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STARS AND STRIPES

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CONTINGENCY EDITION

FRIDAY, AUGUST 19, 2022

Free to Deployed Areas

Army reservists still waiting for housing money year after ruling

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. Army continues to defy an order by its highest review board to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in denied housing benefits to a contingent of reservists, lawyers for the soldiers said, sending the 4-year-old dispute back to federal court for resolution.

“The Army willfully chose to disregard these governing provisions, thus elevating its conduct to the level of gross negligence,” Patrick Hughes, an attorney representing the seven plaintiffs, wrote in U.S. Court of Federal Claims filings this month.

It’s a new development in a case that one year ago appeared to have been resolved. The Army Board of Corrections determined in August 2021 that the service broke federal law in denying dual housing allowances to reservists temporarily sent to Germany.

Hughes said that his seven clients should have been paid a combined total of about \$500,000.

SEE HOUSING ON PAGE 5



TUAREAN HODGE/U.S. Army

U.S. Army Reserve soldiers stand in formation. Several reservists who deployed to Europe in recent years haven't received housing allowances, despite a finding that the Army's denial broke federal law.



AFGHANISTAN

NICHOLAS GUEVARA, U.S. MARINE CORPS/AP

U.S. Marines provide assistance during an evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan. The last U.S. troops left the country on Aug. 30, 2021, following an airlift of nearly 130,000 U.S. citizens and Afghans vulnerable to retribution from the Taliban.

GOP blasts Biden

House Republicans blame White House for chaotic withdrawal in new report

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration was at fault for the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan last year that stranded Afghan allies and forced veterans groups to assist with a haphazard evacuation effort, according to a report published late Wednesday by House Republicans.

The report, produced by Republican mem-

bers of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, accuses the White House and State Department of failing to plan for the Taliban's swift takeover of the country, ignoring the recommendations of Pentagon officials who wanted to maintain a small force on the ground and botching a rushed evacuation.

The last American troops departed Afghanistan on Aug. 30, 2021, following a tumultuous mass airlift of nearly 130,000 U.S. citizens and

Afghans vulnerable to retribution from the Taliban. Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other top military advisers told lawmakers last year that they would have preferred to maintain a U.S. force of 2,500 in the country.

“Following the evacuation debacle, the committee minority believes America's standing in

SEE GOP ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Yellen tells IRS to develop modernization plan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Now that President Joe Biden signed Democrats' expansive climate, tax and health care bill into law, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has directed the IRS to develop a plan within six months outlining how the tax agency will overhaul its technology, customer service and hiring processes.

In part, the improvements are meant to "end the two-tiered tax system, where most Americans pay what they owe, but those at the

top of the distribution often do not," Yellen said in a Tuesday memo to IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig, whose term ends in three months.

Yellen's memo, obtained by The Associated Press, outlines the importance of modernizing IRS computer systems and ensuring the agency has an adequately-staffed workforce now that the tax collector is set to receive nearly \$80 billion over the next 10 years.

That funding is needed for more than technology. At least 50,000

IRS employees are expected to retire over the next five years.

Yellen has called for the IRS to "fully resolve the inventory backlog and make significant improvements in taxpayer services," "to overhaul an information technology system that is decades out of date" and invest and train employees "so they can identify the most complex evasion schemes by those at the top."

This year's tax season resulted in the worst backlog in history for the beleaguered IRS.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Aug. 19)	\$0.99
Dollar buys (Aug. 19)	0.9592
British pound (Aug. 19)	\$1.17
Japanese yen (Aug. 19)	131.00
South Korean won (Aug. 19)	1281.00

South Korea (Won)	1127.14
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9535
Thailand (Baht)	35.66
Turkey (NewLira)	18.0963

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

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
Britain (Pound)	1.2007
Canada (Dollar)	1.2917
China (Yuan)	6.7885
Denmark (Krone)	7.3480
Egypt (Pound)	19.1490
Euro	0.9878
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8442
Hungary (Forint)	402.33
Israel (Shekel)	3.2476
Japan (Yen)	135.02
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3071
Norway (Krone)	9.7091
Philippines (Peso)	55.87
Poland (Zloty)	4.67
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7556
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3833

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	5.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	3.00
Federal funds market rate	2.32
3-month bill	2.64
30-year bond	3.16

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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PACIFIC

S. Korea offers observer swap with North

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Military drills with the United States are nonnegotiable as South Korea looks for incentives to bring North Korea to the nuclear bargaining table, a South Korean cabinet minister said Wednesday.

Diplomatic overtures this week to North Korea by the South's president, Yoon Suk Yeoul, do not extend to canceling upcoming exercises involving large numbers of U.S. and South Korean troops, the first of their kind since 2017, Minister of Unification Kwon Young-se said on Korean Broadcasting Radio.

But Kwon floated the idea of exchanging a "viewer group" from the North and South to observe each other's exercises to build trust.

If North Korea and the South were transparent about their exercises, Kwon said, that may lead to "trust building" between the two countries.

"It would be alright if you could think military trust-building is that both sides conduct military drills respectively and create situations that both sides can understand that their exercises are purely defensive exercises,"



DILLON ANDERSON/RNZAF

South Korean marines exit their amphibious assault vehicles during the Rim of the Pacific 2022 exercise on Marine Corps Base Hawaii on July 30.

Kwon said.

On Tuesday, Yoon offered to boost North Korea's economy and improve the livelihood of its citizens in exchange for Pyongyang's earnest steps toward denuclearization. He called his plan, unveiled in his Liberation Day speech, an "audacious initiative" toward North Korea.

"We will also help enhance North Korea's agricultural pro-

ductivity, offer assistance to modernize hospitals and medical infrastructure, and implement international investment and financial support initiatives," Yoon said in his speech.

North Korea's Foreign Ministry frequently disparages the allies' military drills as rehearsals for an invasion of its country and demands they discontinue the provocative behavior.

"Maybe we could talk with [North Korea] about any issue in principle," Kwon said. "But there are parts we should not concede even though it is an audacious initiative, right?"

The U.S.-South Korean military exercises are defensive in nature, Kwon said, adding that North Korea conducts its own exercises.

The U.S. and South Korea plan to resume large-scale exercises after a five-year pause during which their leaders unsuccessfully negotiated with its leader, Kim Jong Un, for the North's nuclear disarmament. The annual exercises were suspended to lower tensions on the Korean Peninsula as then-President Donald Trump and then-South Korean President Moon Jae-in met with Kim several times.

Yoon, a conservative member of the People Power Party, after his inauguration in May agreed to lift the suspension and planning for the drills resumed with the United States.

Ulchi Freedom Shield, previously known as Ulchi Freedom Guardian and Combined Command Post Training, is scheduled to start Monday and end Sept. 1. Another large-scale exercise, Freedom Shield, is scheduled for

early next year.

Details of the exercises, such as troop numbers, have not been publicly released; however, previous iterations included around 50,000 South Korean and 17,500 U.S. troops. U.S. Forces Korea oversees roughly 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea.

North Korea continues to frustrate regional patience with its missile tests. The communist regime fired two cruise missiles off its western coast Wednesday morning, according to South Korea's Ministry of Defense. The missile launches were North Korea's 18th round of missile tests so far this year.

U.S. and South Korean intelligence officials also believe North Korea is ready for its first nuclear test since 2017. During a South Korean parliamentary committee meeting on Thursday, Kwon told lawmakers the North has yet to conduct its seventh test of a nuclear device.

"We think [North Korea] has been taking in all kinds of political considerations, though it is hard for us to say definitely," Kwon said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Yoo Kyong Chang contributed to this report.
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US announces trade talks with Taiwan

Associated Press

HUALIEN, Taiwan — The U.S. government will hold trade talks with Taiwan in a sign of support for the island democracy that China claims as its own territory, prompting Beijing to warn Thursday it will take action if necessary to "safeguard its sovereignty."

The announcement of trade talks comes after Beijing fired missiles into the sea to intimidate Taiwan after U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi this month became the highest-ranking American official to visit the island in 25 years.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's government criticized the planned talks as a violation of its stance that Taiwan has no right to foreign relations. It warned Washington not to encourage the island to try to make its de facto independence permanent, a step Beijing says would lead to war.

"China firmly opposes this," Ministry of Commerce spokesperson Shu Jueting said. She called on Washington to "fully respect China's core interests."

Also Thursday, Taiwan's military held a drill with missiles and cannons simulating a response to a Chinese missile attack.

Taiwan and China split in 1949

after a civil war and have no official relations but are bound by billions of dollars of trade and investment. The island never has been part of the People's Republic of China, but the ruling Communist Party says it is obliged to unite, by force if necessary.

President Joe Biden's coordinator for the Indo-Pacific region, Kurt Campbell, said last week that trade talks would "deepen our ties with Taiwan" but stressed policy wasn't changing. The United States has no diplomatic relations with Taiwan, its ninth-largest trading partner, but maintains extensive informal ties.

The U.S. Trade Representative's announcement of the talks made no mention of tension with Beijing but said "formal negotiations" would develop trade and regulatory ties, a step that would entail closer official interaction.

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry expressed "high welcome" for the talks, which it said will lead to a "new page" in U.S. relations.

"As the situation across the Taiwan Strait has recently escalated, the U.S. government will continue to take concrete actions to maintain security and stability across the Taiwan Strait," it said.

Top VA official kicks off Pacific trip with stop at Hawaii medical center

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

SPARK M. MATSUNAGA VA MEDICAL CENTER, Hawaii — The PACT Act recently signed into law increased benefits eligibility for veterans exposed to burn pits but will vastly expand VA health care for all veterans, the deputy secretary of Department of Veterans Affairs said Wednesday.

"The PACT Act has a lot of things in it, and it's a tremendous piece of legislation that will grow the services provided by the VA, probably more than any other piece of legislation ever has," Donald Remy, deputy secretary, told reporters during a news conference at the Spark M. Matsunaga VA Medical Center on the outskirts of Honolulu.

"And not just for the toxic exposure and the conditions that were the result of those toxic exposures, but more broadly," he said.

Remy spent Wednesday meeting with staff, patients and leaders of veterans' organizations at the medical center, which adjoins Tripler Army Medical Center.

Through the end of this month, Remy is touring clinics under the VA Pacific Islands Health Care

System, a trip that will take him to VA clinics in Guam, Saipan, American Samoa and the Philippines, as well as the Big Island of Hawaii.

The region is home to more than 100,000 veterans, Remy said.



Remy

President Joe Biden signed the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, or PACT Act, into law on Aug. 10, and among its provisions is authorization for an additional 31 major medical health clinics and research facilities in 19 states.

Those added facilities, however, will be used more broadly than just treatment of veterans suffering from toxic exposure, Remy said.

"We're in the process of looking at that authority, determining where new leases can and should be let, and making sure that we have the facilities to provide the services to the population that exists in those areas," said Remy, an Army veteran whose father was awarded the Bronze Star for ac-

tions during the Vietnam War.

The PACT Act's leasing authority is "something we'll use here and elsewhere" to ensure that the VA health system has the facilities it needs, he said.

"We did market assessments across the country previously and examined where we needed facilities, where we needed to beef up our infrastructure," he said. "That'll serve as a basis for us to examine what we need to do moving forward. So, yes, it's too soon to say we'll lease this facility or that facility."

Remy said he had pressed the staff at the Honolulu medical center to do more in the area of women's health "because that's the largest growing cohort of veterans that we have."

The coronavirus pandemic proved to be boon innovation the area of telemedicine, a health care option that is "here to stay," he said.

"We learned a lot over the course of the last couple of years — not that we're entirely out of the pandemic," he said. "But we learned that we can reach veterans where they are."

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MILITARY

Air Force Special Ops halts Osprey flights

By JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

The Air Force Special Operations Command has grounded its fleet of CV-22 Ospreys over a mechanical problem that first surfaced in 2017, according to a command spokeswoman.

Special operations commander Lt. Gen. Jim Slife ordered a safety stand-down Tuesday, citing four in-flight incidents, including two in the past six weeks, according to a statement emailed Thursday to Stars and Stripes by Lt. Col. Rebecca Heyse.

The command identified a problem with “hard clutch engagement during flight,” according to Heyse’s statement.

“In the coming days, the AFSOC staff will work with the Joint Program Office and industry partners

to fully understand this issue and develop risk control measures to mitigate the likelihood of catastrophic outcomes,” her statement reads. “Ultimately, the goal is to determine a viable long term materiel solution.”

Heyse did not say how long the stand-down may last.

The clutch inside a gearbox that connects one of the CV-22’s two Rolls-Royce Liberty AE1107C engines to the propeller rotor is slipping for an unknown reason, Heyse told Breaking Defense, which first reported the stand-down on Wednesday.

Although the Osprey design allows it to instantaneously compensate for the power disparity if one engine fails, the aircrew must land the tilt-rotor immediately.

The problem has caused no inju-

ries or deaths due to the special operators’ airmanship, Heyse told Breaking Defense.

Concerns over the aircraft’s safety and noise, which takes off like a helicopter and cruises like a plane, sparked protests when the Air Force deployed a special operations squadron to Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo in 2018.

In March, four Marines died when a Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey crashed in Norway during a military exercise. The Marines’ investigation attributed that crash to pilot error. On June 8, five more Marines died when an Osprey crashed in Southern California. That crash is still under investigation.

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XAVIER LOCKLEY/U.S. Air Force

A 71st Special Operations Squadron CV-22 Osprey receives fuel from a Combat Shadow II aircraft over New Mexico in January 2012.

Fort Bragg to stagger relocation of soldiers from barracks

By ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

Roughly 1,200 soldiers are now preparing to move in phases from barracks that Fort Bragg leaders have deemed unsafe because of poor living conditions, the Army base in North Carolina said Tuesday.

The soldiers are living in barracks buildings built in the 1970s in an area of Fort Bragg known as Smoke Bomb Hill. Base officials decided Aug. 4 that the barracks “no longer meet today’s heating, ventilation and air conditioning standards.”

“Continuous repairs and changes to air flow created higher than normal moisture levels and quality-of-life concerns,” the base said.

Soldiers at the base have reported issues with mold in barracks rooms, and those living at Smoke Bomb Hill will move to other barracks on the base. A soldier who is living in unaffected barracks at Fort Bragg and spoke on the condi-

tion of anonymity said soldiers in his unit are moving to make space for those being relocated from Smoke Bomb Hill.

For some, it’s the third or fourth time that they have been forced to move in the past year, and it sometimes means losing their weekend to do so, the soldier said.

“That was a big issue with the soldiers,” the soldier said.

Army officials did not say Tuesday how long the phased approach could take or when the unsafe barracks will be completely empty. Officials said the approach will allow them to keep units close together when possible.

Last week, a Fort Bragg spokesperson said the affected barracks buildings make up about 12% of all single soldier living space at Fort Bragg but that the move will not compromise the amount of space and privacy soldiers are required to have under Army regulations.

For the move, the spokesperson said Fort Bragg has hired a profes-

sional moving company to handle soldiers’ personal items. If soldiers have items damaged from water or mold in the building, they can fill out forms to seek reimbursement, base officials said.

The Army has publicly struggled in the past four years with health and safety concerns in its housing for soldiers and families, following a 2018 Reuters report about the sometimes dangerous conditions in homes. Residents of family housing and barracks have reported problems with mold, pest infestations and slow or ineffective response to maintenance requests.

Privatized companies are responsible for the conditions within the majority of family housing at military bases in the U.S., but the Army is responsible for its barracks. The maintenance in barracks is typically overseen by the base’s Department of Public Works.

Congress has issued a series of

family housing reforms that have made improvements, and Army leaders pledged in 2020 to invest nearly \$10 billion for 10 years. Officials at Fort Bragg did not immediately respond to questions about how much of that money is dedicated to the barracks at Smoke Bomb Hill and what impact emptying them would have on any projected construction funding.

The 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets annual spending for the military, did not include any military construction money for barracks at Fort Bragg.

Some soldiers will be offered basic allowance for housing to move off base, but that decision is dependent on each soldier’s rank and promotion status, Fort Bragg said. The availability of off-base housing could delay those moves. The amount of the allowance would depend on the soldier’s rank, but would likely be about \$1,200 a month, according to the Defense Travel Management Office web-

site.

“Fort Bragg will provide relocation services and support to ensure a smooth transition for all soldiers,” base officials said.

Once the barracks are empty, the majority of the buildings will be demolished and rebuilt, and five will be renovated. About 10-12 buildings are involved, a spokesperson said last week.

Base officials said the work would be completed between fiscal years 2025 and 2027, which is longer than officials previously said. Last week, the spokesperson said the renovations would only take about one year.

“Our enduring obligation at Fort Bragg and as Army leaders is to take care of our people — our soldiers and their families. Their health and welfare are of the utmost importance to our Army readiness,” Fort Bragg said.

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Brother of a Marine killed in Afghanistan withdrawal dies by suicide

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The brother of a Marine killed during the U.S. evacuation from Afghanistan last year has died by suicide near a Southern California town memorial honoring his fallen younger sibling, their mother said.

Dakota Halverson, 28, took his own life on Aug. 9, nearly a year after his brother, Lance Cpl. Kareem Nikoui, 20, died in a suicide bomber attack at the Kabul airport alongside 12 other U.S. troops. The attack on crowds attempting to flee the Taliban also killed some 170 Afghans and injured at least 150 others, including 18 service members.

“The ripple effect! I lost two sons in less than one year, both of them in the month of August,” Shana Chappell, the mother, wrote on Facebook.

Halverson’s body was found at Pikes Peak Park in Norco, Calif., according to the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department, which confirmed the suicide to CNN. The park is close to a community-built memorial flower garden dedicated to the “Fallen 13.” Nikoui’s name is inscribed on a stone tablet on the site.

Nikoui was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Chappell said Halverson struggled to cope with his brother’s death and would frequently sneak into the cemetery where Nikoui is buried to sleep on his grave. Before his suicide, Halverson often spoke of how much he missed his brother, she said.

“Dakota had been expressing some of the things that had been bothering him and one of those things was the loss of his brother Kareem and how he just wanted to be with him again,” Chappell wrote. “He was still having a hard time believing he was actually gone.”

She said Halverson loved people unconditionally and had a forgiv-

ing heart.

“He would do anything for anyone,” Chappell wrote. “He was always happy for everyone and always showed and expressed how proud he was of someone’s success. He just wanted to feel loved and wanted.”

Rep. Mike Waltz, R-Fla., shared his condolences Saturday on Twitter.

“Please pray for his family. There MUST be accountability for this continued carnage,” the congressman wrote.

Waltz urged veterans of the 20-year war in Afghanistan as well as family members who are “going to a dark place” to either call a friend

or the 988 crisis line — the suicide prevention hotline launched in July to give service members and veterans quicker access to mental health services. It is part of a national strategy to address a surge of suicides in the military in recent years.

An online fundraiser collecting donations for Halverson’s funeral has raised nearly \$44,000 as of Wednesday.

“He wanted to be buried next to his brother Kareem,” wrote Chappell. “His family and I want to honor his wishes.”

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MILITARY

Housing: Reservists still waiting for payments

FROM PAGE 1

At issue is a contention by Army finance officials that reservists who mobilize from the U.S. for assignments abroad aren't entitled to a basic housing allowance for their American residence and an overseas housing allowance if the Army fails to provide on-post accommodations.

Reservists typically must take an extended leave of absence from their civilian jobs to deploy overseas, but their rent and mortgage bills back home don't get stopped.

The review board deemed the Army's argument an erroneous interpretation of the law that led to "unjust actions" against reservists. They were subjected to criminal fraud probes, denied promotions and put into debt as the service sought to recoup hundreds of thousands of dollars in allowances that had been paid.

The board ordered the Army to repay the seven soldiers no later than October 2021. It also imposed other corrective steps, such as deletion of all negative findings, letters of reprimand and files stored in Army criminal databases related to the cases.

But Hughes said in the new

court filings that only one of the seven reservists in the case has received reimbursement.

In addition, the Army hasn't confirmed in writing that his clients' records were wiped clean of negative findings, Hughes said.

Since the review board's ruling, several other reservists have filed suit, and the various claims were consolidated into one case.

Hundreds or possibly thousands of reservists have been denied proper housing benefits because of the Army's faulty interpretation of the federal Joint Travel Regulation, according to Hughes.

Furthermore, government attorneys changed their argument from the original contention that dual allowances are prohibited. Now, the Army concedes that it may pay unmarried reservists a dual allowance but isn't required to do so.

Government attorneys also contend that the Defense Finance and Accounting Service ruled that the Army can't pay dual allowances for reservists with family members.

For years, reservists were paid the dual allowances, but in 2016, Army finance officials in Europe

abruptly changed their interpretation of the Joint Travel Regulation.

As a result, reservists were permitted only one allowance from that point on. And the change was applied retroactively, so Army finance officials began targeting those who had received dual payments.

The affected soldiers contend that the effort was an illegal scheme by Army finance officials aimed at finding savings at the expense of reservists.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service has asserted that it may only pay reserve members with dependents in the same fashion as active-duty members, through a family separation basic allowance for housing overseas.

That separation allowance, however, can't be paid if a reservist's family member spends more than 90 days in the same area where the reservist has been mobilized, government attorneys argue.

DFAS determined six of the plaintiffs with dependents could be eligible for relief as intended by the Army board's decision under the family separation allowance, government attorneys said.

But to do that, DFAS would need to know where family members were during the reservists' mobilization, which the Army board did not address.

The reservists counter that the government's argument conflates rules that apply to active-duty personnel with those for reservists.

While active-duty soldiers are sent on permanent duty station assignments with household goods moves, reservists are generally mobilized on temporary assignments that don't allow for the relocation of property and family members.

The Army has "unlawfully mischaracterized the orders ... as a permanent change of station," a plaintiffs' court filing states. The Army can't deny them "an entitlement to cover the two households they were forced to maintain," they argue.

Now, it is up to the federal court to render a decision or set a date for oral arguments to be heard.

The Army in July declined to comment on the matter since it is still in litigation.

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Fort Drum holds forum

BY CRAIG FOX

Watertown Daily Times, N.Y.

WATERTOWN, N.Y. — Maj. Gen. Milford H. Beagle Jr., commander of the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum, says that Fort Drum needs to be relevant as it prepares for Army 2030.

And the community can help Fort Drum get there, he told about 100 community leaders from the north country during an executive forum on Wednesday.

"Fort Drum is good for the north country, and the north country is good for Fort Drum," he said.

While Fort Drum is investing in better technology and infrastructure, Beagle stressed that the north country needs to help the military post continue to work toward advancing its strengths and opportunities by 2030 and 2040.

"The effort is get us all together to see what's coming forward," he said, stressing the importance of retaining the special relationship between Fort Drum and the north country.

It's the first time that anyone can remember that Fort Drum leaders brought such a large contingent of community partners together to talk about where the military installation is headed.

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AFGHANISTAN

GOP: Report says poor choices led to airport blast deaths**FROM PAGE 1**

the world has been degraded, the U.S. is less safe than it was before, and those Afghans most at-risk of Taliban reprisals remain trapped in Afghanistan," the report states.

Republicans said they interviewed people who were on the ground in Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul, reviewed hundreds of situational reports and internal memos, and took fact-finding trips to Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar to prepare their findings.

They said they were unable to complete a thorough investigation due to stonewalling from the State Department and named 34 current and former officials who are likely to be subpoenaed if Republicans win control of the House in the midterm elections in November.

Ned Price, the State Department's spokesman, said Monday that Congress members and staff received more than 150 briefings on the withdrawal, the status of Afghan women and girls, relocation operations, counterterrorism, talks with the Taliban and other issues.

"We consistently stayed until we had exhausted all of their questions from both Republicans and Democrats on the committee," he said.

Price said the report overlooked, ignored, misrepresented and got several facts wrong, namely that the administration of President Joe Biden could have reneged on the 2020 Doha peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban.

"When this administration came into office, we inherited an agreement that the last administration had negotiated just about a year [earlier]," Price said. "As we said at the time, it wasn't an agreement that we precisely would have negotiated, but it's one that we inherited."

The report offers a detailed account of the end of a 20-year offensive in Afghanistan that killed 2,300 U.S. military personnel, wounded another 20,000 and cost almost \$1 trillion, according to Defense Department estimates. More than 775,000 American troops served in the war.

The report also blames poor decision-making for the war's last casualties, the 13 service mem-



CHRIS HERBERT, U.S. AIR FORCE/AP

Afghan citizens pack inside a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III, as they are transported from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Afghanistan, on Aug. 15, 2021.

bers and 170 Afghans killed in a suicide bombing at Kabul's airport during the last days of evacuation. Republicans contend those lives could have been spared if the U.S. agreed to manage security of Kabul as the Taliban had proposed.

"The chaos at the gates and the Taliban's inability to control the perimeter meant that U.S. military personnel were closely packed together as they sought to screen would-be evacuees, placing them in a more vulnerable situation that was exploited by the bomber, contributing to the high number of casualties," the report states.

Marine Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, then-commander of U.S. Central Command, has repeatedly dismissed the Taliban's offer as insincere and said the U.S. did not have the resources to undertake such a mission.

Securing the Kabul airport alone proved to be a struggle as thousands flocked to U.S. aircraft to escape the Taliban, some clinging to landing gear and falling to their deaths. Republicans criticized U.S. officials for urging desperate Afghans to make their way to the airport even though it was at

full capacity and entry gates were closed.

The report states only 36 consular officers from the State Department were on the ground to screen more than 124,000 evacuees, amounting to "roughly one consular officer for every 3,444 evacuees."

The slow processing led staffers and advisers for senior officials such as Vice President Kamala Harris, first lady Jill Biden, and an unnamed member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to reach out to outside veterans groups for help, according to the report. Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, and other officials directly contacted military officers in Kabul to request aid for specific at-risk Afghans, one military officer told Republican committee members.

"The fact that high-level members of the administration felt the need to go to a volunteer organization and tactical-level commanders on the ground as opposed to utilizing the State Department's or other government entities' formal internal processes and chains of command underscores how critical outside groups became to the evacuation effort, even with thousands of U.S. military personnel

on the ground," the report states.

Republicans said veterans groups and other volunteers developed their own procedures to speed up the evacuation, creating special signs with distinct symbols and phrases, code words and other visual signals to allow American service members to pluck select evacuees out of the teeming crowds. The evacuees largely consisted of personnel from elite Afghan military and intelligence units.

The volunteer groups also stepped in to clothe, feed and shelter tens of thousands of Afghans left behind. Many of the volunteers were veterans who drained their 401k retirement plans, quit or took leave from their jobs to fund the operation of a safe house network, according to the report.

Most of those who were able to leave Afghanistan were men. Kelley Currie, the former ambassador-at-large for the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues, wrote in the report that only 25% of evacuees were women and girls. State Department officials have said it was over 40%.

The State Department evacuated more than 800 American citizens from Afghanistan after the pullout of U.S. troops and continues to process immigration requests. As many as 160,000 Afghans and their family members are eligible to come to the U.S. through a Special Immigrant Visa, according to the State Department. Processing those applications could stretch well beyond the end of Biden's first term in January 2025.

Republicans said they are particularly concerned about a "significant" number of Afghan commandos and other special forces who remained behind and are in danger of being recruited by foreign adversaries. They charged the Biden administration has yet to put a plan in place to prioritize their evacuation and said some have crossed into Iran as a result.

"These commandos are trained, highly trained, on how we do signals intelligence, how we do human intelligence, how we operate," Rep. Michael Waltz, R-Fla., said in the report. "We know that the Taliban are hunting them down. They are seeking to force them through coercion to hand over that information so that they

can use it and they can understand how we operate."

House Republicans also took aim at the Biden administration's "over the horizon" counterterrorism strategy, which relies on drone strikes and special forces operations. The report asserts Afghanistan has once again become a safe haven for terrorists and points to the killing in July of al-Qaida's top leader, Ayman al-Zawahri, in Kabul as proof.

Military officials, including Army Gen. Bryan Fenton, commander of Joint Special Operations Command, have defended the strategy to lawmakers. During his Senate confirmation hearing in July, Fenton said battling terrorism from afar is difficult but "absolutely doable" in Afghanistan.

However, a separate report issued Tuesday by the Defense Department's Office of the Inspector General said the U.S. has been "significantly challenged" by the lack of a physical presence in the country as well as "scant intelligence and a lack of access to nearby military bases."

Republicans in their report chastised the Biden administration for failing to secure bases for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations in any of Afghanistan's neighboring countries.

The Defense Department inspector general reported the Taliban seized about \$7.1 billion of military equipment that the U.S. left behind in Afghanistan, including \$923.3 million in aircraft and about \$4.1 billion in military vehicles. Some of the equipment had been made inoperable during the evacuation.

"The Afghan forces were heavily reliant on U.S. contractor support to maintain both their aircraft and vehicle fleets," the report said. "Without this continued support, the long-term operability of these assets would be limited."

The amount also included roughly \$294.6 million in aircraft munitions and \$511.8 million in weapons such as rifles, grenade launchers and howitzers, though it is unknown how many remain operational, according to the report.

Stars and Stripes reporter Caitlin Doornbos contributed to this report. shkolnikova.svetlana@stripes.com
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Mosque bombed in Afghan capital during evening prayers

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A bombing at a mosque in the Afghan capital of Kabul during evening prayers killed at least 21 people, including a prominent cleric, and wounded at least 33 others, eyewitnesses and police said Thursday.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack Wednesday night, the latest to strike the country in the year since the Taliban seized power. Several children were reported to be among the wounded.

The Islamic State group's local affiliate has stepped up attacks tar-

geting the Taliban and civilians since the former insurgents' takeover last August as U.S. and NATO troops were in the final stages of their withdrawal from the country. Last week, the extremists claimed responsibility for killing a prominent Taliban cleric at his religious center in Kabul.

Khalid Zadrán, the spokesman for Kabul's Taliban police chief, gave the figures to The Associated Press for the bombing at the Siddiquiya mosque in the city's Kher Khanna neighborhood. An eyewitness told the AP the explosion was carried out by a suicide bomber.

The slain cleric was Mullah

Amir Mohammad Kabuli, the eyewitness said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid condemned the explosion and vowed that the "perpetrators of such crimes will soon be brought to justice and will be punished."

MILITARY

New commander to lead Navy arm in Indo-Pacific

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Gusts of wind and rain lashed the aft deck of the destroyer USS Benfold as command of the Navy's largest destroyer squadron passed Thursday to its deputy commodore.

Capt. Walter Mainor relieved Capt. Chase Sargeant as commanding officer of Destroyer Squadron 15 during a ceremony aboard the Benfold.

As Task Force 71, the squadron is the 7th Fleet's main battle arm. As part of the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group, the warships provide the USS Ronald Reagan with seagoing escorts.

As squadron commander, Mainor has at his direction eight destroyers armed with the guided-missile Aegis Combat System.

The individual ships make frequent freedom-of-navigation pa-

trols around contested island chains in the South China Sea and transits of the Taiwan Strait. Both operations show U.S. resistance to maritime claims in the area, particularly by China.

China concluded a week of naval and air force exercises around Taiwan on Aug. 11, a response to a U.S. congressional visit to Taiwan. Beijing also reasserted in an Aug. 10 white paper its willingness to reclaim Taiwan by force.

With tempers on both sides of the strait still warm, 7th Fleet commander Vice Adm. Karl Thomas laid out for Mainor his responsibility.

"I think it's safe to say that our rules-based international order is now significantly threatened," Thomas said during the ceremony. "What you do now matters, you can give our president the ability to deter the aggressors and ensure a free and open world — never for-

get that."

Thomas also mentioned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its complications in the Indo-Pacific region.

The squadron command element has 58 officers and sailors; the eight ships have approximately 300 crew members. Mainor will be responsible for all surface operations between the International Date Line and the central Indian Ocean.

Sargeant, of Lakeland, Fla., took command in February 2021. Under his leadership, ships in the squadron made more than 20 freedom-of-navigation operations and 25 passes through the Taiwan Strait.

"Over the last 18 months, no staff has had more impact, conducted more high-interest missions or moved the needle of freedom in the seas more than this staff," he said during the ceremony. "I would put



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

Capt. Walter Mainor took command of Destroyer Squadron 15 at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, on Thursday.

this small, motley crew of dedicated service warriors up against any staff, anywhere in any navy."

Mainor, a native of Alabama, was deputy commodore, the squadron second-in-command, just as Sargeant was before he took command.

Mainor served first as an enlistee sonar technician, attended the Navy's Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training program and graduated from Morehouse College with a bachelor's degree in finance. He later graduated with a master's in business administration from the Naval Postgraduate School.

In Japan, Mainor also com-

manded the mine countermeasures ship USS Patriot and the destroyer USS William P. Lawrence.

During the ceremony, Mainor thanked Sargeant for his services as his commanding officer.

"Chase, your leadership and passion for this [area of responsibility] is unparalleled and this theater is better for it," he said. "Not only did you further enhance the capabilities and tactics of DESRON 15, but you've also built and led a new task force. It's been a pleasure to work alongside you."

Sargeant's next assignment will take him to the Chief of Naval Operations' plans and policies office in Washington, D.C.

Navy wife convicted of defrauding VA of \$170K with fake paperwork

By ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

A Maryland woman who joined a family scheme that defrauded the Department of Veterans Affairs of at least \$1 million was convicted of federal charges and now faces up to 15 years in prison.

Mary Francis Biggs, 65, was found guilty Monday of conspiracy to commit fraud and theft of government property. The jury concluded that Biggs had colluded with her daughter Angela Farr, a Navy veteran, to obtain \$170,000 in disability benefits in her husband's name.

Biggs and Farr fabricated dozens of documents and submitted fraudulent medical claims to the VA requesting disability benefits on behalf of the Navy veteran, who is Farr's father.

Farr pleaded guilty in March to organizing the conspiracy with her ex-husband, Army veteran Michael Vincent Pace. All told, Farr bilked the government out of more than \$475,000.

As part of the conspiracy, Biggs and Farr claimed that the unidentified Navy veteran was "homebound and required full-time assistance for basic tasks such as eating, bathing, and dressing," according to court documents.

For at least part of the scam, the mother-daughter team kept him unaware of the phony claims in his name, according to a statement Wednesday by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Maryland. It's unclear when or how much he ended up learning about the fraud.

Based on the fake paperwork, the VA assessed a 100% service-connected disability and allotted Biggs' husband a special monthly stipend. Meanwhile, he was employed as a Navy civilian supervising a logistics unit of 25 people.

Biggs first swindled the VA into declaring her as her husband's financial fiduciary in 2017 after submitting fraudulent evidence to show that he couldn't manage his own finances because of the severity of his alleged disabilities, ac-

ording to the U.S. Attorney's Office statement.

As his trustee, Biggs then collected his VA payments and spent the money on daily living expenses, cruise vacations and a kitchen renovation, according to prosecutors.

Also involved in the conspiracy was Pace, Farr's ex-husband, who

conned the VA into providing a monthly caregiver assistance stipend and full disability benefits, the Justice Department statement said.

He pleaded guilty to stealing over \$370,000, according to a Justice Department statement issued Wednesday. Like Farr's father, Pace was healthy and lived an ordi-

nary life, according to prosecutors.

"Angela Farr took advantage of a program whose goal was to help others, but did the exact opposite in her efforts to fraudulently obtain VA disability benefits," said U.S. Attorney Erek Barron in a statement in March.

Sentencing is pending for all three people convicted in the case.

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EUROPE

Ukraine's Zelenskyy talks with Erdogan and UN chief

Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine — Turkey's president and the U.N. chief met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday in a high-stakes bid to ratchet down a war raging for nearly six months, discuss desperately needed grain exports and address the safety of Europe's biggest nuclear power plant amid the fighting.

The gathering, held far from the front lines in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, near the Polish border, marked the first visit to Ukraine by Turkey's Recep Tayyip

Erdogan since the outbreak of the war, and the second by U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres.

Erdogan has positioned himself as a go-between in efforts to stop the fighting that erupted when Russia invaded Ukraine. While Turkey is a NATO member, its wobbly economy is reliant on Russia for trade, and the country has tried to steer a middle course.

On the battlefield, meanwhile, at least 11 people were killed and 40 wounded in heavy Russian missile strikes on Ukraine's Kharkiv

region on Wednesday night and Thursday morning, Ukrainian authorities said.

Russia's military claimed that it struck a base for foreign mercenaries in Kharkiv, killing 90. There was no immediate comment from the Ukrainian side.

Heightening international tensions, Russia deployed warplanes carrying state-of-the-art hypersonic missiles to the country's Kaliningrad region, an enclave surrounded by two NATO nations.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the three leaders would



UKRAINIAN PRESIDENTIAL PRESS OFFICE/AP

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, right, shakes hands with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during their meeting in Lviv, Ukraine, on Thursday.

discuss the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine. Moscow and Kyiv have accused each other of shelling the complex, and the fighting has raised fears of a nuclear catastrophe.

In his nightly video address

Wednesday, Zelenskyy reaffirmed his demand for the Russian military to leave the plant, emphasizing that "only absolute transparency and control of the situation" by, among others, the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency, could guarantee nuclear safety.

Westerners sponsor slogans on bombs aimed at Russians

BY JOHN HUDSON
AND KOSTIANTYN KHODOV
The Washington Post

KYIV, Ukraine — At a military position near the front line, members of a Ukrainian military unit snickered as a soldier with tattooed arms scrawled a phallic symbol on an artillery shell designed for an M777 howitzer cannon.

At a separate position, a Ukrainian soldier loaded a shell that read "Hello from Texas" into a medium-range cannon. Seconds before it fired with a loud boom, the operator announced "from Texas" in a gleeful Slavic accent.

The emergence of slogans and symbols emblazoned on U.S.-made artillery — originally a creative outlet for Ukrainian soldiers serving in the country's east — has become a growing and lucrative fundraising tactic for Ukrainians in the nearly seven-month war.

Local crowdfunding websites have raised tens of thousands of dollars for the war effort since Russia invaded on Feb. 24. They offer people anywhere in the world the chance to commission a message on a growing menu of bombs and missiles before they are fired at advancing Russian forces.

The most prominent crowdfunding group — Sign My Rocket — started by selling messages on Soviet-made 82 mm caliber mortar rounds for \$30 each. But eventually co-founder Anton Sokolenko realized if it sold messages on more powerful weapons, benefactors from the United States, Britain, Germany, Canada, Switzerland



Sign My Rocket

A Soviet-designed Buk surface-to-air missile with the inscription "Not for Use on Malaysian Airlines."

and elsewhere would pay even more.

"We got bigger and bigger shells," Sokolenko said in an interview from his home in Cherkasy, a city in central Ukraine. "Ninety-five percent of the orders are in English and most are from the United States."

Sokolenko's organization has now moved beyond mortar shells and is selling inscriptions on antitank mines, bomb-laden

drones, VOG 17 hand grenades, 220 mm rockets, 2S7 Pion heavy artillery and scores of other explosives. He says it has raised more than \$150,000 for the Ukrainian military and facilitated scores of messages including "From NATO with Love," "London Says Hi" and "Remember the Alamo."

The group recently branded a Buk surface-to-air missile with the message "Not

for Use on Malaysian Airlines" — a reference to the downing of a commercial airliner in 2014 by pro-Russian separatists armed with the same missile system, which killed 298 people.

The fundraising effort is not officially sanctioned by the Ukrainian military. Sokolenko's organization relies on his informal connections to Ukrainian military units in the field. The proceeds go toward buying equipment for Ukraine's military units, including camouflaged vehicles and auto parts.

After a donation is collected, a Ukrainian soldier scrawls the requested message on the munition and takes a picture of it. The picture is then sent to the donor.

"I've already donated \$3,000," said Colin Smith, a director at an e-commerce company in Dallas who has dedicated artillery shells to friends and relatives for birthdays, anniversaries and a job promotion.

Smith first discovered Sign My Rocket on a Reddit page earlier this year. He recently gave his wife a picture of an artillery shell for their anniversary, inscribed with their initials and wedding date: "C & Y. Est. 2021."

"She loved it," he said, "though she's now kind of tired of me telling her about the war."

The most expensive item on the website is the naming rights to a Russian-made T-72 tank for \$3,000 — a topic of contention in the Smith household.

"I'm trying to get my family to go in on the tank," said Smith, "but my wife said I've already spent too much."

Ship that Ukraine alleges has stolen grain is likely off coast of Syria

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A Russian cargo ship that Ukraine alleges holds stolen grain from territory seized by Moscow appears to have reached the Syrian port of Tartus, according to satellite images analyzed Thursday by The Associated Press.

The arrival of the SV Konstantin marks just the latest shipment of

Ukrainian grain — whether legally purchased or allegedly looted — to reach Syria. Another, the Razoni, recently docked full of legally purchased Ukrainian corn as part of a United Nations-led effort to get the country's food out of the war zone to a hungry world.

The Konstantin's arrival also shows the level Damascus has relied on Russia to keep its embattled

President Bashar Assad in power amid his own nation's yearslong war, particularly at this Mediterranean Sea port that hosts Russian warships and has crucial Russian-run grain silos.

The Konstantin traveled from the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula in the Black Sea from around July 6, according to ship-tracking data from MarineTraffic.com ana-

lyzed by the AP.

The ship had loaded Ukrainian grain at Sevastopol, said Ihor Ostash, Ukraine's ambassador to Lebanon, during an interview with Espresso TV. That port city in Crimea has seen Russian forces previously bring grain by truck from occupied territories, Ukrainian officials say.

The Konstantin traveled through the Bosphorus and reached the

Turkish city of Izmir on the Aegean Sea. The ship then headed into the Mediterranean along the coast of Cyprus before switching off its Automatic Identification System tracker on Sunday. Ships are supposed to keep their AIS trackers on, but vessels wanting to hide their movements often turn theirs off. Those heading to Syrian ports routinely do so.

NATION



LARRY NEUMEISTER/AP

Rudy Giuliani is pushed in a wheelchair at New York's JFK airport after returning from Atlanta on Wednesday.

Giuliani says he 'satisfied' his obligation with Ga. grand jury

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Rudy Giuliani said Wednesday that he had “satisfied his obligation” after facing hours of questioning Wednesday before a special grand jury in Atlanta as a target of an investigation into attempts by former President Donald Trump and others to overturn his 2020 election defeat in Georgia.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Giuliani said Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis ended his appearance by saying he had “satisfied his obligation under the subpoena.”

“So I was very happy that I satisfied my obligation,” he said.

Speaking upon his return to New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, Giuliani didn't provide any additional details about his appearance or testimony, including the type of questions he was asked. He was pushed through the terminal in a wheelchair alongside his lawyer, Bob Costello.

Giuliani's attorneys tried to de-

lay his appearance before the special grand jury, saying he was unable to fly due to heart stent surgery in early July. On Wednesday, Giuliani said “my plane ride was OK,” noting that it was his first since the procedure.

Costello said the session, which lasted from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a half-hour lunch, “went very well. No disputes.” Costello did not immediately address whether Giuliani answered questions or declined.

“Everyone was a lady or gentleman. Professional,” he wrote in a text message, adding that Willis came out to greet Giuliani and his lawyers at the end.

The investigation by the Democratic prosecutor has brought heightened scrutiny to the desperate and ultimately failed efforts to overturn Joe Biden's 2020 election win. It's one of several investigations into Trump's actions in office as he lays the groundwork for another run at the White House in 2024.

Willis opened her investigation

after the disclosure of a remarkable Jan. 2, 2021, phone call between Trump and Georgia's secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger. On the call, Trump suggested that Raffensperger could “find” the exact number of votes that would be needed to flip the election results in Georgia.

Trump has denied any wrongdoing. He has described the call as “perfect.”

Willis last month filed petitions to compel testimony from seven Trump associates and advisers. She has also said she's considering calling Trump himself to testify, and the former president has hired a legal team in Atlanta that includes a prominent criminal defense attorney.

Other Trump allies swept up in the inquiry include U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. His attorneys filed a legal motion Wednesday asking a federal judge to put Graham's special grand jury appearance set for Aug. 23 on hold while he appeals an order compelling him to testify.

Trump Organization CFO pleads guilty in tax evasion case

By MICHAEL R. SISAK
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A top executive at former President Donald Trump's family business pleaded guilty Thursday to evading taxes in a deal that could potentially make him a star witness against the company at a trial this fall.

Trump Organization CFO Allen Weisselberg pleaded guilty to all 15 of the charges he faced in the case.

In a low, somewhat hoarse voice, he admitted taking in over \$1.7 million worth of untaxed perks — including school tuition for his grandchildren, free rent for a Manhattan apartment and lease payments for a luxury car — and explicitly keeping some of the plums off the books.

Judge Juan Manuel Merchan agreed to sentence Weisselberg to five months in New York City's Rikers Island jail complex, although he will be eligible for release much earlier if he behaves well behind bars. The judge said Weisselberg will have to pay nearly \$2 million in taxes, penalties and interest and complete five years of probation.

The plea bargain also requires Weisselberg to testify truthfully as a prosecution witness when the Trump Organization goes on trial in October on related charges. The

company is accused of helping Weisselberg and other executives avoid income taxes by failing to report their full compensation accurately to the government. Trump himself is not charged in the case.

Weisselberg said nothing as he left court, offering no reply when a journalist asked whether he had any message for Trump.

Weisselberg's lawyer Nicholas Gravante Jr. said his client pleaded guilty “to put an end to this case and the yearslong legal and personal nightmares it has caused for him and his family.”

“We are glad to have this behind him,” the lawyer added.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said in a statement that Weisselberg's plea “directly implicates the Trump Organization in a wide range of criminal activity and requires Weisselberg to provide invaluable testimony in the upcoming trial against the corporation.”

“We look forward to proving our case in court against the Trump Organization,” he added.

Weisselberg's sentencing won't happen until after the trial of the Trump Organization, which is facing tax fraud charges punishable by a fine of double the amount of unpaid taxes, or \$250,000, whichever is larger.

Witnesses: Duo was eager to kidnap Mich. governor

Associated Press

Two men charged with conspiring to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in 2020 were very eager to move forward and fully onboard with the plan, two key witnesses testified Wednesday.

The witnesses, Ty Garbin and Kaleb Franks, are vital for the government's case because they, too, were arrested but pleaded guilty and agreed to cooperate.

Garbin and Franks downplayed the influence of two FBI informants who trained with the group. They didn't know their real roles at the time but said they couldn't recall the operatives proposing that Whitmer should be kidnapped.

“Not that I saw, no,” Garbin told jurors in federal court in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Adam Fox and Barry Croft Jr. are on trial for a second time on conspiracy charges. A jury in April was unable to reach a unanimous verdict but acquitted two other

men involved.

Tension between two defense lawyers and the judge emerged when the lawyers were each limited to 25 minutes to cross-examine Franks. With the jury gone for the day, Joshua Blanchard said the cap was unconstitutional, particularly because Fox and Croft face possible life sentences if convicted and there were no restrictions on prosecutors.

“This isn't dragging on,” Blanchard said at the end of the trial's seventh day.

“The court has been interjecting in the defense case,” he added. “It has not been interjecting in the government's case. And it's creating a perception, I think, among the jurors that the court has a preference for how this case ends.”

U.S. District Judge Robert Jonker defended his decision, saying there was no need for certain questions to be “teed up over and over again.” He complained about the trial's pace last week.

Fewer filed for jobless benefits last week

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Slightly fewer Americans filed for unemployment benefits last week as the labor market continues to stand out as one of the strongest segments of the U.S. economy.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending August 13 fell by 2,000 to 250,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. Last week's number, which raised some eyebrows, was revised down by 10,000.

The four-week average for claims, which evens out some of

the week-to-week volatility, fell by 2,750 to 246,750.

The number of Americans collecting traditional unemployment benefits increased by 7,000 the week that ended August 6, to 1.43 million. That's the most since early April.

Hiring in the United States in 2022 has been remarkably resilient in the face of rising interest rates and weak economic growth.

The Labor Department reported earlier this month that U.S. employers added 528,000 jobs in July, more than double what fore-

casters had expected. The unemployment rate dipped to 3.5%, tying a 50-year low reached just before coronavirus pandemic slammed the U.S. economy in early 2020.

That's not to say the U.S. economy doesn't face challenges. Consumer prices have been surging, rising 8.5% in July from a year earlier — down slightly from June's 40-year high 9.1%. To combat inflation, the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark short-term interest rate four times this year.

NATION

CDC announces shake-up, citing COVID mistakes

By MIKE STOBBE
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The head of the nation's top public health agency on Wednesday announced a shake-up of the organization, saying it fell short responding to COVID-19 and needs to become more nimble.

The planned changes at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — CDC leaders call it a “reset” — come amid criticism of the agency's response to COVID-19, monkeypox and other public health threats.

The CDC's director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, told the agency's staff about the changes on Wednesday. It's a CDC initiative, and was not directed by the White House or other administration officials, she said.

“I feel like it's my responsibility to lead this agency to a better place after a really challenging three years,” Walensky told The Associated Press.

Her reorganization proposal must be approved by the Department of Health and Human Services secretary. CDC officials say they hope to have a full package of changes finalized, approved and underway by early next year.

Some changes still are being formulated, but steps announced Wednesday include:

- Increasing use of preprint scientific reports to get out actionable data, instead of waiting for research to go through peer review and publication by the CDC journal *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

- Restructuring the agency's

communications office and further revamping CDC websites to make the agency's guidance for the public more clear and easier to find.

- Altering the length of time agency leaders are devoted to outbreak responses to a minimum of six months — an effort to address a turnover problem that at times caused knowledge gaps and affected the agency's communications.

- Creation of a new executive council to help Walensky set strategy and priorities.

- Appointing Mary Wakefield as senior counselor to implement the changes. Wakefield headed the Health Resources and Services Administration during the Obama administration and also served as the No. 2 administrator at HHS.

- Altering the agency's organization chart to undo some changes made during the Trump administration.

- Establishing an office of inter-governmental affairs to smooth partnerships with other agencies, as well as a higher-level office on health equity.

Walensky also said she intends to “get rid of some of the reporting layers that exist, and I'd like to work to break down some of the silos.” She did not say exactly what that may entail, but emphasized that the overall changes are less about re-drawing the organization chart than rethinking how the CDC does business and motivates staff.

“This will not be simply moving boxes” on the organization chart, she said.

CDC: ‘Fast-moving’ E. coli outbreak in Michigan, Ohio

The Washington Post

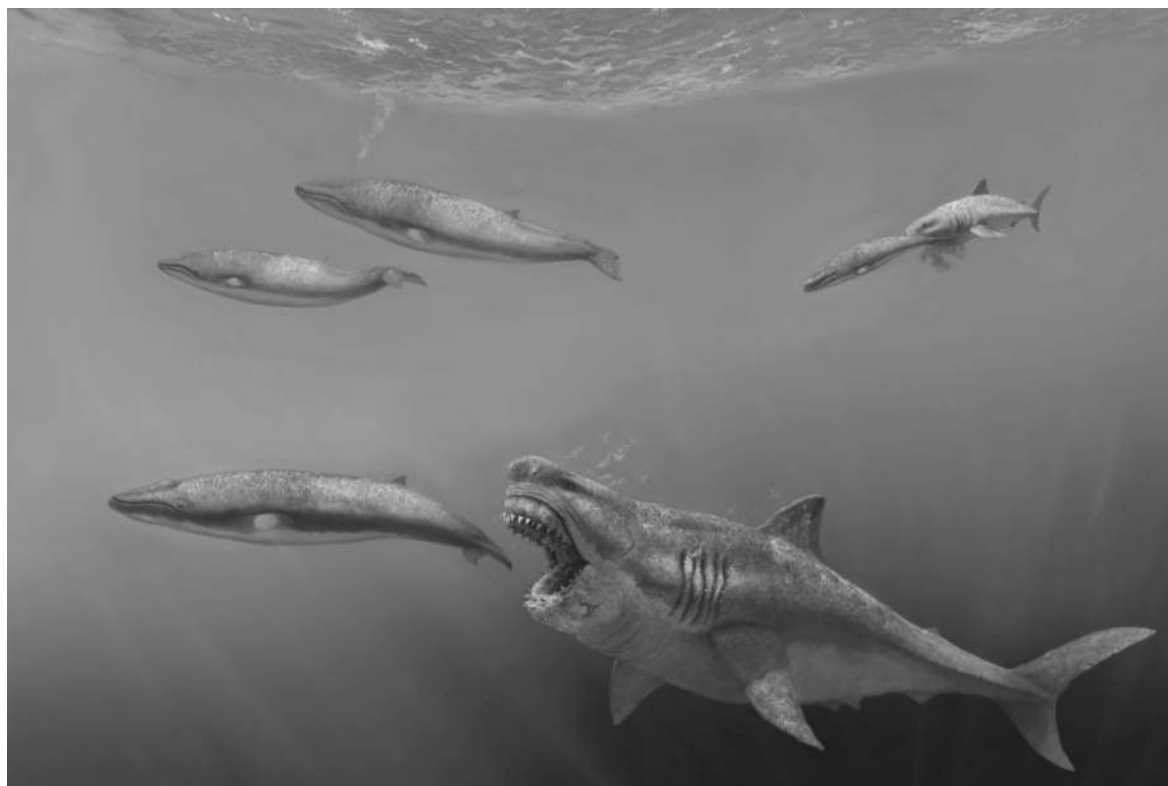
A “fast-moving” E. coli outbreak in Michigan and Ohio has left 29 people ill and nine of them hospitalized, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Wednesday.

In an urgent public announcement aimed at finding the source of the outbreak, the CDC said no deaths had occurred. No food source has been identified, the CDC said, meaning the number of people falling sick could increase. So far, 15 people in Michigan and 14 people in Ohio have been infected, the CDC said.

In a separate news release, Michigan's health department said

it had received 98 reports of E. coli cases this month — up from 20 in August last year. Natasha Bagdasarian, the chief medical executive at the department, said the “significant jump in cases is alarming.” The Ohio Department of Health did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Symptoms of E. coli can include diarrhea, fever, excessive vomiting and dehydration, according to the CDC. “If you have symptoms of E. coli, help us solve this outbreak: Write down what you ate in the week before you got sick” and report your case to health authorities, the CDC said in its notice.



J. J. GIRALDO/AP

This illustration depicts a 52-foot Otodus megalodon shark predating on a 26-foot Balaenoptera whale in the Pliocene epoch between 5.4 to 2.4 million years ago.

Research reveals 3D model, new facts about ancient giant sharks

By MADDIE BURAKOFF
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Today's sharks have nothing on their ancient cousins. A giant shark that roamed the oceans millions of years ago could have devoured a creature the size of a killer whale in just five bites, new research suggests.

For their study published Wednesday, researchers used fossil evidence to create a 3D model of the megalodon — one of the biggest predatory fish of all time — and find clues about its life.

At around 50 feet from nose to tail, the megalodon was bigger than a school bus, according to the study in the journal *Science Advances*. That's about two to three times the size of today's great white shark. The megalodon's gaping jaw allowed it to feed on other big creatures. Once it filled its massive stomach, it could roam the oceans for months at a

time, the researchers suggest.

The megalodon was a strong swimmer, too: Its average cruising speed was faster than sharks today and it could have migrated across multiple oceans with ease, they calculated.

“It would be a superpredator just dominating its ecosystem,” said co-author John Hutchinson, who studies the evolution of animal movement at England's Royal Veterinary College. “There is nothing really matching it.”

It's been tough for scientists to get a clear picture of the megalodon, said study author Catalina Pimiento, a paleobiologist with the University of Zurich and Swansea University in Wales.

The skeleton is made of soft cartilage that doesn't fossilize well, Pimiento said. So the scientists used what few fossils are available, including a rare collection of vertebrae that's been at a Belgium museum since the 1860s.

Researchers also brought in a jaw's worth of megalodon teeth, each as big as a human fist, Hutchinson said. Scans of modern great white sharks helped flesh out the rest.

Based on their digital creation, researchers calculated that the megalodon would have weighed around 70 tons, or as much as 10 elephants.

Even other high-level predators may have been lunch meat for the megalodon, which could open its jaw to almost 6 feet wide, Pimiento said.

Megalodons lived an estimated 23 million to 2.6 million years ago.

Since megalodon fossils are rare, these kinds of models require a “leap of imagination,” said Michael Gottfried, a paleontologist at Michigan State University who was not involved in the study. But he said the study's findings are reasonable based on what is known about the giant shark.

Bank of America overdraft revenue down

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Bank of America said the revenue it gets from overdrafts has dropped 90% from a year ago, after the bank reduced overdraft fees to \$10 from \$35 and eliminated fees for bounced checks.

The nation's largest banks are moving away from the practice of charging exorbitant fees on what are mostly small-dollar purchases after years of public pressure. Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan told The Associated Press that he expects whatever residual

income the bank earns from overdraft fees will come from small businesses using overdraft fees as a convenience.

BofA's new overdraft fee policy was implemented starting in June. Moynihan said in the policy's first two months, overdraft fee revenue declined 90% and the bank was seeing fewer instances of the fees being collected. He did not share specifics on the number of instances.

“The remaining (people that get charged overdraft fees) are business owners who are moving mon-

ey around,” Moynihan said. “It's not individuals anymore, frankly.”

Starting the middle of 2021, regional banks such as PNC and Capital One, as well as the online bank Ally, announced plans to eliminate overdraft fees or find ways to curtail them dramatically. Most of the banks said the fees largely impacted the poor and racial minorities, or that the pandemic had shown the banks they could earn big profits without charging fees on their customers, in explaining their decision.

WORLD

Putin revives Soviet award for women who have 10 kids

By ADELA SULIMAN
The Washington Post

Faced with a worrisome decline in Russia's population, President Vladimir Putin this week revived a Soviet-era award launched in 1944, to encourage Russians to supersize their families.

The "Mother Heroine" award published in a decree on Monday goes to women who bear 10 or more children, offering financial incentives and social kudos in a bid to spur population growth.

The honorary medal was first established by Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union and given to around 400,000 citizens, according to Russian media. The revived award will offer Russian citizens a one-time payment of \$16,500 after their 10th child turns 1 year old — and only if the other nine children have all survived.

No mention of the war in Ukraine was linked to the medal.

The Stalin-era accolade was originally launched as part of a wider social package of "pronatalist" measures taken toward the end of World War II, Kristin Roth-Ey, associate professor at University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies, told The Washington Post on Wednesday.

"It was about service to the motherland," she said. Its revival is "obviously a conscious echo of the Stalinist past."

Roth-Ey said the award was created when the Soviet Union was trying to "plan for postwar reconstruction" and support families as "the core institution of Soviet society." Other measures included better health care for women, financial aid and making it harder for married couples to get divorced, she added.

"The war led to high anxiety about population loss. ... It has resonances obviously with what is going on right now," she added, referring to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which the Kremlin has called a special military operation.

Last month, CIA Director William Burns estimated that about 15,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in the Ukraine war and up to 45,000 more wounded. He cited the latest U.S. intelligence on Russian losses.

Nearly eight decades after Stalin's decree, having lots of children is still viewed as "part of being a good Russian citizen," said Roth-Ey, and it is common in other "authoritarian ... nationalist movements that we see in places like Hungary and other parts of Central and Eastern Europe."

In Russia, as elsewhere in Europe, World War II remains a large part of the national psyche. The defeat of Nazi Germany is celebrated each year on May 9, Victory Day, a Russian holiday of national remembrance marked by much pomp and patriotic fervor.

The revival of the motherhood medal is part of a "patriotic campaign" that has ramped up in Russia since it annexed Crimea in 2014, Roth-Ey added.

The original Soviet medal was a gold star superimposed on a silver pentagon and decorated in red enamel reading "Mother Heroine" in Russian.

Putin, 69, is one of three children, but both of his brothers died in infancy before he was born. He first lent his support to reviving the award on June 1, Children's Day.

"As a rule, you can really rely on those who were brought up in a large family," he said in a speech marking the occasion. "They will

not let down a friend or colleagues, or their motherland."

Since 2008, the Kremlin has also awarded the "Order of Parental Glory" to parents who have more than seven children. They receive \$825 and a certificate when their seventh child reaches 3 years old.

Dina Fainberg, author of "Cold War Correspondents" and an associate professor of modern history, agrees that the revival of the Mother Heroine award is part of similar postwar "drive toward state-led patriotism" by Putin.

But she said the reasoning is not necessarily the conflict in Ukraine.

"Ukraine is still not called a war," she told The Post of the nearly six-month invasion. "Putin and his team took great care not to depict it as a war. If you start calling it a war, you undermine stability and make people panic."

More than just "nostalgia" for the old Soviet empire, a bigger issue in Putin's mind may be demographic decline, she said.

The Russians "have an issue with population decline, obviously, and a demographic crisis," Fainberg said. But there is a "growing return of the patriarchal state," she added, with Putin viewing himself as the symbolic male head of the Russian family, around which everyone can rally, and the ultimate "protector of the elderly, women and children" from Russia's enemies.

For Roth-Ey, whether modern Russian women will take up the incentive of the motherhood award remains to be seen.

"I don't see contemporary young Russian women really responding to the call," she said. "They have other things on their mind."

New Zealand family finds bodies of children hidden in abandoned bags

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — A New Zealand family who bought some abandoned goods from a storage unit got home with their purchases to discover the bodies of two children hidden in two suitcases, police said Thursday.

The children were between 5 and 10 years old, had been dead for a number of years and the suitcases had been in storage for at least three or four years, Detective Inspector Tofilau Faamanuia Vaaelua said.

Vaaelua said the investigation was in its early stages but would be rigorous. "This includes establish-

ing where, when and how," he told journalists in Auckland.

The family had purchased the personal and household items in an online auction and hauled them home last week. Vaaelua emphasized they had nothing to do with the deaths and had been understandably distressed by their discovery.

Police first set up a crime scene at the Auckland home last week and opened a homicide investigation, but had declined to go into the details of the case until Thursday.

Vaaelua said identification procedures for the children were ongoing, but that they have relatives

living in New Zealand.

He also said police had contacted Interpol and overseas policing agencies — a possible indication police might believe the suspect or suspects are now living abroad.

"The investigation team is working very hard to hold accountable the person or persons responsible for the deaths of these children," Vaaelua said.

He said it was a difficult case for the investigative team.

"No matter how many years you serve and investigate horrific cases like this, it's never an easy task," he said. "I myself am a parent of young kids. But we have a job to do."



CCTV/AP

An excavator tries to clear mud from an area after flooding in Datong county in western China's Qinghai province on Thursday. Chinese characters on screen read "National level 3 disaster relief activated."

At least 16 dead, 18 missing in western China flash flood

Associated Press

BEIJING — A sudden rainstorm in western China triggered a landslide that diverted a river and caused flash flooding in populated areas, killing at least 16 people and leaving 18 others missing, Chinese state media said Thursday.

Rescuers, who earlier reported 36 people missing, had found 18 of them by early afternoon, state broadcaster CCTV said in an online update. The Wednesday night disaster affected more than 6,000 people in six villages in Qinghai province, CCTV said.

China is facing both heavy rains and flooding in some parts of the country this summer, and extreme heat and drought in other

regions. State media have described the prolonged heat and drought as the worst since record keeping started 60 years ago.

Emergency authorities described the flash flooding in Qinghai's Datong county as a "mountain torrent." Such torrents generally result from heavy squalls in mountainous areas. Water running down the mountain can turn gullies or streams into raging rivers, catching people by surprise.

Video posted by the Beijing News website showed muddy water rushing down a wide street at night and debris-strewn areas with uprooted trees, partially washed-away roads and overturned cars after the waters had receded.

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Gator hunting starts with expanded time, weapons

FL ORLANDO — Florida's alligator hunting season began this week with new rules expanding the time and weapons that can be used.

The new rules expanded alligator hunting to 24 hours a day, instead of the previous 17 hours a day, primarily at night and early morning, that had been allowed.

Additionally, hunters now will be allowed to use pneumatic air-bows attached to a restraining line to hunt the alligators. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission says the pneumatic air-bows are easier to use for people with mobility challenges and young people.

DNR: Fish kill likely due to heat, natural events

IN FREMONT — Hundreds of fish found dead in a northeastern Indiana lake likely died from natural events tied to recent hot weather, state wildlife officials said.

Fisheries biologists with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources visited Clear Lake after residents reported numerous dead fish in the lake, The Journal Gazette reported.

The DNR said an estimated 500 fish were found dead, including bluegill, crappie and bass in the lake about 50 miles northeast of Fort Wayne.

The state agency said that natural events likely caused the fish to die.

Cops: Ring moved \$22M in catalytic converters

OR PORTLAND — Police in suburban Portland said they arrested a crime ring leader responsible for trafficking more than 44,000 catalytic converters stolen from vehicles on the West Coast since 2021.

Detectives said they identified Brennan Doyle, 32, as the leader of the operation and searched his Lake Oswego home, along with seven other properties. The detectives seized over 3,000 catalytic converters, hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash, a high-end car and jewelry, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.

Doyle and his associates are accused of stealing catalytic converters from vehicles along the West Coast, Beaverton police spokesperson Matt Henderson said.

The street value of the parts stolen and trafficked was estimated to be over \$22 million.

At least 12 other people face charges in connection within the operation, police said.

Alligator kills woman in 2nd attack of summer

SC BLUFFTON — A woman in South Carolina was killed by an alligator earlier this week — the second such at-



JACQUELINE DORMER, REPUBLICAN-HERALD (POTTSVILLE, PA.)/AP

Dressing for the part

Reading Police Department bomb technician Sgt. Nicholas Epolito, left, puts a bomb suit on Trevor Michaud of Berks County, Pa., during a demonstration with the Reading Police Bomb Squad at the Pennsylvania State Police Troop L Camp Cadet at Camp Manatawny in Douglassville, Pa. The weeklong summer camp is for kids ages 12 to 15 years old and is hosted by the Pennsylvania State Police Troop L, which covers Berks, Lebanon and Schuylkill counties.

tack this year, authorities said.

The woman's body was discovered at the edge of the water near a pond in a gated community in the town of Bluffton by a resident, who told deputies that the reptile appeared to be guarding the body, The Island Packet quoted Beaufort County Sheriff's Maj. Angela Viens as saying.

Information about the size of the alligator and whether it would be euthanized or relocated was not immediately available.

On June 24, the Horry County Police Department said an alliga-

tor dragged a man into a pond. Prior to those attacks, authorities said, the state had not recorded any in two years.

Man on vacation dies in fall from drawbridge

WI MILWAUKEE — A Rhode Island man vacationing in Milwaukee fell to his death after a drawbridge was raised while he was walking across it.

Richard Dujardin, 77, of Providence, R.I., was crossing the Kil-

bourne Avenue Bridge with his wife, according to a Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office report.

Rosemarie Dujardin made it across the bridge, but her husband was about halfway across when it began to open. He grabbed onto a side rail as the bridge sections rose to a 90-degree angle, but he lost his grip and fell about 70 feet to the pavement below, the report states.

Rosemarie Dujardin told investigators that her husband was hard of hearing and wore glasses.

The medical examiner's report said he was looking at an iPad while walking.

Man jailed after sound causes airport panic

NV LAS VEGAS — A California man jailed in Las Vegas on suspicion of causing a loud noise that sparked panic and travel delays at Harry Reid International Airport had been arrested at the airport less than 24 hours earlier for allegedly causing a disturbance near a ticket counter, a police official said.

The sharp sound — apparently mistaken for gunfire — caused passengers to abandon security lines. More loud noises reverberated through Terminal 1 as metal posts were knocked over in the chaos, Las Vegas police Officer Larry Hadfield said.

Stefan Mathias Hutchison's alleged role in causing the sound was not immediately described. Hutchison, 33, of Carmichael, Calif., had been arrested earlier on misdemeanor misconduct and resisting an officer charges, and freed without bail.

Police boat comes to rescue of stranded groom

MA BOSTON — Officers with the Boston Police Department's harbor patrol unit are used to helping boaters in distress, but last weekend Officer Joe Matthews came to the rescue of a groom in danger of missing his own wedding.

Patrick Mahoney was scheduled to get married on Thompson Island in the middle of Boston Harbor, but the boat that was supposed to ferry him to the island where his bride-to-be was already waiting broke down, police said in a post on their website. The groomsmen, the photographer, DJ, and floral arrangements were also stuck on the mainland.

Enter Matthews, who transported more than a dozen people to the island on his police boat so Mahoney's marriage to Hannah Crawford could go on as scheduled.

Monkey business behind 911 call from zoo

CA SAN LUIS OBISPO — The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office believes it was a little Capuchin monkey that called 911 from a zoo recently.

The call disconnected and dispatchers tried to call and text back but there was no response, so deputies were sent to investigate, the office said in a social media post.

The address turned out to be the Zoo to You near Paso Robles, but the deputies found that no one there made the call.

They finally deduced that a Capuchin monkey named Route had apparently picked up the zoo's cellphone, which was in a golf cart used to move about the property.

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FACES

Some not pleased by Carey's 'Queen of Christmas' bid

Los Angeles Times

Mariah Carey's Christmas takeover attempt came early this year.

By now, Carey is used to her song "All I Want for Christmas Is You" skyrocketing to the top of the charts each year as the holiday approaches. Now, she wants to trademark the term "Queen of Christmas," and that isn't sitting well with other singers.

Last March, Carey officially filed a trademark bid for "Queen of Christmas," which was made public on July 12. According to the application filed with the U.S. Trademark Office, the trademark would cover a substantial range of products, including fragrances, lotions, nail polish, jewelry, cups, mugs, sweatshirts, food and drink, ornaments — and music.

Last week, singer Elizabeth Chan officially filed a declaration of opposition to Carey's trademark claim.

Speaking with Variety, she said, "Christmas has come way before any of us on Earth, and hopefully will be around way after any of us on Earth." Chan has built a career on Christmas music and released an album titled "The Queen of Christmas" in September 2021. The singer said she feels strongly that nobody should "monopolize" anything about Christmas.

"That's just not the right thing to do. Christmas is for everyone. It's meant to be shared; it's not meant to be owned.

"And it's not just about the music business," Chan continued, noting the breadth of Carey's application. "If you knit a 'queen of Christmas' sweater, you should be able to sell it on Etsy to somebody else so they can buy it for their grandma."

On Tuesday, the story caught the ear of Darlene Love, who became indignant at the possibility that she could no longer call herself the "Queen of Christmas."

"Is it true that Mariah Carey trade marked 'Queen of Christmas'?" the prolific backup singer-turned-lead vocalist wrote on Facebook. "What does that mean that I can't use that title? David Letterman officially declared me the Queen of Christmas 29 years ago, a year before she released 'All I Want for Christmas Is You' and at 81 years of age I'm NOT changing anything."

In 2020, Carey said the popularity of "All I Want for Christmas Is You" caught her by surprise.

"It was kind of an accident," she said. "When I did that first Christmas album, 'Merry Christmas' (in 1994), it was pretty early in my career. The label was like, 'You should do a Christmas album, it's a great idea.' I was like, 'Hmm, I don't know.' It seemed a little premature. ... The success of it was definitely a surprise."



Flipping the focus

'The Princess,' HBO's Diana documentary, turns the camera back on the public through use of archival footage, recordings

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

The last thing the world needs, you might think, is another Princess Diana documentary.

It's a fair thought considering that almost 25 years after her death, her life and impact is still media fodder. From magazine covers to books claiming to have new revelations, the culture continues to have an insatiable appetite for all things Diana.

And yet documentarian Ed Perkins managed to find a novel way in: by turning the lens back on us.

"The obvious truth is that Diana's story is one of the most told and retold stories probably in the past 30 years," Perkins said. "We only felt it was worth us adding to that conversation if we really felt like we had a new perspective to offer up."

"The Princess" has no talking heads and no traditional narrator. Instead, it tells the story of her public life using only archival footage from news broadcasts, talk shows and radio programs. It begins from the time of her earliest moments being trailed by cameras at the news of her royal courtship to the aftermath of her death in 1997. It premieres Saturday on HBO and will be available to stream on HBO Max.

Perkins never met Diana. He was 11 when she died and remembers his mother waking him up with tears streaming down her cheeks. For the next week, they were glued to the television leading up to her funeral, as much of the world was. At the time, he recalled just feeling confused and taken aback by what he said was a "very un-British outpouring of grief."

This was someone most people only knew through the media, he thought. Why were they acting as if they'd lost a mother or a sister?

"There's something about her story which has always felt strangely personal to me," he said. "I think millions of people around the world have a sort of similar relationship. There's something about her or what she represented that sort of got under lots of people's skin and became a part of the kind of collective consciousness or understanding of who we were."

They were questions that lingered over the years. And at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, he and his archival team decided to try to answer the why. As you can imagine for one of the most photographed people in history, the archive was



HBO photos

A sea of flowers left by mourners piles up outside London's Kensington Palace after Princess Diana's funeral in September 1997.

enormous. For six months, Perkins watched footage for eight to 12 hours a day, trying to find moments that spoke to him.

"It was often about trying to find subtext and body language," he said. "Diana is almost like a silent movie star. She doesn't speak publicly that much throughout her public life. And yet I think she was incredibly adept, almost masterful, at sort of projecting her own very public/private story publicly and sort of trying to tell us how to feel, how she was feeling."

He also used the many hours of the public's phone-in commentary that aired on British radio shows over the years to function as a kind of Greek chorus.

The film, which got raves at the Sundance Film Festival this year, is trying to take audiences on both an emotional and intellectual journey as it unfolds in the present tense. For Perkins, it's not just an historical document either: It's an origin story for some things that are happening today.

"I want the film to allow us to turn the camera back on all of us and force ourselves to ask some difficult questions about our relationship, yes to Diana, but perhaps more broadly, our relationship to the royal family and more broadly still, what is our relationship to celebrity," Perkins said. "Then the most important and interesting — but perhaps most difficult — thing to talk about with regard to this story is what was our role in this story? What was our complicity in this tragic tale?"

Biebers 'unbreakable' despite health challenges

Hailey Bieber is peeling back the curtain on some of the hardships she and husband Justin have endured of late — most of which have had to do with the couple's string of health issues.

"I just think life is changing all the time," the model, 25, who tied the knot with the 28-year-old "Hold On" singer in 2018, told Harper's Bazaar recently.

"Day to day, week to week, year to year," continued Bieber.

"I think a perfect example of that is over the last six months, both of us have gone through very serious health issues. You have to figure out how to deal with this s--- as it comes, you know? There's a reason they say 'for better or for worse.' Like, that's for real!"

Hailey Bieber, following a bout of COVID-19, earlier this year underwent a procedure to close an opening in her heart, which in March had resulted in her dealing with a mini-stroke thanks to "a small blood clot."

Justin Bieber the month prior also had COVID, resulting in his decision to postpone multiple shows. In June, he delayed his remaining U.S. "Justice" tour dates due to suffering from partial facial paralysis.

A friend of the couple told People that the two are "unbreakable" together, while an insider close to the pop star contended that 2022 has "definitely been an overwhelming year so far" for them.

Anne Heche's death ruled accidental after car crash

Actor Anne Heche died from inhalation injury and burns after her fiery car crash and the death was ruled an accident, according to coroner's results released Wednesday.

Heche, 53, also had a fractured sternum caused by "blunt trauma," according to information on the website of the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner-Coroner.

A full autopsy report was still being completed, the coroner's office said.

The Emmy-winning film and television actor was removed from life support Sunday at a burn center. She was injured when her car jumped a curb and smashed into a West Los Angeles home on Aug. 5. The car and the home burst into flames. Only Heche was injured.

Heche suffered a "severe anoxic brain injury" caused by a lack of oxygen, according to a statement released last week on behalf of her family and friends.

She was declared brain-dead but was kept on life support until her organs could be donated.

Heche first came to prominence on the NBC soap opera "Another World" in the late 1980s before becoming a Hollywood star in the late 1990s.

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The dueling perceptions of the Trump age

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

The Washington Post

For pure shock value, last week's FBI search of Donald Trump's Palm Beach home was nearly as jarring as the Jan. 6 assault on the U.S. Capitol.

Different actors, different purposes — but similarly unsettling to American sensibilities.

The riot on Jan. 6, 2021, an investigation of which has consumed our interest for the past two months, left many Americans, including me, slack-jawed. Our Bush-era war motto of "shock and awe" came to mind as Trump backers wearing animal skins and horned headgear toppled the barricades and stormed our version of the Bastille.

The violence and malevolent spirit of that day — a hangman's noose for Vice President Mike Pence and the mocking taunts of angry men hunting House Speaker Nancy Pelosi — were profoundly disturbing, even horrifying. Most people, I think, would agree.

Now, switch channels to witness 30 to 40 federal agents arriving at Mar-a-Lago to search the premises for classified papers Trump allegedly had taken from the White House. The agents removed 11 sets of classified documents, some of them marked "top secret/sensitive compartmented information," one of the highest levels of classification.

We weren't privy to the search in real time; and Trump was in New York City that day preparing for his deposition in a state investigation of his sprawling business empire. Except for a few men in suits, most of the federal agents wore T-shirts, cargo pants, masks and gloves.

Having federal agents descend on your property is shocking under any circumstances. Unless, of course, you're a criminal, in

which case you surely wouldn't have been a president of the United States, right? Trump might have been both. But what if he isn't a criminal guilty of espionage, as has been suggested? Isn't it equally possible that he's merely stubborn, prideful and dangerously irresponsible? Intent would seem to be crucial to the answer.

I've wrestled with both events, trying to gauge their effect on our politics in a time of deep division and distrust and asking why my own feelings are mixed. The two historic moments are not the same, obviously, but they both signal profound disruptions in our values. Neither should happen in America. And yet both did, and, inarguably, Trump is to blame for both.

Part of me thinks the Mar-a-Lago search couldn't have happened to a nicer guy. I wouldn't trust Trump with my dry-cleaning stubs, much less boxes of documents containing classified information that could pose a risk to national security.

The other part of me, informed by history's examples of government overreach, finds the search of a former president's home as unsettling as the destruction of public property by U.S. citizens. Perhaps this is the legacy of the World War II generation that taught its children to be ever wary of government's power. Or maybe it's just the reporter in me.

Again, these two episodes are hardly mirror images — one was lawful, and the other plainly was not — but they do reflect the dueling perceptions of our times.

If you see Trump as the worst excuse for a president in our nation's history, then the search bordered on the mounted cavalry riding to the rescue. If he indeed possessed nuclear-related classified documents, as has been reported, then he should be held accountable.

If this was the government's Al Capone strategy — the feds couldn't pin racketeering charges on Capone, so they jailed him for tax evasion — then, fine, please get on with it.

However, if you happen to like Trump, then the search was yet another piece of a larger picture in which the FBI, the media and Democrats are in cahoots to deprive Trump and his voters of their share of power.

This belief, of course, ignores the fact that another supposedly "deep state" conspirator on that crowd's "most wanted" list, former FBI Director James Comey, deserves much credit for throwing the 2016 election to Trump.

It was Comey's letter to Congress just days before the election, saying the FBI had "learned of the existence of emails that appear to be pertinent to the investigation" into Hillary Clinton's private email server, that is widely believed to have handed Trump his victory. If there were any fence-sitters left, they quickly tumbled into Trump's camp, especially in states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Florida.

The FBI search, similarly, was a Comey-esque *deus ex machina* for Trump, whose popularity has supposedly swelled among his party faithful.

The search might have been justifiable — and obviously met the probable-cause standard for a court-ordered search warrant — but the image of federal agents trampling the sacred grounds of their hero's castle has emboldened Trump supporters as little else could.

If the Justice Department intends to indict Trump, then it needs to act quickly so he is prevented from ever holding public office again. Otherwise, in the battle of dueling perspectives, Trump might have the lead.

Biden's immigration policy should be a scandal

BY HENRY OLSEN

Special to The Washington Post

Illegal border crossings remain near record highs despite the searing summer heat, yet the crisis has barely broken through the media's focus on the recently passed climate and health care package and other purported "wins" for President Joe Biden. That lack of attention is bad — both for the country and for Biden.

What's going on along the border with Mexico is scandalous. Thousands of migrants illegally cross it every day, often with no interaction with the overworked Border Patrol. That agency nonetheless reports massive numbers of apprehensions each month. Nearly 163,000 people were encountered at the border in July.

To put this into perspective, consider that the Border Patrol reports it has encountered more than 1.8 million illegally crossing migrants so far this fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. That's more than all of the last fiscal year and more than double that of any single year during President Donald Trump's term. Border encounters for this fiscal year are on track to exceed the total for Trump's full term.

Government data show that roughly 903,000 of these migrants were immediately deported under Title 42, based on an executive order issued by the Trump administration during the pandemic that allows border agents to immediately deport apprehended migrants who pose a risk to public health. (The Biden administration attempted to lift the order but has been blocked in court.)

The rest have been processed under Title 8,

which allows migrants to seek asylum in the United States. The Bipartisan Policy Center reports that more than 80% of Title 8 detainees are allowed to remain in the country while waiting for their asylum cases to be decided, most of them living freely in our cities and neighborhoods.

This means hundreds of thousands of people have been allowed to reside in the United States even though they arrived here illegally. Most will have to appear for court hearings to assess their right to remain, but our immigration court system is hopelessly overloaded. It could be years before these cases are heard. Many migrants — 10% to 20% — will skip their hearing, secure in the knowledge that the system will have likely lost track of them.

We've been hearing a lot about the "rule of law" lately. Biden's look-the-other-way immigration policy is in effect an ingenious way to avoid that rule. That mocks the principle he piously says he supports.

This is bad for the country for a host of reasons. It's bad because it does a nation no good to disrespect its own borders. It's bad because as the country recovers from the pandemic, allowing massive numbers of people to join the economy means legal residents will have to compete with them for jobs. And it's bad because it divides our country by flagrantly ignoring the sentiments of the half or so of voters who want illegal immigration to be controlled. So much for "healing the nation."

It's also bad for Biden and the Democrats politically. Polls regularly show that the public overwhelmingly disapproves of Biden's im-

migration policy. Disapproval is especially high among Hispanics, who disproportionately live along the border and in the communities where the migrants settle. Conservative media cover the ongoing crisis, ensuring that it is kept in the forefront for Republican voters. This is one issue where conservatives and independents agree, meaning it will almost certainly be a major issue in the fall campaign.

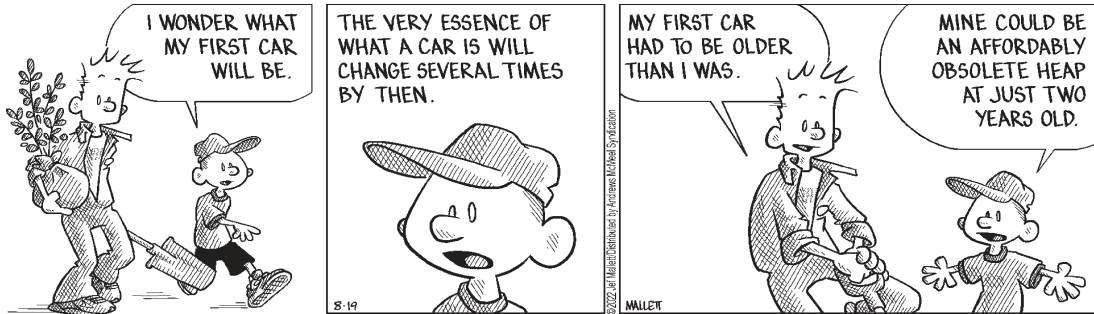
That's why border-state Democrats such as Sen. Mark Kelly, of Arizona, want this addressed before Election Day. The Biden administration recently threw Kelly a bone by providing funding to complete gaps in Trump's border wall in Kelly's state. Yet Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, a Republican, highlighted how quickly the problem could have been solved had the administration really wanted to address it by sealing parts of the gaps himself with cargo containers. Meanwhile, much of the rest of the border continues to be porous with no plans in sight to bring it under control.

Maybe Biden thinks he can force Republicans into a deal on comprehensive immigration reform by allowing so many undocumented people into the country. Perhaps, but it's likelier Republicans will push back even more to control the border.

The huge numbers of migrants crossing the border make it clear: Biden's immigration policy has failed. Expect to see the political fallout of this in November.

Henry Olsen is a Washington Post columnist and a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

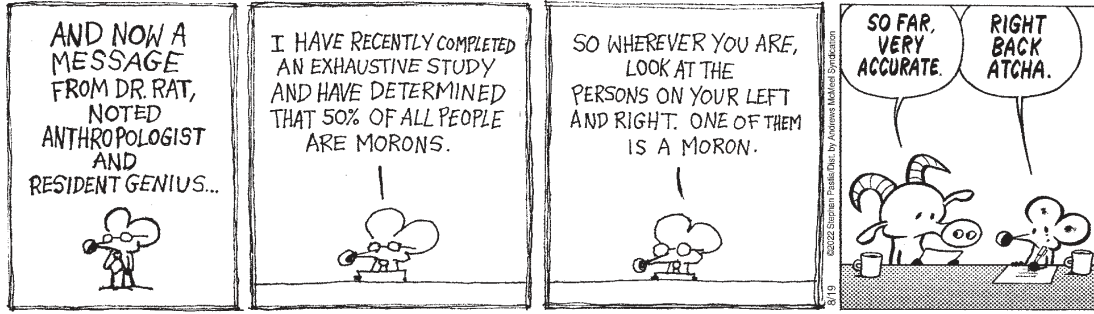
Frazz



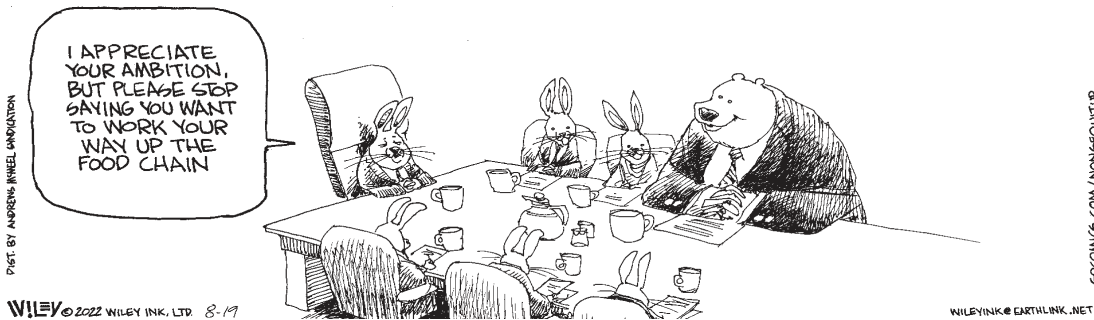
Dilbert



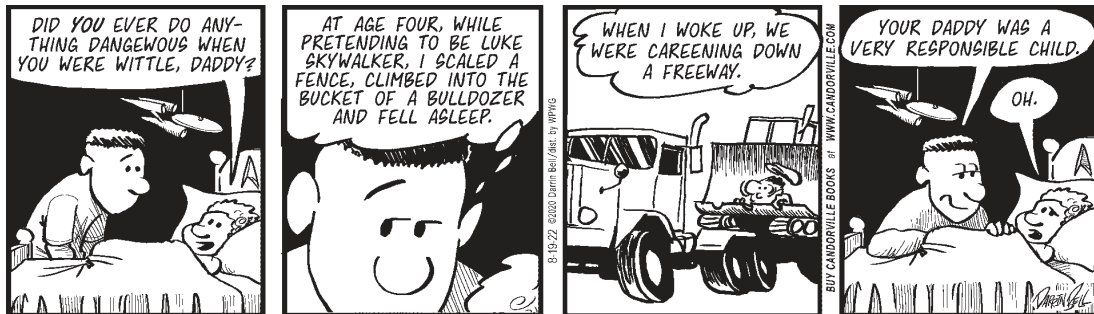
Pearls Before Swine



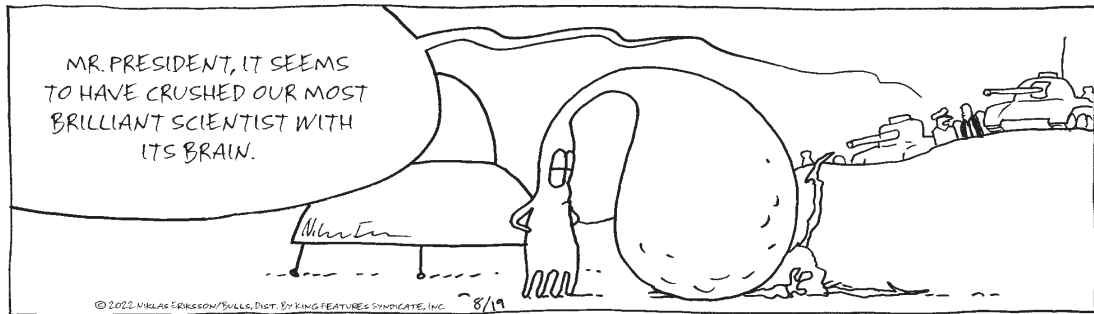
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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

ACROSS

- 1 Solo of "Star Wars"
- 4 Dandy guy
- 7 Sir's counterpart
- 12 Coach
- 13 Lab eggs
- 14 Mountain crest
- 15 Roulette bet
- 16 "Absolutely not!"
- 18 Genetic letters
- 19 Long journeys
- 20 Informal pronoun
- 22 JFK's predecessor
- 23 Slightly wet
- 27 Id counterpart
- 29 Small burger
- 31 Majestic
- 34 Paris school
- 35 Diocese part
- 37 Iota
- 38 Tennis score
- 39 Author Umberto
- 41 Slightly open
- 45 Stand-in
- 47 Japanese sash
- 48 "Absolutely not!"
- 52 Eggy quaff
- 53 Love, Italian-style
- 54 Indian lentil dish
- 55 Citric beverage
- 56 Already
- 57 Magic, on scoreboards

58 French salt

DOWN

- 1 Wizard Potter
- 2 Sports venue
- 3 Tennis star
- 4 Type choice
- 5 Go too far
- 6 Macadamized
- 7 Earth's neighbor
- 8 Common verb
- 9 "Lion" actor Patel
- 10 Chowd down
- 11 Sea, to Henri
- 17 Stretches (out)
- 21 Bolshevik leader
- 23 Formal decrees
- 24 Fuss
- 25 Singer Tormé

- 26 Season opener?
- 28 Dept. store inventory
- 30 Luau souvenir
- 31 Transcript no.
- 32 "Awesome!"
- 33 "Entourage" role
- 36 Olympian queen
- 37 Freight train unit
- 40 Homebuyer's option
- 42 Singer Nick
- 43 Home
- 44 Star in Orion's foot
- 45 "Close one!"
- 46 Holler
- 48 "Terrif!"
- 49 Author Tan
- 50 Heavy weight
- 51 — -Magnon

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

8-19

CRYPTOQUIP

P X F J W M A Y Z W Q K A Y V A P
 X Z W F X W S V W X S Z X S Q R E X Z L
 X S B A J V W Z X M F U B A F A K R: "Z L U
 B F W R L A P Z L U Z X Z X W S R."
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF TENNIS PLAYER STEFFI OPENS UP AN EATERY CHAIN, SHE REALLY OUGHT TO CALL IT "GRAF-ETERIA."
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals I

SCOREBOARD/WNBA PLAYOFFS

PRO SOCCER

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Philadelphia	13	4	9	48	45	20
CF Montréal	13	8	4	43	43	41
NYFC	12	7	6	42	46	30
New York	11	8	7	40	40	32
Columbus	8	6	10	34	32	27
New England	8	7	10	34	38	36
Orlando City	9	10	6	33	28	36
Inter Miami CF	9	10	6	33	32	41
Cincinnati	8	8	9	33	42	45
Charlotte FC	10	14	2	32	33	40
Toronto FC	8	12	6	30	39	45
Chicago	8	11	6	30	28	34
Atlanta	7	10	8	29	34	38
D.C. United	6	15	4	22	28	49

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
LAFC	18	4	3	57	54	24
Austin FC	14	5	6	48	54	34
FC Dallas	11	7	9	42	39	28
Minnesota	11	9	5	38	40	35
Real Salt Lake	10	8	7	37	33	34
LA Galaxy	10	11	3	33	37	34
Vancouver	9	11	6	33	31	45
Nashville	8	9	9	33	34	36
Portland	7	7	12	33	42	40
Seattle	10	13	2	32	32	31
Colorado	8	10	7	31	36	39
Houston	7	14	4	25	31	42
San Jose	5	11	9	24	40	53
Sporting KC	6	15	5	23	26	48

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Tuesday's game

Los Angeles FC 1, D.C. United 0

Wednesday's games

New York 2, Atlanta 1
New England 2, Toronto FC 2, tie
Charlotte FC 3, New York City FC 1
FC Dallas 1, Philadelphia 0
Vancouver 2, Colorado 1

Friday's games

Seattle at LA Galaxy

Saturday's games

Cincinnati at New York
Philadelphia at D.C. United
New England at CF Montréal
Toronto FC at Miami
Austin FC at Minnesota
Houston at Colorado
Vancouver at Real Salt Lake
Los Angeles FC at San Jose

Sunday's games

Atlanta at Columbus
New York City FC at Chicago
Orlando City at Charlotte FC
Portland at Sporting Kansas City
FC Dallas at Nashville

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Portland	7	1	7	28	36	15
Houston	8	4	4	28	28	18
Kansas City	7	4	4	25	20	20
San Diego	7	5	4	25	21	14
OL Reign	6	4	6	24	20	15
Chicago	6	4	5	23	22	18
Angel City	6	5	3	21	15	16
Orlando	4	5	6	18	17	30
Louisville	2	6	8	14	16	22
Gotham FC	4	10	0	12	11	30
Washington	1	6	9	12	16	21
North Carolina	2	6	4	10	23	26

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Wednesday's game

Houston 2, Gotham FC 1

Friday's game

Angel City at Kansas City

Saturday's games

Orlando at Gotham FC
Chicago at North Carolina
Houston at San Diego

Wednesday, Aug. 24

Portland at North Carolina

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA playoffs

(x-if necessary) First Round (Best-of-three)

No. 1 Las Vegas vs. No. 8 Phoenix

Wednesday: Las Vegas 79, Phoenix 63
Saturday: at Las Vegas
x-Tuesday, August 23: at Phoenix
New York 1, Chicago 0

Wednesday: New York 98, Chicago 91

Saturday: at Chicago

x-Tuesday, August 23: at New York

No. 3 Connecticut vs. No. 6 Dallas

Thursday: at Connecticut

Sunday: at Connecticut

x-Wednesday, August 24: at Dallas

No. 4 Seattle vs. No. 5 Washington

Thursday: at Seattle

Sunday: at Seattle

x-Wednesday, August 24: at Washington

TENNIS

Odlum Brown VanOpen

Wednesday
At Hollyburn Country Club
Vancouver
Purse: \$115,000

Surface: Hardcourt outdoor Women's Singles Round of 16

Valentini Grammatikopoulou, Greece, def. Cadence Brace, Canada, 7-5, 6-2.
Victoria Jimenez Kasintseva, Andorra, def. Jodie Anna Burrage, Britain, 7-5, 6-7 (5), 7-6 (7).
Chloe Paquet, France, def. Heather Watson, Britain, 6-4, 6-2.
Rebecca Peterson (5), Sweden, def. Catherine Harrison, United States, walkover.

Women's Doubles Round of 16

CoCo Vandeweghe, United States, and Astra Sharma, Australia, def. Olivia Tjandramulia, Australia, and Arianne Hartono, Netherlands, 6-4, 6-2.
Rebecca Marino, Canada, and Heather Watson, Britain, def. Emily Webley-Smith, Britain, and Ingrid Gamarra Martins, Brazil, 6-4, 6-1.
Timea Babos, Hungary, and Angela Kulikova (4), United States, def. Valentini Grammatikopoulou, Greece, and Victoria Jimenez Kasintseva, Andorra, 6-3, 7-6 (6).

Quarterfinals

Lizette Cabrera and Priscilla Hon, Australia, def. Renata Voracova, Czech Republic, and Julia Lohoff, Germany, 6-3, 6-2.

Western & Southern Open

Wednesday
At Lindner Family Tennis Center
Cincinnati
Purse: \$6,280,880

Surface: Hardcourt outdoor Men's Singles Round of 32

Felix Auger-Aliassime (7), Canada, def. Alex de Minaur, Australia, 6-3, 6-2.
Andrey Rublev (6), Russia, def. Fabio Fognini, Italy, 6-7 (7), 7-6 (3), 6-2.
Cameron Norrie (9), Britain, def. Andy Murray, Britain, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.
Jannik Sinner (10), Italy, def. Miomir Kecmanovic, Serbia, 7-5, 3-1, ret.
John Isner, United States, def. Hubert Hurkacz (8), Poland, 7-6 (5), 6-7 (5), 6-2.
Denis Shapovalov, Canada, def. Tommy Paul, United States, 3-6, 6-4, 6-3.
Ben Shelton, United States, def. Casper Ruud (5), Norway, 6-3, 6-3.
Taylor Fritz (11), United States, def. Nick Kyrgios, Australia, 6-3, 6-2.
Stefanos Tsitsipas (4), Greece, def. Filip Krajinovic, Serbia, 6-3, 6-4.
Roberto Bautista Agut (15), Spain, def. Marcos Giron, United States, 6-3, 6-3.
Borna Coric, Croatia, def. Rafael Nadal (2), Spain, 7-6 (9), 4-6, 6-3.
Sebastian Korda, United States, def. Frances Tiafoe, United States, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4.

Women's Singles Round of 32

Shelby Rogers, United States, def. Amanda Anisimova, United States, walkover.
Alison Riske-Amritraj, United States,

def. Marie Bouzkova, Czech Republic, walkover.
Petra Kvitova, Czech Republic, def. Sorana Cirstea, Romania, 6-2, 6-3.
Zhang Shuai, China, def. Ekaterina Alexandrova, Russia, 6-3, 6-4.

Ons Jabeur (5), Tunisia, def. Caty McNally, United States, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7).
Jessica Pegula (7), United States, def. Marta Kostyuk, Ukraine, 6-7 (5), 6-1, 6-2.

Elise Mertens, Belgium, def. Karolina Pliskova (14), Czech Republic, 7-6 (3), 6-3.
Emma Raducanu (10), Britain, def. Victoria Azarenka, Belarus, 6-0, 6-2.

Veronika Kudermetova, Russia, def. Simona Halep (15), Romania, walkover.
Elena Rybakina, Kazakhstan, def. Garbine Muguruza (8), Spain, 6-3, 6-1.

Iga Swiatek (1), Poland, def. Sloane Stephens, United States, 6-4, 7-5.
Madison Keys, United States, def. Jelena Ostapenko (16), Latvia, 6-4, 7-5.

Aryna Sabalenka (6), Belarus, def. Anna Kalinskaya, Russia, 6-3, 4-1, ret.
Ajla Tomljanovic, Australia, def. Paula Badosa (3), Spain, 6-7 (3), 6-0, 6-2.

Men's Doubles Round of 32

Grigor Dimitrov, Bulgaria, and Andrey Rublev, Russia, def. Daniel Evans, Britain, and John Peers, Australia, 7-6 (5), 7-5.
Michael Venus, New Zealand, and Tim Puetz (6), Germany, def. Diego Schwartzman and Francisco Cerundolo, Argentina, 6-2, 6-1.

Stefanos Tsitsipas, Greece, and Holger Rune, Denmark, def. David Vega Hernandez, Spain, and Rafael Matos, Brazil, 6-2, 6-3.

Edouard Roger-Vasselin, France, and Santiago Gonzalez, Mexico, def. Marcelo Melo, Brazil, and Roberto Bautista Agut, Spain, 6-4, 7-6 (4).

Round of 16

Kevin Krawietz and Andreas Mies, Germany, def. Cameron Norrie, Britain, and Alex de Minaur, Australia, 4-6, 6-3, 11-9.

Women's Doubles Round of 32

Beatriz Haddad Maia, Brazil, and Anna Danilina, Kazakhstan, def. Sam Stosur, Australia, and Latisha Chan, Taiwan, 6-3, 7-6 (5).

Sania Mirza, India, and Lucie Hradecka, Czech Republic, def. Petra Martic, Croatia, and Caroline Garcia, France, 1-6, 6-3, 11-9.

Round of 16

Gabriela Dabrowski, Canada, and Giuliana Olmos (5), Mexico, def. Irina-Camelia Begu, Romania, and Martina Trevisan, Italy, 6-1, 6-4.

Nicole Melichar-Martinez, United States, and Ellen Perez, Australia, def. Barbora Krejickova and Katerina Siniakova (2), Czech Republic, 6-3, 6-2.

Aliaksandra Sasnovich, Belarus, and Ekaterina Alexandrova, Russia, def. Ingrid Neel and Jessie Aney, United States, 6-4, 5-7, 10-7.

Victoria Azarenka, Belarus, and Ons Jabeur, Tunisia, def. Xu Yifan and Zhaoxuan Yang (8), China, 7-5, 6-2.

Demi Schuurs, Netherlands, and Desirae Krawczyk (6), United States, def. Sloane Stephens, United States, and Anett Kontaveit, Estonia, 6-4, 6-1.

DEALS

RHP Jason Alexander to Nashville.

NEW YORK METS — Selected the contract of 3B Brett Baty from Syracuse (IL). Recalled LHP Sam Clay from Syracuse. Placed INF Eduardo Escobar on the 10-day IL, retroactive to August 16. Designated R.J. Alvarez for assignment.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Reinstated C Tyler Heineman from the 10-day IL. Optioned C Jose Godoy to Indianapolis (IL). Recalled RHP Roansy Contreras from Indianapolis. Designated RHP Austin Brice for assignment.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Claimed LHP Andrew Vasquez off waivers from Philadelphia and optioned him to Sacramento (PCL). Designated OF Steele Walker for assignment. Reinstated RHP Zack Littell from 15-day IL and rehab assignment. Optioned OF Luis Gonzalez to Sacramento.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Waived OLB Jesse Lemoinier.

ATLANTA FALCONS — Signed WR Kee-Sean Johnson. Released WR Tyshawn James and DL Bryce Rodgers from injured reserve with a settlement.

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Signed LB Josh Watson. Released TE Ryan Izzo.

CHICAGO BEARS — Placed DBs Michael Joseph, Jayson Stanley and LB Javin White on injured reserve after clearing waivers.

CINCINNATI BENGALS — Signed CB Javaris Davis. Waived CB Bookie Radley-Hiles.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Signed T Wyatt Miller. Waived WR Tarvell Harris. Placed OT Elijah Nkansah on injured reserve after clearing waivers.

DALLAS COWBOYS — Placed DB Kyrion Brown, TE Ian Bunting and WR Ty Frygogle on injured reserve after clearing waivers.

DETROIT LIONS — Placed DB Brady Breeze on injured reserve after clearing waivers.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Waived WR Malik Taylor with an injury designation. Signed S De'Vante Cross. Claimed WR Travis Fulgham off waivers from Denver. Placed TE Dominique Dafney on injured reserve after clearing waivers.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Released DT Malcolm Brown.

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Reinstated DT Johnathan Hankins, DB Trayvon Mullen, DE Bilal Nichols and WR Dillon Stoner from

YOUTH BASEBALL

Little League World Series

At Williamsport, Pa.
UNITED STATES

GREAT LAKES REGION, Hagerstown, Ind.; METRO REGION, Massapequa, N.Y.; MID-ATLANTIC REGION, Hollidaysburg, Pa.; MIDWEST REGION, Davenport, Iowa; MOUNTAIN REGION, Santa Clara, Utah; NEW ENGLAND REGION, Middleboro, Mass.; NORTHWEST REGION, Bonney Lake, Wash.; SOUTHEAST REGION, Nolensville, Tenn.; SOUTHWEST REGION, Pearland, Texas; WEST REGION, Honolulu, Hawaii

INTERNATIONAL

ASIA-PACIFIC REGION, Taipei City, Chinese Taipei; AUSTRALIA REGION, Brisbane, Australia; CANADA REGION, Vancouver, British Columbia; CARIBBEAN REGION, Willemstad, Curacao; EUROPE-AFRICA REGION, Bologna, Italy; JAPAN REGION, Takarazuka, Japan; LATIN AMERICA REGION, Managua, Nicaragua; MEXICO REGION, Matamoros, Mexico; PANAMA REGION, Aguadulce, Panama; PUERTO RICO REGION, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico

Double Elimination

Wednesday's games

Game 1: Willemstad (Curacao) 2, Managua (Nicaragua) 0

Game 2: Nolensville (Tenn.) 5, Middleboro (Mass.) 3

Game 3: Vancouver (British Columbia) 7, Brisbane (Australia) 0

Game 4: Honolulu (Hawaii) 11, Bonney Lake (Wash.) 1

Thursday's games

Game 5: Taipei City (Chinese Taipei) vs. Bologna (Italy)

Game 6: Davenport (Iowa) vs. Hagerstown (Ind.)

Game 7: Guaynabo (PR) vs. Matamoros (Mexico)

Game 8: Pearland (Texas) vs. Hollidaysburg (Pa.)

Friday's games

Game 9: Willemstad (Curacao) vs. Aguadulce (Panama)

Game 10: Nolensville (Tenn.) vs. Santa Clara (Utah)

Game 11: Takarazuka (Japan) vs. Vancouver (British Columbia)

Game 12: Massapequa (N.Y.) vs. Game 4 winner

Saturday's games

Game 13: Brisbane (Australia) vs. Game 5 loser

Game 14: Game 4 loser vs. Game 6 loser

Game 15: Managua (Nicaragua) vs. Game 7 loser

Game 16: Middleboro (Mass.) vs. Game 8 loser

Sunday's games

Game 17: Game 9 loser vs. Game 13 winner

Game 18: Game 10 loser vs. Game 14 winner

Game 19: Game 15 winner vs. Game 11 loser

Game 20: Game 16 winner vs. Game 12 loser

Monday, Aug. 22

Game 21: Game 5 winner vs. Game 9 winner

Game 22: Game 6 winner vs. Game 10 winner

Game 23: Game 11 winner vs. Game 7 winner

Game 24: Game 12 winner vs. Game 8 winner

WNBA ROUNDUP

Liberty surprise Chicago

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Sabrina Ionescu had 22 points, seven rebounds and six assists, Natasha Howard also scored 22 points and the seventh-seeded New York Liberty beat the defending champion Chicago Sky 98-91 on Wednesday night in the opening game of the WNBA playoffs.



Ionescu

New York scored the final 13 points of the fourth quarter as Chicago missed 10 of its last 11 shots. Ionescu made a three-pointer and a jumper from the free-throw line during the run, and Marine Johannes highlighted the spurt with an over-the-shoulder pass to Howard.

“We’ve been in this situation all year and early on we were losing these games,” Ionescu said. “But we found out what it takes to win and we showed that tonight. We gotta do it again.”

Betnijah Laney added 17 points and Stefanie Dolson scored 13 points for New York, which set a franchise scoring record in the playoffs. Dolson, a center, made 3 of 4 three-pointers to help the Liberty go 11-for-25 from distance.

Kahleah Copper led the second-seeded Sky with 21 points. Allie Quigley scored 18 points, Candace Parker had 17 points and Courtney Vandersloot added 13 points.

Aces 79, Mercury 63: Kelsey Plum had 22 points, Chelsea Gray scored nine of her 17 points in the fourth quarter and top-seeded Las Vegas beat short-handed Phoenix in Game 1 of their best-of-three series.

The Aces created some separation with a five-point possession midway through the fourth quarter for a 60-51 lead. Gray was fouled on a drive to the basket and the officials upgraded it to a flagrant on Megan Gustafson. Gray made both free throws and followed with a three-pointer.

Jackie Young added 16 points for Las Vegas. A’ja Wilson had eight points and 12 rebounds and Kiah Stokes had eight points and 13 boards.

Diamond DeShields had 18 points and eight rebounds for Phoenix. Brianna Turner grabbed 16 rebounds and Gustafson scored 12 points.

COLLEGE
WASHINGTON (MD.) — Named Dan Philpott head men’s and women’s golf coach.

MLB

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	73	45	.619	—
Tampa Bay	62	54	.534	10
Toronto	62	54	.534	10
Baltimore	61	56	.521	11½
Boston	59	59	.500	14
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	63	55	.534	—
Minnesota	61	55	.526	1
Chicago	61	57	.517	2
Kansas City	48	71	.403	15½
Detroit	45	75	.375	19
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	76	43	.639	—
Seattle	65	54	.546	11
Texas	52	65	.444	23
Los Angeles	51	67	.432	24½
Oakland	43	75	.364	32½

National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	76	42	.644	—
Atlanta	72	47	.605	4½
Philadelphia	65	52	.556	10½
Miami	52	66	.441	24
Washington	39	80	.328	37½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
St. Louis	65	51	.560	—
Milwaukee	62	54	.534	3
Chicago	49	67	.422	16
Cincinnati	46	70	.397	19
Pittsburgh	45	72	.385	20½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	81	35	.698	—
San Diego	66	54	.550	17
San Francisco	59	58	.504	22½
Arizona	54	63	.462	27½
Colorado	51	68	.429	31½

Wednesday's games
 Minnesota 4, Kansas City 0
 Toronto 6, Baltimore 1
 Seattle 11, L.A. Angels 7
 Boston 8, Pittsburgh 3
 Cleveland 8, Detroit 4
 N.Y. Yankees 8, Tampa Bay 7, 10 innings
 Oakland 7, Texas 2
 Houston 3, Chicago White Sox 2
 Cincinnati 1, Philadelphia 0
 Chicago Cubs 3, Washington 2
 San Diego 10, Miami 3
 N.Y. Mets 9, Atlanta 7
 St. Louis 5, Colorado 1
 L.A. Dodgers 2, Milwaukee 1
 Arizona 3, San Francisco 2

Thursday's games
 Oakland at Texas
 Houston at Chicago White Sox
 Chicago Cubs at Baltimore
 Boston at Pittsburgh
 Toronto at N.Y. Yankees
 Kansas City at Tampa Bay
 Colorado at St. Louis
 L.A. Dodgers at Milwaukee
 Arizona at San Francisco
 N.Y. Mets at Atlanta
 Washington at San Diego

Friday's games
 Boston (Crawford 3-4) at Baltimore (Lyles 9-9)
 Toronto (Gausman 8-9) at N.Y. Yankees (Taillon 11-3)
 Chicago White Sox (Lynn 3-5) at Cleveland (McKenzie 8-9)
 Kansas City (Singer 6-4) at Tampa Bay (McClanahan 11-5)
 L.A. Angels (Sandoval 3-8) at Detroit (Manning 0-0)
 Houston (McCullers Jr. 1-0) at Atlanta (TBD)
 Texas (Pérez 9-3) at Minnesota (Bundy 6-5)
 Seattle (Gonzales 7-12) at Oakland (Irvin 6-10)
 Milwaukee (Ashby 2-10) at Chicago Cubs (Thompson 9-5)
 Cincinnati (Ashcraft 5-3) at Pittsburgh (Beebe 1-2)
 N.Y. Mets (Bassitt 10-7) at Philadelphia (Nola 8-9)
 San Francisco (Wood 8-9) at Colorado (Ureña 1-4)
 St. Louis (Mikolas 9-9) at Arizona (Henry 2-1)
 Washington (Espino 0-5) at San Diego (Snell 5-6)
 Miami (Luzardo 3-5) at L.A. Dodgers (Anderson 13-2)

Calendar
Aug. 21 — Boston vs. Baltimore at Williamsport, Pa.
Aug. 31 — Last day to be contracted to an organization and be eligible for postseason roster.

ROUNDUP

Astros squeak past White Sox

Associated Press

CHICAGO—The Houston Astros got back in the win column after blowing late leads in consecutive losses — not exactly shocking considering they own the best record in the American League.

Framber Valdez threw seven solid innings, Jordan Alvarez drove in a run and scored one, and Houston beat the White Sox 3-2 on Wednesday night, ending Chicago's five-game winning streak.

The AL West-leading Astros hung on after squandering eighth-inning leads in the first two games of the series. The White Sox trail AL Central-leading Cleveland by two games.

"We got the victory," manager Dusty Baker said. "We stopped the losing streak."

Yankees 8, Rays 7 (10): Josh Donaldson hit a walk-off grand slam in the 10th inning as the clock struck midnight, and struggling New York salvaged a win over visiting Tampa Bay Rays to avoid a three-game sweep.

Gleyber Torres singled leading off the 10th off Jalen Beeks (2-2) and Anthony Rizzo walked before Donaldson lifted a one-strike, 97 mph fastball to the short porch in right field.

Mets 9, Braves 7: Brett Baty homered his first time up in the big leagues, Starling Marte went deep twice and visiting New York snapped Atlanta's eight-game winning streak.

The NL East-leading Mets jumped to a 6-1 lead and barely made it stand up to push their advantage over the Braves back to 4½ games.

Blue Jays 6, Orioles 1: George Springer broke a scoreless tie with a pinch-hit RBI single in the seventh inning, and host Toronto beat Baltimore behind a stellar effort by Ross Stripling.

Springer's liner to center was career hit No. 1,000, and the Blue Jays poured it on from there. Santiago Espinal followed Springer with a two-run double, and Alejandro Kirk capped their six-run seventh with another two-run double.

Mariners 11, Angels 7: Cal Raleigh homered twice, Eugenio Suárez and Jesse Winker each hit a two-run shot, and Seattle completed a three-game sweep at Los Angeles.

Shohei Ohtani had a two-run homer, a triple, two singles and four RBIs for the Angels.

Twins 4, Royals 0: Emilio Pagán pitched two scoreless innings after Tyler Mahle departed with right shoulder fatigue, and host Minnesota completed a three-game sweep.



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP

Houston Astros starting pitcher Framber Valdez improved to 4-0 over his last six outings in a 3-2 win over the White Sox on Wednesday in Chicago.

Jose Miranda hit a two-run homer for the Twins, who are fighting with Cleveland and the Chicago White Sox for control of the crowded AL Central.

Reds 1, Phillies 0: Jose Barrero hit a game-ending RBI single off Seranthony Domínguez with two out in the ninth inning, sending host Cincinnati to the win.

Albert Almora Jr. helped set up Barrero's winning hit with a one-out walk.

Padres 10, Marlins 3: Jake Cronenworth hit a grand slam in the first inning, Ha-Seong Kim also drove in four runs, and San Diego avoided a three-game sweep at Miami.

Cronenworth's two-out blast against Pablo López (7-8) was his 12th homer this season and second career grand slam.

Dodgers 2, Brewers 1: Tony Gonsolin pitched seven scoreless innings for his 15th victory, Austin Barnes and Max Muncy homered, and Los Angeles won at Milwaukee.

Gonsolin (15-1) matched the Astros' Justin Verlander for the major league lead in wins.

Cubs 3, Nationals 2: Yan Gomes hit a tie-

breaking single in the seventh inning, lifting Chicago to a win at Washington.

Red Sox 8, Pirates 3: Christian Arroyo had three hits and three RBIs, Alex Verdugo reached base five times and 42-year-old Rich Hill won for the first time in nearly two months in Boston's victory at Pittsburgh.

Guardians 8, Tigers 4: All-Star José Ramírez blooped a go-ahead, two-run double as host Cleveland scored six runs with two outs in the eighth inning, rallying to beat Detroit.

Cardinals 5, Rockies 1: Jordan Montgomery picked up his third win in as many starts with host St. Louis, and Nolan Gorman drove in three runs in a victory over Colorado.

Athletics 7, Rangers 2: Sean Murphy had his second two-homer game and rookie Shea Langeliers hit his first major league home run in his second game with Oakland in a win at Texas.

Diamondbacks 3, Giants 2: Pinch-hitter Jake McCarthy hit a go-ahead two-run single in the eighth, and Arizona rallied to win at San Francisco.

Daniels out as Rangers president after 17 years

By **STEPHEN HAWKINS**
 Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Jon Daniels was the general manager of the Texas Rangers for their only two World Series appearances more than a decade ago. His 17 years leading the club ended with a string of bad seasons.

Daniels was relieved of his duties as president of baseball operations Wednesday, when team owner Ray Davis informed him that his contract wouldn't be renewed at the end of this season. Davis said he had been contemplating the move for several months.

"Bottom line is we're not good,

and we haven't been good for six years," Davis said. "To be competitive going forward, I felt that we needed to make a change."

The dismissal of **Daniels**

Daniels came two days after manager Chris Woodward was fired in his fourth season. It also occurred less than nine months after the Rangers committed more than a half-billion dollars to free agent infielders Corey Seager and Marcus Semien, and starting pitcher Jon Gray.



Daniels was the youngest GM in the majors when he got the job with the Rangers at age 28 in October 2005. He added the title of president of baseball operations in 2013, and held both roles until Chris Young was brought in as the team's general manager in December 2020.

"Somewhere along the way, this baseball fan from Queens got an opportunity to help lead a Major League Baseball franchise in Texas," Daniels said in a statement released Wednesday night. "It's been an unbelievable experience."

Young now assumes oversight of all aspects of the team's baseball

operations department. The former big league pitcher was a senior vice president for Major League Baseball before joining the Texas front office.

"I think Chris will come in with a new vigor and new enthusiasm and be able to build an organization that we can be consistent for many years," Davis said.

The Rangers went to the World Series in 2010 and 2011, then won AL West titles again in 2015 and 2016. They have since slipped into a rebuilding phase and the longest streak of consecutive losing seasons since moving to Texas a half-century ago.

AUTO RACING



STEVE HELBER/AP

Kevin Harvick, with his win last week at Richmond, is the only back-to-back winner this year in the NASCAR Cup Series. The 60th Cup victory of his career tied Harvick with Kyle Busch for ninth all-time in NASCAR.

IN THE PITS

Harvick seizes momentum ahead of NASCAR playoffs

BY JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Well hello, Happy. Welcome to NASCAR's championship race.

Just when it seemed time to write off Kevin Harvick, at least for this season, the 46-year-old has figured out how to win again. He has two victories in eight days — after snapping a 65-race losing streak dating to 2020 — and all the momentum headed into the playoffs.

If you counted Harvick out, he's now demanding a correction.

"It's kind of like when they put those small boxes in the newspaper where they have to correct their story and you can't hardly read them. I feel like a lot of you should put those at the bottom of your story. I get great gratification out of that," Harvick said after winning Sunday at Richmond Raceway.

His resurgence has saved his season.

After winning a career-high nine races in 2020, Harvick disappeared. He went winless last season for the first time since 2009 and only the fourth time in 22 Cup seasons.

This year, he seemed slow to grasp NASCAR's new Next Gen car as a slew of new faces raced their way to victory lane. The Cup Series so far has five first-time winners this season, the playoff grid filling fast with fresh new names, and Harvick found himself in a vulnerable spot headed into the final month to qualify for one of the 16 playoff berths.

His much-needed first win came Aug. 7 at Michigan, followed by Sunday's win at Richmond, making Harvick the only back-to-back race winner this season.

"At this point, a win's a win, right? I think we were 0-for-65 and we've done nothing different and here we are two weeks in a row. That's racin', right?" Harvick grinned.

The 60th Cup victory of his career tied Harvick with Kyle Busch for ninth all-time in NASCAR. Next up on the list? The late Dale Earnhardt in eighth at 76 career victories.

To have Earnhardt in reach brings Harvick full cir-

cle: He replaced Earnhardt following Earnhardt's fatal 2001 crash in the Daytona 500.

"As you start your career, it's easy to say, 'I want to win 70-some races' and then you start doing this on a week-to-week basis," Harvick said. "It's just a lot harder because everyone in this garage is just a killer, from the crew chief to the drivers to the guys changing the tires. It's the best of the best, and it's not easy to keep your team and everybody within your organization competitive, keep yourself competitive."

Now that he's proven to still be competitive, Harvick is a serious threat for a second Cup championship.

Harvick is one of the few throwbacks remaining in the Cup garage. A former West Coast racer nicknamed "Happy" when he got to NASCAR, the stress of replacing Earnhardt turned Harvick's nickname into unintentional satire.

It was fitting, though, as he scrapped on and off the track and proved over two decades he would not be pushed around. It's a younger man's game now — the average age of this season's first-time winners is 27 — and the tricks Harvick mastered seemingly no longer applied with the Next Gen car.

But the No. 4 team at Stewart-Haas Racing began to figure out the car long before the wins finally came. A crash at Gateway in June dropped Harvick to 13th in the standings and on the bubble of not making the playoffs.

Crew chief Rodney Childers kept the team calm knowing that a win was within reach.

"Two months ago it was like, 'We ran better and this is better and this was better and this was better.' The two months before that we would have those meetings and it was like, 'Well, this was worse, this was worse, this was worse, this was worse,'" Childers said. "It started two months ago, and you could just see — the communication and the confidence and the cars we were building, all that stuff just got better."

The late push forces the competition to take note of Harvick's potential. And the first round favors Harvick, who has a combined nine career victories at Darlington, Kansas and Bristol, the first three tracks in the playoffs.

Raikkonen pauses retirement to drive NASCAR road race

BY JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Kimi Raikkonen retired to Switzerland at the end of last year's Formula One season and has blissfully spent the last eight months with his young family.

Did he miss racing?

"Not really, no," the 2007 F1 champion said.

Yet here he is, not even a full year into retirement, and Raikkonen will race again.

Raikkonen will race Sunday at Watkins Glen International in upstate New York in — and this isn't a typo — a NASCAR event. The driver known as "The Iceman" for his unintentionally droll demeanor was persuaded to get back behind the wheel by TrackHouse Racing and its ambitious, purpose-driven Project91 program.

Project91 was created to raise NASCAR's worldwide profile with top drivers from other series by Justin Marks, the 41-year-old former driver and now co-owner of NASCAR's hot, new winning team. He was prepared to personally fund the debut race at Watkins Glen, a road course where TrackHouse should compete for the win.

Tops on Marks' list of prospects was Raikkonen, who had previously competed in both an Xfinity Series and Truck Series race at Charlotte Motor Speedway during one weekend in 2011, the season Raikkonen took a one-year sabbatical in his 19-year F1 career. There was some bemusement over Raikkonen's mere presence in NASCAR's hotbed, but the most memorable part of his brief NASCAR career was that he was sponsored by Perky Jerky.

Even so, Raikkonen was interested when first presented this NASCAR offer. Marks then sealed the deal in February by traveling to Raikkonen's home in Switzerland to make his pitch in person to

"I had to find somebody that would give immediate legitimacy to it."

Project 91 co-owner Justin Marks
On hiring Raikkonen to the team

the Finnish driver.

"I had to find somebody that would give immediate legitimacy to it and be interested in doing it. And to me, really quickly, it was Kimi," Marks said. "The genesis of Project91 was just my desire as a race fan to see cool things happen in racing. A Formula One driver coming to NASCAR and being competitive at the Cup level is a cool thing and if we were going to launch this thing, obviously we needed somebody relevant globally to set it off."

In an interview with The Associated Press, the 42-year-old Raikkonen admitted he casually follows NASCAR and has been intrigued by the stock car series for more than a decade. He had hoped to also run a Cup Series race back in 2011, but it never happened and he returned to F1, where he won the final three of his 21 career victories over the following decade.

Raikkonen was intrigued by both NASCAR and its new Next Gen spec car, which debuted this year and equalized the competition among the elite top teams including the upstart TrackHouse Racing.

"I think any time there's an equal chance to win in a series it is nice, I think it's good, and what I heard when I talked to people about the new car is that it is pretty even with everybody," Raikkonen said. "It's still a learning phase for all teams with the new car."



MIKE McCARN/AP

Ex-Formula One driver Kimi Raikkonen of Finland will take a break from retirement to drive in Sunday's NASCAR race at Watkins Glen.

NBA/GOLF



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

According to his agent, LeBron James' contract extension makes him the highest-paid player in NBA history.

LeBron, Lakers agree to 2-year, \$97.1M extension

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — LeBron James has agreed to a two-year, \$97.1 million contract extension through the 2024-25 season with the Los Angeles Lakers, his agent announced Wednesday.

Klutch Sports CEO Rich Paul said the league-maximum deal makes James the highest-paid player in NBA history. His new deal includes a player option that would keep the second-leading scorer in NBA history with the Lakers past his 40th birthday in December 2024.

James, 37, is headed into the final year of his most recent contract with the Lakers, who signed the four-time NBA MVP and four-time league champion in July 2018. The new deal means the 18-time All-Star will make \$46.7 million this season.

James and the Lakers hope to be in contention for another title if James and Anthony Davis can return at full health after an injury-plagued 2021-22 ended without a playoff appearance.

James' new deal syncs with Davis' most recent extension, allowing both to leave the Lakers or negotiate new deals in 2024. Both are represented by Klutch.

James' recommitment to the Lakers also silences persistent talk of his possible departure. James hasn't appeared to be going anywhere on social media or in his public appearances, and he

CLOSING IN ON KAREEM

Barring injury, James is likely to surpass Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the NBA's career scoring king this winter. Abdul-Jabbar scored 38,387 points in his 20-year career. James, entering his 20th season, has 37,062. He averaged 30.3 a game last season.

SOURCES: AP; NBA.com

praised the hiring of new Lakers coach Darvin Ham.

James has missed significant time due to injury in three of his four years with the Lakers. He was largely healthy in the elongated 2019-20 season when the Lakers won the franchise's 17th NBA title in the Florida bubble, and he has been every bit the dominant player of his prime when at full strength in the ensuing two years.

Although his contract status inspired plenty of offseason chatter, James seemed unlikely to relocate after spending the past four seasons of his 19-year career with the storied Lakers. His family is settled in Los Angeles, where his eldest son, Bronny, is a 17-year-old senior and college basketball prospect playing at Sierra Canyon High School in Chatsworth.

James has occasionally said he intends to play on the same team with Bronny when his son reaches the NBA. Plenty of obstacles remain between the younger James and the NBA, but he could be draft-eligible in summer 2024.

Report: LIV's draft contract has restrictions, major bonus

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. — A draft contract to play for Saudi-funded LIV Golf includes clauses that require players be available to recruit other players to the league and to get permission before granting exclusive interviews, The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday.

The Journal said it reviewed a draft contract that LIV Golf has offered players, noting it was unclear if terms in the draft are in all contracts or can be negotiated.

Among other provisions in the draft contract was approval for most of the logos they wear and branded products they use at events.

Meanwhile, LIV Golf CEO Greg Norman sent a letter to players and agents outlining why the league should get Official World Golf Ranking points.

"This is not only in the best interests of LIV Golf, but importantly also necessary for the integrity, accuracy and fairness of the rankings to be upheld," Norman wrote.

Noting the application was filed July 6, and that new tours have to show they have complied with OWGR guidelines for one year, he is urging the OWGR to "gain comfort" with LIV Golf's status. Norman said neither LIV Golf nor the Asian Tour has heard from the ranking officials.

The draft contract reviewed by the Journal did not include any signing bonuses, though the newspaper said one detail was a \$1 million bonus for winning a major championship.

"LIV Golf, as a start-up, is proud to offer our golfers competitive contracts," an LIV spokesman



SETH WENIG/AP

Of the players to leave the PGA Tour for Saudi-funded LIV Golf, Dustin Johnson has the highest world ranking at No. 21.

said in a statement to the Journal. "Our future is bright and we continue to be excited by the player and fan response."

The rival league, run by Norman and backed by the Saudi Arabian sovereign wealth fund, has played three events this year. The next one is scheduled for Sept. 2-4 outside Boston.

LIV Golf already has attracted 10 players among the top 50 in the world rankings, with Dustin Johnson the highest at No. 21. The PGA Tour has suspended them — some players resigned — upon playing an event for not having a conflicting event release.

Last week, a federal judge in California denied the request from three LIV Golf players who sought a temporary restraining

order to complete in the tour's lucrative postseason.

U.S. District Judge Beth Labson Freeman had copies of the LIV contracts signed by Talor Gooch, Hudson Swafford and Matt Jones. Only outside attorneys and the judge — not PGA Tour attorneys — were allowed to see them, and the PGA Tour's outside attorney had to be careful in his arguments not to reveal any financials.

But at one point in the hearing, when the topic was conflicting events and media rights releases, Freeman remarked about LIV Golf, "But from what I understand of these contracts, these are — these contracts lock up these players in ways that the PGA Tour never imagined. They are so restrictive."

The attorney for LIV Golf replied, "I think that's unfair, your honor."

The Journal said apparel requirements were noted "multiple times" in the draft contract it reviewed and that players are to only wear appropriate "Team Apparel" during any LIV activity or "any other covered golf activity."

One component of LIV Golf Invitational events are 12 four-man teams that compete for \$5 million, in addition to the \$20 million prize fund for individual scores.

"The Player agrees to wear LIV Golf branding (or other branding supplied by the League Operator) at each Tournament and each other golf tournament you participate in anywhere in the world," it states.

The Journal cited a person familiar with LIV thinking as saying that clause was geared toward next year when the 12 teams will be set for the year.

Players meeting was about better PGA Tour

WILMINGTON, Del. — Tiger Woods showed up for a private meeting of top PGA Tour players dressed in jeans and a long-sleeved plaid shirt. By the sound of his impact, he might as well have been wearing a Sunday red shirt.

"I think it's pretty apparent that whenever we all get in the room, there's an alpha in there," Rory McIlroy said Wednesday. "And it's not me."

Exactly what came out of the Tuesday night meeting at Hotel Du Pont is more of a mystery, even down to the number of players in attendance.

The purpose was to unify, not only against the threat of a rival league funded by Saudi money, but shoring up any weaknesses in the tour.

Chief among the topics was a future of bigger money and a formula that gets the best players on tour competing against each other more often.

Otherwise, details were scarce. They emerged from the players-only meeting with another form of unity: tight lips.

"I think I'd be pretty unhappy if I saw one of those guys from last night just blabbering to you guys what we talked about," Xander Schauffele said. "That would be really frowned upon, and you probably wouldn't get invited back to the meeting. There's a little bit of a code there, I'd say."

The meeting was an extension of an impromptu gathering at the J.P. McManus Pro-Am at Adare Manor in Ireland the week of the Scottish Open, which featured a field of golf's best, young and old, even those who had signed with LIV Golf.

It was important enough for Woods, who has played only three times this year because of injuries to his leg from a February 2021 car crash, to fly up in his private jet and bring along Rickie Fowler, who did not qualify for the BMW Championship.

— Doug Ferguson



McIlroy

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

B1G deal: Big Ten lands \$7 billion TV contract

Conference signs rights agreements with FOX, CBS and NBC

By RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

The Big Ten's new \$7 billion media rights deal will string the conference's top football games across three major networks each week, creating an NFL-style television schedule on Saturdays.

The Big Ten announced Thursday it has reached seven-year agreements with Fox, CBS and NBC to share the rights to the conference's football and basketball games.

The deals go into effect in 2023, expire in 2030 and eventually will allow the conference's soon-to-be 16 member universities to share more than \$1 billion per year, a person familiar with the terms told The Associated Press.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because Big Ten and network officials were not disclosing financial details publicly, but the deal is believed to be the richest ever on an annual basis for a college sports property. The large increase in revenue to the conference won't kick in until

the third year of the deal and gradually will increase over the final five years.

"I think what it does, it affords us the opportunity to make sure that we can continually do the things we need to do to take care of our student-athletes, to fortify our institutions, to build our programs," Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren told the AP.

The Big Ten currently has 14 members, stretching from Rutgers and Maryland on the East Coast to Nebraska across the Midwest, and covering some of the biggest media markets in the country, including New York, Philadelphia and Chicago.

In 2024, Southern California and UCLA are scheduled to join the Big Ten, adding the Los Angeles market to its footprint.

With ESPN out of the equation for Big Ten football after a 40-year relationship, the league is set to lock down three prominent time slots with its network partners.

Fox, which has shared the rights to the Big Ten with ESPN since

2017 and owns a majority stake in the Big Ten Network, will continue to feature noon Eastern time as its primary game of the day.

Fox and its cable network FS1 will have the rights to more than two dozen football games, at least 45 men's basketball games and women's basketball games.

CBS, starting in 2024, will replace the Southeastern Conference game of the week at 3:30 p.m. Eastern — that is moving to ABC — with a Big Ten game.

CBS will carry 14-15 Big Ten football games a season from 2024-29, including a Black Friday game. Unlike with its longtime SEC deal, CBS will not be guaranteed the first selection of football games each week with the Big Ten. Fox, CBS and NBC will hold a draft for games, allowing each network some opportunities for first selection in a given week.

In 2023, CBS will carry seven Big Ten games while it still has the SEC on CBS at 3:30 p.m. Eastern. The network will continue to be the home of Big Ten men's basketball,



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren said the conference's new TV contract will allow its schools to build their programs and take care of their student-athletes. School will share more than \$1 billion per year.

including the conference tournament semifinals and finals, and it will begin airing the women's basketball tournament championship.

Starting in 2023, NBC will launch "Big Ten Saturday Night" in prime time and broadcast 15-16 games per season. The agreement with NBC also includes eight football games and dozens of men's and women's basketball games per season to be exclusively streamed

on Peacock, the network's online subscription service. NBC also has a separate, longstanding broadcast deal with Notre Dame, which remains unaffiliated with a conference.

Each network will air the Big Ten's championship football game at least once during the length of the deals, with Fox securing the rights to four (2023, '25, '27 and '29).

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NFL



PHOTOS BY ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

Above: Los Angeles Chargers safety Derwin James Jr. participates in drills during a combined practice with the Dallas Cowboys at the Los Angeles Rams' practice facility in Costa Mesa, Calif., on Wednesday. **Below:** James signs autographs for fans during practice Wednesday. He signed a four-year, \$76.5 million extension with the team on Wednesday, which makes him the league's highest-paid safety.

Chargers sign James to a 4-year, \$76.5M extension

By JOE REEDY
Associated Press

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Los Angeles Chargers fans on Wednesday finally got to see what they had been hoping for three weeks into training camp — a smiling Derwin James running out to the field in his powder blue jersey, helmets and shoulder pads.

James took part in his first practice after signing a four-year, \$76.5 million contract extension, making him the NFL's highest-paid safety.

"This wasn't like every other big contract that gets signed, because you know what he had to go through in order to make it to this point in his career," coach Brandon Staley said. "He overcame a lot to earn this contract, and he earned every cent of it. He was a big, big leader for us today out there."

The deal includes \$42 million in guaranteed salary. James did not participate in the first three weeks of practice and took part only in walkthroughs as the two sides worked on an extension.

"I'm feeling amazing," said James after the Chargers completed the first day of joint practices with the Dallas Cowboys. There was never a doubt in my mind (the deal would get done). I just tried to do what I could as a player to come out here every day and get better in the ways that I could."

James' deal eclipses the four-year, \$72.98 million extension Pittsburgh's Minkah Fitzpatrick signed in June. That included \$36 million in guaranteed salary.

James took part in individual drills but none of the 7-on-7 or full-team drills against the Cowboys. Staley said James wouldn't take part in team work until next week.

Los Angeles has spent nearly \$112 million in guaranteed salaries since the end of last season to improve a defense that was 23rd overall and near the bottom in key categories, including run defense, third-down conversions and points allowed after halftime.

James — the defensive signal-caller in the huddle — will be counted on as the leader of a unit that made significant upgrades over the offseason. The Char-



gers signed cornerback J.C. Jackson, defensive linemen Sebastian Jones-Day, Austin Johnson and Morgan Fox and edge rusher Kyle Van Noy, along with trading for linebacker Khalil Mack.

Staley on Tuesday stressed the importance of James, saying he is more than a safety and is a complete defensive back. Staley also called James "the heartbeat of our defense."

James — the 17th overall pick in the 2018 draft — didn't participate in full-speed drills during the off-season program after having shoulder surgery once last season ended. He is cleared to go now that the contract issues are resolved.

James was an All-Pro selection as a rookie before being derailed the next two seasons because of injuries during training camp. A broken foot limited him to five games in 2019, and he suffered a season-ending knee injury in 2020.

Last season James bounced back and reclaimed his spot as one of the top safeties in the league. He was the eighth defensive player and first defensive back since 2000 to have more than 100 tackles (118) after being sidelined the previous year.

James also had two interceptions, a pair of sacks and three forced fumbles.

Miss: League appealed initial 6-game suspension

FROM PAGE 24

in a statement. "Now that a decision on discipline has been reached, we understand this is a real opportunity to create meaningful change and we are committed to investing in programs in Northeast Ohio that will educate our youth regarding awareness, understanding, and most importantly, prevention of sexual misconduct and the many underlying causes of such behavior."

On Aug. 1, the three-time Pro Bowler was suspended six games by Sue L. Robinson, a former federal judge jointly appointed by the league and union to act as an independent disciplinary officer.

Robinson found the 26-year-old Watson violated the league's personal conduct policy after reviewing an investigation into his actions and called his behavior "egregious" and "predatory."

Believing the suspension was too light, the league appealed and pushed Watson's case back to Goodell, who had handled all player discipline in the past. The league previously pushed for an indefinite suspension and hefty fine.

Goodell appointed former New Jersey Attorney General Peter C. Harvey to hear the appeal. Harvey is an attorney who was previously involved in the NFL's decision to suspend Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott for six games during the 2017 season for domestic violence allegations.

Per the 2020 collective bargaining agreement, Harvey's decision would have constituted "full, final and complete disposition of the dispute."

At the owners' meetings this month, Goodell said the league's pursuit of a yearlong ban was warranted following its investigation and Robinson's findings.

"She reinforced the evidence," Goodell said. "There were multiple violations that were egregious, and it was predatory behavior."

In her conclusion, Robinson cited Watson's lack of remorse as a

factor in her decision. Watson apologized for the first time "to all the women that I have impacted" before making his Browns debut in an exhibition in Jacksonville.

Watson was accused of being sexually inappropriate with the women during massage therapy sessions from March 2020 to March 2021 in Texas. In civil lawsuits filed in Texas, the women accused Watson of exposing himself, touching them with his penis or kissing them against their will. One woman alleged Watson forced her to perform oral sex.

Two separate grand juries in Texas declined to indict Watson, who has denied any wrongdoing. He recently settled 23 of 24 lawsuits.

For now, the suspension ends months of speculation about whether Watson would play in 2022 for the Browns, who outbid several other teams, traded three first-round draft picks to the Texans in March and signed the QB to a five-year, \$230 million contract.

Watson's case sparked strong opinions while raising questions about the league's handling of player discipline and its spotty record of supporting women.

The Browns believe Watson could make them a Super Bowl contender. Without him, they could struggle to simply contend in the AFC North against defending conference champion Cincinnati along with Baltimore and Pittsburgh.

The suspension also means Watson will be idle longer. One of pro football's elite QBs, he sat out last season in Houston after demanding a trade and before the sexual allegations surfaced.

Watson has continued to practice while his case made its way through the league's process.

All along, the Browns' plan was to turn their offense over to veteran Jacoby Brissett, who has made 37 career starts, during Watson's suspension. But it's now possible Cleveland will explore other options at quarterback.



PHELAN M. EBENHACK/AP

Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson, left, and linebacker Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah leave the field after the first half of a preseason game against the Jaguars last week in Jacksonville, Fla.

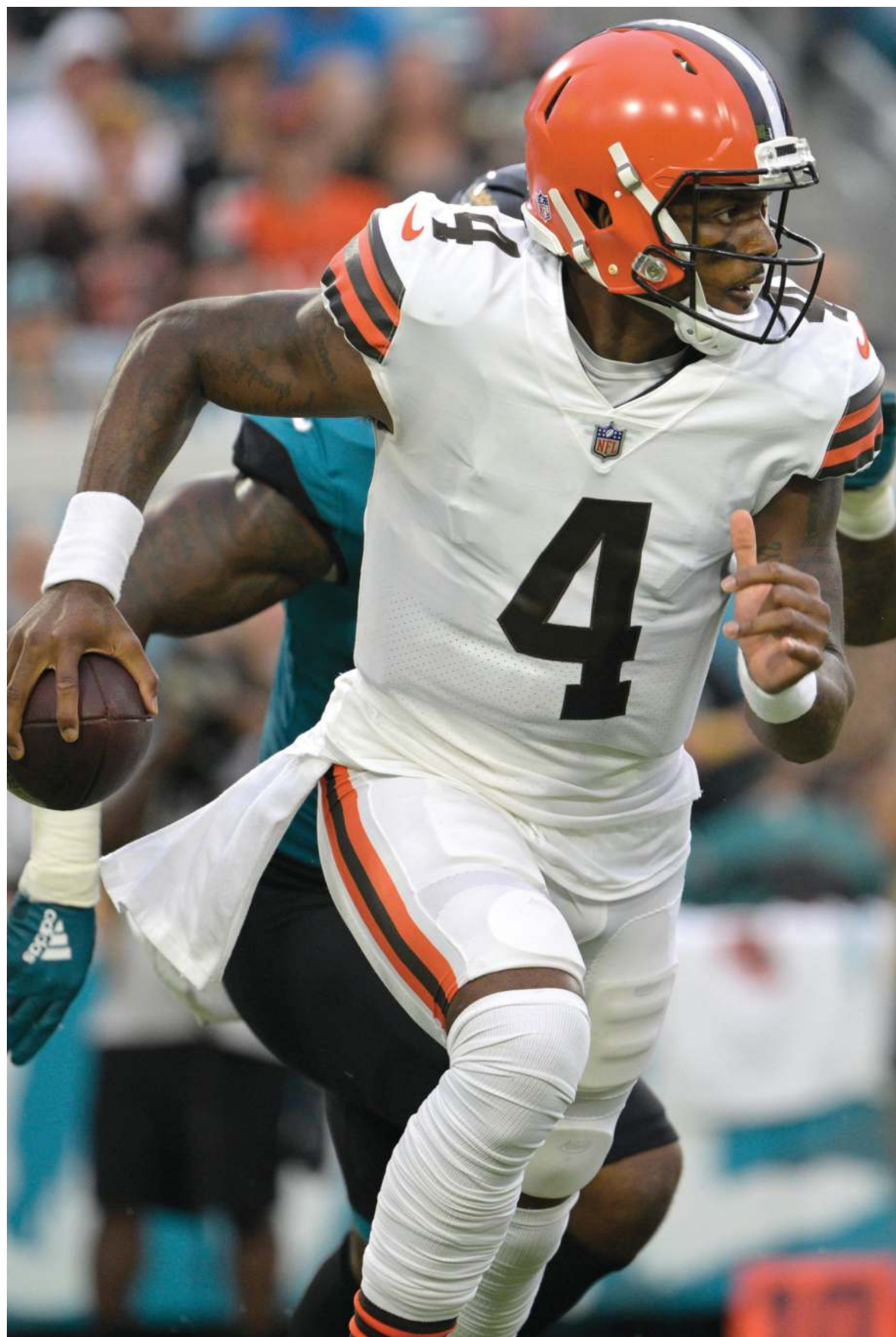
SPORTS

Staying in Los Angeles

James, Lakers agree to 2-year, \$97.1M contract extension » **NBA, Page 21**

NFL

Watson to miss 11 games



Browns QB will also pay \$5M fine in settlement with league

By ROB MAADDI
AND TOM WITHERS
Associated Press

BEREA, Ohio — Deshaun Watson has reached a settlement with the NFL and will serve an 11-game unpaid suspension and pay a \$5 million fine rather than risk missing his first season as quarterback of the Cleveland Browns following accusations of sexual misconduct.

Watson was accused of sexual assault and harassment by two dozen women while he played for the Houston Texans. The league had sought to ban him for at least one year for violating its personal conduct policy.

As part of the settlement, which concludes the disciplinary process, Watson will also undergo a professional evaluation by behavioral experts and will follow their treatment program, the NFL said in a statement.

"I'm grateful that the disciplinary process has ended and extremely appreciative of the tremendous support I have received throughout my short time with the Browns organization. I apologize once again for any pain this situation has caused. I take accountability for the decisions I made," Watson said in a statement re-

ADDITIONAL ACTION

As part of the settlement, which concludes the disciplinary process, Watson will also undergo a professional evaluation by behavioral experts and will follow their treatment program.

SOURCE: Associated Press

leased through the team. "My focus going forward is on working to become the best version of myself on and off the field and supporting my teammates however possible while I'm away from the team."

Asked later if he thinks the settlement is fair, Watson said: "I'm going to keep my opinion to myself."

The settlement ends months of posturing between Watson's legal team, the NFL and NFL Players Association.

As part of the settlement, Watson may return for the Browns' game on Dec. 4 in Houston.

"As we have previously conveyed, Deshaun and his representatives have abided by the NFL and NFLPA structure awaiting a final decision and we have respected the process," team owners Dee and Jimmy Haslam said

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PHELAN M. EBENHACK, ABOVE, AND REBECCA BLACKWELL, RIGHT/AP

Above: Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson scrambles for yardage during the first half of a preseason game against the Jaguars last week in Jacksonville, Fla. Right: NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said the league's pursuit of a yearlong ban of Watson was warranted following its investigation.

Liberty surprise defending champion Sky in opener » WNBA playoffs, Page 18