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CONTINGENCY EDITION

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stripes.com

Free to Deployed Areas

AFGHANISTAN



A U.S. Army Reserve CH-47 Chinook helicopter flies over Helmand province, Afghanistan, in 2017. The Pentagon plans to send 20 Chinooks to Afghan special forces, according to a Pentagon brief.

BRIAN HARRIS/U.S. Army

Pentagon sheds light on plans to provide Afghan special forces with Chinook helos

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department plans to provide 20 Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopters to Afghanistan's security forces in a bid to save on support costs and air crew requirements, Pentagon officials said in a briefing that provides new details on the program.

Afghanistan would receive 10 Chinooks per year over two years to replace its elite Special Mission Wing's aging Russian-made Mi-17 helicopters by 2023, the brief said. Current Mi-17 pilots and new trainees will become air crews on the Chinooks.

The two-page document issued Monday came in response to questions Sen. Richard Blumenthal raised in a letter last month to Defense Undersecretary John C. Rood about what he saw as an "abrupt change" to the helicopters being fielded to America's Afghan allies.

Afghanistan would receive 10 Chinooks per year over two years, Pentagon officials said in a briefing.

Blumenthal, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, was concerned about the change and what he called its "unclear strategic justification."

The Connecticut Democrat had previously pushed DOD to provide Afghan forces with UH-60 Black Hawks, made in his state by Sikorsky Aircraft Corp., after sanctions barred the U.S. from buying Russian spare parts to keep the Mi-17s flying.

SEE CHINOOK ON PAGE 4

US, Taliban reach weeklong 'reduction of violence' deal

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The United States has reached an agreement with the Taliban to begin a seven-day "reduction of violence" across Afghanistan starting Saturday, officials said.

Intended to test whether the insurgents can live up to a promise to curtail bloodshed, it could lead to the U.S. and Taliban signing a peace deal by the end of the month, paving the way for a U.S. troop withdrawal and an eventual end to America's longest war.

Once a peace deal has been signed, the insurgents, government and other Afghan stakeholders would start talks that would

likely cover difficult issues such as how to integrate Taliban fighters into the government and military after more than 18 years of war.

"After decades of conflict, we have come to an understanding with the Taliban on a significant reduction in violence across Afghanistan," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Twitter. "This is an important step on a long road to peace, and I call on all Afghans to seize this opportunity."

The reduction in violence, which the Afghan military will also observe, would begin at midnight, President Ashraf Ghani confirmed in a televised speech Friday evening.

SEE TALIBAN ON PAGE 4

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Victoria's Secret sold as women shop elsewhere

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Victoria's Secret, which once defined sexy with its leggy supermodels prancing around in their bras and oversized angel wings, is being sold, its fortunes diminished as women increasingly look for styles that more realistically fit their body types.

The company's owner, L Brands, said that the private-equity firm Sycamore Partners will buy 55% of Victoria's Secret for

about \$525 million. The Columbus, Ohio, company will keep the remaining 45% stake. After the sale, L Brands will be left with its Bath & Body Works chain and Victoria's Secret will become a private company.

Les Wexner, who founded the company in 1963, will step down as chairman and CEO after the transaction is completed and become chairman emeritus.

The selling price for Victoria's Secret signifies a marked decline for a brand with hundreds of

stores that booked about \$7 billion in revenue last year. Shares of L Brands fell 88 cents, or 3.6% to close Thursday at \$23.42.

Rivals like Adore Me and ThirdLove, which have sprouted up online and marketed themselves heavily on social media, have focused on fit and comfort while offering more options for different body types. Meanwhile, American Eagle's Aerie lingerie chain has also lured customers away from Victoria's Secret.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Switzerland (Franc)	
Euro costs (Feb. 24)	\$1.089		0.9791
Dollar buys (Feb. 24)	69.9018	Thailand (Baht)	31.60
British pound (Feb. 24)	\$1.32	Turkey (Lira)	6.1139
Japanese yen (Feb. 24)	109.00	(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	
South Korean won (Feb. 24)	1,175.00		
Commercial rates			
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769		
British pound	\$1.2946		
Canada (Dollar)	1.2551		
China (Yuan)	7.0311		
Denmark (Krone)	6.8920		
Egypt (Pound)	15.5884		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	\$1.0838/0.9227		
Hungary (Forint)	7.7882		
Israel (Shekel)	3.4222		
Japan (Yen)	111.71		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3066		
Norway (Krone)	9.1304		
Philippines (Peso)	51.02		
Poland (Zloty)	3.96		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7506		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.4004		
South Korea (Won)	1,211.42		

INTEREST RATES	
Prime rate	4.75
Discount rate	2.25
3-month federal funds rate	1.58
3-month bill	1.58
30-year Treasury	6.50

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	4.75
Discount rate	2.25
Federal funds market rate	1.58
3-month bill	1.54
30-year bond	1.98

WEATHER OUTLOOK

SATURDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



SATURDAY IN EUROPE



SUNDAY 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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MILITARY

Soldiers rapidly deployed into Mideast return

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Some 800 soldiers from an 82nd Airborne Division brigade that rapidly deployed into the Middle East early this year amid heightening tensions with Iran returned to Fort Bragg, N.C., on Thursday, Army officials said.

The soldiers were the first group of some 3,000 paratroopers with the 82nd's 1st Brigade Combat Team rushed to Kuwait during the first week of January to bolster security for U.S. troops in the region after an American airstrike killed Iran's most powerful general. Army officials described the deployment that required soldiers to leave within hours as the "most significant no notice deployment of combat forces" in three decades.

Fort Bragg officials said the 800 paratroopers welcomed home Thursday were greeted by family and friends at the Army post. Most of the returning soldiers were from the brigade's 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, which was the first element to deploy.

That battalion deployed within 18 hours of receiving orders to the Middle East, Pentagon officials have said. The 82nd Airborne's 1st Brigade Combat Team is now assigned as the U.S. military's Immediate Response Force Brigade, a designation that makes the unit responsible for responding to any emergencies across the globe. Army officials said the stressed the rapid deployment ca-

pability is important to maintain, though rarely used. The last time was in 2010 when soldiers quickly deployed to Haiti following a devastating earthquake.

"As the centerpiece of the nation's Immediate Response Force, it's critical that 1st Brigade and the 82nd Airborne Division are able to project global force employment," Col. Andrew Slavik, commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, said in a prepared statement. "Working across combatant commands not only demonstrates the flexibility and expeditionary capability of our airborne forces, but also better prepares our paratroopers for the complexity of the modern global security environment."

Some soldiers with the brigade's 3rd Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, its 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, and other support soldiers also returned to Fort Bragg on Thursday, the division said in a statement. The remainder of the brigade's about 3,000 troops remained in the Middle East as of Thursday, officials said. It was not clear how long they would remain deployed.

Much of the brigade has remained in Kuwait throughout its deployment, however, some members of the unit have operated in Iraq, including in Baghdad where they were assigned to bolster security at the U.S. Embassy, according to U.S. Central Command officials.

The brigade was tapped for the quick deployment within hours of the Jan. 3 airstrike in Baghdad



U.S. Army

A paratrooper from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division holds his daughter at Fort Bragg, N.C., on Thursday during a welcome-home ceremony after the unit's recent rapid deployment.

that killed Iran's Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who commanded the elite Quds Force, which has trained and directed Tehran's proxy forces across the Middle East. Other military elements, including a small special operations task force of mostly Army Rangers, also were quickly moved into the region to prepare for expected retaliation from Tehran.

Iran's response came Jan. 8 when it launched more than a dozen ballistic missiles at Iraq's al Asad Air Base, which hosts some 1,000 American troops. More than 100 U.S. service members suffered traumatic brain injuries in the attack. But President Donald Trump did not retaliate militarily, keeping the tensions from rising further.

Lt. Col. Scott McKay, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regi-

ment, said his unit spent most of the deployment conducting training, in case it was needed to respond to issues throughout the Middle East.

McKay's unit will now prepare for a major training operation this spring, known as Exercise Swift Response 20, in Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania. The exercise is meant to test the ability of U.S. and NATO forces to quickly respond to a situation in Europe. The exercise will also include troops from Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom.

Unlike the rapid deployment to Kuwait, the 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment will parachute into Swift Response, a unit spokesman said Thursday.

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Kansas base finds deadly chemical in craft hangar

By TARA COPP
McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The cancer-linked compound made famous by the movie "Erin Brockovich" has been found in dangerous levels inside an aircraft hangar at McConnell Air Force Base, Kan., including its breakroom, according to documents.

Hexavalent chromium can be used as an anti-corrosion agent and "it is found in paints and primers used on the KC-135 and to a lesser extent the KC-46," both tanker aircraft that are based at McConnell. Contamination from the chemical compound was documented in multiple base memos from October 2019 to January 2020 that were obtained by McClatchy.

More than 50 personnel may have been exposed to the chemical, an October memo warned. A November test found that an airman had been exposed to levels almost six times higher than the permissible exposure limits set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Exposure to hexavalent chromium can cause respiratory diseases, kidney, liver or abdominal damage and various cancers, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has warned.

"The risk of developing lung, nasal, and sinus cancer increases with the amount of hexavalent chromium inhaled and the length of time the worker is exposed," OSHA said.

While exhaust filters and protective gear should have limited contamination and risk of exposure to the area where painting took place, "we determined that Cr(VI) dust contamination is present on most surfaces in hangar 1124 North and presents a contact hazard to unprotected workers." The Cr(VI) mentioned in the memo refers to hexavalent chromium.

"Additionally we noted inadequate control of Cr(VI) dust due to the detection of Cr(VI) in the breakroom area on the floor near the shop supervisor's desk," an October 2019 memo reported.

A notice was issued in October to personnel warning of the hangar contamination and underlined "NO FOOD OR DRINK are authorized in the North Bay of Hangar 1124."

The base encouraged any personnel who believe they were exposed to the chemical to report it.

Air Force personnel exposed to similar hexavalent chromium contamination at a maintenance hangar at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., have said they think that exposure is responsible for multiple cancer deaths among the maintenance crew that was tasked with removing old paint and corrosion from C-130 "hurricane hunter" aircraft at the base.

Navy keeps rivals on their toes with new plans

By BROCK VERGAKIS
The Virginian-Pilot

As part of the Navy's plan to make aircraft carrier deployments less predictable, thousands of crew members on the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and its strike group stayed at sea after they passed their final certification exercise rather than coming home before being deployed as is normally the case.

The Navy said Thursday the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group started its deployment in the Atlantic Ocean immediately after completing an exercise that began in January. The certification exercise usually lasts about a month and amounts to a final exam proving everyone is ready for various real-world combat scenarios.

The Navy did not specify exactly when the strike group's deployment officially began.

The unusual step is part of a Defense Department strategy known as "dynamic force deployment," which is meant to keep adversaries on their toes.



The guided-missile cruiser USS San Jacinto and various small craft sail in formation along with the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower in the Atlantic Ocean on Feb. 8.

For decades, Norfolk, Va.-based aircraft carriers would predictably sail into the Mediterranean Sea on their way to the Persian Gulf and back. But as Russia's navy has become more active in the Atlantic and elsewhere,

military leaders decided to change that up.

The Norfolk-based aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman was the first to do so in 2018 when it deployed for a few months to the Mediterranean, came home and then deployed again to the Arctic Circle.

The Navy has not said where the Eisenhower is headed. The Truman is already underway in the Middle East and it's unclear when it is coming home after it faced months of delays due to an electrical issue.

"The Sailors of IKE Strike Group are trained and ready to execute the full spectrum of maritime operations in any theater," Rear Adm. Paul Schlise, commander of the Eisenhower carrier strike group, said in a statement.

Other ships in the strike group include the Norfolk-based guided-missile cruisers USS San Jacinto and USS Vella Gulf, and the guided-missile destroyers USS Stout, USS James E. Williams and USS Truxtun.

The strike group has about 6,000 people assigned to it, including its air wing.

WAR/MILITARY

Op-ed by Taliban leader draws criticism

By KATIE SHEPHERD
The Washington Post

A New York Times op-ed published Thursday left many readers, including some reporters who work for the newspaper, upset.

The message of the op-ed — “What We, the Taliban, Want,” which argued for a peace agreement between U.S. and Afghan leaders — wasn’t the primary target of criticism. The bigger problem was the byline: Sirajuddin Haqqani, the deputy leader of the Taliban and leader of the insurgent Haqqani Network in Afghanistan.

“The piece by Siraj Haqqani in *(en)topinion* — which’s independent of our news operations & judgment — omits the most fundamental fact,” Mujib Mashal, the Times’s senior correspondent in Afghanistan, tweeted, “that Siraj is no Taliban peace-maker as he paints himself, that he’s behind some of most ruthless attacks of this war with many civilian lives lost.”

Haqqani used the Times op-ed to urge U.S. and Afghan leaders to find a path to end the decades-long strife in Afghanistan.

“For more than four decades, precious Afghan lives have been lost every day,” he wrote. “Everyone has lost somebody they loved. Everyone is tired of war. I am convinced that the killing and the maiming must stop.”

Some of the criticism of the op-ed stemmed from the Times not explaining the Haqqani family’s role in the Taliban or the author’s involvement in deadly military strikes that have killed Afghan citizens and American soldiers. Sirajuddin Haqqani commanded a guerrilla force of at least 5,000 fighters in Afghanistan. The Washington Post’s Haq Nawaz

Taliban: Evaluations ‘minute to minute’

FROM FRONT PAGE

U.S. defense officials and Afghan military and government authorities declined to comment on the matter when reached by Stars and Stripes.

“We have nothing to announce at this time,” a spokesman for United States Forces — Afghanistan said.

The “understanding ... on a significant and nationwide reduction in violence” was reached by U.S. and Taliban negotiators at talks in Doha, Qatar, in recent weeks, the State Department said in a statement Friday.

While neither side has explained what the reduction of violence will entail and how it would be monitored, Pentagon officials told reporters this week that Army Gen. Scott Miller, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, will be responsible for a “continual evaluative process” to determine compliance.

“The evaluations are going to be going on day to day, hour to hour and, frankly, minute to minute,” said Rear Adm. William D. Byrne Jr., vice director of the Joint Staff.

U.S. and Afghan forces are expected to refrain from conducting offensive operations against the Taliban throughout the country during the period.

The Taliban have reportedly reserved the right to attack under certain circumstances, such as if they believe Afghan troops are using the lull in fighting to supply areas usually out of their reach. The New York Times reported earlier this month.

After more than a year of negotiations with the Taliban, U.S. officials said they wanted assurances that the insurgent group could control their fighters and show good faith before a deal is signed.

President Donald Trump, who has been vocal about his desire to end America’s so-called forever wars, cited a Taliban attack that killed a U.S. soldier when he abruptly halted negotiations with the insurgents in September, just as they were said to be on the brink of producing an agreement.

The limited truce is important for optics, said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Washington, D.C.-based Wilson Center.

“For the U.S., a deal with no Taliban pledge to curb violence would look a lot like a surrender,” Kugelman said.

If the weeklong reduction of violence is successful, a peace deal would likely be signed next week and would be followed by

direct talks between the Taliban and Afghan leaders, including the Kabul government, which the Taliban considers illegitimate and has so far excluded from the talks.

“We are preparing for the signing to take place on February 29,” the State Department said.

A Taliban statement gave the same date, adding: “Both parties will now create a suitable security situation in advance of [the] agreement signing date.”

Under a peace agreement, the U.S. is expected to carry out a phased withdrawal of troops in return for the Taliban upholding a promise to prevent terrorists from using Afghanistan to stage attacks against the U.S. and its allies.

The pace of that withdrawal remains unclear, but it could see a drawdown from about 13,000 to 8,600 American troops, which U.S. officials have said is enough to carry out a counterterrorism mission and a NATO training mission.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed the reduction in violence, calling it “a critical test of the Taliban’s willingness and ability to ... contribute to peace in good faith.”

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itself for enabling this blatant propaganda from a designated global terrorist, all in the name of ‘diverse reviews.’”

The FBI offers \$5 million for information leading to his arrest. “Sirajuddin Haqqani is wanted for questioning in connection with the January 2008 attack on a hotel in Kabul, Afghanistan, that killed six people, including an American citizen,” the bureau says on its website. “He is believed to have coordinated and participated in cross-border attacks against United States and coalition forces in Afghanistan. Haqqani also allegedly was involved in the planning of the assassination attempt on Afghan President Hamid Karzai in 2008.”

Midway through the story, the op-ed offered a link for readers to learn “more on the Haqqani network,” which directed to a 2016 news story that said the militant group was leading a “deadlier Taliban in Afghanistan.”

The Times defended the decision to publish the piece. “We know firsthand how dangerous and destructive the Taliban is,” Times spokesperson Eileen Murphy said in a statement emailed to The Washington Post. “But, our mission at Times Opinion is to tackle big ideas from a range of newsworthy viewpoints. We’ve actively solicited voices from all sides of the Afghanistan conflict, the government, the Taliban and from citizens. Sirajuddin Haqqani is the second-in-command of the Taliban at a time when its negotiators are hammering out an agreement with American officials in Doha that could result in American troops leaving Afghanistan. That makes his perspective relevant at this particular moment.”

Chinook: Helos expected to cut maintenance costs, improve capabilities

FROM FRONT PAGE

The U.S. began supplying Kabul with the first of a planned 159 UH-60s in the fall of 2017, but last month said it was capping that total at 53. Plans to send Chinooks instead were revealed in a DOD report to Congress last month, though the Pentagon declined at the time to say how many.

The American-made Chinooks are expected to be 10-15% cheaper to maintain but 30% more capable than the Russian helicopters, while giving the special operations air wing “a medium-lift platform that fully meets its requirements for conducting its combat mission.”

The twin-rotor Chinook, which can carry about three times the number of troops as a Black Hawk, fulfills the special operations unit’s requirement for conducting air assaults, the Pentagon said.

None of the Chinooks are being provided to the conventional air force, officials said. Conventional units will use Black Hawks, mainly for air movement, resupply and casualty evacuation, and the Special Mission Wing

will get some for “utility missions.”

The switch is also expected to trim about two-thirds of the projected \$683 million annual cost of sustaining the Special Mission Wing’s Black Hawks, and reduces the number of aircraft needed to meet Afghan requirements.

That also means fewer air crews are needed than would be for either MH-17s or UH-60s, the Pentagon said. The U.S. has struggled to train pilots and crews, but efforts are now on track to train “sufficient numbers,” DOD told Blumenthal.

In its brief to Blumenthal’s staff, the Pentagon said the changes were due to a review conducted in 2019 that found Afghan requirements could be met with fewer UH-60s.

That decision was based on improvements in the Afghan air force’s use of existing ground-attack aircraft the U.S. has provided since 2016, to include 93 MD-530 helicopters with weapons pods and 40 fixed-wing A-29 light attack planes.

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ticularly brutal attacks.

“The Haqqani and Taliban are responsible for the death of dozens of American soldiers and

atrocities against Afghan civilians,” added Rep. Michael Waltz, R-Fla., in a tweet Thursday. “@nytimes should be ashamed of



KRISTOFFER SIBBALUCA/U.S. Army

The sun rises over the mountains in eastern Afghanistan, shedding light on a CH-47 Chinook helicopter assigned to Task Force Shadow parked on the flight line in July.

NATION

Officials: Russia boosting Trump candidacy

By MARY CLARE JALONICK
AND MICHAEL BALSAMO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Intelligence officials have warned lawmakers that Russia is interfering in the 2020 election campaign to help President Donald Trump get reelected, according to three officials familiar with the closed-door briefing.

The warning raises questions about the integrity of the presidential campaign and whether Trump's administration is taking the proper steps to combat the kind of interference the U.S. saw in 2016.

The officials asked for anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence. They said Thursday that the briefing last week focused on Russia's efforts to influence the 2020 election and sow discord in the American electorate. The intelligence warning was first reported by The New York Times and The Washington Post.

A senior administration official told The Associated Press that the news infuriated Trump, who complained that Democrats would use the information against him. Over the course of his presidency, Trump has dismissed the intelligence community's assessment of Russia's 2016 election interference as a conspiracy to undermine his victory. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the private meeting.

Moscow denied any meddling. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that the allegations are "paranoid reports that, unfortunately, there will be more and more of as we get closer to the elections (in the U.S.). Of course, there have nothing to do with the truth."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi tweeted that, "American voters should decide American elections — not Vladimir Putin." She



Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting in Moscow on Feb. 14. Intelligence officials warned lawmakers that Russia is helping with President Donald Trump's 2020 campaign.

'American voters should decide American elections — not Vladimir Putin.'

Nancy Pelosi
House Speaker

added that all members of Congress "should condemn the President's reported efforts to dismiss threats to the integrity of our democracy & to politicize our intel community."

A day after the Feb. 13 briefing to the House Intelligence Committee, Trump berated the then-director of national intel-

ligence, Joseph Maguire, and he announced this week that Maguire would be replaced by Richard Grenell, a Trump loyalist.

U.S. intelligence agencies say Russia interfered in the 2016 election through social media campaigns and stealing and distributing emails from Democratic accounts. They say Rus-

sia was trying to boost Trump's campaign and add chaos to the American political process. Special counsel Robert Mueller concluded that Russian interference was "sweeping and systematic," but he did not find a criminal conspiracy between Russia and the Trump campaign.

Republican lawmakers who were in last week's briefing by the DNI's chief election official, Shelby Pierson, pushed back by noting that Trump has been tough on Russia, one of the officials said.

While Trump has imposed severe economic sanctions on Russia, he also has spoken warmly of Russian leader Vladimir Putin

and withdrawn troops from areas, like Syria, where Moscow could fill the vacuum. He delayed military aid last year to Ukraine, a Russian adversary — a decision that was at the core of his impeachment proceedings.

The Times said Trump was angry that the House briefing was made before the panel's chairman, Rep. Adam Schiff, who led the impeachment proceedings.

Pierson told NPR in an interview that aired last month that the Russians "are already engaging in influence operations relative to candidates going into 2020. But we do not have evidence at this time that our adversaries are directly looking at interfering with vote counts or the vote tallies."

Pierson, appointed in July 2019 by then-Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, works with intelligence agencies like the CIA, the FBI, the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security to identify anyone seeking to interfere with U.S. elections.

Pierson told NPR that the U.S. doesn't know exactly what the Russians are planning, but she said it's not just a Russian problem.

"We're still also concerned about China, Iran, non-state actors, hacktivists and frankly — certainly for DHS and FBI — even Americans that might be looking to undermine confidence in the elections."

At an open hearing this month, FBI Director Christopher Wray told the House Judiciary Committee that Russia was engaged in "information warfare" heading into the November election, but that law enforcement had not seen efforts to target America's infrastructure. He said Russia is relying on a covert social media campaign to divide the American public.

Trump looks for permanent national intelligence director

By BEN FOX
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. Ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell is the new acting national intelligence director but he's expected to be a short-timer overseeing the nation's 17 spy agencies.

President Donald Trump named Grenell the acting director, but says he'll nominate a permanent director soon. The president told reporters on Air Force One Thursday evening that he's considering Rep. Doug Collins, R-Ga. But Collins said Friday that he's not interested.

The appointment of Grenell, an outspoken Trump loyalist with little to no intelligence experience, did nothing to heal the president's fraught relations with an intelligence community he has derided as part of a "deep state" of entrenched bureaucrats seeking to undermine him. His administration has feuded with the intelligence community, most notably over Russian interference in the 2016 election and the events surrounding Trump's

impeachment.

But Grenell's selection follows the logic of a Trump White House that prizes loyalty and has a penchant for "acting" Cabinet secretaries who don't require a potentially bruising Senate confirmation.

The background of Grenell, the U.S. ambassador to Germany since April 2018, is primarily in politics and media affairs. He lacks the extensive national security and military experience of the acting director he replaces, Joseph Maguire, as well as previous holders of the position. Such experience appears to be required under the 2004 law that created the post to coordinate the work of the nation's intelligence agencies.

"He is probably the most unqualified individual ever appointed to this position," said Larry Pfeiffer, a former longtime

intelligence agency official who helped establish the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

But Grenell has support among the president's backers on Capitol Hill. "Ric has a proven track record of fighting for our country, and now, he will work every day to make sure Americans are safe," House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said on Twitter.

In announcing Grenell's appointment, the White House pointed to his diplomatic background and work as a spokesman for the U.S. mission to the United Nations. Trump said on Twitter that Grenell had represented the United States "exceedingly well."

Grenell, who is apparently the first openly gay Cabinet member in any administration, said on Twitter that he expects to hold the job only on a temporary basis. "The President will announce the Nominee (not me) sometime soon," he said.

Grenell is expected to be in the post for

90 days and a permanent replacement will be announced by Mar. 11, said a U.S. official. Among those under consideration is former Republican Rep. Pete Hoekstra, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal White House deliberations.

Grenell will continue to keep his ambassador post as well as a third job as special presidential envoy for Serbia and Kosovo peace negotiations, according to a U.S. official in Germany. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to respond to questions not addressed in a brief White House statement on the Grenell appointment.

Former officials expressed shock that Grenell would try to take on two of those jobs at the same time, let alone all three.

"What it signals is that Donald Trump is now making clear what we long suspected: That he has no use for a director of national intelligence," said Ned Price, a former CIA officer who served as a special assistant to President Barack Obama on the National Security Council.



Grenell

NATION

Dems' big money pledges give way to reality

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Many Democratic presidential candidates launched their campaigns last year with bold pledges to reject help from super PACs and dark money groups. But as the realities of a tough primary fight sink in, those promises are fading away.

Elizabeth Warren, one of the fiercest critics of money in politics, was the latest White House hopeful this week to accept help from a big money organization that can raise and spend unlimited amounts on behalf of political candidates. Former Vice President Joe Biden, Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Bernie Sanders have done much the same.

The Democratic battle to take on President Donald Trump is entering a critical new phase as more than a dozen states vote within the next couple of weeks with about one third of the delegates needed to win the nomination at stake. Campaign finance disclosures made to the Federal Election Commission on Thursday offered the clearest look yet at who will have the resources to forge on deep into the calendar and who will be forced to soon reckon with the sustainability of their candidacy.

The disclosures include campaign spending and fundraising details for the month of January and laid bare the stark financial choices ahead for those other than former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Sanders.

Bloomberg, a billionaire, has plunged over \$400 million into his campaign, while Sanders is propelled by an army of contributors whose renewable stream of small online contributions helped him amass \$25 million in January alone.

"Our campaign has built a nationwide organization that is engaging voters daily," said Bloomberg campaign manager Kevin Sheehey. "With over 2,400 staff across 43 states today, Mike is the only candidate with the record and resources to build the national infrastructure Democrats need to beat Donald Trump."

In contrast, Warren raised \$10.4 million, held just \$2.2 million in reserve at the month's end and took in a \$400,000 line of credit. Since then, in the month of Febru-

ary her campaign said she has since raised \$17 million, some of it after a spirited debate performance Wednesday night.

Former Vice President Joe Biden raised \$8.8 million in January and had \$7.1 million in the bank. And Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar had \$2.8 million on hand, though she has raised more than \$6 million since a breakout debate performance before the New Hampshire primary.

Even Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Ind., whose improbable rise to prominence was fueled in part by his massive fundraising success earlier in the contest reported taking in a laudatory \$6 million in January. He also had just \$6.6 million cash on hand after burning through \$14.1 million that month. His campaign says he has since taken in another \$11 million, but has not said how much of that he has spent.

That gives Sanders and Bloomberg an overwhelming advantage heading into Super Tuesday on March 3, when more than a dozen states will hold contests.

Party leaders have long worried that Sanders, a democratic socialist, would lose to Trump because of his embrace of left wing politics. Now, after a neck-and-neck showing against Buttigieg in Iowa, fol-

lowed by a win in New Hampshire, he's the one best poised to capture nomination.

Bloomberg, with his limitless resources, has emerged as a centrist candidate who has the money to compete with Sanders. But after a widely-panned debate performance on Wednesday where he was eviscerated by Warren, some are doubting that possibility, too.

Many now rue that early days of the primary were dominated by pledges of the sources of money campaigns would reject rather than building a fundraising network to compete with Trump. Along with the Republican National Committee, he has raised more than \$525 million for his reelection effort since the start of 2019.

"It was a huge mistake to try to adhere to this level of financial purity. The only person who can do it is Bernie Sanders — no one else can. Barack Obama couldn't, Hillary Clinton couldn't and Donald Trump can't," said Rufus Gifford a prominent Democratic fundraiser who held high-level posts in both of Obama's campaigns. "That will be the lesson of this primary — especially if Bernie Sanders wins."

Warren, a Massachusetts senator, was a notable addition on Thursday to people acquiescing to help from a super PAC.



Warren

Sanders' 'summer camp' becomes debate fodder

Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. — Can a socialist own a summer house?

That's the question unabashed capitalist billionaire Mike Bloomberg — who himself owns about a dozen homes — posed as he tried to brand Sen. Bernie Sanders a hypocrite in Wednesday night's fiery Democratic presidential primary debate.

"The best known socialist in the country happens to be a millionaire with three houses," Bloomberg said of Sanders, the independent Vermont senator who is running for president as a Democrat and calls himself a democratic socialist. That charge prompted an irritated Sanders to start ticking through his real estate holdings onstage.

Yes, he has a home in Washington, where he works; one in Burlington, Vt., where he lives; and "like thousands of other Vermonters, I do have a summer camp," Sanders shot back. "Forgive me for that."

The use of the word camp is a Vermont colloquialism. In other parts of the country, Sanders' vacation home would be called a cabin or just a summer home. Its purchase price — \$575,000 when he and his wife bought it in 2016 — suggests it's not exactly a rough and rustic shack in the wilderness.

The waterfront home sits on the island of North Hero in 120-mile-long Lake Champlain, between Vermont and New York. The population of 1,000 at least doubles in the summer, with visitors from around New England, Quebec and New York. Properties range from camps for \$150,000 to some higher-end homes on the lake,

according to Franz Rosenberger, co-owner of Coldwell Banker Islands Realty.

Sanders' place is a "modest seasonal house" on an acre with a decent amount of lake frontage, Rosenberger said. "It's not a fancy house at all. There are no granite countertops, stainless appliances or anything like that," he said. He believes the cottage was built in 1910 and renovated in 1984, with a small one-bedroom bunkhouse added later.

Sanders' wife, Jane, said around the time of the purchase that she and her husband paid cash for the four-bedroom house. She had sold a share of her family's longtime vacation home in Bridgton, Maine, to her brother for \$150,000, and to buy the property, added some money from her retirement account and from an advance her husband got on a book he was writing.

It was valued at \$540,000 as of 2017, just less than what the Sanderses paid, according to Lisa Keyworth, assistant town clerk. Sanders' assertion that "thousands" of Vermonters have summer homes is difficult to check. Vermont has 77,000 second homes, rental properties or camps, according to Douglas Farnham, policy director for the Vermont Department of Taxes. Of the roughly 18,000 camps, about 45% have Vermont mailing addresses, but that doesn't necessarily mean the owners are Vermont residents, he said.

During the debate, Sanders then asked Bloomberg where his home is, and in which tax haven, to which Bloomberg responded: "New York City, thank you very much, and I pay all my taxes."



RICK BOWMER/AP

Democratic presidential candidate and former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg speaks during a rally Thursday in Salt Lake City.

Bloomberg campaign turns to Utah

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — New York billionaire Mike Bloomberg's presidential campaign strategy is unprecedented, and his choice of rally location on Thursday to bounce back from an unsteady debate performance was unusual: Salt Lake City.

This is the first year Utah will vote on Super Tuesday, the March 3 contests that Bloomberg is basing his strategy on.

And Utah's Democrats in the largely Republican state are fired up about new attention from candidates courting their votes.

After arriving in Salt Lake City on a short plane ride following his heavily criticized debate performance in Las Vegas, Bloomberg found a friendly audience of hundreds focused on the topic he'd prefer to talk about: the effort to defeat Donald Trump.

Winning Utah on Super Tuesday won't be a slam dunk in a state where Bernie Sanders remains popular with left-leaning voters. But Bloomberg is hoping his well-funded campaign can sway moderate independent voters, disaffected Republicans and

undecided Democrats.

Bloomberg has visited the state's liberal-leaning, mountain-ringed capital city before and told the rally that every delegate counts.

"No voter is too liberal, too moderate or too conservative to help us make Donald Trump a one-term president!" Bloomberg said to cheers from the crowd. He did not take questions from reporters eager for a response from him about the debate, and senior advisers have declined requests for comment.

While conservative Utah is unlikely to flip for a Democratic presidential candidate in a general election, many of the state's voters have never warmed to Trump's harsh style or positions on immigrants and refugees.

"Utah is far more dynamic from a conservative perspective than it gets credit for," said Reed Galen, an independent political consultant who worked for campaigns of the late Sen. John McCain, former President George W. Bush and former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "It's got the right sort of demographic political makeup for those not on the progressive end of the spectrum."

NATION

Trump reveals in Bloomberg's debut at debate

By ZEKE MILLER
AND JONATHAN LEMIRE
Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Relishing in Democrats' jumbled primary in the wake of a fractious debate, President Donald Trump offered stinging criticism of his rivals as he sought to take advantage of the moment.

Making a rare four-day swing through the West, Trump was exuding reelection confidence Thursday at a campaign rally in Colorado, after taking in the prior night's prize fight of a debate in Las Vegas. He reveled in the intra-party squabbling and the weak debut debate performance turned in by former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg, according to aides and allies.

"I don't know if anyone watched last night's debate," Trump told an arena of raucous supporters. "It got very bad ratings, and you know what, Mini Mike didn't do well last night. I was going to send him a note, saying it's not easy doing what I do is it?"

He offered other biting assessments of the Democratic contenders, contrasting them to his own performance in debates four years ago.

"I became president because of the debates because unlike Mini Mike I could answer questions," Trump said.

Feeling reelection odds rising after his acquittal in the Senate impeachment trial and his campaign's record fundraising, Trump seized on the deep

divisions and personal tiffs on display in the Democratic field. But his preoccupation with the scrambled nomination race for the Democrats seeking to replace him has been clear throughout the trip.

The night before, after a campaign rally in Phoenix, Trump summoned reporters to his office aboard Air Force One to join him in watching a replay of the debate on the return flight to Las Vegas. He was scheduled to hold a rally in the city — his third in as many days — Friday on the eve of the caucuses, as he did before contests in Iowa and New Hampshire.

Bloomberg has been the most disconcerting force in the 2020 race for Trump since the ultra-billionaire entered the fray in November and spent more than \$400 million, which rocketed him in the polls in just three months.

Bloomberg's willingness to spend near-unlimited sums to defeat Trump this fall, and the mocking tone of many of his ads, have deeply rankled the president.

Trump's campaign had organized itself around the strategy that it would be able to paint any rival as an extreme liberal, a "socialist" or worse, and concerns mounted that strategists would have to come up with a different plan should Bloomberg win the nomination.

Trump's team saw the debate as validating his reelection strategy and providing a fresh opening for Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, a



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Supporters wave and cheer as President Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally Thursday, in Colorado Springs, Colo.

self-described Democratic socialist, to gain a significant delegate lead on Super Tuesday. The president was hopeful that panic from more moderate Democrats at Sanders' rise would only further fracture the Democratic Party.

On Thursday, Trump predicted the debate would be the end of Bloomberg's campaign, and said Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar's campaign was also mortally wounded.

Trump on Thursday placed a round of calls to confidants, echoing the thoughts he had posted on Twitter and opining that Bloomberg did not appear ready for the moment, according to two Republicans close to the White House who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations.

Long insecure about Bloomberg's wealth, Trump told confidants that the debate proved money alone did not lead to his own electoral success.

Trump apparently not fan of 'Parasite' movie

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is apparently not a fan of "Parasite," his biggest complaint being that the movie was made in South Korea.

Trump started talking about the Academy Awards during a campaign rally in Colorado Springs, Colo., on Thursday. "Parasite" was named best picture, becoming the first non-English-language film to get the top honor.

"What the hell was that all about?" Trump said. "We've got enough problems with South Korea with trade. On top of that, they give them best

movie of the year. Was it good? I don't know."

Neon, the U.S. distributor for the subtitled film, shot back on Twitter: "Understandable. He can't read."

The audience boomed when Trump mentioned the Academy Awards and then cheered when he said: "Can we get like 'Gone with the Wind' back please? 'Sunset Boulevard,' so many great movies."

"Parasite" tells the story of how a family of four poor, unemployed people living in a slum basement apartment comically infiltrates a luxurious mansion before things unravel violently and tragically.

India hastily builds wall along slum ahead of Trump visit



AIIT SOLANKI/AP

A boy rides a cycle past a slum near Sardar Patel Stadium in Ahmedabad, India, on Tuesday. Authorities on Monday served eviction notices to 45 families living in the slum area ahead of the visit of President Donald Trump.

By AIT SOLANKI
Associated Press

AHMEDABAD, India — A 1,640-foot brick wall has been hastily erected in India's Gujarat state ahead of a visit by U.S. President Donald Trump, with critics saying it was built to block the view of a slum area inhabited by more than 2,000 people.

"Since they are spending so much money on this wall, why not use that to improve our slum and provide better facilities for us," said Keshi Saraniya, a resident. "Why are they hiding us poor people?"

Trump is visiting the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat during a two-day trip to India next week to attend an event called "Namaste Trump," which translates to "Greetings, Trump" at a cricket stadium along the lines of a

"Howdy Modi" rally attended by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Houston last September. Trump is to drive along a road next to the slum and will be accompanied by Modi, who is from Gujarat.

News reports said the wall was originally planned to be 6-7 feet high but was reduced to 4 feet after it received widespread publicity.

Senior government official Bijal Patel said the wall was built "for security reasons" and not to conceal the slum.

"Apart from security reasons, the wall is also part of a beautification and cleanliness drive," she said.

Several political leaders were quick to criticize the wall's construction, questioning Modi's development work in his own state. Modi was chief minister of Gu-

jarat for 12 years before becoming the country's prime minister in May 2014.

Authorities on Monday also served eviction notices to 45 families living in another slum area near the cricket stadium.

The residents said they were asked to leave because of the upcoming event, but the city's civic body denied it.

"We have been living here for the last 20 years and now we are suddenly being told to vacate because some important leader is visiting this city for a day," said Sanjay Patani, a resident. "This is injustice."

Kishore Varna, a government official, said the land belongs to the civic body and evictions were done under the law. He didn't say why the eviction notices were sent just days ahead of Trump's visit.

NATION

SpaceX aims to launch tourists into high orbit

By MARCIA DUNN
Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — SpaceX aims to launch up to four tourists into a super high orbit, possibly by the end of next year.

The private company is working with Space Adventures Inc. for the flight, officials announced Tuesday. Ticket prices are not being divulged but are expected to be in the millions.

Space Adventures already has helped put tourists into orbit with trips to the International Space Station, working with the Russian space program.

For this trip, paying customers will skip the space station and instead orbit two to three times higher, or roughly 500 miles to 750 miles above Earth.

It's a lofty goal that would approach the record 850-mile-high orbit achieved by Gemini 11's Pete Conrad and Dick Gordon in 1966.

The tourist flight "will forge a path to making spaceflight possible for all people who dream of it," SpaceX President Gwynne Shotwell said in a statement.

Elon Musk's California-based SpaceX has also already begun to dabble in space tourism, signing

on a Japanese billionaire to fly to the moon in three or so years. Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin and Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic also plan tourist trips to space, but these will be brief up-and-downs, not orbital.

SpaceX will use the same kind of Dragon capsule that will launch NASA astronauts to the space station, possibly in another few months. The capsule has flown only once in space so far, making its debut last year in a successful test flight without a crew.

Space Adventures spokeswoman Stacey Tearne said the tourist flight could occur in the last quarter of 2021. The company is in discussions with "several potential clients."

No professional pilot or astronaut will be required, Tearne said, because the Dragon is fully autonomous. But passengers will be able to control the spacecraft if required, she said in an email.

The cost will be in line with previous tourist flights, she said. Canadian billionaire Guy Laliberte, founder of Cirque du Soleil, paid \$35 million for a 1 1/2-week space station flight in 2009. He said from orbit that it was "worth every penny and more."

Like all previous space tourists, he launched on a Russian rocket from Kazakhstan.

However, the private Dragon flight from Cape Canaveral will be shorter, lasting up to five days, according to Tearne.

Based in Vienna, Virginia, Space Adventures helped arrange the flight of the world's first space tourist, Dennis Tito, founder and chairman of Wilshire Associates in California. He flew to the space station on a Russian capsule in 2001, igniting the wrath of top NASA officials who opposed visiting tourists.

The company has arranged eight space missions, with one tourist going twice.

Space Adventures' goal is to create "unique and previously impossible opportunities for private citizens to experience space," Eric Anderson, company chairman, said in a statement.

NASA has softened its stance on space tourists, and is opening the station doors to paying customers once commercial crew flights by SpaceX and Boeing have been established.



ANGIE WANG/AP

A mug displaying the logo of the White Star Line, which operated the Titanic, is seen in a Feb. 18 video. The mug is among the items that salvage firm RMS Titanic, Inc., has recovered from the ocean liner and is at a storage facility in Atlanta.

Consent sought to recover Titanic telegraph machine

By BEN FINLEY
Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. — The salvage firm that has plucked silverware, china and gold coins from the wreckage of the Titanic now wants to recover the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Machine that transmitted the doomed ship's increasingly frantic distress calls.

Lawyers for the company, R.M.S. Titanic, Inc., called witnesses before a federal judge on Thursday to explain why the company should be allowed to possibly cut into the rapidly deteriorating ship to recover the device before it's irretrievable.

"It's one of those iconic artifacts, like the signal flags (that the sinking ship launched)," testified David Gallo, an oceanographer who retired from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and is now a paid consultant for the firm.

Gallo, who testified in federal court in Norfolk, Virginia, said that salvaging the device would not be "grave robbery" but a way to connect people to the ship's legacy and honor its passengers.

U.S. District Judge Rebecca Beach Smith, the maritime jurist who presides over Titanic salvage matters, said it was too early for her to make any decisions on the proposal. She said she needed more details and proposed scheduling another hearing sometime in the future.

The Titanic was traveling from England to New York when it struck an iceberg at 11:40 p.m. on April 14, 1912. The large and luxurious ocean liner sent out distress signals using the relatively new Marconi wireless radio system.

The messages in Morse code were picked up by other ships and onshore receiving stations. They included: "We require immediate assistance" ... "Have trust iceberg and sinking" ... "We are putting women off in boats."

The ship sank in less than three hours, with the loss of all but 700 of the 2,208 passengers

and crew.

An international team led by oceanographer Robert Ballard located the wreckage in 1985 on the North Atlantic seabed, about 400 miles (645 kilometers) off Newfoundland, Canada.

RMS Titanic Inc., oversees a collection of thousands of items recovered from the site over the years as the court-recognized salvor, or steward of the artifacts.

The company has argued that time is running out to retrieve the telegraph machine. It has been referred to as "the voice" of the Titanic, which also delivered the ship its last words.

The device is located in a room on the ship's deck. A gymnasium on the other side of the grand staircase has already collapsed. The roof above the telegraph machine has begun to perforate.

"I'm not sure if we go in 2020 that the roof won't be collapsed on everything," testified Paul Henry Nargeot, director of the company's underwater research program.

The company is already facing resistance from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which represents the public's interest in the wreck site.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Virginia represents NOAA. Its attorneys argued in court documents that the proposed retrieval runs contrary to prior court orders that prohibit the firm from cutting holes or taking items from the wreck. The items that the firm already salvaged came from a debris field outside the ship.

"It seems clear that this is not simply a 'one-off' proposal for the Marconi Wireless Telegraph, but a placeholder for future requests to take similar actions in order to recover other artifacts from inside the wreck," federal attorney Kent P. Porter wrote.

Porter also wrote that the court must consider international agreements involving the wreck as well as archaeological standards to determine whether the retrieval is justified.

Police in Hawaii arrest mother who lied about her missing kids in Idaho

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER
Associated Press

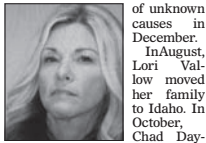
HONOLULU — The mother of two Idaho children missing since September was arrested Thursday in Hawaii.

Lori Vallow, also known as Lori Daybell, 46, was arrested on a warrant issued in Madison County, Idaho, and was being held on \$5 million bail, Kauai police said.

Seven-year-old Joshua "JJ" Vallow and 17-year-old Tyler Ryan haven't been seen since late September, and police in Rexburg, Idaho, have said they "strongly believe that Joshua and Tyler's lives are in danger."

Police have said Lori Vallow and her new husband Chad Daybell have lied about the children's whereabouts and even about their existence, with Chad Daybell allegedly telling one person that Lori Vallow had no kids, and Lori Vallow allegedly telling another person that her daughter had died more than a year earlier.

The tangled case spans multiple states and includes investigations into three separate deaths. Lori Vallow's estranged husband, Charles Vallow, was shot and killed in Phoenix in July by Lori's brother, Alex Cox. Cox, who claimed the shooting was in self-defense, died



Vallow

of unknown causes in December.

In August, Lori Vallow moved her family to Idaho. In October, Chad Daybell's wife, Tammy

Daybell died of what her obituary said was natural causes. When Chad Daybell married Lori Vallow just two weeks after Tammy's death, law enforcement became suspicious and ultimately had Tammy Daybell's remains exhumed.

The test results on Tammy Daybell's remains and on Alex Cox have not yet been released.

Vallow failed to comply with a court order to produce her children before authorities on Jan. 30 in Madison County, authorities have said.

She has been charged with two felony counts of desertion and nonsupport of dependent children, Madison County Prosecutor Rob Wood said in a prepared statement. She is also charged with the order to produce the children, with the order to produce the kids, and then searched.

contempt of court.

Wood noted that Vallow is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court. If that happens, she could face up to 14 years in prison for each count of desertion of a child, he said.

In December, Rexburg police asked Kauai police for help in locating the couple. On Jan. 26, Kauai police served a search warrant on a rented vehicle and condo they were renting in Princeville, a resort town on Kauai's north shore.

A hearing date has yet to be determined to give Vallow an opportunity to waive or fight extradition to Idaho.

"The children were last seen in Idaho and there is no indication that they are on Kauai," police said in a statement. "There are currently no criminal charges against Vallow on Kauai."

Lori Vallow's attorney, Sean Bartholick of Rexburg, Idaho, did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment.

Police questioned Daybell and Vallow about the missing kids in late November, and the couple left town before police returned the next day. They were stopped by investigators in Hawaii, served with the order to produce the kids, and then searched.

MIDEAST

Airstrike kills two Turkish soldiers

Syrian war continues to strain Turkish-Russian relations

By SUZAN FRASER AND
VLADIMIR ISACHENKO
Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Two Turkish soldiers were killed Thursday in an airstrike in northwestern Syria, Turkey said, after an attack by Ankara-backed opposition forces that targeted Syrian government troops. The deaths came after the Turkish president threatened to expand his nation's involvement in Syria if another one of his troops were hurt.

At least 15 Turkish soldiers have been killed in Syria this month amid a crushing offensive by Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces aimed at recapturing remaining opposition-held areas in the region.

On halting the advance, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had vowed Feb. 12 to take military action "everywhere in Syria" if another Turkish soldier was killed or wounded.

The multiple front offensive has triggered the biggest single wave of fleeing civilians in Syria's nine-year war, displacing nearly 1 million people who have rushed

toward the Turkish border and are sheltering in tents or sleeping rough in harsh winter weather.

It has also risked completely shattering a fragile cooperation between Ankara and Moscow, which back opposing sides of the Syria war. Ankara has sent thousands of soldiers to northwestern Syria to try to stem the Syrian government advance on the province near the Turkish border, leading to the repeated flare-ups.

Thursday's exchange marked a serious escalation that risks growing into a full-blown conflict between Turkey and Syria. Erdogan has also called on Assad's forces to retreat from Idlib or face an "imminent" Turkish attack.

The exchange began after opposition fighters shelled Syrian government forces and entered the village of Nairab, which Assad's forces had captured Feb. 3, the Turkish Anadolu agency said.

The Russian military said the militants' actions "were supported by Turkish artillery fire," which allowed them to break through the Syrian army's defenses. Four Syrian soldiers were



GHAITH ALSAYED/AP

Turkish-backed rebel fighters prepare for an attack near the village of Nairab in Syria, Thursday.

wounded in the Turkish shelling, it said.

At the Syrian military's request, Russian Su-24 bombers then struck the militants to prevent them from advancing and allowing Syrian government forces to "successfully repel all attacks," the military added.

It was not immediately clear whether it was the Russian airstrikes that killed the two Turkish soldiers and injured five others.

Fahrettin Altun, a top aide to Erdogan, said the attack was carried out by Syrian government forces. On Twitter, he wrote: "The blood of our martyrs won't be left unaccounted for."

The Turkish Defense Ministry tweeted that as many as 50 Syrian government soldiers were killed and that five tanks, two armored personnel carriers and

other equipment were destroyed.

In Moscow, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova raised what she called "serious concern about the Turkish military support for the militants."

"This incident represents a violation of the Russian-Turkish agreements on separation between the armed opposition and terrorists and the creation of a demilitarized zone. It risks provoking further escalation of the conflict in that part of Syria's territory," she said in a statement.

Turkey and Russia have closely coordinated their moves in recent years in Idlib province. Turkey maintains observation posts in northern Syria that were set up to monitor a 2018 cease-fire agreement with Russia. The truce collapsed in late 2019, leading to the

current Syrian offensive, backed by Russia.

Russian officials have said they hold Turkey responsible for the collapse of the cease-fire deal, saying Ankara had not held up its end to rein in militants who continued attacking Syrian and Russian targets.

Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar on Thursday rejected the Russian assertion, saying Ankara was making progress against radical groups in Idlib when the Syrian government launched its offensive.

Ankara sent in thousands of additional troops and armored vehicles in recent weeks, vowing to halt the government's advance.

So far, talks between Turkey and Russian officials have failed to reach agreements that would ease tensions there.

Iran votes for new parliament despite sanctions

By NASSER KARIMI
Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iranians voted for a new parliament Friday, with turnout seen as a key measure of support for Iran's leadership as sanctions weigh on the economy and U.S. pressure isolates the country diplomatically.

The disqualification of more than 7,000 potential candidates, most of them reformists and moderates, raised the possibility of lower-than-usual turnout. Among those disqualified were 90 sitting members of parliament who had wanted to run for re-election.

The election comes at a time of growing economic hardship for many in Iran. U.S. sanctions have strangled Iran's ability to sell its oil abroad, forcing its economy into recession.

Also looming over the election is the threat of the new coronavirus. Many voters hesitated nearly two weeks before heading to the polls with face masks.

Iranian health authorities on Friday confirmed two new deaths from the virus, which first emerged in China in December, bringing the total death toll in Iran to four, from among 18 confirmed cases. Authorities say all the cases have links with city of Qom, where the first two elderly



EBRAHIM NIKROOZI/AP

A voter registers to cast her vote during the parliament elections at a polling station in Tehran, Iran, Friday.

patients died on Wednesday. Concerns over the spread of the virus prompted authorities in Iran to close all schools, universities and Shiite seminaries in Qom.

Iran's leadership and state media have urged people to show up and vote, with some framing it as a religious duty. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei cast his ballot at a mosque near his Tehran office shortly after polls opened at 8 a.m.

"Anyone who cares about Iran's national interests should partici-

pate in the election," he said. Earlier in the week, Khamenei said high voter turnout will thwart "plots and plans" by the U.S. and supporters of Israel against Iran.

After the disqualifications, around 7,000 candidates were left vying for a place in the 290-seat chamber across 208 constituencies.

Tensions with the United States could strengthen hard-liners by reinforcing long-held distrust of the West. A parliament stacked with hard-liners could favor ex-

panding the budget for the Revolutionary Guard Corps, which has been sanctioned by the U.S. It could also tilt public policy debates toward hard-liners who are opposed to engagement with the U.S.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who had initially criticized the disqualification of so many moderate would-be candidates, cast his ballot on Friday and urged the public to stage another "victory" by voting in large numbers. "Our enemies will be disappointed more than before," Rouhani said.

On the eve of the vote, the Trump administration ratcheted up its campaign of pressure on Iran by imposing sanctions on two senior officials of the Guardian Council, the body of clerics and judges that decides which candidates may run in elections. The U.S. also sanctioned three members of Iran's elections supervisory committee, saying all those targeted were responsible for silencing the voice of the Iranian people by rejecting thousands of people from running.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo criticized the election as a "sham" and a vote that "is not free or fair."

Iran's Foreign Minister Mo-

hammad Javad Zarif was quoted in official media saying the election showcases that Iranians are choosing their own fate and "do not allow a person sitting in Washington to make decisions for them."

The parliament in Iran does not have power to dictate major policies, but it does debate the annual budget and the possible impeachment of ministers. Power in Iran ultimately rests with Khamenei, who has final say on all key matters.

Current parliament speaker Ali Larijani is stepping down after 11 years and is not running for reelection, though he was shown voting in his city of Qom. Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, the former mayor of Tehran who is also the former head of the Revolutionary Guard air force, is seen as one of the front-runners to succeed Larijani.

The current parliament, elected in 2016, had more than 100 reformists and moderates, with the rest of the chamber split between independents and hard-liners. Some 90 current lawmakers were also barred from running in Friday's election.

Initial results are expected to be announced on Saturday.

WORLD

Virus cases balloon across South Korea

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Schools were shuttered, churches told worshippers to stay away and some mass gatherings were banned as cases of a new virus swelled Friday in South Korea, the newest front in a widening global outbreak.

The country said a total of 204 people were infected with the virus, quadruple the number it had two days earlier, as a crisis centered in China has begun strongly reverberating elsewhere.

The multiplying caseload in South Korea showed the ease with which the illness can spread. Though initial infections were linked to China, new ones have not involved international travel.

"We have entered an emergency phase," Prime Minister Chung Se-kyun said in televised comments at the start of a government meeting on the health emergency. "Our efforts until now have been focused on blocking the illness from entering the country. But we will now shift the focus on preventing the illness from spreading further in local communities."

Daegu, a southeastern city of 2.5 million that is the country's fourth largest, emerged as the focus of government efforts to contain the disease known as COVID-19, and Chung promised support to ease a shortage in hospital beds, medical personnel and equipment. Mayor Kwon Young-jin of Daegu has urged residents to stay inside, even wearing masks at home, to stem further infections.

The first case in Daegu was reported on Tuesday. By Friday, the area had 153.

Nationwide, the numbers told of a ballooning problem. There were 20 new cases reported Wednesday, 53 on Thursday and 149 on Friday.

The central government declared a "special management zone" around Daegu on Friday, which didn't restrict movement of residents or supersede local officials' power but served as official recognition of the problem. A total of 110 infections have been confirmed in Daegu and

surrounding areas, including South Korea's first fatality from COVID-19.

Most of those cases have been linked to a single house of worship, a branch of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, where a woman in her 60s attended two services before testing positive for the virus.

About 1,000 others who attended services with the woman have been isolated in their homes for screening, and health authorities say they're trying to monitor thousands of other church members.

All 74 sites operated by the Shincheonji Church have been closed and worshippers have been told to instead watch services online for a sect whose leader claims to be an angel of Christ, but who is dismissed by many outsiders as a cult leader. Its teachings revolve largely around the Book of Revelation, a chapter of the New Testament known mostly for its apocalyptic foreshadowing.

Health and city officials say the woman eyed as a potential transmitter at the church had contact with some 1,160 people, both at the church and at a restaurant and a hospital where she was treated for injuries from a car accident. That raised fears that South Korea — which before Wednesday had recorded just 31 cases of the virus — should brace for a further surge.

"I hope South Korea will do everything to contain this outbreak at this early stage," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general of the World Health Organization.

Usually bustling downtown streets of Daegu were nearly deserted Friday as people wearing face masks lined up at clinics seeking testing.

Crowds formed in supermarkets where shelves of ramen and curry were nearly bare. Eight hundred area schools, due to start a new academic year on March 2, delayed their openings by a week.

"Panic is taking hold," said Daegu resident Huh Mi-yeon. "People are scared of any situation where they would run into another person."



ANN YOUNG-JOON/AP

A thermal camera monitor shows the body temperature of people at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, on Friday. South Korea reported 100 new virus cases Friday.

China's count of new virus cases drops

Associated Press

BEIJING — China reported another fall in new virus cases Friday as health officials expressed continued optimism over containment of the outbreak that has caused more than 2,200 deaths but has grown elsewhere.

Containment of the illness has been a struggle far from the epicenter in central China. South Korea's capital banned street rallies and the government sent help to a city where cases have surged. Hong Kong reported a new infection in a police officer.

Newly reported infections in China have fallen for days, although changes in how health authorities have counted cases have muddied the true trajectory of the epidemic.

"The downward trend will not be reversed," Ding Xiangyang, deputy chief secretary of the State Council and a member of

the central government's supervision group, said on Thursday.

China's count of 889 cases in the previous 24 hours brought its total to 75,465. The 118 newly reported deaths raised the total to 2,236. More than 1,000 cases and 11 deaths have been confirmed outside the mainland.

People in the country were mourning a doctor who succumbed to the disease Thursday, according to an announcement from the district in which he worked in Wuhan, the city where the virus emerged. Peng Yin-hua, a respiratory and intensive care physician, was infected last month while treating patients with the illness.

Chinese media reported that Peng was 29 years old, which would place him among the youngest to die from COVID-19. Most of the fatalities have been people aged 60 and over with underlying medical conditions, ac-

cording to a report from China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Peng was profiled last month by a local newspaper, which said he postponed his wedding to help fight the epidemic, working day and night to accommodate the influx of patients.

Officials have been sacked in hardest-hit Hubei province and other areas after more than 500 cases were diagnosed in prisons, Justice Ministry official He Ping told reporters at a daily briefing.

China last week began recording cases without waiting for laboratory results, causing a significant spike in cases. But on Thursday it returned to counting only lab-confirmed positive cases and discounted some cases where the lab tests came back negative. The changes are sure to aggravate observers who say consistency is key to understanding COVID-19's path.

Germany to increase police presence in wake of shooting

Associated Press

BERLIN — German authorities will step up the police presence throughout the country and keep a closer watch on mosques and other sites after the racially motivated shootings that killed nine people, the country's top security official said Friday.

A 43-year-old German man fatally shot the victims of immigrant backgrounds in the Frankfurt suburb of Hanau on Wednesday night before killing his mother and himself. The man, identified as Tobias Rehder, left a number of rambling texts and videos espousing racist views and claiming to have been under surveillance

since birth.

Meanwhile, officials confirmed they had received a letter from the suspect last November in which he sought help from authorities in stopping the surveillance he believed he was under. The letter didn't ring any alarm bells with prosecutors, authorities said.

Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said state-level security officials and security agencies he consulted Thursday agreed to increase the law enforcement presence around the country. Seehofer said there would be more surveillance at "sensitive sites," including mosques, and a high police presence at railway stations, airports and borders.

"The threat posed by far-right extremism, anti-Semitism and racism is very high in Germany," Seehofer told reporters in Berlin.

Thousands of people gathered in cities across Germany on Thursday evening to hold vigils for the shooting victims but also to express anger that authorities haven't done enough to prevent attacks despite a string of incidents in recent years.

Some also called for a crackdown on the extremist and anti-migrant ideology that has crept into mainstream political debate with the rise of the Alternative for Germany party, or AfD.

A top official in the center-left Social Democratic Party, a junior partner in

Chancellor Angela Merkel's governing coalition, accused AfD of providing ideological fodder to people like the Hanau shooter.

"One person carried out the shooting in Hanau, that's what it looks like, but there were many that supplied him with ammunition, and AfD definitely belongs to them," Lars Klingbeil told German public broadcaster ARD on Friday.

Parts of Alternative for Germany already were under close scrutiny from Germany's domestic intelligence agency. The party has rejected all responsibility for far-right attacks, including an anti-Semitic attack on a synagogue and the killing of a regional politician last year.

VIDEO GAMES



Sparking creativity

Puzzle-based 7th Sector a fresh approach to sci-fi plot

By CHRISTOPHER BYRD

Special to The Washington Post

Sergey Noskov's 7th Sector is an inspired sci-fi game that draws on the visual vocabulary of the 1980s. Neon skies, rabbit-eared televisions and moody synth music all play into its analogue vision of the future. Although it has its stealth and action moments, at its heart 7th Sector is a challenging puzzle game that will occasionally tap into your math or logic skills, or, if you're like me, send you scurrying to the internet for answers. The game's atmospheric quality, which evokes themes of confinement and the struggle for liberation, is reminiscent of the work of Playdead, the Danish development studio whose *Inside* (2016) set the standard



for dark cinematic sidescrollers.

7th Sector opens with a scene that recalls the haunted television in Steven Spielberg's film "Poltergeist." An indistinct figure materializes on a fuzzy CRT television. Using the thumbstick on the controller, you can guide it to either side where it will push against the edge as though at the door of a cage. Then, with the press of a button, the phantom on the screen transforms into a spark that can pass through the cables on the back of the television.

From there, you can hop between other cables snaked along the ground or attached to different surfaces, as well as into transistor boxes and other electronic sources. Over the length of the adventure, the backstory of which is told in collectibles spread throughout the environment, you'll hijack everything from the power amp on a record player to a child's RC car, to domestic and killer robots and other forms of machinery.

Traveling as a spark along cables reminded me of the opening shots of Polish filmmaker Krzysztof Kieslowski's "Red." I've never seen a game adopt such a novel point of view. Given that science fiction has long been an overly represented genre in video games, surprises are rare, and I considered this no small feat. That said, a couple of puzzles stopped me in my tracks and would have seriously derailed, if not outright halted, my progress if I hadn't consulted an online walkthrough.

Although I took issue with the fiddliness of a couple of the puzzles such as one in a chapter appropriately titled "Physics," where you must ferry highly insecure cargo on the back of a flying drone, I was, on the whole, impressed with the range of puzzles and different gameplay scenarios available.

Platforms: Nintendo Switch, PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One

Online: store.steampowered.com/app/749250/7th_Sector

Journey to the Savage Planet largely forgettable

By CHRISTOPHER BYRD

Special to The Washington Post

Cheeky behavior can be a cover for inadequacy. That was the main thought I had while playing *Journey to the Savage Planet*, a candy-colored, sci-fi action adventure game that left me deflated.

The game puts players in the role of a lonely explorer that the A.I. companion who aides you on your expedition compliments you for acquiring a 3-D printed gun. "Now you have a weapon," she says. "The single



most important tool of any colonizer."

Comedy is supposed to function as an important part in *Savage Planet*. There are silly messages from your corporate headquarters and commercials for products like a mobile game with a titanic amount of microtransactions. But as with the aforementioned joke, the humor in *Savage Planet* is tame. Yep, colonialism was bad and video game design often uses weapons as a crutch around which to build other gameplay mechanics, but here still is a game where you spend a good amount of time shooting hostile aliens. And yes, microtransactions are an easy straw man to poke fun of as an example of corporate greed, but *Journey to the Savage Planet* isn't exactly bucking conventions. Think what you will of its funny-looking creatures such as the Jellywaft—a flying jellyfish of sorts—or the Barfer, a creature whose existence is self-explanatory. Its gameplay progression is fairly pedestrian, its combat is so-so and its boss fights seem there for obligation.

As the story goes, your employer didn't invest much thought into seeing you, in person, ever again. So, you must explore the planet—made up of a number of floating archipelagos—to try to resupply your ship for a homeward voyage. The company credits you for scanning flora and fauna for clues and is, of course, interested in all of the data you collect. Travel between places is gated by obstacles requiring specific tools to overcome such as a grappling hook or pouches tailored to hold plant-based projectiles. And if you've played a fair number of Metroid-style games, the treadmill of upgrades available here should pass by with hardly any notice. The most memorable (if that's the word for it) obstacle in the game is the Meat Vortex, a flesh-eating plant that requires an offering before it'll move its tendrils from blocking a pathway.

All in all, I found little reason to wish to prolong my *Journey to the Savage Planet*.

Platforms: PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One
Online: savageplanetgame.com

Latest Call of Duty season makes Ghost a playable character

The second season for *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* pushed live last week, reintroducing one of the franchise's all-time favorite soldiers as a playable character.

Simon "Ghost" Riley is back and will be available to anyone who purchases the Season 2 pass for 1,000 Call of Duty Points (\$10). Also reintroduced in the game's latest content update will be fan-favorite, tight quarters multiplayer map Rust, along with Zharkov Boneyard, which will be playable in the game's Ground War mode.

Two new weapons—the GRAU 5.56 assault rifle and Striker 45 sub machine gun—will also be unlockable through gameplay. A "classified" weapon has also been teased for later in the season, along with two other new operators, named Talon and Mace (who also looks suspiciously like Ghost). White face paint on black masks is all the rage this season, apparently). Other new multiplayer maps (Atlas Superstore) and Buzarov (specific to the game's gunfight mode) are already playable, with another map (Khandor Hideout) advertised to be available later in the season.

Season 2 will also introduce multiplayer playlists specific to the game's esports circuit, the Call of Duty League, which began play at the end of January. Gunfight tournaments—play tested as a limited time mode during Season 1—will make a return in Season 2. Infinity Ward also advertised that its popular Infected mode would be coming to the 50-on-50 Ground War mode later in the season.

Ghost will be unlocked immediately with the purchase of the Season 2 battle pass. The Talon and Mace characters will be available for purchase via the in-game store.

Other items obtainable in the battlepass include new weapon blueprints (such as a slick gold-plated MK2 skin), added operator skins (including some streetwear threads), and XP bonuses. The battlepass will also again include the opportunity for players to earn up to 1,300 Call of Duty points (the equivalent of \$13) by completing all tiers.

This is the second installment of *Modern Warfare's* battlepass mechanism, a Fortnite-like rewards mechanism that parcels out new content for players as they amass playing time and experience points in the game. The first battlepass included another new character, Mara, while a second, Nikto, was available in the in-game store as part of a \$24 bundle.

Previous *Call of Duty* games had come under fire for incorporating a player reward system that relied on randomly assigned loot boxes, which required players to spend significant amounts of money to assure themselves of a desired character skin or weapon, some of which were among the most powerful in the game. The latter issue led some to criticize game publisher Activision for using a pay-to-win dynamic, one of the more frowned-upon practices by game developers and something that has led to lawsuits and potential legislation in both Europe and the United States.

The content comes at a non-nominal cost, too. Some reports are reporting the update comes in around 70 gigabytes, depending on the platform.

—Mike Hume/The Washington Post

BOOKS

Crime binge

What's it like to read 50 books in 5 months? Writer tells of her experience with In Death series

By SOPHIA ROSENBAUM
Associated Press

When you binge-read an entire 50-book series over five months, coming to the end feels like the final days of an amazing trip. You don't want it to end, and at the same time you want to get back to your life.

I started reading J.D. Robb's In Death series — a futuristic police procedural set in the mid-21st century — when I was in desperate need of escape. It was mid-August and, as an Associated Press editor, I had been through a particularly difficult news cycle: a mass shooting in Dayton, Ohio, followed by Jeffrey Epstein's suicide. My mind was teeming with the details from both stories,

and I was burnt out. I felt like I could only get to a quarter tank of gas, and every time a half tank was in view, my energy would get depleted again.

I had been on a good reading kick, ripping through some spectacular books including Tayari Jones' "An American Marriage" and Tara Westover's "Educated." But I was looking for something lighter, more of a beach read. A friend described a series she had recently started — page-turning murder mysteries paired with a storybook love story — and said it might be a good fit for me.

I read the first two books later, and I can say it definitely was.

My bingeing streak just ended with the 50th book, "Golden in Death," which was released this month.

"The In Death series is far from light reading. It centers around the life of Eve Dallas, a no-nonsense New York City police lieutenant. She's a homicide cop, so there is murder in every book.

There's the one where two lovers who think of themselves as a modern-day Bonnie and Clyde leave a trail of death, with

their initials carved into their victims' bodies. There are the ones tinged with terrorism: A young sniper trained by her drugged-out, former-cop father turns people into murder-mindless zombies. Many of the books deal with rape, sexual assault or abuse, for more of a "Law & Order: SVU" vibe. And some are like "The Girl on the Train," a thriller.

J.D. Robb is the pen name for the prolific romance writer Nora Roberts, who started writing the series in 1995 and releases at least two new titles a year.

In the very first book, "Naked in Death," we are introduced to a slew of what become recurring characters: Eve's former partner and trainer, who becomes a father figure; the esteemed police commander; the maternal staff psychiatrist; Eve's ex-boyfriend-turned-singer bestie; and most importantly, Roarke.

The sexual tension leaps off the page when Eve meets Roarke, who is rich, handsome and happens to be her prime suspect. Eve's moral code is black and white, which causes friction throughout the series with Roarke, who becomes her husband by the fourth book.

Roberts spends a lot of time building layer upon layer of intimacy into their relationship, so their partnership is believable while still being the epitome of #couplegoals. Their relationship is one of the things I loved most about the series, and miss most now that I'm caught up.

So what happens when you plunge into a 50-book series? Here are five things I learned:

The In Death series, written by Nora Roberts under her pseudonym J.D. Robb, features New York City Police and Security Department Lieutenant Eve Dallas and her husband, Roarke, and is set in the mid-21st century.

Berkley, St. Martin's Press/AP



There's nothing like escaping into a good book ... or 50

I lost touch of reading for a good chunk with my 20s. I blamed it on school, and then on my job. But getting back into a reading routine has done wonders for my life, and my brain. Reading requires undivided attention. You can't really read a book while you're texting someone or scrolling through Instagram or participating in any bad habits you're trying to kick.

About 10 books in, when I noticed I was starting to rip through a book a day, I started wondering: Was reading this much another bad habit?

Nervously, I asked my therapist about this obsession, admitting that most of my free time was spent escaping into Eve's world. "My therapist said something like, 'Of the compulsive habits to have, this seems relatively harmless, and maybe you really need it. It's only a

problem if you start turning down social interactions or find it is interfering with your daily life."

I've always been inclined to binge. The medium doesn't matter — TV show, book, podcast — once I'm hooked, I need to know everything.

I read these books everywhere I went, using peripheral vision as I walked through the corridor to my office every morning, narrowly avoiding running into people. I would sneak in five minutes when the subway was delayed. I'd curl up on the couch with my cat on a rainy afternoon, fall asleep most nights with a book in my hand, read on the beach on vacation.

After meeting a colleague for the first time recently, she said, "You're the book woman. It's so good to finally meet you."

Crazy book lady, at your service.

I am not a cop, but I started to think like one

When you spend hours of day reading police procedurals, you start thinking like a cop, or at least how I imagine a cop thinks. I began paying more attention to details.

Looking at people on the subway, I would think about how I would describe them if I were called as a witness — their dimensions, physical attributes, clothing, tendencies — and then test myself when I got home to see if I remembered.

I'd pay attention to license plates of passing cars, though I never was able to remember those.

Fiction is not reality

Over the summer, a homeless man killed four people as they slept on the streets of New York City. Telling my partner about it, I started describing what would happen if this was Eve's case.

"I think you have a problem," he replied.

There was a particularly meta moment when I was reading a book that featured characters going to the Oscars because a movie about one of Eve's cases was nominated. Later that evening, I tuned into the Golden Globes and couldn't help but make comparisons between fiction and reality. If only "The Icove Agenda" (from Robb's "Origin in Death") won instead of "1917."

Now that I'm caught up, I can't say I'm looking for another series to dive into. I did immediately binge "The Morning Show" because I had been neglecting my TV shows. But reading these books gave me what I wanted and needed. Just like a vacation, the series gave me a break from reality, and taught me how much I need that.

You can, in fact, read too much

At 29, I'm not old, but I sometimes comically injured myself at least twice while reading the In Death series.

The first happened about 10 books in, when I got the strangest pain in my left pinky. It was particularly present when I would type; it felt like my finger had done one too many crunches. I was in the middle of reading when I said to my partner, "I can't figure out why my pinky hurts so much." He casually suggested it might have something to do with my new reading obsession, but I shot that down, feeling defensive.

I did notice, however, that I was holding the book like a martini glass, pinky up. Within days of changing my grip, the pain went away.

Then, toward the end of the book series, my right eye started twitching for about a week and a half. I was embarrassed, and Googled what might be the cause. Sure, I drank the occasional caffeinated tea, I probably could have gotten more sleep, and I am always stressed. But about two days after I finished book No. 50, my eye twitch went away.

Libraries are candy shops for adults

Rediscovering the library has been one of my favorite things about reading this series. I can't explain the excitement I would feel when I got an email notifying me that my books had come in. I loved going to get them and finding them bound together with a rubber band and marked with my initials.

I only bought one book, in a moment of weakness over Labor Day

weekend when I realized the library was going to be closed for four days and I hadn't ordered the next few books in time.

After that, I ordered them five or 10 at a time at the library.

It turns out I'm not the only one who loves the library. A recent Gallup poll found that Americans visited the library more frequently than the movie theater in 2019.

MOVIES



Ford knows heroes

Actor's latest classic character is a gruff adventurer in a movie adaptation of a beloved Jack London novel

By PETER SLENDORIO
New York Daily News

Harrison Ford is certainly no stranger to iconic roles. From Han Solo to Indiana Jones, the actor has captivated audiences for decades by portraying some of cinema's most beloved action heroes.

His latest classic character is John Thornton, the adventurer from Jack London's book "The Call of the Wild," who forms a life-changing bond with Buck the dog after saving him from abusive owners. In a movie adaptation of the 1903 novel hitting theaters this weekend, Ford aimed to bring new depth to Thornton.

"We did take some liberty with the book, in that the character in the book just arrives without history, solves Buck's problems, but we don't know anything about him," Ford told the *Daily News*. "What I wanted was to develop an emotional story for him that found its resolution in context of his relationship with Buck."

For Ford, that meant giving Thornton a gripping backstory in which a tragedy from his past drives him to a life of isolation. It's only after he meets Buck that Thornton is inspired to embark on the outdoor adventure of a lifetime with the St. Bernard-Scotch Collie.

"The Call of the Wild" follows Buck as he's stolen from his home in California and sold as a sled dog in the Yukon before he crosses paths with Thornton.

"I knew the book from early on in my life," Ford, 77, said. "I hadn't read it since high school, when it was assigned reading. But when the script came to me, I saw an opportunity for a good audience film, a family movie, where I'd have a chance to do something that I haven't done for a while."

The film's director, Chris Sanders, applauds Ford for his desire to enhance the story.

"In the book, John Thornton is a guy who

is looking for gold," Sanders, 57, told *The News*. "Harrison found it very important to switch the narrative away from somebody who's looking for treasure in the ground to somebody who's looking for a different kind of treasure: a wilderness experience."

"I thought that was a really smart and sweet way of making it relatable and warming it up, whilst holding on to the idea that Thornton is a man ... who's a bit lost, and Buck helps him find his way."

In recent years, Ford has revived marquee characters such as Solo in the latest *Star Wars* trilogy and Rick Deckard in the 2017 sequel to "Blade Runner." He's set to reprise the role of Indy soon, too, for a fifth "Indiana Jones" movie.

Although his work in the action-adventure realm has long earned acclaim, Ford says the genre isn't what draws him to roles.

"It's a character or relationships or the emotional substance of a film that attracts me, but I have no interest in any particular genre," Ford said. "I enjoy dressing up and pretending to be somebody I'm not. The job is just that: pretending."

Ford was intrigued that those making "The Call of the Wild" decided to computer-animate Buck into the film rather than shoot scenes with an actual dog.

Sanders says using a computer-created canine let them maintain consistency during production instead of rotating among multiple dogs who specialize in different things. It also let them put Buck through rough circumstances in the movie that the filmmakers wouldn't want a real dog to go through.

The actor is thankful to have worked with so many people over the years who helped him make successful films.

"It's a collaborative enterprise," Ford said. "It's the quality of the script. It's the investment of the director. It's the contribution of the cinematographer and all the other talented people that work on stuff. I'm grateful that I have the opportunity to do this job. It's given me a really very fulfilling life."

Harrison Ford, shown Feb. 13 in Los Angeles, helped fill in the backstory for his "Call of the Wild" character, John Thornton.

CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Cops: Farmer holds goat thief at gunpoint

VA FREDERICKSBURG — A Virginia man held a suspect who was trying to steal goats from his farm at gunpoint until authorities could arrive to make an arrest, authorities said.

Stafford County deputies responded to a call Friday night from the property owner, who said he was holding a thief in the middle of a field on his land, Stafford County Sheriff's spokeswoman Amanda Vicinanza said. The farmer told deputies his wife had gone outside to check on their goats and discovered they'd been let out of their pen.

The farmer tracked the suspect to the field, where he found the man apparently intoxicated and slurring his words, the department said. Three goats were tied up next to the suspect's truck. A deputy later determined through a breathalyzer test that the man was pretending to be intoxicated, Vicinanza said.

Deer sent flying by car crashes into 2nd car

IA SIGOURNEY — A deer sent flying when it was hit by a car in southeast Iowa crashed through the window of a second car, killing its driver, the Iowa State Patrol said.

The accident occurred a little after 7 p.m. Wednesday on Iowa Highway 92, just west of Sigourney. The deer went onto the roadway from the north ditch and was struck by a westbound car, the patrol said. The deer was knocked into the air and then went through the windshield of an eastbound car.

The driver who was killed was identified as Donald Burdick, 45, who lived in North English.

Paraglider trapped for 3 hours in power lines

CA OLIVEHURST — A paraglider trapped in power lines for three hours in northern California was rescued by emergency crews near the Yuba County Airport.

The pilot was facing the ground with the wires as his only support when first responders arrived, Olivehurst Fire Department officials said.

"The difficulty was making sure that the lines were de-energized to make sure that our firefighters were safe before we could make patient contact," said Randy York, with the Olivehurst Fire Department.

Power was cut to the surrounding area of Yuba County for a few hours while crews worked to save the man, authorities said.

The pilot got stuck while trying to land at the airport from a training exercise with an instructor, first responders said. No major injuries were reported.

Police: Man charged with 6th DUI after crash

DE HOCKESSIN — Police charged a man with his sixth DUI.



JULIO CORTEZ/AP

Sunset by the shore

A couple stands at the banks of the Loch Raven Reservoir as the sun begins to set Wednesday in Glen Arm, Md.

Delaware State Police said in a statement Wednesday that they charged David L. Brower, of Hockessin, after he crashed his car.

Police said he struck an embankment in the yard of a residence. Brower was taken to a hospital with nonlife-threatening injuries.

Police said they learned that Brower was driving under the influence of alcohol — and that he had five prior DUI convictions.

Plymouth Rock covered in graffiti by vandals

MA PLYMOUTH — The iconic Plymouth Rock and other sites were covered in red graffiti Monday during a vandalism spree discovered at the site marking the landing of the Pilgrims in Massachusetts 400 years ago.

Officials in Plymouth discovered the vandalism early in the morning. Workers had removed the red spray paint, which included the letters MOF and the numbers 508, from the rock before dawn.

Authorities say no arrests have been made and the site was open to tourists.

Tavern manager said to have stolen nearly \$70K

KY BEREKA — The general manager of a historic tavern in Kentucky has been accused of stealing nearly \$70,000 from the business and then gambling it away.

James Smock, 57, was charged

THE CENSUS

O The cost of tuition at the University of Southern California for students from families with an annual income of \$80,000 or less, according to a recent announcement from USC President Carol L. Folt. As part of the initiative, ownership of a home will not be counted in determining a student's financial need to attend the expensive Los Angeles private college. The changes will be phased in beginning with first-year students entering USC in the fall of 2020 and the spring of 2021.

with theft by taking from Boone Tavern, a historic hotel and restaurant, Berea police spokesperson Amanda Chitwood said in a news release Tuesday.

Detectives determined Smock stole almost \$64,000 from daily deposits and nearly \$4,000 from the house bank where money was stored, Chitwood said.

Smock has refused to speak with detectives, Chitwood said, but police obtained a warrant and arrested him Feb. 9.

Police chief stripped of duties disrobes

NH CROYDON — The police chief in a New Hampshire town took it literally when he was stripped of his duties at a local board meeting, disrobing to his underwear and walking out into a snowstorm.

Richard Lee has been chief in the small town of Croydon for 20 years. Recently, the three-member selectboard voted to eliminate the one-man department and move to 100% coverage by the New Hampshire State Police.

Lee, who was at the meeting, was told to turn in the key to his cruiser, his guns and his uniform — immediately. He went into an

office he shared with town officials and took off his clothes before the board chairman.

"I gave them my uniform shirt. I gave them my turtleneck, I gave them my ballistic vest. ... I sat down in the chair, took off my boots, took off my pants, put those in the chair, and put my boots back on, and walked out the door," Lee said. He didn't have spare clothes or a ride home. He walked nearly a mile before his wife picked him up.

Lee said that if he had left with his gear, he didn't want to face the possibility of being arrested. As he took off his clothes, he said, the chairman said he didn't have to do that, but Lee said those were the orders.

Police: Man steals patrol car, wrecks it

SC EASLEY — A man broke into a South Carolina police officer's home, took his patrol car and then wrecked it, authorities said.

Roy Wood McDonald also took a gun and Narcan, a drug used to try to reverse symptoms of an opioid overdose, when he broke into the Greenville County deputy's home, investigators said.

Pickens County deputies discovered the theft when someone called 911 to report the overturned patrol car on state Highway 183 near Easley on Sunday morning, Pickens County Chief Deputy Chad Brooks said.

McDonald, 32, was arrested by the Highway Patrol and charged with driving under the influence. Pickens County deputies added a charge of grand larceny and simple larceny, Brooks said in a statement.

Store yanks souvenir Washington dentures

VA MOUNT VERNON — George Washington's Mount Vernon estate says it will no longer sell a souvenir depicting the founding father's false teeth amid criticism that Washington's dentures were made with teeth pulled from the mouths of his slaves.

Critics said selling a souvenir magnet depicting Washington's famous false teeth trivialized the fact that Washington's slaves had to give up their own teeth.

Mount Vernon said on Twitter that it would remove the magnet from its online store. The webpage on which the magnet had been offered for sale was disabled as of Wednesday afternoon.

The old story that Washington's dentures were made of wood has long been known to be false. It has been known for years that Washington paid about six pounds for nine teeth that were pulled from slaves' mouths. The payment is recorded in a 1784 ledger.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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OPINION

Rest of the world preparing for a 2nd Trump term

By DAVID IGNATIUS
Washington Post Writers Group

Many commentators have argued that the big winner in Wednesday's poisonous Democratic Party debate was Donald Trump. But as the world assesses the United States in this 2020 election season, the long-term political implications may be foreign rivals such as China's President Xi Jinping.

The circular firing squad in Las Vegas probably raised expectations abroad that the Democrats won't unite behind a candidate with broad popular appeal who can beat Trump. People across Eastern Europe and Asia who have struggled to escape from socialist governments must find Sen. Bernie Sanders' enthusiasm for it — and the fact that he is leading the field — especially bizarre.

The Democrats' disinterest in the world will also be noted. Foreign policy was barely mentioned in Las Vegas. As the candidates shouted at each other, they seemed unaware that voters would be judging them in part on their fitness to be commander in chief. Rather than discuss rational global climate policies, like a carbon tax, they talked about putting American energy executives in jail.

But the world moves on. If a sensible, moderate Democrat seems unlikely to emerge from the scrum, then U.S. allies and adversaries will prepare for the likelihood of four more years of the erratic, bullying "America First" incumbent. Countries will hedge their bets, knowing that Trump's promises are unreliable. Even for the closest U.S. allies, friendship is not a suicide pact. They will adjust, accommodate, distance. This concern about

an America adrift from its traditional leadership role was evident last weekend at the Munich Security Conference. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier spoke for many at the conference when he complained: "Our closest ally, the United States of America, under the current administration, rejects the very concept of the international community."

Europeans are realizing, too, that America's turn inward goes much deeper than Trump. Steinmeier bemoaned Trump's retreat from transatlantic ties, but he recognized, "We know that this shift began a while ago, and it will continue even after this administration."

A former top national security official in Republican and Democratic administrations summed up the implications of the U.S. political morass for foreign allies: "They understand now that waiting it out is not a good strategy. They know that the backdrop is no longer there."

Europeans feel a nostalgia for the old order, summed up in the "Westlessness" theme of the Munich conference. But there's opportunism, too, a desire to expand influence as America's contracts. You could see the gleam in the eye of French President Emmanuel Macron as he discussed onstage with Wolfgang Ischinger the conference's host, the possibility that Germany might soon look to France's nuclear deterrent, rather than depending solely on American pledges.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo acted as if this European disaffection doesn't exist. "I'm happy to report that the death of transatlantic alliance is grossly overexaggerated," he told the conference. "The West is winning, and we're winning together." That bland reassurance didn't find much traction, even among Americans in the audience.

US troop drawdown in Africa would be a big mistake

By JOSH ROGIN

The Washington Post

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo just completed his first tour of Africa, promising U.S. support and warning against Chinese influence. Back in Washington, Defense Secretary Mark Esper is preparing to recommend a drastic scale-back of the U.S. military presence there. The problem is, the United States can't successfully compete in Africa and withdraw at the same time.

Concern in Congress and around the government has grown in recent months about Esper's review of U.S. troop levels worldwide, which fits into President Donald Trump's campaign promise to bring U.S. troops home from abroad and save money doing it. In the U.S. command in Africa, the first theater to be examined, Esper is reportedly planning to recommend a sweeping drawdown that could include ending U.S. military support for French forces fighting terrorism in Mali and closing down a new drone base in Niger.

There are 800 to 1,000 U.S. forces providing airlift, refueling and intelligence support for French troops fighting terrorists all over the Sahel region, according to Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. French President Emmanuel Macron met with him on the sideline of the Munich Security Conference last weekend and requested the Americans stay.

"He said to please tell [Trump] that we are committed to fighting terrorism, we'll do the on-the-ground work, we just need your airlift and your intelligence. It makes us effective. Without your help, we can't be effective," Graham told me. "The president of France is asking us to continue a support mission that has kept them deployed for 20 years and keeps terrorists at bay. That's a

good deal."

Graham and other senators raised this issue with Esper in a separate Munich meeting. Graham denied an NBC report that he would "take the defense secretary that he would 'make his life hell' if Esper ordered the drawdown. Graham supports the review process but told Esper that cost savings can't be the only consideration.

The Trump administration has demanded European allies increase burden-sharing and France has stepped up. The cost for the U.S. is low. We've suffered no casualties. Pulling the rug out from under the French after they deployed forces at our request undermines the entire narrative.

"If we want allies to respond in a positive way to those kinds of encouragements, you've set a rotten precedent if once they've done so, you bail out on them," said Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., who also pressed Esper on the issue. "Plus, it's the right thing to do," he told me.

Asked about this in public in Munich, Esper praised the French for leading in the Sahel but didn't rule out thinking about the future of the U.S. support mission.

There's also concern Esper will recommend drastic drawdowns of U.S. troops in East Africa. The U.S. base in Djibouti hosts about 4,000 U.S. and allied forces supporting counterterrorism missions against al-Shabab, counterpiracy efforts and other non-terrorist goals.

The review is meant to shift resources to Asia to fulfill the National Defense Strategy's call for increased focus on great-power competition with China. But that same strategy also promises to bolster partnerships in Africa to "address significant terrorist threats that threaten U.S. interests ... and the malign influence of non-African powers."

What puzzles Europeans is that the U.S. seems to want to have it both ways. "America wants to retrench, but it also wants to remain a hegemon and tell people what to do," says a former senior European intelligence official. "That isn't going to work."

Anxiety abroad about Trump's reelection was probably augmented by Wednesday's announcement that he would appoint Richard Grenell, ambassador to Germany and a ferocious political loyalist, as acting director of national intelligence. Allies worry that Grenell's appointment signals an expanding campaign to control the intelligence community and retaliate against Trump's perceived enemies. If allies decide that a second-term Trump will compromise the independence and professionalism of U.S. intelligence agencies, they may begin to reconsider their relationships.

Who benefits in a world where Republicans trumpet "America First" and Democrats don't even debate foreign policy? The answer is painfully obvious to foreign officials. As the United States turns its back step forward. Since Xi's accession in 2013, China has advertised its plans to dominate the global technology and business.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper talked in Munich of making the world choose between being America's technology partner or foe. But he isn't going to like the answer: Even Britain, America's closest ally, has said it plans to continue its relationship with Huawei, China's flagship technology company.

The Democrats seemed poised on the edge of a cliff Wednesday, heading toward nomination of a candidate who could be as polarizing as Trump. Maybe the Democrats will find a way back from the brink and pick a winner. But the world is adjusting to the prospect that Trump's version of America may be here a good while longer.

Inside the administration, there's concern Esper's Pentagon-centered process has resulted in non-military considerations being given short shrift. U.S. diplomats aid workers and spies in Africa depend on the security U.S. forces provide. An emergency rescue task force established after the 2012 Benghazi attacks is being looked at for cuts.

Officials who support the review caution it is its final. They say it's time to examine the rationale and efficiency of a U.S. troop footprint in Africa that has grown steadily in recent years, bringing massive support costs along with it. As for the French support mission, officials disagree over whether the terrorists it targets have the capability and intent to threaten the U.S. homeland. They also disagree over whether we should end our support if they don't.

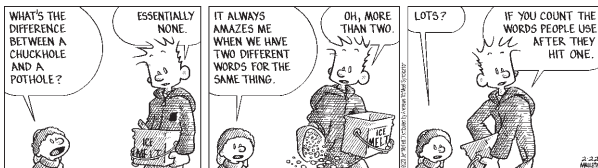
We may not have the right forces in the right places doing the right things in Africa. Perhaps some training missions could be moved without harm. It's true U.S. troops in the Sinai aren't doing what they were sent to do, but that doesn't mean the step is a real thing. It's a debate worth having.

But everyone also knows how the president wants the review to turn out. Lawmakers will surely challenge Esper on whether political considerations are influencing national security concerns when he testifies before Congress next week.

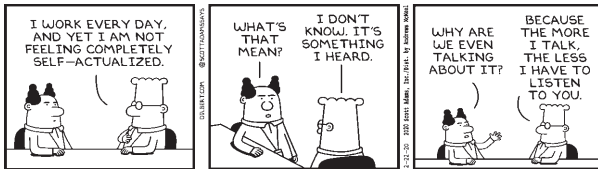
It's not just money and campaign on bringing troops home from abroad. But Africa is the wrong place to start. Pompeo can promise commitment, but the region is watching as we threaten to pack up and leave. If we do, Beijing will not be able to believe its luck.

Josh Rogin is a columnist for the Global Opinions section of The Washington Post. He writes about foreign policy and national security.

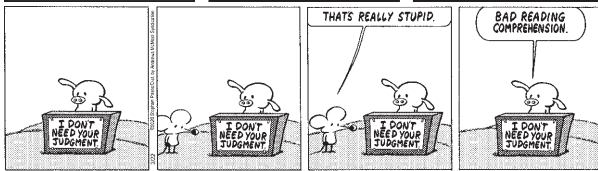
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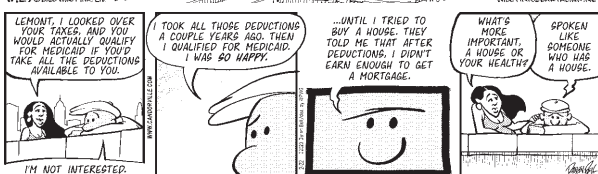
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



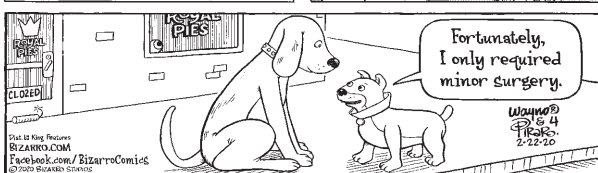
Carpe Diem



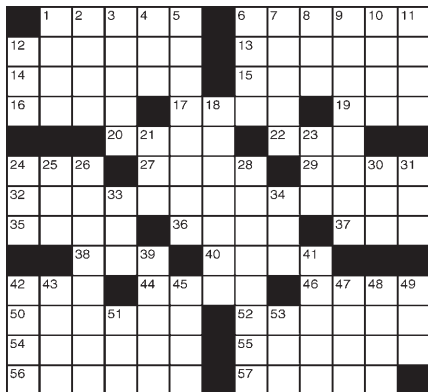
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 "Vamoosel"
- 6 Geronimo, for one
- 12 Italian ice cream
- 13 More opulent
- 14 Front-runner
- 15 Court contests
- 16 Hotel chain
- 17 Bangkok language
- 19 Bakery purchase
- 20 Theater award
- 22 Actor Gibson
- 24 X-ray's cousin
- 27 Many a prep school (Abbr.)
- 29 Hawaiian island
- 32 Performer who works with dummies?
- 35 Cover with blacktop
- 36 "— She Sweet"
- 37 Refusals
- 38 Perfume label word
- 40 Tree house
- 42 Fellow
- 44 Nickname for Dallas
- 46 Computer brand
- 50 Takes, as advice
- 52 Card game
- 54 Parka
- 55 Type of price

- 56 Deserves
- 57 Gulf in a WWII battle

DOWN

- 1 Appear
- 2 Family
- 3 CBer's device
- 4 Chowd down
- 5 "Addams Family" mom
- 6 Utah ski resort
- 7 Jewish holiday
- 8 "— was saying ..."
- 9 Military clergy person
- 10 Prefix with pad or port
- 11 Celtic tongue
- 12 Day- — paint
- 18 Getting better
- 21 Tavern
- 23 Flightless bird
- 24 Super Bowl VIP
- 25 Irish actor Stephen
- 26 Patent seeker
- 28 Fait accompli
- 30 GI entertainers
- 31 "— showtime!"
- 33 Chai, e.g.
- 34 Gal. fractions
- 39 German sub
- 41 In poor taste
- 42 Sir's counterpart
- 43 Skin breakout
- 45 Pen fluids
- 47 Voucher
- 48 Coastal eagle
- 49 Rule, for short
- 51 — Lanka
- 53 Employ

Answer to Previous Puzzle



2-22

CRYPTOQUIP

H GNJX KSDWCXY YUHWQ

LWNYDKAM UCY KUC CXJXW

MANL KNCMDPHCT ASXP. HA'M

RDAAXWGQ HPLNMHRRGX.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NO, I DON'T NEED YOU TO GIVE ME YOUR HELP PEDDLING MY MERCHANDISE. I CAN VEND FOR MYSELF.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals L

SPORTS BRIEFS/HIGH SCHOOL

Briefly

NFL owners accept labor deal

NEW YORK — The new labor agreement accepted by NFL owners and now being considered by players features a 17-game season, shorter preseason, larger rosters and limits on the number of international games.

The NFL Players Association's executive committee and player representatives are to discuss the proposal Friday by conference call. If the NFLPA does not approve the agreement, the current CBA, which expires in March 2021, would remain in effect and further talks would be required.

Several people familiar with the proposal say it features increases in minimum salaries; changes in practice squad make-up and eligibility; and reduced offseason and preseason requirements as pivotal parts of the deal.

Those people spoke on condition of anonymity because provisions in the 10-year agreement that would run through 2029 are not being made public.

An expansion of the playoffs to seven teams in each conference, with only the top seed in the AFC and NFC getting a wildcard bye, can be instituted by the league without any negotiations — as long as the postseason remains in a four-week format.

Gut-Behrani wins downhill

CRANS-MONTANA, Switzerland — In ski-crazy Switzerland, Lara Gut-Behrani's first World Cup victory in more than two years was quickly labeled "a resurrection" by broadcasters.

The former teenage prodigy, an overall World Cup champion in 2016, led a 1-2 Swiss finish in a downhill race Friday on the Mont Lachaux course, beating discipline leader Corinne Suter by 0.80 seconds. Stephanie Venier of Austria was third, 0.92 behind.

It was the biggest winning margin in a women's downhill this season.

An elite speed racer with an Olympic medal and seven career World Cup wins in the marquee discipline, Gut-Behrani had a best result of 10th place in the six previous downhill.

While Gut-Behrani's form had slipped, Suter has built on her world championship silver medal from last year to be the top-ranked Swiss downhiller. Suter can clinch the season-long discipline title on Saturday, taking advantage of closest challenger Mikaela Shiffrin's extended break from racing after the death of her father.

US pulling out of luge races

USA Luge said it is pulling its team out of this weekend's World Cup luge races in Winterberg, Germany, adding to a chorus of athletes from many nations protesting what they are calling unsafe ice conditions.

Austria has also withdrawn its team from the weekend events and even several sliders from Germany — on home ice, no less — have said they are not willing to race this weekend. The International Luge Federation offered a compromise of sorts Friday by saying it would shorten the race distances, but even that did not solve the intense disagreement between sliders and officials over the safety issue.

Two U.S. sliders — Tucker West and Jonny Gustafson — did compete later Friday in a Nations Cup race, which serves as a qualifier for the World Cup over the weekend. It was not immediately clear if they planned to compete this weekend.

Sliders from many nations have said there is too much ice buildup on certain track curves, which significantly increases the chance of crashing.

— Associated Press



FRANCINE IMBRE

Daegu High School cheerleaders practice Thursday for the Far East cheerleading tournament at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan. The tournament began Thursday, but was called off hours later due to concerns over the coronavirus.

More Pacific events canceled

Participants express frustration in wake of coronavirus concerns

BY DAVE ORNAUER
AND JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

YONGSAN GARRISON, South Korea — Pacific area Defense Department schools canceled more events Friday, a day after pulling the plug on Far East winter sports tournaments due to concerns over potential exposure to the coronavirus.

Two school-sponsored events in Japan in the coming week are canceled, according to a statement Friday from Department of Defense Education Activity-Pacific.

The first, the Far East Drama and Performing Arts Festival, was scheduled Monday and Tuesday at Matthew C. Perry High School at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni. It's now off.

The second, the Far East Culinary Arts Festival, was scheduled Wednesday and Thursday at Yokota High School at Yokota Air Base. It, too, is canceled.

A third official event called the Tomodachi Bowl — a friendship football game slated for March 8 at Naval Air Facility Atsugi — was also canceled, Yokota athletics director Tim Pujol said in an email Friday.

Spring sports expected to start Feb. 29 and season-ending tournaments in May are still on schedule, including soccer, baseball, track and field and softball. However, that schedule could change.

"This is an evolving situation and the well-being of our students and families is our top priority," the statement from DODEA Pacific said.

The arts and culinary festivals were canceled a day after the Far East boys and girls basketball and cheerleading tournaments in Japan and South Korea were halted due to coronavirus concerns.

The virus, first detected in December in Wuhan, China, has spread to at least 30

countries since then. More than 2,100 people, mostly in China, have died and more than 75,000 people have tested positive worldwide, according to The Associated Press.

The South Korean city of Daegu, 200 miles southeast of Seoul, reported its first virus-linked death Thursday and the military tightened travel restrictions there.

No cases of coronavirus were reported among DODEA Pacific student-athletes, according to the statement from DODEA Pacific area director Lois Rapp.

Cheerleaders and basketball players from Daegu Middle School and Daegu High School were present at the basketball and cheerleading tournaments, but none were reported to have fallen ill with the virus.

"We will continue to work closely with the military commands to ensure we are taking all proper measures to mitigate the risks to our students and employees," the statement said.

Far East cheer and basketball tournaments began Thursday but were called off hours later due to coronavirus concerns. Many involved with the events expressed disappointment. Many family members traveled with their players to see them compete in the Far East girls basketball tournament at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, the boys tourney at Camp Humphreys, South Korea, and the cheer competition at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni.

Harvey Inouye, 78, a retired master sergeant from San Antonio, saw his grandson

Dylan Tomas hit the game-winning shot to lift Misawa Air Base's Robert D. Edgren High School over Yokota 47-45 in an opening match.

"I would like to have seen the team play a lot more, but I guess for the safety of everyone, it's a good decision," he said.

DODEA Pacific struggled Friday to re-issue tickets for players' and coaches' travel back to their home bases, officials said. Some teams had to wait until the weekend to travel.

Cheerleaders from the three DODEA Korea schools were stuck at Iwakuni until Saturday, the day the competition was scheduled to end. Some wondered why the competition wasn't held Friday.

"I get that they didn't want us in the school, but we were already there Thursday," said Osan sophomore cheerleader Ahnyana Mills.

Football players destined for the ninth Tomodachi Bowl were also disappointed.

"I'm lost for words," said Humphreys senior David Key, who returned an interception 99 yards for a touchdown in last year's Tomodachi Bowl, a 23-3 win for Team USA. "I can't believe this is happening (in) my senior year. It's disappointing. I couldn't wait to be back on the field one more time."

Other events sanctioned but not sponsored by DODEA Pacific are safe for the moment, organizers said.

The Perry Cup boys soccer tournament scheduled for March 21-22 at Iwakuni is still a go, said tournament founder Mark Lange.

The 15th annual Mike Petty Memorial track and field meet April 6 at Kubasaki also remains on "for now," said school athletics director Jon Fick.

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'I get that they didn't want us in the school, but we were already there Thursday.'

Ahnyana Mills
Osan sophomore cheerleader

MLB



PHOTOS BY DARRON CUMMINGS, ABOVE, BEN MARGOT, BELOW/AP

Oakland Athletics pitcher Mike Fiers, the whistleblower in the Houston Astros' sign-stealing scandal, is scheduled to make his first spring start Sunday in a split-squad game.

Athletics' Fiers plans to make his first spring start Sunday

Associated Press

MESA, Ariz. — Mike Fiers is scheduled to start a split-squad game for Oakland on Sunday in his first game action since revealing the Houston Astros' cheating scheme.

It had not been determined Wednesday whether Fiers' spring training debut would come in the home game versus San Francisco or against Arizona in Scottsdale. Fiers went 15-4 last season, including the second no-hitter of his career, as the A's earned an AL wild-card spot.

In a story published by The Athletic in November, Fiers said the Astros had stolen signs using a camera in center field during their run to the 2017 World Series championship. Fiers played on that team.

The ensuing scandal resulted in three managers losing their



jobs, a fine and other penalties, and has become the talk of Major League Baseball. Many players have harshly spoken about the

Astros, saying they should be stripped of their title.

There has been debate among fans and others whether Fiers did the right thing in his role as a whistleblower. Commissioner Rob Manfred said there was no doubt Fiers helped the sport.

"We will take every possible step to protect Mike Fiers wherever he's playing, whether it's in Houston or somewhere else," Manfred said. "Mike did the industry a service."

Fiers has declined to speak in detail about the scheme itself or his decision to go public.

"I'm not asking for extra security. I'm here to play baseball and I can defend myself, if anything," he was quoted as saying by The Athletic on Wednesday. "It's part of the game. If they decide to throw at me, then they throw at me. There's nothing much you can do about it."

Cole: Cheating talk doesn't concern him

BY KRISTIE ACKERT
New York Daily News

TAMPA, Fla. — Gerrit Cole is fine with his new teammates expressing their feelings. The former Astro reiterated Wednesday that he did not see, hear or know anything about Houston's scheme to illegally steal and transmit signs in real time, which was proven to have happened in 2017 — before he was there. Several Yankees have alleged, however, that it continued for the two seasons after Cole was traded there.

"I mean, I just refer back to what I said the other day. George asked me yesterday about players specifically and I'll just stick to what I said, which is everybody's entitled to their opinion. It's their own opinion. And people handle this the way they want to handle it," Cole said. "And, you know, we're all grown guys around here. And, you know, I certainly am not going to tell somebody how to think, so I don't see it as an issue."

"I am not personally offended by it. And so

hopefully that's the last question that I'll have to answer about it."

The MLB report concluded the Astros used the "banging scheme" in 2017, before Cole was traded to Houston. Gleyber Torres, Aaron Judge and Giancarlo Stanton (and many players across baseball) have made it clear they don't believe it stopped in 2018 and continued in 2019. Those were Cole's two seasons in Houston.

Still, there seems to be no animosity toward the Yankees' new ace from his teammates.

After throwing a 40-pitch live batting practice that featured Torres, Cole and the shortstop spent a long time going over the sequence of pitches. It was amicable and it was helpful to Cole.

"Gleyber was asking why I didn't double up on the change-up because he didn't see it. But he encouraged me to try to throw it again," Cole said. "We were just talking about approach to right on right, change-up and, you know, when I feel comfortable throwing it and then he was telling me when hitters are susceptible to swinging at that."

Hurts so good

Nats' Scherzer says he's pleased to have normal shoulder soreness

BY JESSE DOUGHERTY
The Washington Post

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Max Scherzer smiled through the pain. Then those smiles grew while he discussed it.

"Can feel the shoulder is a little tired, right where you want it," Scherzer said Wednesday afternoon. "So I threw just enough pitches, just right, to be able to get back out here in a couple days when the games start up. Right on target."

The 35-year-old had just tossed 42 pitches across two simulated innings. That he felt a few pangs in his shoulder, and not anywhere else, was viewed as a little victory. Scherzer is coming off a very odd year for the Washington Nationals. He had been perpetually healthy, and averaging 32 starts a season, before his body acted up. His July included three diagnoses in 16 days — a mid-back strain, bursitis below the scapula in his right shoulder blade, then a mild rhomboid strain — before dealing with neck spasms in the World Series.

Scherzer finished with 27 regular-season appearances and pitched until Oct. 30. But Scherzer felt normal by December, when his throwing program picked up, and was encouraged by Wednesday's live batting practice. The shoulder soreness was welcomed and normal. It was exciting because there was no soreness anywhere else.

"In spring training, you have to put yourself through some fatigue. That's good for you," said Scherzer, who is expected to make his spring training debut against the Houston Astros on Saturday. "That's when you know you're pushing the limit in how you're building up. This is honestly the most dangerous time of the year for pitchers. This is when you see a good amount of Tommy John's



JEFF ROBERSON/AP

Washington Nationals pitcher Max Scherzer said he was encouraged by his throws during live batting practice Wednesday.

across the league and everything. I'm always scared of that."

The Nationals have again hitched their identity to starting pitching, with a returning rotation of Scherzer, Stephen Strasburg, Patrick Corbin and Anabel Sanchez. Their fifth starter will be either Joe Ross, Erick Fedde or Austin Voth, with depth options in Kyle McGowin and Ben Brayman.

That leaves limited experience behind the top four arms. And that is why the health of Scherzer, Strasburg, Corbin and Sanchez will be essential to success.

Washington starters finished second in the league with 938 innings last season. They finished first in the league 21.4 wins above replacement. Both figures were important because of how bad the bullpen was. But even with a retooled relief corps, including the addition of Will Harris, this team will go as its rotation does. That begins with Scherzer.



FRANK FRANKLIN III/AP

New York Yankees pitcher Gerrit Cole, who pitched the past two seasons for the Houston Astros, said he isn't bothered by talk of the Astros' sign stealing, saying he wasn't aware of it.

OLYMPICS/NHL



AP photos

An American flag and a Soviet team banner are shown above the rink prior to the medal-round game between the U.S. and the Soviet Union on Feb. 22, 1980 at the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N.Y.

Inspires: 'Miracle' made lasting impact

FROM BACK PAGE

Lake Placid, either. The village in the heart of the Adirondacks still bustles, even in the summer months. The arena is still there, the rink where the Americans played that game now named for the late Herb Brooks, the U.S. coach, and a sporting goods shop across the street from the Olympic Center is called "Locker Room 5" — a tribute to the room the team used on that fateful night.

"The stories I hear, 40 years later, depending on their age: 'I remember where I was when Kennedy was assassinated, I remember where I was on 9/11, I remember where I was when the Challenger blew up, and I remember where I was when we won,'" said Mike Eruzione, the team captain who scored what became the game-winning goal with exactly 10 minutes left in the third period. "And I always say, 'We? I didn't know you were on the team.' But people felt a part of it, and it's nice to know 40 years later ... that people remember and share some great stories about what we did so long ago."

The game details remain largely unforgettable: The U.S. trailed 1-0, 2-1 and 3-2, spending more than half the night behind on the scoreboard. Schneider scored to tie the game 1-1, Mark Johnson scored at the very end of the first period to make it 2-2 and Johnson struck again on the power play with 11:21 left to tie the game 3-3.

A mere 81 seconds later, Eruzione happened. The Americans clogged the defensive end of the ice the rest of the way, doing all they could to help goaltender Jim Craig. The Russians never pulled their goalie for an extra attacker, presumably because they were so used to winning that they didn't know what to do in such a situation.

A miracle. Two days later, the U.S. rallied past Finland for the gold medal on the final day in Lake Placid.

"Lake Placid also had the Olympics in 1932 and, to me, that



U.S. hockey players Mark Johnson, left, and Bill Baker, right, battle the Soviet Union's Vladimir Petrov for the puck.

meant it was the birthplace of the Winter Olympics in the United States," said Schneider, who appeared alongside Olympic luge legends Erin Hamlin and Gordy Sheer, former two-time biathlon Olympian Tim Burke and a pair of rising athletes from the Lake Placid area on a panel Monday night. "It's a small town, the people here always want to make things work, they're very humble and they're hard-working. I'll tell you, it's a special little spot."

There's no shortage of other reasons why Lake Placid is busy 52 weeks a year. Hockey players and figure skaters still flock to the Olympic Center and its three sheets of ice. There's a bobsled, skeleton and luge track that welcomes the world's best every year. The ski jumps are still there, as is the 400-meter speed skating track in front of the high school. Whiteface Mountain is a few miles down the road. There's a world-class horse show every summer, an Ironman race, and state officials are pumping tens of millions into construction projects to make sure Lake Placid remains extremely visible on the winter sports map.

The hockey gold — the game against the Soviets, really — has overshadowed everything

else from those Olympics. Eric Heiden's five gold medals in the five speedskating distances that year, from sprints to a marathon, is a feat that remains unmatched. Figure skating won a pair of singles medals. Phil Mahre won a skiing silver. The Americans picked up 12 medals in all, matching what at the time was the best showing for the U.S. at an Olympics — also done in 1932, also in Lake Placid.

"I think I saw all the hockey games. It was incredible," said Charles Tickner, the Olympic silver medalist for the U.S. in men's figure skating 40 years ago. "I think back and I'm disappointed that I never saw Eric Heiden. And the hockey team was great, but I think poor Eric Heiden gets overshadowed by all of that."

True, but for good reason. And if the Miracle on Ice needed any assistance in remaining viable after 40 years, the movie "Miracle" has surely helped.

A couple generations later, young athletes — boys or girls, hockey players or skiers or sliders or anything else you can do in winter — are still being told the story of how Lake Placid is a place where miracles can come true.

It's been proven.

Teams getting jump on trade deadline

Some big moves already made after early flurry

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

Tom Fitzgerald changed teams twice at the NHL trade deadline as a player and knows how it feels.

As interim general manager of the New Jersey Devils, he didn't wait until deadline day to trade captain Andy Greene or forward Blake Coleman. Beating the buzzer by more than a week, Fitzgerald recalled his own rough experiences of getting dealt late.

"I wish I was traded a week and a half before so I could get adjusted a little bit quicker," he said.

Greene and Coleman are among more than a half-dozen players who are already adjusting to a new team because of an early trading flurry. The deadline isn't until Monday, but some major moves are already done thanks to a clear definition between buyers and sellers, contenders interested in the same possibilities, and reasonable prices around the league.

"Over (last) weekend, a lot of things started to pick up," said Los Angeles Kings GM Rob Blake, who has already made three trades and could still be active. "It seems after the All-Star break, a lot of teams start finding their direction on where they're going, what's available and prices."

Los Angeles got things going by dealing goaltender Jack Campbell and versatile forward Kyle Clifford to Toronto in early February, and this week traded winger Tyler Toftoli to Vancouver and defenseman Alec Martinez to Vegas. On Tuesday, Pacific Division rival San Jose traded defenseman Brenden Dillon to Washington, and the Winnipeg Jets got blue liner Dylan DeMelo from Ottawa.

A couple of days earlier, the Devils traded Greene to the New York Islanders and Coleman to the Tampa Bay Lightning within hours of each other.

The NHL several years ago moved the trade deadline from March to February to give teams

more time to benefit from acquiring players. Fitzgerald was traded in March each time and played 11 and 15 regular-season games, respectively, after getting moved. Times have changed.

"A lot of teams like to get to things early," Fitzgerald said. "(Teams) want you to mesh with the team quicker rather than later. ... A little bit longer runway is useful."

Who's gone

■ Campbell and Clifford traded from Kings to Maple Leafs for Trevor Moore, 2020 third-round pick and conditional 2021 third-round pick

■ Jason Zucker traded from Wild to Penguins for Alex Galchenyuk, Calen Addison and conditional 2020 first-round pick

■ Greene traded from Devils to Islanders for David Quenneville and 2021 second-round pick

■ Coleman traded from Devils to Lightning for Nolan Foote and 2020 first-round pick

■ Toftoli traded from Kings to Canucks for Tim Schaller, Tyler Madden, 2020 second-round pick and conditional 2022 fourth-round pick

■ DeMelo traded from Senators to Jets for 2020 third-round pick

■ Dillon traded from Sharks to Capitals for 2020 second-round pick and conditional 2021 third-round pick

■ Scandella traded from Canadiens to Blues for 2020 second-round pick and conditional 2021 fourth-round pick

■ Martinez traded from Kings to Golden Knights for 2020 second-round pick and 2021 second-round pick

Who's left

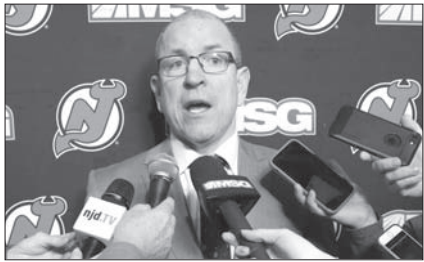
■ Rangers: F Chris Kreider, G Alexander Georgiev, F Jesper Fast

■ Kings: F Trevor Lewis
■ Devils: F Wayne Simmonds, D Sami Vatanen, G Louis Domingue

■ Senators: F Jean-Gabriel Pageau, F Vladislav Namestnikov

■ Red Wings: F Andreas Athanasiou, D Mike Green, D Trevor Daley
■ Canadiens: F Ilya Kovalchuk

■ Sharks: F Patrick Marleau, F Joe Thornton
■ Jets: D Dustin Byfuglien



KATHY WILLEMS/AP

New Jersey interim general manager Tom Fitzgerald answers reporters' questions after the Devils traded captain Andy Greene to the New York Islanders on Sunday.

NHL/COLLEGE BASKETBALL



ISAAC BREKNER/AP

Tampa Bay Lightning defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk, left, and Golden Knights center William Karlsson become entangled during the first period of Thursday's game in Las Vegas.

NHL roundup

Knights halt Bolts' 11-game win streak

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Hours before making his Vegas debut, Alec Martinez sat on the team bench, gazing out a clean sheet of ice while collecting his thoughts inside an empty T-Mobile Arena, a place he called the loudest venue in the NHL.

The crowd of 18,376 roared when he was announced in the starting lineup.

"It's obvious I was pretty emotional at the beginning there, feeding off the fans," the veteran defenseman said. "I had to tell myself to settle down a little bit."

Martinez settled in nicely with a goal and an assist, and the Golden Knights stopped Tampa Bay's 11-game win streak with a 5-3 victory over the Lightning on Thursday night.

It marked the first time in 23 games Tampa Bay allowed more than three goals and the fourth time in seven games Vegas scored five or more.

Flyers 4, Blue Jackets 3 (OT): Kevin Hayes scored 3:51 into overtime, and visiting Philadelphia beat Columbus to sweep the home-and-home series between Metropolitan Division contenders.

Philadelphia trailed 3-1 before Nicolas Aube-Kubel and Claude Giroux scored 1:26 apart in the second period. After a scoreless third, Hayes snapped a shot from the slot past Elvis Merzlikins for his 19th of the season.

Canadiens 4, Capitals 3 (OT): Ben Chiarot scored his second goal of the game 58 seconds into 3-on-3 OT to win it for visiting Montreal as Washington's Alex Ovechkin scored his 699th ca-

reer goal and closed in on another milestone.

Ovechkin fired up the crowd by scoring seven minutes in and came close to reaching 700 goals on a bang-bang play in the third period. Instead, he'll have to wait to become the eighth player in NHL history to go to 700 as Washington lost its third straight.

Blues 1, Coyotes 0: Ryan O'Reilly scored and Jordan Binnington recorded 14 saves to lead host St. Louis past Arizona.

Binnington recorded his second consecutive shutout and the eighth of his career.

Maple Leafs 4, Penguins 0: Jake Muzzin had a goal and two assists, Frederik Andersen made 24 saves and host Toronto dealt Pittsburgh its most lopsided loss of the season.

It was Andersen's second shutout of the season and No. 18 for his career.

Jets 5, Senators 1: Mark Scheifele snapped a 12-game scoring drought with three power-play goals, helping visiting Winnipeg beat Ottawa.

Kyle Connor and Nikolaj Ehlers also scored for the Jets, who improved to 7-2-1 over their last 10 and moved into the first wild-card spot in the Western Conference. Laurent Brossoit made 29 saves for his sixth win of the season.

Devils 2, Sharks 1: Mackenzie Blackwood made 36 saves in winning his fifth straight start and host New Jersey beat San Jose in a matchup of struggling franchises.

Kings 5, Panthers 4: Gabriel Vilardi had a goal and an assist in his NHL debut and host Los Angeles opened a five-game home-stand with a win over Florida.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	61	38	11	12	88	201	147
Tampa Bay	61	40	16	5	85	218	164
Toronto	62	32	22	8	72	217	204
Florida	61	32	23	6	70	214	207
Montreal	63	28	27	8	64	191	195
Buffalo	60	27	25	8	62	175	190
Ottawa	61	21	29	11	53	164	209
Detroit	62	15	43	4	34	127	232

Metropolitan Division							
Pittsburgh	59	37	16	6	80	196	158
Washington	60	37	17	6	80	211	184
Philadelphia	61	34	20	7	75	202	181
Columbus	62	30	19	13	73	159	159
Carolina	59	34	21	4	72	193	164
N.Y. Islanders	59	33	20	6	72	168	162
N.Y. Rangers	59	31	24	4	66	195	184
New Jersey	60	23	27	10	56	164	208

Western Conference

	Central Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
St. Louis	61	34	17	10	78	191	172	
Dallas	60	35	19	6	76	164	153	
Colorado	59	34	18	7	75	209	165	
Winnipeg	62	32	25	5	69	190	185	
Nashville	59	29	23	7	65	190	191	
Minnesota	59	28	24	7	63	180	190	
Chicago	60	26	26	8	60	179	194	

Pacific Division							
Vegas	62	32	22	8	72	197	188
Edmonton	60	32	21	7	71	191	185
Vancouver	60	32	22	6	70	194	184
Calgary	61	31	24	6	68	180	190
Arizona	64	30	26	8	68	174	171
San Jose	60	26	30	4	56	156	196
Anaheim	60	24	29	7	55	156	190

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

Thursday's games

Toronto 4, Pittsburgh 0
Montreal 4, Washington 3, OT
New Jersey 2, San Jose 1
Philadelphia 4, Columbus 3, OT
Winnipeg 5, Ottawa 1
St. Louis 1, Arizona 0
Vegas 5, Tampa Bay 3
Los Angeles 5, Florida 4

Friday's games

N.Y. Rangers at Carolina
Detroit at Philadelphia
Nashville at Chicago
St. Louis at Dallas
Boston at Calgary
Minnesota at Edmonton
Colorado at Anaheim

Saturday's games

Buffalo at Pittsburgh
Washington at New Jersey
Winnipeg at Philadelphia
Carolina at Toronto
Montreal at Ottawa
San Jose at N.Y. Rangers
Columbus at Nashville
Tampa Bay at Arizona
Boston at Vancouver
Florida at Vegas

Sunday's games

Pittsburgh at Washington
Chicago at Dallas
Winnipeg at Buffalo
San Jose at N.Y. Islanders
Calgary at Detroit
St. Louis at Minnesota
Edmonton at Los Angeles
Vegas at Anaheim

Monday's games

Ottawa at Columbus

Top 25 roundup

Arizona State upends Oregon

Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Alonzo Verge Jr. scored 26 points, Rob Edwards added 24 and Arizona State beat No. 14 Oregon 77-72 on Thursday night for its sixth straight victory.

The Sun Devils (18-8, 9-4 Pac-12) continued their unexpected charge up the conference standings following a mediocre January. Every team in the Pac-12 has lost at least four league games.

Oregon (20-7, 9-5) bumbled its way through a bad chunk of the game, clanking errant three-pointers and giving up turnovers. But the Ducks used an 11-0 run to tie it at 54 with 7:17 left.

Arizona State responded with the next six points, which included a three-pointer from Edwards, and never trailed again.

Payton Pritchard had 18 points for Oregon but fouled out with about two minutes left, badly hurting the Ducks' chances of a last-minute rally. Will Richardson also had 18 points and Chris Duarte added 10.

No. 2 Gonzaga 71, San Francisco 54: Killian Tillie scored 22 points and grabbed nine rebounds as the host Bulldogs rallied to beat the Dons for their 19th consecutive victory.

Filip Petruser scored 16 points and Ryan Woolridge 12 for Gonzaga, and 17-10 West Coast Conference, which trailed at halftime.

Gonzaga outscored San Francisco 49-23 in the second half for the win.

No. 20 Iowa 85, No. 25 Ohio State 76: Luka Garza scored 24 points and the host Hawkeyes beat the Buckeyes.

Garza has scored 20 points or more in 12 consecutive games in Big Ten play, the longest streak for an Iowa player in 49 seasons

and the most by any conference player in the last 20 years.

Bakari Evelyn came off the bench to score 15 points for Iowa (19-8, 10-6). Joe Wieskamp had 13 points, and Ryan Kriener added 12.

No. 18 Colorado 70, Southern California 66: McKinley Wright IV had 15 points, including a floater in the lane in the final minutes, to help the host Buffaloes hold off the Trojans.

Wright added six rebounds and seven assists, and Tyler Bey had 14 points and 11 rebounds for Colorado (21-6, 10-4 Pac-12 Conference). The Buffaloes lead the conference by a game after Oregon fell at Arizona State.

Colorado has never won the Pac-12 regular-season title but took the 2012 conference tournament in coach Tad Boyle's second season.

No. 23 BYU 85, Santa Clara 75: T.J. Haws had 28 points and nine assists in the host Cougars' victory over the Broncos.

Yoeli Childs added 22 points and 11 rebounds, and Jake Toolson had 20 points and 10 rebounds for BYU (22-7, 11-3 West Coast Conference). The Cougars won their seventh straight.

Josip Frankic had 28 points and 11 rebounds for Santa Clara (18-10, 5-8).

No. 24 Arizona 89, Oregon State 63: Josh Green scored 18 points and Nico Mannion had 12 of his 16 in the second half to help the host Wildcats beat the Beavers.

Max Hazzard scored 13 of his 15 points in the second half and Zeke Nnaji added 13 points and seven rebounds for Arizona (19-7, 9-4 Pac-12).

Jarod Lucas scored 18 points for Oregon State (15-11, 5-9).



DARRYL WEBB/AP

Arizona State's Mickey Mitchell, right, eyes the basket as Oregon's Addison Patterson defends during the second half of Thursday's game in Tempe, Ariz. Arizona beat 14th-ranked Oregon, 77-72.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Plummeting percentages

Moving back three-point line has resulted in historically poor shooting from deep

By JOHN MARSHALL
Associated Press

By the numbers

The NCAA moved back the three-point line this season to create more room in the lane and cut down on the barrage of threes in college basketball.

Shooting percentages are down, historically low. Attempts also have dropped, slightly.

Clogged lanes? Depends on who you ask.

"I don't think it's changed a lot," Kansas guard Marcus Garrett said. "Just feel like a lot more shots are being missed."

He's right.

With teams heavily relying on three-pointers more and percentages steadily rising, the NCAA moved the arc back nearly two feet to 22 feet, 1½ inches this season. That matches the international distance, but short of the NBA arc at 23 feet, nine inches.

The goal was to make the lane more available for drives, cut down on the prevalence of three-pointers and create more offensive spacing.

The result, at least from the arc, is teams are missing at a historic rate.

Division I teams are shooting 33.3% so far this season, lowest since the three-point line was added to college basketball in 1986-87, according to KenPom.

Maryland Eastern Shore, annually one of the nation's worst three-point shooting teams, is last in Division I at 24.9%. Kennessaw State is just ahead of the Hawks at 25.1%.

Northern Alabama shot 29.8% last season, worst in the nation. This year, 25 teams are shooting at least that low.

Reigning national champion Virginia, which lost its top three scorers to the NBA, is 331st nationally at 29.2% from the arc, down from 39.5% last year.

33.3

Three-point shooting percentage for D-I teams this season, lowest since 1986-87.

29.2

Three-point shooting percentage for defending national champion UVA, down from 39.5%.

37.6

Percentage of FGs taken from deep this year, down from last season's all-time high of 38.7.

32

Number of players shooting over 40% from beyond the arc, down from 49 last season.

SOURCE: Associated Press

The last time the NCAA moved the three-point line back — a foot to 20 feet, 9 inches in 2009-10 — shooting percentages dipped the first few years before rising again.

"If it goes by what normally happens, it'll go down a little bit," Tennessee coach Rick Barnes said. "But it always comes back."

What it hasn't done is affect the elite shooters.

With players like Golden State's Steph Curry and Klay Thompson routinely shooting from well beyond the NBA three-point line, college players started extending their range, too, almost to half court.

Stefan Gonzalez of UC Davis leads the nation at 49% from the arc this season, a year after Norfolk State's Derrik Jamerson topped Division I at 49.7%. For players like them or Marquette's Markus Howard, the nation's leading scorer at 27.3 points per game, it doesn't really matter where the line is set.

The difference is found in the players around them.

"For guys that can shoot, I think that the line moving back is not a big deal; I think they shot from there anyway," Pittsburgh coach Jeff Capel said. "I think for guys that are experimenting, then maybe there's a difference. I personally don't see a big difference."

The goal of creating more space in the lane hasn't fully materialized.

For teams that have multiple players who can shoot from long distance, sure. Defenses have no choice to extend out to the line, which widens the gap out to the lane.

Those teams who don't have a multitude of shooters, defenses have continued to pack it in, daring them to shoot. And, now with the deeper three-point line, they're missing even more.

"I haven't really seen

much of a difference," Sacramento State coach Brian Katz said. "I believe there's only one thing that creates space: really good shooters. You can put lines wherever you want, but if there's

four guys out there who can't shoot, we're not going out there beyond the line. I believe spacing is all about how guys shoot the ball, not lines on the floor."

The difference in the new three-point line may not be fully known for a few seasons. If the shooting percentages continue to fall, coaches will adjust, possibly cutting back on the number of three-pointers his team takes or which players take them.

Once that happens, there's a good chance three-point shooting will rise and, maybe, the arc gets moved out again.



Marquette's Markus Howard, right, shoots over Villanova's Collin Gillespie. Howard has been one of a few players largely unaffected by this season's move back of the three-point line, leading the nation with 26.7 points per game on 39.4% shooting from beyond the arc.

MATT SLOCUM / AP

NBA

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	40	15	.727	—
Boston	38	16	.704	1½
Philadelphia	28	21	.569	5½
Brooklyn	25	29	.463	14½
New York	38	30	.559	23

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	35	20	.636	—
Orlando	24	31	.436	11
Washington	30	23	.564	14
Charlotte	19	34	.352	16
Atlanta	16	41	.281	20

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	37	8	.855	—
Indiana	32	23	.582	15
Chicago	28	27	.538	28½
Detroit	19	39	.328	29½
Cleveland	14	40	.259	32½

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	35	20	.636	—
Memphis	28	27	.509	7
San Antonio	23	31	.426	11½
New Orleans	23	32	.418	12

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Denver	36	17	.691	—
Utah	36	18	.667	1½
Oklahoma City	23	22	.500	5
Portland	25	31	.446	13½
Minnesota	37	30	.552	21

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	41	12	.774	—
L.A. Clippers	37	17	.685	5
Sacramento	22	33	.400	20
Phoenix	22	33	.400	20
Golden State	32	24	.571	30½

Wednesday's games

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee 126, Detroit 106				
Atlanta 129, Miami 124				
Charlotte 103, Chicago 95				
Philadelphia 112, Brooklyn 104, OT				
Sacramento 129, Memphis 125				
Houston 135, Golden State 105				

Friday's games

	W	L	Pct	GB
Dallas at Washington				
Cleveland at Orlando				
Indiana at New York				
Phoenix at Toronto				
Boston at Minnesota				
Portland at Oklahoma City				
San Antonio at Utah				
Memphis at L.A. Lakers				
Sacramento at Portland				
Bakura's games				
Sacramento at Charlotte				
Phoenix at Milwaukee				
Cleveland at Miami				
Phoenix at Chicago				
Philadelphia at Milwaukee				
Houston at Utah				

Sunday's games

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston at L.A. Lakers				
Indiana at Toronto				
Minnesota at Denver				
San Antonio at Oklahoma City				
Phoenix at Chicago				
New Orleans at Golden State				
Detroit at Portland				

Calendar

April 15 — Regular season ends.

April 15 — Playoffs begin.

May 19 — Draft lottery, NBA Finals begin.

June 4 — NBA Finals begin.

June 25 — NBA Draft.

Leaders

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Harden, HOU	52	52	546	1029	35.2
Young, ATL	51	471	410	1533	30.1
Antetompe, MIL	49	542	214	1477	30.1
Lillard, POR	54	507	368	1594	29.5
Beal, WAS	46	459	305	1340	29.1
Donicic, DAL	44	418	306	1271	28.9
Leonard, LAC	42	398	256	1141	27.2
Westbrook, OKC	48	374	124	1244	27.0
Davis, LAL	46	428	320	1225	26.6
Booker, PHX	52	438	247	1374	26.4

Rebounds

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Drummond, CLE	49	226	549	775	15.8
Gobert, UTA	52	193	565	758	14.58
Whiteside, POR	51	203	515	718	14.08
Capeha, HOU	39	168	569	737	13.77
Antetompe, MIL	52	159	491	650	12.51
Sabonis, IND	52	159	491	650	12.51
Embiid, PHI	40	101	471	572	12.03
Yacovic, OKC	44	115	361	476	10.82
Adebayo, MIA	55	145	436	581	10.56
Vanciano, MEM	52	148	401	549	10.56

Assists

	G	AST	AVG
James, LAL	51	551	10.8
Young, ATL	51	467	9.2
Lowry, TOR	43	427	7.6
Rubio, PHX	47	403	8.6
Simmons, PHI	53	441	8.3
Lillard, POR	54	429	7.9
Graham, CHA	55	427	7.8
Lowry, TOR	43	427	7.6
Harden, HOU	52	384	7.4
Simmons, PHI	53	441	8.3
Westbrook, HOU	46	334	7.3

	3PM	PA	PCT
Redick, NOP	113	252	.448
Bjelicic, SAC	118	252	.468
McMendry, IND	106	240	.442
Curry, DAL	107	246	.435
Robinson, WAS	192	444	.432
Simmons, PHI	128	297	.431
Bertans, MIA	156	368	.424
Holiday, IND	100	240	.417

Young leads Hawks to win over Heat

Atlanta guard scores career-high 50

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Trae Young didn't attribute his first 50-point game to confidence gained from his first All-Star start.

Belief in himself has never been a problem for the high-scoring guard with a fondness for 30-foot jumpers.

Young had a career-high 50 points and the Atlanta Hawks scored the last 10 points of the game to beat the Miami Heat 129-124 on Thursday night.

Young made 18 of 19 free throws and 8 of 15 three-pointers to set his scoring high in his first game after starting in the NBA All-Star Game.

"I've always had confidence in myself," Young said when asked if he was boosted by the All-Star Game experience.

Young scored 20 points in the final period. The Heat had no answer for Young's barrage of three-pointers, many from well beyond the line.

"He just got into such an incredible rhythm," said Miami coach Erik Spoelstra. "He's pulling up from six feet behind the line... There's not a lot of things you can do about that."

Bam Adebayo had 28 points and a season-high 19 rebounds for Miami. Adebayo, the NBA All-Star skills champion, added seven assists.

76ers 112, Nets 104 (OT): Joel Embiid had 39 points and 16 rebounds, Alec Burks and Shake Milton added big baskets in overtime and Philadelphia beat visiting Brooklyn. Tobias Harris added 22 points and 12 rebounds for the 76ers. Burks had 19 points, including a pair of layups in overtime that gave Philadelphia the lead for good.

Bucks 126, Pistons 106: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 33 points and 16 rebounds to help Milwaukee rout Detroit.

The Pistons have lost five straight since trading Andre Drummond to Cleveland on Feb. 6 and were playing for the first time since buying out Reggie Jackson's contract.



JOHN AMIS/AP

Hawks guard Trae Young, second from right, shoots between Miami Heat forward Bam Adebayo, second from left, and forward Jimmy Butler, right, on Thursday in Atlanta. Young scored a career-high 50 in his first game after starting in the All-Star Game.

Rockets 135, Warriors 105: James Harden had 29 points and 10 assists, leading visiting Houston past cold-shooting Golden State in the teams' first game back from the All-Star break.

The Rockets knocked down 25 total three-pointers — a franchise record allowed by the Warriors against any opponent. Houston set an NBA record with 27 threes in a win against the Suns last April.

Hornets 103, Bulls 93: Malik Monk scored 25 points, Miles Bridges added 22 and

Charlotte hung on to beat host Chicago.

The Hornets let a 21-point lead in the third quarter shrink to two. But they regrouped to win their third in a row after losing five straight and 13 of 14.

Kings 129, Grizzlies 125: Harrison Barnes scored a season-high 32 points and matched his career high with seven three-pointers. De'Aaron Fox added 26 and host Sacramento beat Memphis.

DeAnthony Melton scored 24 and Ja Morant had 19 for the Grizzlies.

Nets' Irving to have season-ending surgery

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Kyrie Irving tried to keep playing through pain, a cortisone shot no longer providing enough relief.

Eventually, he and the Brooklyn Nets decided it's best to get his right shoulder taken care of now and get healthy for next season — when Irving and Kevin Durant can finally play together.

Irving will have arthroscopic surgery and miss the rest of the season. Nets general manager Sean Marks said Thursday.

"Kyrie mentioned he was playing through pain and you have to give him a lot of credit for that. He wants to be out there and playing with his guys," Marks said. "But there comes a point where you say enough is enough and again, it goes to long-term health. And the best thing that (we) could do is to shut it down and get this taken care of once and for all."

Coach Kenny Atkinson said the point guard was still having trouble with the shoulder that began troubling him in October and sidelined him for 26 games earlier this season.

"Some days it was OK and other days it bothered him," Atkinson



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

The Brooklyn Nets announced on Thursday that guard Kyrie Irving will have arthroscopic shoulder surgery and miss the rest of the season. In the first year of a four-year, \$136.49 million contract, played in 20 games this season, averaging 27.4 points.

said before the Nets faced the Philadelphia 76ers. "Obviously, it is difficult to perform under those circumstances."

Irving said pain in the shoulder initially worsened after a game on Nov. 4. The Nets then went on a

five-game road trip, when Irving continued to play until the pain got so bad he was having trouble lifting his arm.

He got a cortisone shot on Dec. 24 and was able to return on Jan. 12, but he acknowledged that

surgery might still be necessary. Irving met with a specialist this week and by deciding to have a procedure now, his first season in Brooklyn ends after just 20 games.

Irving averaged 27.4 points, with a 50-point game on opening night and a 54-point performance against Chicago on Jan. 31. He played only one more game after that.

Marks said the Nets would have more information about Irving's recovery process after the surgery, but expects that he will be back for summer workouts.

Irving missed the last five games before the break with a sprained right knee. He now joins Durant on the sideline; the superstars signed with the Nets together in July. Durant has been out all season while recovering from surgery to repair his Achilles tendon.

Brooklyn is still in good position to make the playoffs, coming out of the break in seventh place in the East and five games ahead of ninth-place Washington. The Nets have received strong guard play from Spencer Dinwiddie and Caris LeVert.

SPORTS



Happy Max
Scherzer says shoulder is
'right on target' » **Page 19**

OLYMPICS

UNFORGETTABLE

40 years later, US hockey's
'miracle' win still inspires

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

The woman had been waiting for her opportunity for more than an hour, which was no big deal because, technically, she had been waiting 40 years. She went to the Lake Placid Center for the Arts on a frigid night earlier this week with a folder containing a stack of perfectly preserved photographs and news clippings.

And finally, she was going to get Buzz Schneider — who scored the first U.S. goal of the hockey game that would become forever known as the Miracle

on Ice — to sign them. He obliged, happily signing everything the overjoyed woman needed.

"Personally, I can't believe it's resonated this long," Schneider said.

Oh, but it has.

Saturday marks exactly four decades since perhaps the greatest sports result

in the history of this country, and possibly the greatest upset in the history of sports anywhere — USA 4, USSR 3. A bunch of kids beat the best hockey team in the world — at the height of the Cold War, David vs. Goliath, Us vs. Them, a moment when the nation's collective mood seemed as cold as that sheet of ice that became a canvas for a miracle in Lake Placid, N.Y.

Lake Placid has never forgotten, and in turn, the world hasn't forgotten

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Inside:

■ NHL teams get jump on deadline with flurry of early trades, Page 20

U.S. captain Michael Eruzione, left, celebrates with teammates Jim Craig, John O'Callahan and David Silk after scoring the deciding goal in a 4-3 win over the Soviet Union on Feb. 22, 1980, at the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N.Y.

AP photo



Athletes frustrated with coronavirus cancellations » High school, Page 18