and Jordie Benn to one-year contracts.
VEGAS KNIGHTS — Signed F Spencer Foo to a one-year contract.
WASHINGTON CAPITALS — Signed D Matt Irwin to a one-year, two-way contract. Signed F Dylan Strome to a one-year contract.
WINNIPEG JETS — Signed D Alex Limoges to a one-year entry level contract. Signed D Kyle Capobianco to a two-year contract.
SOCCER
National Women's Soccer League
PORTLAND THORN FC — Signed F Michele Vasconcelos, pending the receipt of her international transfer certificate (ITC) and P-1 visa.

TENNIS
Hall of Fame Open
Thursday
At International Tennis Hall of Fame Newport, R.I.
Purse: \$594,950
Surface: Grass
Men's Singles
Quarterfinals
Maxime Cressy (4), United States, def. Steve Johnson, United States, 6-7 (3), 6-4, 6-4.
John Isner (2), United States, def. Benjamin Bonzi (5), France, 7-6 (2), 6-7 (6), 7-6 (5).
Men's Doubles
Quarterfinals
John-Patrick Smith, Australia, and Ramkumar Ramanathan, India, def. Treat Conrad Huey, Philippines, and Radu Albot, Moldova, 6-1, 6-4.
Robert Galloway and Alex Lawson, United States, def. Nathaniel Lammons and Jackson Withrow (3), United States, 4-6, 7-6 (4), 12-10.
Steve Johnson and William Blumberg (4), United States, def. Tim van Rijthoven, Netherlands, and Max Purcell, Australia, 7-6 (3), 6-3.
Marcelo Melo, Brazil, and Raven Klaasen (1), South Africa, def. Benjamin Bonzi, France, and Felix Auger-Aliassime, Canada, 6-4, 6-2.
Hungarian Grand Prix
Thursday
At Europe Tennis Center Budapest, Hungary
Purse: Euro 203,024
Surface: Red clay
Women's Singles
Round of 16
Aleksandra Krunic, Serbia, def. Zhang Shuai (6), China, 6-1, 6-0.
Wang Xiyu, China, def. Ana Bogdan, Romania, 7-6 (2), 7-6 (10).
Yulia Putintseva (3), Kazakhstan, def. Laura Pigossi, Brazil, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.
Elisabetta Cocciaretto, Italy, def. Katerina Siniakova, Czech Republic, 7-5, 4-6, 7-5.
Women's Doubles
Quarterfinals
Katarzyna Piter, Poland, and Kimberley Zimmermann, Belgium, def. Renata Voracova, Czech Republic, and Ingrid Neel, United States, 6-4, 4-6, 10-7.
Timea Babos and Fanny Stollar, Hungary, def. Anna Bondar and Panna Udvardy, Hungary, 6-4, 1-6, 10-5.
Zhang Shuai, China, and Laura Siegemund, Germany, def. Jessy Rompies, Indonesia, and Yu-Chieh Hsieh, Taiwan, 4-6, 6-4, 10-6.
Ladies Open Lausanne
Thursday
At Stade-Lausanne Tennis Club Lausanne, Switzerland
Purse: \$251,750
Surface: Red clay
Women's Singles
Round of 16
Olga Danilovic, Serbia, def. Anna Kalinskaya, Russia, 6-3, 3-6, 7-5.
Jule Niemeier, Germany, def. Eva Lys, Germany, 6-4, 6-2.
Caroline Garcia (6), France, def. Leolia Jeanjean, France, 6-1, 6-4.
Belinda Bencic (2), Switzerland, def. Susan Bandecchi, Switzerland, 6-3, 6-4.
Women's Doubles
Quarterfinals
Aldila Sutjiadi, Indonesia, and Miyu Kato, Japan, def. Latisha Chan and Hao-Ching Chan (4), Taiwan, 6-7 (5), 6-1, 11-9.
Han Xinyun, China, and Alexandra Panova, Russia, def. Alicia Barnett and Olivia Nicholls, Britain, 7-5, 6-7 (5), 10-7.
Kristina Mladenovic, France, and Olga Danilovic, Serbia, def. Raluca-Ioana Olaru, Romania, and Anna Kalinskaya (3), Russia, walkover.
Nordea Open
Thursday
At Bastad Tennis Stadium Bastad, Sweden
Purse: Euro 534,555
Surface: Red clay
Men's Singles
Round of 16
Laslo Djere, Serbia, def. Marc-Andrea Huesler, Switzerland, 7-5, 6-2.
Andrey Rublev (2), Russia, def. Federico Coria, Argentina, 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (2).
Dominic Thiem, Austria, def. Roberto Bautista Agut (4), Spain, 7-6 (5), 3-6, 6-4.
Men's Doubles
Quarterfinals
Simone Bolelli and Fabio Fognini (2), Italy, def. Joao Sousa, Portugal, and Pablo Carreno Busta, Spain, 6-4, 6-1.
David Vega Hernandez, Spain, and Rafael Matos (4), Brazil, def. Andres Molteni, Argentina, and Hugo Nys, Monaco, 7-5, 5-7, 10-8.
Tomas Martin Etcheverry and Francisco Cerundolo, Argentina, def. Fabrice Martin, France, and Franko Skugor, Croatia, 6-4, 6-2.
AP SPORTLIGHT
July 16
1920 — Babe Ruth breaks his season record of 29 homers with his 30th, leading the New York Yankees past the St. Louis Browns, 5-2. Ruth ends the season with 54. 1920 — The United States sweeps Australia in five matches to win the Davis Cup for the first time since 1913. The U.S. team is made up of Bill Tilden and Bill Johnston. 1947 — Rocky Graziano scores a technical knockout with a barrage of 30 punches against Tony Zale in the sixth round to win the world middleweight boxing title. Held in Chicago Stadium, it's the largest grossing fight in history.

GOLF			
Barracuda Championship			
PGA Tour and European Tour			
Thursday			
At Old Greenwood			
Truckee, Calif.			
Purse: \$3.7 million			
Yardage: 7,480; Par: 71			
First Round			
Charley Hoffman, U.S.	33-32—65	-6	
Mark Hubbard, U.S.	32-33—65	-6	
Sean Crocker, U.S.	33-33—66	-5	
Brice Garnett, U.S.	34-32—66	-5	
Callum Tarren, England	31-35—66	-5	
Joshua Creel, U.S.	33-33—66	-5	
Aaron Cockerill, Canada	33-34—67	-4	
Michael Gligic, Canada	33-34—67	-4	
Jim Knous, U.S.	33-34—67	-4	
Maverick McNealy, U.S.	33-34—67	-4	
Henrik Norlander, Sweden	35-32—67	-4	
Martin Laird, Scotland	34-33—67	-4	
Michael Thompson, U.S.	34-33—67	-4	
James Morrison, England	33-34—67	-4	
Chez Reavie, U.S.	34-33—67	-4	
Marcus Helligkilde, Denmark	35-32—67	-4	
Yannik Paul, Germany	34-33—67	-4	
Mike Lorenzo-Vera, France	34-34—68	-3	
Matt Ryan, U.S.	33-35—68	-3	
Bill Haas, U.S.	33-35—68	-3	
Chase Hanna, U.S.	35-33—68	-3	
Scott Jamieson, Scotland	36-32—68	-3	
Kelly Kraft, U.S.	33-35—68	-3	
Martin Trainer, U.S.	34-34—68	-3	
Nino Bertasio, Italy	35-33—68	-3	
Chase Seiffert, U.S.	32-36—68	-3	
Fabian Gomez, Argentina	36-33—69	-2	
Cameron Percy, Australia	34-35—69	-2	
Scott Piercy, U.S.	37-32—69	-2	
Matthieu Pavon, France	33-36—69	-2	
Matthias Schwab, Austria	35-34—69	-2	
Austin Smotherman, U.S.	35-34—69	-2	
Sebastian Soderberg, Sweden	32-37—69	-2	
Scott Gutschewski, U.S.	35-34—69	-2	
Benjamin Hebert, France	34-35—69	-2	
Rasmus Hojgaard, Denmark	34-35—69	-2	
Francesco Laporta, Italy	33-36—69	-2	
Justin Lower, U.S.	33-36—69	-2	
Richy Werenksi, U.S.	35-34—69	-2	
Vince Whaley, U.S.	35-34—69	-2	
Nick Hardy, U.S.	36-33—69	-2	
Taylor Pendrith, Canada	32-37—69	-2	
Cameron Davis, Australia	36-34—70	-1	
Joseph Bramlett, U.S.	36-34—70	-1	
Hurly Long, Germany	35-35—70	-1	
Preston Stanley, U.S.	36-34—70	-1	
Kevin Tway, U.S.	33-37—70	-1	
Greg Chalmers, Australia	35-35—70	-1	
Jason Dufner, U.S.	36-34—70	-1	
Chesson Hadley, U.S.	33-37—70	-1	
Espen Kofstad, Norway	34-36—70	-1	
Seung-Yul Noh, South Korea	35-35—70	-1	
Chad Ramey, U.S.	35-35—70	-1	
Camilo Villegas, Colombia	34-36—70	-1	
Matthias Schmid, Germany	36-34—70	-1	
Robert Garrigus, U.S.	35-35—70	-1	
Brandon Hagy, U.S.	35-35—70	-1	
Dow Great Lakes Bay Invitational			
LPGA Tour			
Thursday			
At Midland Country Club			
Midland, Mich.			
Purse: \$2.5 million			
Yardage: 6,277; Par: 70			
Second Round			
P.Roussin/D.Weber	65-61—126	-14	
L.Salas/J.Kupcho	68-61—129	-11	
E.Talley/J.Ewart Shadoff	66-64—130	-10	
H.Kang/T.Chan	68-62—130	-10	
M.Castren/K.Tan	69-61—130	-10	
P.Phatlum/P.Yoktuan	66-64—130	-10	
S.Kemp/A.Sharp	69-61—130	-10	
M.Alex/K.Webb	69-62—131	-9	
M.Sagstrom/A.Sorenstam	65-66—131	-9	
S.Popov/A.Van Dam	70-61—131	-9	
Y.Noh/A.Kim	69-62—131	-9	
L.Stephenson/J.Hollis	66-66—132	-8	
M.Metraux/C.Herbin	70-62—132	-8	
N.Korda/J.Korda	69-63—132	-8	
P.Reto/A.Lewis	69-63—132	-8	
B.Matthews/L.Hartlage	71-62—133	-7	
M.Szeryk/K.McPherson	69-64—133	-7	
M.Uribe/S.Smith	74-59—133	-7	
S.Schmelzel/M.LebLANC	71-62—133	-7	
S.Schubert/A.Doherty	72-61—133	-7	
Y.Liu/P.Chien	68-65—133	-7	
C.Kerr/S.Meadow	69-65—134	-6	
E.Szokol/C.Knight	72-62—134	-6	
F.Finhult/L.Johansson	68-66—134	-6	
H.Choi/N.An	69-65—134	-6	
D.Davidson/D.Darquea	71-63—134	-6	
L.Coughlin/S.Vilaubi	70-64—134	-6	
M.Stackhouse/S.Michaels	72-62—134	-6	
P.Anannarukarn/A.Ashok	72-62—134	-6	
S.Lewis/M.Fassi	69-65—134	-6	
S.Parks/A.Uwadia	69-65—134	-6	
W.Meechai/R.Liu	70-64—134	-6	
A.Olson/K.Kirk	68-67—135	-5	
A.Yin/Y.Hong	71-64—135	-5	
C.Danielson/L.Kim	71-64—135	-5	
M.Martin/V.Hurst	69-66—135	-5	
R.Ree/J.Chang	73-62—135	-5	
R.Rohana Virgili/H.Harford	71-64—135	-5	
X.Lin/P.Delacour	69-66—135	-5	

MLB

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	62	27	.697	—
Tampa Bay	49	40	.551	13
Boston	47	43	.522	15½
Toronto	47	43	.522	15½
Baltimore	45	44	.506	17
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	49	42	.538	—
Cleveland	44	44	.500	3½
Chicago	44	45	.494	4
Detroit	37	53	.411	11½
Kansas City	36	53	.404	12
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	58	30	.659	—
Seattle	48	42	.533	11
Texas	41	46	.471	16½
Los Angeles	39	51	.433	20
Oakland	30	60	.333	29
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	56	34	.622	—
Atlanta	54	37	.593	2½
Philadelphia	46	43	.517	9½
Miami	43	45	.489	12
Washington	30	61	.330	26½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	50	40	.556	—
St. Louis	48	44	.522	3
Pittsburgh	38	52	.422	12
Chicago	34	55	.382	15½
Cincinnati	34	55	.382	15½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	58	30	.659	—
San Diego	50	41	.549	9½
San Francisco	45	43	.511	13
Colorado	41	49	.456	18
Arizona	39	50	.438	19½
Thursday's games				
Cleveland 4, Detroit 0				
Tampa Bay 5, Boston 4				
Kansas City 3, Toronto 1				
Chicago White Sox 12, Minnesota 2				
Seattle 6, Texas 5				
Houston 3, L.A. Angels 2, 10 innings				
Miami 3, Pittsburgh 2, 11 innings				
Colorado 8, San Diego 5				
Atlanta 5, Washington 4				
L.A. Dodgers 4, St. Louis 0				
Cincinnati 7, N.Y. Yankees 6, 10 innings				
N.Y. Mets 8, Chicago Cubs 0				
Milwaukee 3, San Francisco 2, 10 innings				
Friday's games				
Boston at N.Y. Yankees				
Kansas City at Toronto				
Baltimore at Tampa Bay				
Detroit at Cleveland				
Seattle at Texas				
Chicago White Sox at Minnesota				
Oakland at Houston				
N.Y. Mets at Chicago Cubs				
Philadelphia at Miami				
Atlanta at Washington				
Cincinnati at St. Louis				
Pittsburgh at Colorado				
L.A. Dodgers at L.A. Angels				
Arizona at San Diego				
Milwaukee at San Francisco				
Saturday's games				
Chicago White Sox (Lynn 1-2) at Minnesota (Bundy 5-4)				
Kansas City (Lynch 3-7) at Toronto (TBD)				
Seattle (Gilbert 10-3) at Texas (Howard 1-1)				
Baltimore (Kremer 3-1) at Tampa Bay (TBD)				
Detroit (Pineda 2-4) at Cleveland (Quantrell 5-5)				
Oakland (Koenig 1-2) at Houston (Verlander 11-3)				
Boston (Pivetta 8-6) at N.Y. Yankees (Taillon 9-2)				
Cincinnati (Lodolo 2-2) at St. Louis (Mikolas 6-7)				
N.Y. Mets (Scherzer 6-1) at Chicago Cubs (Smyly 2-5)				
Pittsburgh (Keller 3-6) at Colorado (Ureña 0-1)				
Atlanta (Fried 9-3) at Washington (Espino 0-2)				
Philadelphia (TBD) at Miami (Meyer 0-0)				
Milwaukee (Lauer 6-3) at San Francisco (Cobb 3-4)				
Arizona (Gilbert 0-3) at San Diego (Manea 4-4)				
L.A. Dodgers (Urias 7-6) at L.A. Angels (Suarez 1-3)				
Calendar				
July 17-19 — Amateur draft, Los Angeles.				
July 19 — All-Star Game, Los Angeles.				
July 24 — Hall of Fame induction ceremonies, Cooperstown, N.Y.				

KC wins despite missing 10 players

Associated Press

TORONTO — Double-A callup Angel Zerpa pitched five innings to win for the first time as a big league starter, Bobby Witt Jr. hit a tie-breaking home run and the Kansas City Royals overcame the absence of 10 unvaccinated players to beat the Toronto Blue Jays 3-1 on Thursday night.

Zerpa (2-0) allowed one run and four hits, walked two and struck out two. Fellow callup Nate Eaton hit his first career homer as the Royals won for the fifth time in six games.

Foreign nationals who aren't vaccinated against COVID-19 are not allowed to enter Canada, save for limited exceptions that require a 14-day quarantine. Unvaccinated baseball players are placed on the restricted list, which means they are not paid and do not accrue major league service time.

Matt Chapman homered for Toronto. Kevin Gausman (6-7) started for the first time since taking a line drive off his ankle in a July 2 start against Tampa Bay. He allowed two runs and seven hits in six innings.

Mariners 6, Rangers 5: Ty France hit a two-run single in the eighth inning as visiting Seattle rallied from a four-run deficit and beat Texas to extend its winning streak to 11 games.

Seattle's winning streak is the second-longest in club history behind the 2001 Mariners, who won 15 straight. That team was the franchise's most recent playoff team. The run is also the second-longest streak in the majors this season, behind Atlanta's 14-game winning streak. The Mariners are 19-3 since being 10 games under .500 on June 19.

Seattle trailed 5-1 before tagging Texas' bullpen for two runs in the seventh and three in the eighth. Up to that point, the Mariners' only run came on Sam Haggerty's inside-the-park homer in the fourth. Haggerty had his fourth career four-hit game and second in 10 days.

Reds 7, Yankees 6 (10): Joey Votto lined a tiebreaking double in a three-run 10th inning for his second go-ahead hit of the night, and visiting Cincinnati beat New York to earn an unexpected series win.

Last in the NL Central, the Reds took two of three at Yankee Stadium from the top team in the majors. They blew a sizable lead for the second consecutive night, but this time recovered and held on.

Tyler Stephenson followed Votto's double off Lucas Luetge (2-3) with an RBI double of his own, and Donovan Solano added a run-scoring single with two outs to make it 7-4.

Braves 5, Nationals 4: Kyle Wright earned his 11th victory to tie for the major league lead and visiting Atlanta beat Washington in the opener of a four-game series.

Michael Harris II, Matt Olson



JON BLACKER, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

The Kansas City Royals' Nate Eaton gestures to the crowd after hitting his first home run in the majors during the eighth inning of Thursday's game against the Blue Jays in Toronto.

and Dansby Swanson homered for Atlanta, which has won five of its last seven. The Braves improved to 8-2 against the Nationals this season.

Wright (11-4), who gave up a solo homer to Josh Bell in the first, set down 17 of his last 21 batters in his seven-inning outing, allowing two runs while striking out four. He's tied with the Los Angeles Dodgers' Tony Gonsolin and Houston's Justin Verlander for the most victories in baseball.

Guardians 4, Tigers 0: Triston McKenzie struck out a career-high 12 and extended his scoreless streak to 21 innings, leading host Cleveland past Detroit.

McKenzie (7-6) pitched eight dominant innings, giving up five singles and walking none. He matched his longest outing, set a career best with 109 pitches and won his third start in a row while helping the Guardians end a streak of five consecutive losses to the Tigers.

Josh Naylor homered in the first off rookie Elvin Rodriguez (0-3), who made his first start for the Tigers since June 10. All-Star Andrés Giménez added a solo shot in the eighth inning for Cleveland.

Mets 8, Cubs 0: Carlos Carrasco pitched six sharp innings, Brandon Nimmo and Pete Alonso homered and visiting New York handed Chicago its seventh straight loss.

The Mets won for the third time in four games, maintained their 2½-game lead over Atlanta in the NL East and improved their road record to 28-19. The Cubs have totaled three runs over their last three games.

Nimmo's three hits paced a 12-hit attack. His homer off reliever Mark Leiter Jr. in the sixth extended the Mets' streak of hitting at least one homer at Wrigley Field to nine consecutive games.

Rays 5, Red Sox 4: Taylor Walls and Yandy Díaz had two-run singles during a five-run outburst in the seventh inning, helping host Tampa Bay beat Boston to complete a four-game sweep.

After rookie Kutter Crawford took a three-hitter into the seventh with Boston leading 3-0, John Schreiber (2-1) came in and gave up Walls' tying hit and Díaz's go-ahead single. Crawford ended up allowing three runs and six hits along with six strikeouts.

Astros 3, Angels 2 (10): Jeremy Peña drove in the tiebreaking run in the 10th and visiting Houston earned its 13th victory in 16 games with a win over Los Angeles.

Automatic runner Korey Lee advanced on Mauricio Dubon's flyout and scored on Peña's single to right off Aaron Loup (0-3) for the Astros, who hadn't scored since the first inning.

Ryan Pressley (3-2) struck out Brandon Marsh to end it with the potential tying run on third.

Marlins 3, Pirates 2 (11): Brian Anderson atoned for a costly error with a two-run triple in the 11th and host Miami edged Pittsburgh.

Anderson was originally ruled to have been hit by a pitch from Wil Crowe (3-6), but the Pirates successfully challenged, saying it hit his bat first. Anderson then sent a drive to deep right center that scored Jesús Aguilar and Avisail García.

Joey Wendle doubled, singled and walked for the Marlins, who had their second straight walk-off against Pittsburgh and split the four-game series.

Dodgers 4, Cardinals 0: Tyler Anderson pitched six shutout innings, Gavin Lux hit a two-run homer and visiting Los Angeles blanked St. Louis.

Anderson (10-1) scattered three

hits, struck out four and walked two while needing just 88 pitches to get through six innings. Yency Almonte, Evan Phillips and Craig Kimbrel each pitched an inning of scoreless relief to finish the combined five-hitter.

The Dodgers won for the 13th time in their last 15 games. They improved to 9½ games ahead of San Diego for first place in the National League West after being tied with the Padres on June 22.

Rockies 8, Padres 5: Randal Grichuk doubled twice and drove in three runs, C.J. Cron had two hits in his return to the starting lineup and host Colorado beat San Diego.

Cron, the Rockies' lone All-Star selection, missed three of the last five games with a wrist injury suffered Friday night at Arizona. He had a pinch-hit single Wednesday night.

White Sox 12, Twins 2: Luis Robert hit his first grand slam, Johnny Cueto pitched six strong innings and visiting Chicago beat Minnesota to extend its winning streak to three games.

Robert's 452-foot blast to the second deck in left field gave the White Sox a 6-1 lead in the fourth inning. He added a run-scoring single in the sixth inning and a double in the eighth for his third consecutive three-hit game.

Brewers 3, Giants 2 (10): Pinch-runner Christian Yelich scurried home for the winning run in the 10th on an infield single by Jonathan Davis that pitcher Camilo Doval couldn't secure on the grass in front of third to give visiting Milwaukee the victory.

Corbin Burnes struck out 10 pitching into the eighth inning, yet settled for a no-decision as the first-place Brewers won for just the second time in five games and third time in eight.

WNBA/BRITISH OPEN/TRACK AND FIELD

Lawyer: Griner cannabis use approved by doctor

By Jim Heintz
Associated Press

KHIMKI, Russia — A lawyer for WNBA star Brittney Griner at her drug possession trial in Russia on Friday gave the court a U.S. doctor’s letter recommending she use medical cannabis to treat pain.

Griner, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and standout for the Phoenix Mercury, was arrested at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo Airport in February after customs officials said they found vape canisters containing cannabis oil in her luggage. She faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted on charges of transporting drugs.

In court last week, Griner pleaded guilty and acknowledged possessing the canisters but said she had no criminal intent and said they were in her luggage because she packed hastily in her return to Russia to play for the UMMC Ekaterinburg basketball team during the WNBA’s offseason.

In Russia’s judicial system, admitting guilt doesn’t automatically end a trial. Since that plea, her court sessions have focused on in-person and written testimony to her good character and athletic prowess.

“The attending physician gave Brittney recommendations for the use of medical cannabis,” said her lawyer, Maria Blagovolina. “The permission was issued on behalf of the Arizona Department of Health.”

The defense on Friday also submitted tests she underwent as part of an anti-doping check, which didn’t detect any prohibited substances in her system.

The next hearing of Griner’s case was scheduled for July 26.



WNBA star and two-time Olympic gold medalist Brittney Griner holds up a photo of players from the recent WNBA All-Star Game wearing her number, while sitting in a jail cell prior to Friday’s hearing in the Khimki district court, just outside Moscow.

U.S. President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have said they are doing all they can to win her release, as well as that of other Americans the U.S. considers “wrongly detained” by Russia, including former Marine Paul Whelan, who is serving 16 years on an espionage conviction.

Washington may have little leverage with Moscow, though, because of strong animosity over its military operation in Ukraine.

Dream: Disqualification blindsided Echikunwoke

FROM PAGE 24

Still needed to be sorted out.

“I was like, ‘No way this is happening,’” Echikunwoke said.

As an NCAA athlete, she said she wasn’t drug tested that frequently, just when she won at the national indoor championships in 2017. But with others in a similar situation, she reasoned it would all be sorted out.

“Not once” she said, when asked if something felt amiss. “That’s the crazy part: I feel like I usually have a premonition if something is off.”

That’s why the ultimate decision blindsided her: She was disqualified by the Athletics Integrity Unit, which oversees the anti-doping effort in track and field. There were 20 athletes, including 10 from Nigeria, who weren’t allowed to participate in track and field at the Olympics because they did not meet anti-doping testing requirements in the lead-up to the Games.

The AIU requires athletes from countries categorized as “high risk” because of deficiencies in their testing programs to be given three no-notice, out-of-competition tests in the 10 months leading to a major event.

Echikunwoke explained that the Athletics Federation of Nige-

ria (AFN) didn’t set up the proper testing for its athletes. She said, in an Instagram post, that they “left us in the dark about this whole drug testing issue until the last minute where we were left helpless.”

The AFN didn’t respond to emails from The Associated Press.

“I would definitely consider it probably the most traumatic experience of my life,” she said. “Because it was just very unexpected.”

Echikunwoke — whose name translates into “leader of men” — went to counseling to come to terms with the heartbreak. Mom helped, too.

“She was like, ‘You need to forgive them. ... You’re the one holding on to that anger and that bitterness toward them,’” Echikunwoke said. “That helped me tremendously.”

Around December, she reached out to World Athletics, the governing body for the sport, to notify them of her plans to switch nations to the U.S. The paperwork, she figured, would be straightforward.

Not so much. She waited and waited.

In the meantime, she trained — hoping to be approved in time for U.S. championships, which were

still months away. But the closer and closer the event got, the more anxious she and her coach, Susan Seaton, became.

“There were days where she was a little bit doubtful about it and I cheered her back up,” said Seaton, the director of cross country/track & field at Cincinnati. “Then there were days where I was kind of losing some faith over all these holdups and paperwork and everything and she would cheer me up. We just kind of kept each other sane and said, ‘Hey, worst-case scenario, we’re getting better.’”

Official word she’d been approved to compete arrived early on June 22 — a day before she was supposed to compete at nationals in Eugene, Ore.

Echikunwoke boarded a flight from Ohio to Oregon — with a layover in Denver — and arrived that night. She showed up the next day eager to earn a spot on her new team.

Her second throw of the competition went 73.76 meters (242 feet), which was good enough for third place and a spot to worlds for Team USA.

“A full-circle moment,” Echikunwoke said of representing a new nation. “I’m excited — excited to represent Team USA.”

Scoreboard

British Open		
Thursday At Old Course St Andrews, United Kingdom, United Kingdom		
Purse: \$14 million Yardage: 7,313; Par: 72		
First Round		
Cameron Young, U.S.	31-33-64	-8
Rory McIlroy, Northern Ireland	32-34-66	-6
Robert Dinwiddie, England	33-34-67	-5
Cameron Smith, Australia	33-34-67	-5
Barclay Brown, England	34-34-68	-4
Talor Gooch, U.S.	34-34-68	-4
Viktor Hovland, Norway	34-34-68	-4
Dustin Johnson, U.S.	35-33-68	-4
Brad Kennedy, Australia	34-34-68	-4
Kurt Kitayama, U.S.	34-34-68	-4
Scottie Scheffler, U.S.	32-36-68	-4
Lee Westwood, England	35-33-68	-4
Bryson DeChambeau, U.S.	34-35-69	-3
Padraig Harrington, Ireland	35-34-69	-3
Joohyung Kim, South Korea	32-37-69	-3
Si Woo Kim, South Korea	36-33-69	-3
Thriston Lawrence, South Africa	34-35-69	-3
Min Woo Lee, Australia	35-34-69	-3
Kyoung-Hoon Lee, South Korea	35-34-69	-3
Joaquin Niemann, Chile	36-33-69	-3
John Parry, England	36-33-69	-3
Ian Poulter, England	33-36-69	-3
Xander Schauffele, U.S.	34-35-69	-3
Sahith Theegala, U.S.	33-36-69	-3
Scott Vincent, Zimbabwe	35-34-69	-3
Danny Willett, England	34-35-69	-3
Patrick Cantlay, U.S.	36-34-70	-2
Thomas Detry, Belgium	35-35-70	-2
Ernie Els, South Africa	33-37-70	-2
Dylan Frittelli, South Africa	33-37-70	-2
Tyrrell Hatton, England	36-34-70	-2
Russell Henley, U.S.	37-33-70	-2
Lucas Herbert, Australia	34-36-70	-2
Robert Macintyre, Scotland	34-36-70	-2
Abraham Ancer, Mexico	35-36-71	-1
Marcus Armitage, England	37-34-71	-1
Dean Burmester, South Africa	35-36-71	-1
Paul Casey, England	32-39-71	-1
Wyndham Clark, U.S.	38-33-71	-1
Corey Connors, Canada	34-37-71	-1
Justin De Los Santos, Philippines	36-35-71	-1
Matt Ford, England	36-35-71	-1
Ryan Fox, New Zealand	36-35-71	-1
Sungjae Im, South Korea	35-36-71	-1
Sadom Kaewkanjana, Thailand	37-34-71	-1
Yuto Katsuragawa, Japan	36-35-71	-1
Hideki Matsuyama, Japan	35-36-71	-1
Trey Mullinax, U.S.	35-36-71	-1
Louis Oosthuizen, South Africa	37-34-71	-1
Victor Perez, France	34-37-71	-1
Webb Simpson, U.S.	33-38-71	-1
Jordan Spieth, U.S.	34-37-71	-1
Cameron Tringale, U.S.	33-38-71	-1
Brandon Wu, U.S.	34-37-71	-1
Sam Bairstow, England	36-36-72	E
Sam Burns, U.S.	36-36-72	E
Laurie Canter, England	36-36-72	E
David Carey, Ireland	35-37-72	E
Matt Fitzpatrick, England	37-35-72	E
Tommy Fleetwood, England	36-36-72	E
Garrick Higgo, South Africa	36-36-72	E
Zach Johnson, U.S.	37-35-72	E
Jason Kokrak, U.S.	36-36-72	E
David Law, Scotland	38-34-72	E
Shane Lowry, Ireland	37-35-72	E
Phil Mickelson, U.S.	35-37-72	E
Collin Morikawa, U.S.	36-36-72	E
Kevin Na, U.S.	35-37-72	E
Keita Nakajima, Japan	38-34-72	E
Patrick Reed, U.S.	35-37-72	E
Adam Scott, Australia	39-33-72	E
Jason Scrivener, Australia	37-35-72	E
Justin Thomas, U.S.	34-38-72	E
Bernd Wiesberger, Austria	34-38-72	E
Aaron Wise, U.S.	36-36-72	E
Fabrizio Zanotti, Paraguay	37-35-72	E
C. Bezuidenhout, South Africa	34-39-73	+1
John Daly, U.S.	37-36-73	+1
Tony Finau, U.S.	37-36-73	+1
Brian Harman, U.S.	37-36-73	+1
Kazuki Higa, Japan	37-36-73	+1
Nicolai Højgaard, Denmark	35-38-73	+1
Max Homa, U.S.	36-37-73	+1
Billy Horschel, U.S.	33-40-73	+1
Mackenzie Hughes, Canada	36-37-73	+1
Minkyu Kim, South Korea	35-38-73	+1
Brooks Koepka, U.S.	36-37-73	+1
Hao-Tong Li, China	38-35-73	+1
Richard Mansell, England	37-36-73	+1
Guido Migliozzi, Italy	36-37-73	+1
Francesco Molinari, Italy	35-38-73	+1
Ronan Mullarney, Ireland	33-40-73	+1
Sebastian Munoz, Colombia	35-38-73	+1
J.T. Poston, U.S.	33-40-73	+1
Seamus Power, Ireland	36-37-73	+1
Jon Rahm, Spain	35-38-73	+1
Jamie Rutherford, England	37-36-73	+1
Jordan L. Smith, England	37-36-73	+1
Harold Varner III, U.S.	38-35-73	+1
Will Zalatoris, U.S.	37-36-73	+1
Adri Arnaus, Spain	36-38-74	+2
Ben Campbell, Australia	37-37-74	+2
John Catlin, U.S.	39-35-74	+2
Filippo Celli, Italy	36-38-74	+2
J. Fernandez-Valdes, Argentina	39-35-74	+2
Matthew Griffin, Australia	38-36-74	+2
Justin Harding, South Africa	39-35-74	+2

Woods gets big sendoff

By Doug Ferguson
Associated Press

ST. ANDREWS, Scotland — Tiger Woods removed his cap a few strides from Swilcan Bridge, knowing Friday might be the last time he crossed over in a British Open at St. Andrews.

This is where the legends pause, pose and wave goodbye.

“Stop! Stop!” a few photographers cried out as they positioned themselves for another historic moment at the home of golf.

Woods kept right on walking, even as tears began to form in his eyes.

“That’s when I started to realize — that’s when I started thinking about — the next time it comes around here, I might not be around,” Woods said.

He said this wouldn’t be his last British Open. Woods just doesn’t know if his 46-year-old body, battered by multiple surgeries on both legs and his back, would be fit enough to compete when it returns to the home of golf. Woods mentioned 2030. The R&A hasn’t announced the rotation that far out.

Still, the moment was not lost on him.

Woods saluted the thousands of fans in the grandstands on the left, and thousands more who watched from hotel balconies and rooftops on the perimeter of the Old Course, some peering through windows, others without a ticket hanging from the top of the fence on the road down the right side of the 18th fairway.

Rory McIlroy looked over at him from the first fairway — he was starting his second round as Woods was finishing a 75 to miss the cut — and tipped his cap. Justin Thomas was on the first tee and nodded to Woods.

“As I got closer to the green, the ovation got louder,” Woods said. “You could feel the warmth and you could feel the people from both sides. Felt like the whole tournament was right there.”

It may as well have been.

This is where Woods won his first Open in 2000 to become the youngest player to complete the career Grand Slam. He won another claret jug at St. Andrews in 2005, the year Jack Nicklaus finished his major championship career.

No one has ever won an Open at St. Andrews three times, and Woods wasn’t about to change that.



Woods

NHL/SOCCER



Left wing Ondrej Palat, who won two Stanley Cups with the Tampa Bay Lightning, signed a \$30 million, five-year contract with the New Jersey Devils on Thursday.

NHL free agency: Devils sign Palat, Capitals add Strome

By JOHN WAWROW AND STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

A day after the New Jersey Devils missed out on the top prize in NHL free agency, they landed two-time Stanley Cup champion Ondrej Palat on Thursday.

The Washington Capitals, meanwhile, continued their busy offseason by signing former Chicago Blackhawks forward Dylan Strome.

The Devils signed Palat to a \$30 million, five-year contract. The left-winger had 52 points in 71 games during Tampa Bay's three consecutive trips to the Cup Final. He finished sixth in Conn Smythe Trophy voting as playoff MVP this year.

Tampa Bay attempted to keep the 31-year-old from Czechia and defenseman Jan Rutta, who signed with Pittsburgh, but couldn't make the salary cap numbers work. Instead, general manager Julien BriseBois signed defensemen Mikhail Sergachev and Erik Cernak and center Anthony Cirelli to eight-year extensions through 2031.

The Devils landed Palat after losing the Johnny Gaudreau sweepstakes to the Columbus Blue Jackets. Gaudreau signed a \$68.25 million, eight-year contract with Columbus after deciding to leave Calgary. His decision came after an initial frenzy of

signings, including the Washington Capitals getting Cup-winning goaltender Darcy Kuemper and Claude Giroux leaving Florida for Ottawa.

Strome, who signed for \$3.5 million on a one-year deal, became Washington's latest addition after Chicago decided against a qualifying offer to keep him around. The 25-year-old scored a career-high 22 goals last season and added 26 assists in 69 games.

The Capitals previously signed Kuemper to be their starting goaltender and Charlie Lindgren to be their backup, re-signed winger Marcus Johansson and defenseman Matt Irwin, and signed two other Blackhawks castoffs, Erik Gustafsson and Henrik Borgstrom. They acquired winger Connor Brown from the Ottawa Senators for a 2024 second-round pick.

Ottawa also stayed busy, following up on signing former Flyers captain Giroux by locking up third-year center Josh Norris through the 2029-30 season with a \$63.3 million, eight-year deal.

The spree of signings that occurred during the first day of free agency slowed to a trickle on Thursday, with forward Nazem Kadri and defenseman John Klingberg the most notable names still on the market.

The reigning champion Colorado Avalanche have said they

would like to bring back Kadri, who helped them win it all. The Dallas Stars all but ruled out keeping Klingberg, who could still sign one of the biggest contracts of the offseason.

The Senators continued building on what could be the most promising offseason in the franchise's 30-year history with Norris' signing.

Selected 19th in the 2017 draft, the 23-year-old from Michigan is considered a key fixture on a young, developing team. He's coming off a season in which he scored a team-leading 35 goals and 55 points in 66 games.

Norris' signing comes on the heels of the the Senators landing Giroux in a move that brings the 34-year-old former Flyers captain back to the region where he played junior hockey. Ottawa also acquired winger Alex DeBrincat and goaltender Cam Talbot in trades over the past week in signaling the team is prepared to take the next step toward contending in the Eastern Conference.

The Vegas Golden Knights made two bargain signings, adding forwards Sakari Manninen and Spencer Foo on one-year deals each worth \$750,000. Manninen was Finland's leading goal-scorer on the way to winning gold at the Beijing Olympics, while Foo played for host China.

US wins semifinal against Costa Rica

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

MONTERREY, Mexico — The U.S. women's national team will play Canada in the final of the CONCACAF W Championship for a spot in the 2024 Olympics.

The United States beat Costa Rica 3-0 in the semifinals Thursday night on goals from Emily Sonnett, Mallory Pugh and Ashley Sanchez. Canada downed Jamaica 3-0 in the late game to advance to earn the other spot Monday night in the championship.

The four teams had already qualified for the region's berths at the 2023 Women's World Cup as the top finishers in the group stage. The winner of the W Championship additionally earns one of the region's spots in the Olympics.

The U.S. team extended its shutout streak in World Cup or Olympic qualifying matches to 32 games.

"I think we need to be overall sharper," Sonnett said about facing Canada. "I don't think our team's very satisfied with that win. There's a lot that we need to focus on."

The U.S. has won the past two World Cups, but the Americans are heading into next summer's tournament in Australia and New Zealand with a different look. Coach Vlatko Andonovski has focused on developing young talent since winning the bronze medal at last year's Olympics, and up-and-coming players including Sophia Smith and Mallory Pugh have cracked the starting lineup.

A few veterans remain, including Alex Morgan and Becky

Sauerbrunn, who both started Thursday.

Morgan had the team's best chances early on. One of her opportunities, a left-footed shot, went wide left in the 13th minute.

Defender Sonnett broke through with her first international goal in the 33rd minute. Pugh scored her first goal of the tournament in first-half stoppage time — with a backheel assist from Rose Lavelle — to give the U.S. a 2-0 lead at the break.

Sanchez capped the victory with her goal in stoppage time.

Casey Murphy got the starting nod in goal for the U.S.

"Obviously, it's a semifinal, we're here to go to the final, to win the final," Murphy said. That was one step to get to there."

For Costa Rica, Noelia Bermudez made the first start of the tournament in goal. Costa Rica won its first two group-stage matches before falling to Canada 2-0 on Monday.

Jessie Fleming scored for Canada in the 18th minute of the late game at Estadio Universitario. The conditions were muggy, with temperatures in the mid-90s at the start of the night.

Allysha Chapman added a goal on a header in the 64th minute. It was her first international goal since 2015. Adriana Leon scored in the 76th.

In addition to the four direct berths in the World Cup, the third-place finishers in the two groups at the W Championship, Panama and Haiti, advanced to an inter-continental playoff in February in New Zealand.



The United States' Mallory Pugh celebrates scoring her team's second goal against Costa Rica during a CONCACAF Women's Championship semifinal Thursday in Monterrey, Mexico.

SPORTS

New home for Palat

Left wing signs \$30 million, 5-year deal with Devils » NHL, Page 23



TRACK AND FIELD



MIKE WYKE/AP

After being denied the opportunity to compete for Nigeria at the Tokyo Olympics, hammer thrower Annette Echikunwoke decided to compete for the U.S.

Still chasing her dream

After Olympic heartbreak, Echikunwoke changes teams for worlds

BY PAT GRAHAM
Associated Press

A few days before the hammer thrower from Ohio was scheduled to compete and represent Nigeria at the Tokyo Olympics, she was informed she couldn't.

Over a federation error concerning drug testing. On her 25th birthday.

"Beyond heartbreaking," Annette Echikunwoke said.

No chance to walk at opening ceremonies, either (her team uniform didn't arrive in time). The only memory was a pretend practice throw inside the Olympic hammer ring.

It all led her to this: Switching countries, an arduous task with her application finally coming through at the

"I would definitely consider it probably the most traumatic experience of my life. Because it was just very unexpected."

Annette Echikunwoke

Hammer thrower, on being told she couldn't compete in the Olympics for Nigeria

last minute before U.S. nationals. She earned a spot at the world championships, where she'll wear the red, white and blue.

Which is why she celebrated an All-American way when she qualified: A juicy burger and fries at a fast-food restaurant (no milkshake, though,

she's dairy-free).

"It honestly feels very redemptive," Echikunwoke said of making Team USA as she competes for her new team Friday in the preliminaries of the hammer throw at world championships. "I'm just so grateful."

Echikunwoke (pronounced: eh-

CHI-koo-wokay) grew up in Pickerington, Ohio, the oldest of four kids. Her dad, Godwin, works for the state government as an auditor. Her mom, Christiana, is a nurse. Both are from Nigeria.

Family pride. That's why the standout thrower from the University of Cincinnati decided to wear the green-and-white of Nigeria last summer in Tokyo. She earned a spot by winning her country's trials.

First, a rumbling that something might be amiss as the Nigerian team trained outside the city a few day before the Summer Games. Paperwork problems with drug testing leading into the Olympics, they were hearing.

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Royals win in Toronto without 10 unvaccinated players » MLB, Page 21