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CONTINGENCY EDITION

FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2025

Free to Deployed Areas

Army sends tanks, heavy vehicles to DC for celebration

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Tanks, troops and heavy vehicles from Fort Cavazos, Texas, are being loaded onto trains and heading to the nation's capital for the Army's long-planned 250th anniversary celebration that coincides with President Donald Trump's 79th birthday on June 14.

"This has been the Army's birthday. We've had 249 previously," Army spokesman Steve Warren told reporters Wednesday. "We're excited that the commander-in-chief is interested in the Army's 250th anniversary and that he will want to view it."

Trump has long talked of a parade with soldiers and vehicles rolling down the streets of Washington similar to major celebrations held in Moscow, Paris and other world capitals.

He backed off the idea in 2018 amid pushback from Army and District of Columbia officials over exorbitant costs and damage tanks might inflict on roads.

Trump settled for a display of tanks and other armored vehicles during a July Fourth celebration in 2019 in Washington.

As part of the Army's celebration on June 14, 28 M1A1 Abrams tanks will roll down Constitution Avenue. The tanks will be trucked to a staging area closer to the parade route.

The Army isn't concerned about the parade route, said Col. Jesse Curry, executive officer to the Army Chief of Engineers. Steel plates will be placed where tanks will have to turn sharply and vehicles will receive new track pads.

"We're not expecting any damage to the route," Curry said.

SEE ARMY ON PAGE 7



ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

Sailors and civilian mariners aboard USS Mount Whitney man the bridge May 13 as the ship comes into port at Naval Station Rota, Spain. The ship has a hybrid crew of about 300 Navy sailors and Military Sealift Command civilian mariners.

Mothballing the Mount Whitney?

The indispensable, one-of-a-kind ship has landed on the Navy's decommission list

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

ABOARD THE USS MOUNT WHITNEY — The Navy wants to mothball the only ship in the fleet that allows a U.S. commander to simultaneously lead U.S. and NATO forces in Europe and Africa, a move critics say would weaken combat flexibility and American influence abroad.

USS Mount Whitney, flagship of the Naples, Italy-based 6th Fleet, provides capabilities that no other Navy facility or platform — including aircraft carriers, amphibious groups or even sister ship



JOSEPH BULIIVAC/U.S. Navy

The Blue Ridge-class command and control ship USS Mount Whitney, the U.S. 6th Fleet flagship, arrives in Praia, Cabo Verde, on May 4.

USS Blue Ridge — can match, sailors aboard the vessel said.

Simply put, "we are a floating Pentagon," said Lt. Cmdr. Jonathan DeSimone, a communications information systems officer assigned to the ship.

The one-of-a-kind status lies in its dual, secure command centers for U.S. and NATO forces, allowing sailors to operate jointly without compromising sensitive information, DeSimone said.

Recent communication upgrades give Vice Adm. Jeffrey An-

SEE SHIP ON PAGE 8

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Filings for jobless aid inch down as uncertainty continues

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans filing unemployment claims last week fell slightly as businesses continue to retain employees despite growing uncertainty over trade policy.

Applications for jobless benefits fell by 2,000 to 227,000 for the week ending May 17, the Labor Department said Thursday. That's pretty close to the 230,000 analysts forecast.

Weekly applications for jobless benefits are seen as representa-

tive of U.S. layoffs and have mostly bounced around a historically healthy range between 200,000 and 250,000 since COVID-19 ravaged the economy and wiped out millions of jobs five years ago.

Even though President Donald Trump has paused or dialed down many of his tariff threats, concerns remain about a global economic slowdown that could upend the U.S. labor market, which has been a pillar of the American economy for years.

The U.S. and China last week

agreed to a 90-day pause in their trade war, giving financial markets a boost and at least temporarily relieving some of the anxiety over the impact of tariffs on the U.S. economy.

Earlier this month, the Federal Reserve held its benchmark lending rate at 4.3% for the third straight meeting after cutting it three times at the end of last year.

It's not clear if or when the job cuts ordered by the Department of Government Efficiency will surface in the weekly layoffs data.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (May 23)	0.86	Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound (May 23)	1.31	Britain (Pound)	1.3417
Japanese yen (May 23)	140.00	Canada (Dollar)	1.3887
South Korean won (May 23)	1344.00	China (Yuan)	7.2025
		Denmark (Krone)	6.6114
		Egypt (Pound)	49.9027
		Euro	0.8863
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8264
		Hungary (Forint)	357.78
		Israel (Shekel)	3.5870
		Japan (Yen)	143.88
		Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3068
		Norway (Krone)	10.2183
		Philippines (Peso)	55.66
		Poland (Zloty)	3.77
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7510
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.2916
		South Korea (Won)	1383.13
Switzerland (Franc)	0.8283		
Thailand (Baht)	32.87		
Turkey (NewLira)	38.9241		

(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.)

INTEREST RATES	
Prime rate	7.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50
Federal funds market rate	4.38
3-month bill	4.36
30-year bond	5.08

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MILITARY

USAF sends F-15 fighters to Diego Garcia

By WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

The Air Force has deployed F-15 fighter jets for a force protection mission on Diego Garcia, Pacific Air Forces confirmed Tuesday.

The strategically important island in the Indian Ocean has served as a base for U.S. bombers during the Pentagon's airstrikes on the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen that began earlier this year.

The War Zone website, citing an anonymous defense official, reported Monday that six F-15s have been working out of Diego Garcia.

Six B-2 Spirit stealth bombers, along with a C-17 Globemaster airlifter and several refueling tankers, were deployed there this spring, the Indo-Pacific Defense Forum reported May 2. The mag-



DON TREEGER, THE REPUBLICAN/TNS

The Air Force has deployed F-15 fighters similar to this one to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

azine is published by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, whose area of responsibility includes Diego Garcia.

At least some of the B-2s returned to Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., on May 9, according to

photos posted online by the Defense Department.

Air and Space Forces Magazine reported Friday that four B-52H Stratofortress bombers had been rotated in to replace the B-2s.

The Air Force and INDOPA-

COM declined to comment on the presence of B-52s on Diego Garcia. The island is part of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Under a lease with the United Kingdom that expires in 2036, the U.S. operates Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia, which hosts units from the U.S. Navy, Air Force and Space Force, along with the royal navy.

The island served as a key logistical hub during America's 20-year military intervention in Afghanistan and was a launch point for bombing missions during the conflict.

The island is once again playing a central role for the U.S. military in the wake of the October 2023 attack on Israel from the Gaza Strip by the Palestinian Sunni Islamist group Hamas.

That conflict has heightened

tensions between the U.S. and Iran.

Iran attacked Israel with more than 300 aerial drones and missiles on April 13 in response to an Israeli airstrike two weeks earlier that killed senior Iranian military officers in an Iranian consular building in Syria.

"These developments marked an unprecedented escalation in the confrontation between Iran and Israel," according to the Council on Foreign Relations in an April 23 update on its Global Conflict Tracker.

"In addition to concerns about direct U.S.-Iran conflict, existing proxy warfare in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq is at risk of escalating as regional tensions mount, placing thousands of U.S. troops and U.S. interests in the Middle East in danger," the update states.

Soldiers pondering reenlistment to have less time to decide

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

The Army is giving soldiers less time to decide whether to reenlist or extend contracts amid a recent uptick in recruiting and retention, the service announced this week.

Starting July 1, the Army will reinstate a former policy that requires soldiers to reenlist no later than 90 days from their expiration term of service date. Soldiers less than 90 days from their ETS dates will be unable to reenlist, the Army said in a statement Tuesday.

"With reenlistment and recruiting exceeding expectations, the Army is in a good position to maintain its end strength and force requirements for the foreseeable future," Master Sgt. Kindra Ford, a senior Army retention operations enlisted official, said in the statement.

For soldiers weighing whether to reenlist, that means no more last-minute decisions.

Another policy that allowed soldiers to extend their service for short periods of time without reenlisting also is being curtailed.

Soldiers with an ETS date before Oct. 1 who are not deployed or deploying have until May 31 to obtain retention extensions, the Army said.

Over the years, the Army has adjusted its policies on reenlistment and retention based on a variety of factors, such as the service's ability to attract new recruits. During recruiting down periods, the Army often is more flexible as it tries to retain soldiers.

Now, after several years of struggles that resulted in failures to meet recruiting targets at times, the service has seen a groundswell



DUSTIN REETZ/U.S. Army

A soldier reenlists in Memphis, Tenn., on March 16. The Army is shortening the time soldiers have to decide whether to reenlist or extend their contracts, citing improvements in recruiting and retention.

of interest over the past year.

The Army surpassed its fiscal year 2025 reenlistment goal in April by retaining 15,600 soldiers,

exceeding the 14,800 target, according to the service.

"The Army's retention success also coincides with it recently ex-

ceeding 90% of its recruiting goals in May as it continues to build on its recruiting momentum," the Army said.

Canada in talks about joining US 'Golden Dome' missile defense system

Associated Press

TORONTO — Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Wednesday his government is talking to the U.S. about joining President Donald Trump's future Golden Dome missile defense program.

The multilayered, \$175 billion system would for the first time put U.S. weapons in space. Trump said the previous day he expected the system to be fully operational by the end of his term in 2029.

"Is it a good idea for Canada?

Yes, it is a good to have protections in place for Canadians," Carney said.

Carney confirmed he's had talks with Trump about it and said there are discussions with senior officials. Trump said the Canadian government had contacted his administration indicating it wants to join the program and that he will work with Ottawa to ensure it contributes its "fair share."

Golden Dome is envisioned to include ground- and space-based

capabilities to detect and stop missiles at all four major stages of a potential attack: detecting and destroying them before a launch, intercepting them in their earliest stage of flight, stopping them midcourse in the air, or halting them in the final minutes as they descend toward a target.

"It's something that we are looking at and something that has been discussed at a high level," Carney said. "But not I'm not sure one negotiates on this. These are military decisions that have been

taken in that context, and we will evaluate it accordingly."

Carney warned that Canada faces potential missile threats in the "not-too-distant future" that could come from space.

"Is Canada going to be doing this alone or with the United States? Because with a Golden Dome, there will be discussions that could have an impact on Canada, but Canada wouldn't be a part of them," Carney said.

The Pentagon has warned for years that the newest missiles de-

veloped by China and Russia are so advanced that updated countermeasures are necessary. Golden Dome's added satellites and interceptors — where the bulk of the program's cost is — would be focused on stopping those advanced missiles early on or in the middle of their flight.

Canada and the U.S. are partners in the North American Aerospace Defense Command, the combined organization that provides shared defense of airspace over the two nations.

MILITARY

Pulled books return to Naval Academy library

By LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — All but a few of the nearly 400 books that the U.S. Naval Academy removed from its library because they dealt with anti-racism and gender issues are back on the shelves after the newest Pentagon-ordered review — the latest turn in a dizzying effort to rid the military of materials related to diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

Based on the new review, about 20 books from the academy's library are being pulled aside to be checked, but that number includes some that weren't identified or removed in last month's initial purge of 381 books, defense officials told The Associated Press.

A few dozen books at the Air Force libraries — including at the Air Force Academy — also have been pulled out for review, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the process is still ongoing.

The back-and-forth on book removals reflects a persistent prob-



PATRICK SEMANSKY/AP

The U.S. Naval Academy campus is seen in Annapolis, Md.

lem in the early months of the Trump administration, as initial orders and demands for an array of policy changes have been forced to be reworked, fine-tuned and reissued because they were vague, badly defined or problematic.

The reviews and changes at military libraries and to websites, so-

cial media accounts and more are part of the Trump administration's far-reaching efforts to purge so-called DEI content from federal agencies.

The Pentagon earlier this month issued a detailed directive to all military leaders and commands to pull and review all library books addressing diversity,

anti-racism or gender issues by Wednesday. The order contained more specific search words than earlier guidance and verbal orders from Defense Department leaders, and officials said it resulted in dramatically fewer banned books than initially thought.

The Navy said in a statement Wednesday that it reviewed the library collections at all of its educational institutions to ensure compliance with the directives, noting that materials have been "identified and sequestered." The Army and Air Force also have reviewed their collections.

All of the services' libraries had to provide their new lists of books to Pentagon leaders. Now additional guidance will be given on how to cull those lists, if needed, and determine what should be permanently removed. The review also will "determine an appropriate ultimate disposition" for those materials, according to a Defense Department memo.

The May 9 memo — signed by Timothy Dill, who is performing the duties of the deputy defense

undersecretary for personnel — did not say what will happen to the books or whether they will be stored away or destroyed.

The libraries at the military academies and those at other schools and commands had to remove educational materials "promoting divisive concepts and gender ideology" because they are incompatible with the Defense Department's core mission, the memo said.

A temporary Academic Libraries Committee set up by the department is overseeing the process, and it provided a list of search terms to use to determine which books to pull and review.

Those search terms included: affirmative action, anti-racism, critical race theory, discrimination, diversity, gender dysphoria, gender identity and transition, transgender and white privilege.

The U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., removed 381 books from its library in early April after being told by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's office to get rid of those that promote DEI.

Accident damages N. Korean warship

By DAVID CHOI
AND YOOJIN LEE

Stars and Stripes

Extensive repairs are underway on a new North Korean destroyer after a "serious accident" damaged the warship during its ceremonial launch, state-run media reported Thursday.

As the 5,000-ton destroyer was being launched Wednesday, the flatcar carrying the warship failed to move, causing the stern to depart by itself and become stuck on the launch slide at the Chongjin Shipyard in North Korea's eastern coast, the Korean Central News Agency reported the next day.

The destroyer's hull was crushed and the vessel failed to leave the shipway, according to the report.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who oversaw the ceremony, described it as "a serious accident and criminal act caused by absolute carelessness, irresponsibility and unscientific empiricism," KCNA said.

Kim reportedly demanded the "immediate restoration" of the destroyer and an investigation into the incident.

KCNA did not identify the destroyer by name or class and included no photographs in the report.

North Korea often embellishes its military and technological capabilities and rarely admits to



PLANET LABS PBC/AP

A tarp covers a North Korean destroyer, center of photo, after a failed launch Wednesday in Chongjin, North Korea.

mistakes, according to Koh Yuhwan, emeritus professor of North Korean Studies at Dongguk University and the former president of the Korea Institute for National Unification.

The latest incident, however, was difficult to conceal from the public eye, Koh said by phone Thursday.

"In this case, [Kim] participated in the warship launching ceremony and many people would have seen the accident," he said. "It was a big event with the military and civilians present. They would have agreed that they could not hide the accident and decided to make it public."

Kim could have also publicized the failure to instill discipline throughout the ranks, Koh said.



KCNA

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attends the unveiling of a new destroyer in April.

The communist regime's leader may have "wanted to imprint upon the officers and citizens that punishment may follow mistakes" in other industries, Koh said.

On April 25, Kim oversaw the launch of another 5,000-ton destroyer at the Nampho Dockyard in the country's western coast. The Choe Hyon-class destroyer — named after a North Korean anti-Japanese revolutionary fighter — boasted new technology that modernized the North's fleet, KCNA said at the time.

"The new generation multipurpose attack destroyer ... serves as an important starting point on the road toward advanced maritime power," the report said.

The second destroyer's unveiling was tracked by U.S. and South Korean intelligence agencies, which confirmed its ceremonial launch had failed, South Korean army Col. Lee Sung-jun, a spokesman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters Thursday in Seoul.

Lee said the damaged destroyer is similar in size and scale to the

one unveiled last month and "is currently laying down in the sea."

North Korea on Thursday fired several cruise missiles eastward from near Sondok village in South Hamgyong province, roughly 100 miles northeast of Pyongyang, the Joint Chiefs said in a text message to reporters that day.

"We are closely observing the North's different moves and maintaining capabilities and readiness to overwhelmingly respond to any provocations," the message said.

PACIFIC

Future air base in Japan faces more delays

By BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

Ongoing construction delays at a Japanese air base meant to host U.S. Navy carrier landing practice have stalled parts of the project again, this time due to buried debris and obstacles, according to Japan's Ministry of Defense.

The base — under construction on Mageshima, a small volcanic island in Kagoshima prefecture — is intended to support field carrier landing practice ahead of deployments aboard the USS George Washington. The Navy's Carrier Air Wing 5 now trains on Iwo Jima, nearly 850 miles from its home at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni.

A housing unit for Japanese personnel who will support the new base's operations has been on

hold since November after workers discovered large rocks and buried refuse during excavation, a spokesman for the Kyushu Defense Bureau said by phone Thursday.

Despite the setback, the housing delay is not expected to further affect the overall timeline, he said.

The airfield itself, however, is already three years behind schedule due to material and labor shortages. It is now projected to open in 2030 at a cost of more than \$2.4 billion, a Defense Ministry spokesman said by email Friday.

The unit under construction is in Nishinoomote city on Tanegashima Island, about eight miles east of Mageshima, where the base is being built.

Five housing units are planned for approximately 200 Japanese workers assigned to the site with



JAMES GUILLORY/U.S. Marine Corps

A U.S. Navy F/A-18E Super Hornet with Carrier Air Wing 5 conducts a touch-and-go landing on Iwo Jima, Japan, in May 2017.

their families. Tanegashima — home to more than 28,000 residents as of 2019 — lies about 20 miles south of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands.

"Underground obstacles" discovered during excavation led to

the suspension of construction "to consider how to address this issue," the bureau spokesman said.

Defense Minister Gen Nakatani, speaking Tuesday in Tokyo, said workers encountered "significant rocks and underground obstacles such as empty bottles and

old tires," prompting reassessment. "We are currently making various arrangements with Nishinoomote city," he said.

The bureau spokesman declined to elaborate on those arrangements. Some Japanese government officials speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

Past delays have been attributed to poor weather, unsuitable soil and the effects of the January 2024 earthquake on the Noto Peninsula, which disrupted supply chains and labor availability.

The Mageshima base is intended to relieve pressure on other U.S. training sites in Japan, particularly Iwo Jima. While the Navy has conducted landing practice on the island for decades, it has long considered it unsuitable as a permanent site due to its remoteness and lack of alternative runways.

Civilian's road tax sticker designs turn heads in Japan

By JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Tomoko Hyatt has no formal art training, but her designs are in high demand across Japan, displayed by tens of thousands of people and growing in popularity.

Hyatt, a civilian employee at this U.S. airlift hub in western Tokyo, creates the colorful sticker that anyone under the status of forces agreement must display each spring on their personal vehicle to prove they have paid the annual Japanese road tax.

"I've always admired art and artists," she said. "My mother once enrolled me in a drawing class when I was 6, not because I showed talent, but to get me to sit still for more than 30 minutes."

As forms manager for the 374th Communications Squadron, Hyatt is responsible for procuring the annual road tax sticker — an adhesive disc with a holographic print, displayed on windshields and motorcycles.

"Some people might remember that the stickers used to have the same crane pattern, just in different colors each year," she said.

In 2018, she began designing the sticker herself, starting with a



JOSHUA L. DeMOTTs/Stars and Stripes

Tomoko Hyatt poses with U.S. Forces Japan road tax stickers that feature her artwork, at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo, May 9.

fresh take on the traditional crane motif. The following year, she drew inspiration from Japanese Emperor Naruhito's accession to the throne.

"I wanted to mark the occasion by redesigning the road tax decal,

making it more meaningful for the U.S. Forces Japan community," she said.

Her designs have since gained popularity, each year reflecting traditional themes such as dragons, tigers and cherry blossoms.

This year's sticker features a serpent, inspired by the current Chinese year of the snake. Mount Fuji and a torii gate also make an appearance.

"I design dozens of options annually, and only one is selected," she said. "It's a long but rewarding process."

Hyatt said she submits between 10 and 20 designs to her squadron for consideration. Her command trims the selections and sends them to the USFJ Provost Marshal's Office for final input before finalizing the design.

The decals are displayed on vehicles at U.S. bases across Japan.

Despite her lack of formal training, Hyatt taught herself the craft.

Her husband, Matthew Hyatt, a meteorological technician with the 374th Operations Support Squadron, has a background in graphic design and introduced her to Adobe Illustrator.

Her work has sparked a following. She recently launched a Facebook page — Tomoko's Tokyo Treasures — where she sells items featuring her designs, including patches, ceramic ornaments and stickers.

"The artist is INSANELY tal-

ented," Chelsea Morrison, a contractor's spouse at Yokota, wrote April 27 on the unofficial Yokota Community Facebook page.

"I'm pretty excited to see that Tomoko is opening up orders for patches, not only for this year's designs, but the last few years," Morrison told Stars and Stripes. "I've been very impressed with the designs, I collect patches, I put them on the roof of my car and I'm so excited to add some from her."

Hyatt said her work had been pirated by individuals who used her designs on collectible coins without her permission. She reported the infringement to Yokota's legal office after consulting her command.

Despite that setback, her audience continues to grow. More than 200 people from Yokota and other bases have contacted her about purchasing merchandise featuring her work. Nile C. Kinnick High School on Yokosuka Naval Base is one her main customers, she said.

"People have encouraged me to pursue my art, and I've expanded into designing ornaments, coasters, bags and apparel," she said. "It's always a thrill to spot my designs out in Tokyo."

Philippines condemns Chinese use of water cannon on research boat

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine officials on Thursday condemned the Chinese coast guard, which it said used a powerful water cannon to target one of two Philippine fishing boats conducting marine research in the disputed South China Sea.

The Bureau of Fisheries in Manila said the incident, which took

place Wednesday near one of three sandbars called Sandy Cay, damaged one of the fishing vessels and endangered its crew.

The Chinese coast guard's "aggressive interference" happened as the two Philippine vessels were conducting "routine marine scientific research" in the barren sandbars that lie between the Philippine-occupied Thitu island and

a Chinese-built island base called Subi Reef, according to the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Fisheries in Manila.

Officials said a Filipino scientific team were in Sandy Cay to collect sand samples from the sandbars.

A larger Chinese coast guard ship "water cannoned and sideswiped" one of the vessels twice,

"resulting in some damage to the latter's port bow and smokestack and putting at risk lives of its civilian personnel onboard," the Philippine officials said.

They said the incident "occurred within the territorial sea of the Philippines" off Thitu island, which Filipinos call Pagasa, Tagalog for hope.

China's coast guard blamed the

Philippines for the collision, saying the vessels entered the waters illegally without China's permission and landed personnel on Sandy Cay, it said.

It said the vessels ignored warnings from the Chinese side and came dangerously close to the Chinese ship, which it said was conducting normal law enforcement operations.

MILITARY

Army Corps official denies politicization of funds

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — An Army Corps of Engineers official denied Wednesday that the agency's 2025 work plans had been politicized as Democrats accused President Donald Trump's administration of shifting construction funds away from Democratic-led states to Republican-led ones.

Two-thirds of Army Corps construction funding for civil works is going to red states under the plans, marking a notable change from former President Joe Biden's budget request and appropriations bills drafted by both the House and Senate, which had split the funds roughly 50-50.

Robyn Colosimo, the senior official performing the duties of principal deputy assistant secretary of

the Army for civil works, told lawmakers on a House Appropriations subcommittee that she did not believe the decision to reassign funds was politically motivated.

"They had to make trade-offs that I was not privy to — I don't believe they were partisan, but that's their decision," she said, adding that projects were prioritized based on "life, safety, flooding and American prosperity."

But Democrats charged that the redirection of funds was deliberate and intended to punish states for the way their residents voted.

"I find your testimony to be completely unbelievable," Rep. Mike Levin, D-Calif., told Colosimo. California saw its expected Army Corps construction funding reduced from the \$125 million outlined in Biden's budget request

and congressional appropriations bills to zero.

The Army Corps' work plans shifted more than \$250 million from states such as California and Washington to Republican-led states, according to data compiled by the Democratic staff of the Senate and House appropriations committees.

Red states are receiving about \$1.2 billion for construction projects — almost 30% more than Biden had requested — and blue states are getting less than \$600 million — about half of what they would have received under Congress' appropriations bills.

The funding shift was made possible by a full-year continuing resolution Congress passed in March that kept government funding largely at 2024 levels for the re-

mainder of the 2025 fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.

The stopgap spending measure did not include earmarks for projects in lawmakers' districts and states or specific instructions on how the Army Corps must spend its construction money, giving the administration wide discretion over the funds.

Democrats had warned that the bill would let the administration pick which Army Corps, transit and military construction projects would move ahead or grind to a halt and now say their fears are coming true.

"President Trump has unilater-

ally chosen to punish the people living in certain states — a historic and clear abuse of taxpayer dollars," Reps. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., and Marcy Kaptur, D-Ohio, said in a statement last week.

Kaptur on Wednesday continued to condemn "the extreme politicization" of Army Corps' construction funding decisions and said they were another reminder that "Congress must reclaim its authority over funding decisions" by passing full-year funding bills.

Around 37,000 civilians and soldiers work for the Army Corps. Army Corps assignments can include constructing military facilities, developing technology for troops, dredging waterways, devising infrastructure to reduce risk from disasters and cleaning contaminated sites.



Colosimo

Noem: Coast Guard needs secretary, 15,500 more people

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Coast Guard needs a service secretary and must grow its force by 15,500 people by 2028 to reverse its "downward readiness spiral," according to Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem.

The planned changes were outlined Wednesday by Noem during the Coast Guard Academy's graduation ceremony in New London, Conn., during which she pledged to work with Congress to overhaul the service.

"You are the first graduating class of a brand-new Coast Guard," Noem told the more than 250 new officers.

Coinciding with Noem's remarks, Coast Guard headquarters released its executive report detailing Force Design 2028, an initiative to reorganize the service, address workforce shortfalls and streamline the purchase of vessels and new technology.

All branches of the armed forces, which are part of the Department of Defense, have service secretaries who provide direct civilian political leadership and oversight.

Meanwhile, the Coast Guard operates under a commandant who reports to the secretary of Homeland Security.

The Coast Guard's lack of a service secretary has contributed to its neglect and drift for decades, Noem said.

"I, working with Congress, will pursue the legislation needed to establish a Coast Guard service secretary within the Department of Homeland Security to correct this historical institutional disadvantage that has left it less ready to protect the American people," Noem wrote in the Force Design 2028 executive report.



JESSICA HILL/AP

Cadet Jonah Lee of Ewa Beach, Hawaii, smiles during commencement for the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, on Wednesday, in New London, Conn. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem is seeking for the service to grow, and to have a secretary instead of a commandant.

In recent years, Coast Guard officials have advocated for the service's needs, which have grown with its responsibilities. Since President Donald Trump took office Jan. 20, the service has faced increased pressure to deter illegal immigration along the southern border, while maintaining its commitments to the Indo-Pacific and Arctic regions.

A Coast Guard secretary would be responsible for advocating for the service at a political level, as well as directing actions to organize, man, train and equip the service.

The secretary's authority would be comparable to that of other service secretaries within the Defense Department. Also like the other service secretaries, the position would be nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

Noem said the Coast Guard has

unprecedented support from the president that will transform the service. She said Trump recently asked her what the Coast Guard needs.

"I said, 'Sir, they need everything. They've been neglected for too long,'" Noem said during the graduation ceremony.

The Coast Guard's cutters, boats, aircraft, information technology and shore stations are on the verge of collapse because of a long-term lack of maintenance, Noem said. And efforts to replace the aging assets are underfunded and behind schedule.

"The men and women of the United States Coast Guard represent the very best that the nation has to offer. When they have the assets, capabilities, support, and advocacy they deserve, there is nothing they cannot accomplish," reads Force Design 2028.

The Coast Guard is making

strides to recruit new members, Noem said. With four months left in the fiscal year, the Coast Guard has already surpassed its recruiting goal of 4,300 by approximately 400 people. But maintaining the current force is not enough. The service must grow, Force Design 2028 reads.

The plan also calls to increase the Coast Guard by 15,500 members by the end of fiscal year 2028. In 2024, the Coast Guard employed 55,500 people across its force, of which more than 39,000 are active-duty service members.

But the service is short by about 3,000 active-duty members and is operating below the workforce level that it deems necessary to meet operational demands, a federal watchdog reported this month.

"For decades, chronic manning shortages at front-line units have hampered the service's ability to execute its missions. These gaps also created an unacceptable risk to its personnel and the public," reads Force Design 2028.

In line with this effort, the service will invest more in recruiting, the Coast Guard Academy, officer candidate school, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Force Design 2028 also outlines an effort to provide leadership training and opportunities to the Coast Guard's civilian workforce.

Force Design 2028 echoes changes that are being implemented across the military services in line with Trump's executive order on "Restoring America's Fighting Force." Changes taking place across the services, including the Coast

Guard, are an emphasis on merit-based promotions, reviews of physical fitness standards and a restructuring of leadership to eliminate redundancies.

The Coast Guard announced last week plans to cut 25% of its 46 flag officer positions by January as part of Force Design 2028. The reductions, according to a service-wide message sent May 15, are meant to eliminate redundant executive oversight that "hinders efficient decision-making and service effectiveness."

Decision-making, Noem said, will "return to the front line, where it belongs."

The message follows an order earlier this month by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to cut the number of active-duty general and flag officer ranks across the Defense Department by 10%. That plan also calls for reducing the number of four-star positions by 20%.

"[Force Design 2028] will restore the service to greatness so that it is once again the instrument of national power that ensures our national security and economic prosperity for generations to come," Noem wrote in the report.

Adm. Kevin Lunday, as commandant of the Coast Guard, will lead Force Design 2028. Lunday, who previously served as the vice commandant, took command of the Coast Guard on Jan. 21 after Trump fired Adm. Linda Fagan from the position reportedly for failing to address border security. Lunday will drop "acting" from his title, according to Noem, who named Lunday as the commandant of the Coast Guard during the graduation ceremony Wednesday. Vice Adm. Thomas Allan, recommended for promotion to admiral, will serve as the vice commandant.



Noem

MILITARY

Air Force to build training center in Alaska

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

Work will start this summer on a Pentagon “mega-project” in Alaska intended to boost the Air Force’s training capability to defend North America.

The 150,000-square-foot Joint Integrated Test and Training Center will contain 426 computer servers kept running by a 15 million megavolt-ampere electric substation. The project is slated to be completed in 2029 at a cost of up to \$500 million.

John Budnik, spokesman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said the center will allow trainers to sync personnel on the ground with pilots in the air.

“It’s the only place in the Indo-Pacific Command that can host multi-domain simulators for joint and coalition fighters, including F-35s, F-22s, F-15s, F-18s, next-generation fighters, bombers, command and control platforms, intelligence surveillance, reconnaissance aircraft and long-range weapons fire,” he said.

Thareth Casey, the program manager for the Army Corps of Engineers, said the training center is being designed so simulations can be adapted to include weapons and aircraft from other U.S. military branches, as well as NATO allies Canada, Finland, Sweden and others.

Air Force Col. Lisa Mabbutt,

commander of the 673d Air Base Wing at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, the future home of the facility, said the location underlines the importance of Alaska and the Arctic to the U.S.

“It demonstrates a commitment to Alaska as both a key power-projection platform and one of our nation’s leading edges of homeland defense,” Mabbutt said.

While the long, warmer days of summer have allowed military and commercial ships to take advantage of new sea lanes, the training center has to be built to withstand the seasonal flipside: winter, with its minus-20 temperatures and days where sunset comes a little over five hours after sunrise.

Casey, the project manager, said construction less than 2,000 miles from the North Pole has its challenges.

To keep the elements outside from impacting the work inside, the center will be built with a reinforced concrete foundation, steel-frame-insulated wall panels covered in masonry and a steel-reinforced metal roof.

Construction will accelerate during the long, warmer summer days when the sun can be out for 20 hours. It will slow down during the cold, dark winters.

“It’s a one-of-a-kind project,” Casey said. “We’re constrained by the seasons but with planning, we



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

A designer’s concept of the Joint Integrated Test and Training Center to be built at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska.

expect to complete work by the fall of 2029.”

Despite a steady stream of reports about Russian and Chinese joint sea and air operations in the region, the U.S. commands that will be the primary users of the training center declined to specify which nations the training will focus on as possible aggressors.

A query to the 11th Air Force in Alaska was passed to Air Force headquarters at the Pentagon, which passed it to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii — which then passed it back to the 11th Air Force.

But political and military officials have made it clear in earlier statements that the focus will be on training to react to potential threats from Russia and China.

Former Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and top officers such as Air Force Gen. Anthony J. Cotton, head of Strategic Command, helped popularize the term “near-peer adversary,” a nation with a large military force approaching — it not reaching — equivalence with the United States.

The term was most frequently used as a shorthand to describe Russia.

The other term often used is “pacing challenge” — a country that is building up its military at a rapid rate. A 2023 Pentagon statement said the planned training center at Elmendorf-Richardson would allow “our warfighters to train against our pacing challenge in realistic threat scenarios.”

“China is the only country that

can pose a systemic challenge to the United States in the sense of challenging us, economically, technologically, politically and militarily,” Colin Kahl, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy, said in 2023.

Kahl said being a pacing challenge didn’t mean the U.S. had to go to war with China.

“It does mean that we will have a more competitive and, at times, ... adversarial relationship with Beijing,” he said.

Russia’s northern border is adjacent to the Arctic Ocean. From czars to Stalin to Putin, it has operated in the region for centuries.

China is a relative newcomer. Though 900 miles from the Arctic Circle, China in 2018 officially declared itself an “near-Arctic state” intent on becoming a “great polar power” by 2030.

In October 2024, a U.S. Coast Guard HC-130J long-range surveillance plane spotted Russian and Chinese ships operating together near the Bering Strait, the sea passage between Alaska and Russia that is just 55 miles wide at its closest point.

Last year, American and Canadian fighters were scrambled to intercept Russian and Chinese long-range reconnaissance aircraft flying near the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone, a U.S.-designated 150-mile buffer zone from U.S. territory.

Army: Displays, competition, festival to precede DC parade

FROM PAGE 1

The Army will pay for any damages, Warren added.

On June 14, there will be a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in the morning, followed by a fitness competition and an Army birthday festival on the National Mall in Washington.

The festival will also include equipment displays, demonstrations of military skills and performances from country artists Noah Hicks and Scotty Hasting.

The day will culminate with a parade through the city and a jump by the Army’s Golden Knights parachute team, which will present Trump with an American flag. The president will also preside over an enlistment ceremony for 250 service members.

Democratic lawmakers have criticized Trump for taking over the Army’s birthday and refocusing it on himself.

“This is Trump. This is all about his ego and making everything ‘him,’ which is, I think, a discredit to the military, the Army,” Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed



JOSE ESCAMILLA/U.S. Army

One of the first U.S. Army tanks bound for Washington, D.C. and the Army’s 250th Birthday Parade is loaded onto a rail car at Fort Cavazos on Wednesday. Each tank weighs around 140,000 pounds.

Services Committee and a U.S. Military Academy graduate, told the Reuters news agency.

Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., introduced a bill to prohibit the use of public funds for “displays of military force for personal glorification.”

Donors are being offered a “dedicated VIP experience” at several events Trump is planning

this summer with the U.S. military, The Wall Street Journal Reported.

The Army has been planning the 250th celebration for two years, with the parade being “more recent,” Warren said. He did not elaborate on how conversations regarding the parade took place.

The service is bringing about

6,700 troops from every Army division, 150 vehicles and more than 50 aircraft for the event. The cost for the parade and other events will be between \$25 and \$45 million, Warren said.

“It is a lot of money, but I think that amount of money is dwarfed by 250 years of service and sacrifice that, you know, American soldiers have given this country,” he

added. “We’re looking at this as an opportunity to really strengthen the connection between America and her Army.”

Other equipment for the celebration include 28 Bradley Fighting Vehicles, 28 Strykers, four M109 Paladins and a series of historic vehicles, including Sherman tanks and a B-25 bomber, he added.

Between 3,000 and 4,000 soldiers will be housed in the General Services Administration building, and 2,000 in the Department of Agriculture in downtown Washington, Warren said. Most participants will arrive on June 11 and depart Washington June 15.

Troops will be provided Meals, Ready to Eat for breakfast and lunch and a hot meal for dinner, Warren added. Soldiers will also receive a per diem of about \$69.

The last time a national military parade was held in Washington was June 1991 to celebrate the U.S. victory in the first Gulf War. The U.S. Park Police estimated the crowd at 200,000, The Associated Press reported at the time. The Army is estimating about 200,000 will attend next month’s celebration.

EUROPE

Ship: 6th Fleet vessel seen as 'floating Pentagon'

FROM PAGE 1

derson, who leads both 6th Fleet and Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, the flexibility to direct operations from sea without traveling ashore to command centers in Italy and Portugal.

"In a crisis or conflict, I have to be able to have the ability to simultaneously do it from one location," Anderson said. That capability isn't possible in Naples or Lisbon, he said.

Yet in its 2023 budget, the Navy said it wanted to decommission Mount Whitney next year to save some \$179 million annually. The ship's functions could be handled ashore, the service said at the time without specifying how.

That date was extended to 2027, a Navy spokesperson said Thursday.

However, sailors aboard Mount Whitney said they believe the ship actually will be in service for a decade or more in a series of incremental extensions.

In recent years, the Navy has submitted budgets calling for the retirement of a sizable number of older vessels to make way for a more advanced, lethal fleet, a divest-to-invest strategy that often draws the scrutiny of Congress.

In 2023, the Navy sought to retire 16 ships early, but Congress approved only six.

The plan to decommission Mount Whitney has raised alarm among advocates and analysts, who say it defies common sense. It limits options during crises, undercuts diplomacy and strains operational readiness, they say.

Sebastian Bruns, a maritime expert at the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University, said Mount Whitney can project naval power and diplomacy better in some instances than an armed destroyer or cruiser.

The window of opportunity to use the ship in that capacity appears to be closing "if one assumes that Mount Whitney will be decommissioned, will not be replaced, and if one assumes ... the moving away of the United States from Europe is going to continue," Bruns said.

Despite its strategic use, Mount Whitney is ineligible for congressional funding for critical needs because it's on the decommissioning list. The ship, which entered service in January 1971, needs upgrades to its defensive systems to ensure it remains mission-ready, shipboard officials said.

In comparison, the Navy has extended the service life of Blue Ridge, its oldest operational warship, until 2039.

The ship "is not going to get the real services and help she needs to really stay modern and to be able to keep pace with the threats of the times," said Lt. Cmdr. Kenyon Co-



PHOTOS BY ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

U.S. 6th Fleet flagship USS Mount Whitney is on the Navy's shortlist for decommissioning. Officials aboard the control-and-command ship say no other vessel or building in the service offers the same maritime operations center capabilities.



Capt. Colin Price, commanding officer of USS Mount Whitney, middle right, gives military and civilian officials from Mauritania a tour of the ship on May 8.

wart, a combat systems maintenance officer.

Primary mission

Even before Mount Whitney's communications overhaul, analysts and retired Navy officers argued that the ship's maritime operations center and versatility couldn't be matched.

A shore-based replacement facility would eliminate the ability to move into international waters if another country, potentially Italy, objected to military decisions within its borders.

The ship traveled about 12 miles offshore in 2011 to support multinational forces during Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya, the precursor to the fall of Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi. It deployed to the Black Sea during the 2008 Russia-Georgia war and was there again in 2021 amid tensions over Ukraine.

And in the fall of 2023, Mount Whitney was stationed in the East-

ern Mediterranean Sea for about six weeks as the U.S. worked to keep conflict in the Middle East from spreading after Hamas' attack on Israel.

"We can go to where the fight is or where we're going to be used most effectively to provide (a commander) the most situational awareness," said Capt. Colin Price, commanding officer of Mount Whitney.

The vessel's crew of about 300 Navy sailors and civilian mariners can support at least 200 more personnel with workspace, accommodations and high-end technology.

That flexibility allows Mount Whitney to take on many different roles in the 6th Fleet area of responsibility, which stretches from the Arctic to Antarctica, Price said.

Blue Ridge, which functions as the maritime operations center for 7th Fleet both ashore and at sea, doesn't have the same ability,



Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 28, Detachment 1 practices live hoist training in the Atlantic Ocean on May 9.

hosting foreign VIPs has earned it a reputation as a sort of "party ship," complete with good food, music and fun.

But that perception underestimates the importance of naval diplomacy in regions of the world where the U.S. is challenged to build and sustain relationships, officials said.

The military has long been part of a multipronged strategy to gain U.S. influence in Africa, a role likely to grow with the shuttering of most U.S. Agency for International Development functions, looming State Department cuts and freezes on foreign aid.

The ship's presence in Mauritania helped foster the U.S. security relationship with the country, which sits at the nexus of the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa. The region is impacted by violent extremist groups, notably in neighboring Mali, according to the State Department.

The U.S. also wants to grow its economic ties by encouraging American businesses to invest in the region, said John Ice, charge d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Mauritania. He said cooperative military and economic efforts each contribute to security goals.

Since January, Mount Whitney has made port calls in Cyprus, Tunisia, Libya and Cabo Verde. Its visits to the Libyan cities of Tripoli and Benghazi last month, the first by a Navy ship to the country in 56 years, sent a clear message that the U.S. remains engaged in North Africa, analysts said.

The ship can throw a party for dignitaries as well as offer space for high-level discussions around the world while staying focused on operations.

And that makes Mount Whitney indispensable, said Ensign Joshua Coatny, an electronics material officer.

"It just all comes together," Coatny said.

"In a crisis or conflict, I have to be able to have the ability to simultaneously do it from one location"

Vice Adm. Jeffrey Anderson
6th Fleet and Naval Striking
and Support Forces NATO

officials said.

"There is no other ship in the world that can do that like we can," Price said.

'Party ship'

Little more than a day after hosting African military officials and dignitaries in Praia, Cabo Verde, earlier this month, Mount Whitney was scheduled to make a port call in the West African country of Mauritania.

But the visit in Nouakchott didn't go as planned.

There weren't enough tugboats available to tow the 634-foot-long vessel into port, and sea conditions made it unsafe to ferry visitors to the ship. Anchoring wasn't a possibility.

Instead, Price and a delegation flew ashore by helicopter for a visit. Mauritania's chief of naval operations and other leaders later flew out to the ship.

On-the-fly adaptation is routine, officials said, as Mount Whitney sustains military relationships in countries with limited port infrastructure.

The vessel's frequent role in

NATION

House Republicans pass big bill in wee hours

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans stayed up all night to pass their multitrillion-dollar tax breaks package, with Speaker Mike Johnson defying the skeptics and unifying his ranks to muscle President Donald Trump's priority bill to approval Thursday.

With last-minute concessions and stark warnings from Trump, the Republican holdouts largely dropped their opposition to salvage the "One Big Beautiful Bill" that's central to the GOP agenda. The House launched debate before midnight and by dawn the vote was called, 215-214, with Democrats staunchly opposed. It next goes to the Senate, with long negotiations ahead.

"To put it simply, this bill gets Americans back to winning again," said Johnson, R-La.

The outcome caps an intense time on Capitol Hill, with days of private negotiations and public committee hearings, many happening back-to-back, around-the-clock. Republicans insisted their sprawling 1,000-page-plus package was what voters sent them to Congress — and Trump to the White House — to accomplish. They believe it will be "rocket fuel," as one put it during debate, for the uneasy U.S. economy.

Trump himself demanded action, visiting House Republicans at

Tuesday's conference meeting and hosting GOP leaders and the holdouts for a lengthy session Wednesday at the White House. Before the vote, the administration warned in a pointed statement that failure "would be the ultimate betrayal."

After the legislation's passage, Trump posted on social media: "Thank you to every Republican who voted YES on this Historic Bill! Now, it's time for our friends in the United States Senate to get to work."

The Senate hopes to wrap up its version by the Fourth of July holiday.

Central to the package is the GOP's commitment to extending some \$4.5 trillion in tax breaks they engineered during Trump's first term in 2017, while temporarily adding new ones he campaigned on during his 2024 campaign, including no taxes on tips, overtime pay, car loan interest and others.

To make up for some of the lost tax revenue, the Republicans focused on changes to Medicaid and the food stamps program, largely by imposing work requirements on many of those receiving benefits. There's also a massive rollback of green energy tax breaks from the Biden-era Inflation Reduction Act.

Additionally, the package tacks on \$350 billion in new spending, with about \$150 billion going to the Pentagon, including for the presi-



ROD LAMKEY JR./AP

Pulling President Donald Trump's multitrillion-dollar tax breaks package together before his Memorial Day deadline has been an enormous political lift for House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., left.

dent's new "Golden Dome" defense shield, and the rest for Trump's mass deportation and border security agenda.

All told, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates 8.6 million fewer people would have health care coverage and 3 million less people a month would have SNAP food stamps benefits with the proposed changes.

The CBO said the tax provisions would increase federal deficits by \$3.8 trillion over the decade, while the changes to Medicaid, food stamps and other services would

tally \$1 trillion in reduced spending. The lowest-income households in the U.S. would see their resources drop, while the highest ones would see a boost, it said.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York read letters from Americans describing the way the program cuts would hurt them. "This is one big ugly bill," he said.

As the minority, without the votes to stop Trump's package, Democrats instead offered up impassioned speeches and procedural moves to stall its advance. As soon as

the House floor reopened for debate, the Democrats forced a vote to adjourn. It failed.

In "the dark of night they want to pass this GOP tax scam," said Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-Calif.

Other Democrats called it a "big, bad bill" or a "big, broken promise."

Pulling the package together before his Memorial Day deadline has been an enormous political lift for Johnson, with few votes to spare from his slim GOP majority whose rank-and-file Republicans have conflicting priorities of their own.

Conservatives, particularly from the House Freedom Caucus, held out for steeper spending cuts to defray costs piling onto the nation's \$36 trillion debt.

At the same time, more moderate and centrist GOP lawmakers were wary of the changes to Medicaid that could result in lost health care for their constituents. And some worried the phaseout of the renewable energy tax breaks will impede businesses using them to invest in green energy projects in many states.

By early morning hours, the chief holdouts appeared to be falling in line. Rep. Ralph Norman, R-S.C., said they "got some improvements."

Final analysis of the overall package's costs and economic impacts are still being assessed.

Senate votes to end California gas-car ban, sends bill to Trump

By ARI NATTER
Bloomberg

The U.S. Senate voted to block a California program banning gasoline-powered cars and other vehicles by 2035, sending the measure to President Donald Trump's desk for his signature.

The 51-44 vote Thursday rolls back an Environmental Protection Agency waiver issued under former President Joe Biden allowing California to enact emissions standards even stricter than the U.S. government's requirements to increase sales of electric and other zero-emission vehicles.

The decision to repeal waivers for the state automobile programs overturns a decades-old practice — enshrined in the Clean Air Act of 1970 — of allowing the most populous U.S. state to set stringent pollution standards that go beyond federal government requirements. That authority, first envisioned as a way to help California combat smog, has helped put Sacramento in the driver's seat, designing pollution curbs that apply widely across the nation in other states that have opted to follow along.

The California requirements, which drew opposition from automakers, fuel producers and Trump himself, were also set to be applied in New York, Washington and other states that agreed to follow suit. Opponents of California's rules — which include automaker Toyota, the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers trade group and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce — have said they are unachievable.

"Over the past two decades, California has used its waiver authority to push its extreme climate policies on the rest of the country, which was never the intent of the Clean Air Act," said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, a



DAVID PAUL MORRIS/BLOOMBERG

Traffic moves along Interstate 80 in Emeryville, Calif. On Thursday, the U.S. Senate voted to block a California program banning gasoline-powered cars and other vehicles by 2035.

West Virginia Republican. "The decision to limit consumer choice, increase car prices, and cost hundreds of thousands of jobs was made by California, and approved by a federal administration that had already been rejected by the American voters."

The move to repeal the California requirements drew fire from groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"This vote is an unprecedented and reckless attack on states' legal authority to address the pollution causing asthma, lung disease and heart conditions," said Manish Bapna, the environmental group's president. "After a multi-million dollar lobbying campaign from Big Oil, Republicans readily jettisoned their long-held view that states can best enact measures that reflect the values and interests of their residents."

Judge blocks Trump, orders rehire of Education workers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge on Thursday blocked President Donald Trump's executive order to dismantle the Education Department and ordered the agency to reinstate employees who were fired in mass layoffs.

U.S. District Judge Myong Joun in Boston granted a preliminary injunction stopping the Trump administration from carrying out two plans announced in March that sought to work toward Trump's goal to shut down the department. It marks a setback to one of the Republican president's campaign promises.

The ruling came in two consolidated lawsuits that said Trump's plan amounted to an illegal closure of the Education Department.

One suit was filed by the Somerville and Easthampton school districts in Massachusetts along with the American Federation of Teachers and other education groups. The other suit was filed by a coalition of 21 Democratic attorneys general.

The suits argued that layoffs left the department unable to carry out responsibilities required by Congress, including duties to support special education, distribute financial aid and enforce civil rights

laws.

In his order, Joun said the plaintiffs painted a "stark picture of the irreparable harm that will result from financial uncertainty and delay, impeded access to vital knowledge on which students and educators rely, and loss of essential services for America's most vulnerable student populations."

Layoffs of that scale, he added, "will likely cripple the Department. The idea that Defendants' actions are merely a 'reorganization' is plainly not true."

Joun ordered the Education Department to reinstate federal workers who were terminated as part of the March 11 layoff announcement.

That announcement led to the firing of about 1,300 people. Some Education Department employees have left through buyout offers and the termination of probationary employees, which combined with the layoffs have reduced the staff to roughly half the 4,100 the department had when Trump took office.

The Trump administration has said the layoffs are aimed at efficiency, not a department shutdown. Trump has called for the closure of the agency but recognizes it must be carried out by Congress, the government said.

NATION

Private jet crashes in San Diego

Plane passengers killed, no casualties in military housing

By JULIE WATSON
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A private jet crashed into military housing in San Diego during foggy weather early Thursday, igniting cars parked along a suburban neighborhood block and killing multiple people on board the plane, authorities said.

The plane could hold eight to 10 people but it's not yet known how many were on board, Assistant San Diego Fire Chief Dan Eddy said at a news conference. Authorities will be investigating whether the plane hit a power line, he said.

The aircraft crashed just before 4 a.m. into the U.S. military's largest housing neighborhood. It appeared to strike at least one home that had a charred and collapsed roof and smash through half a dozen vehicles. About 10 homes suffered damage.

Authorities initially said no one was transported by emergency crews from the military housing. But after a morning news conference, San Diego police officer Anthony Carrasco said five people from a single family were hospitalized for smoke inhalation. Another person was treated at a hospital for injuries sustained while climbing out of a window trying to flee. Two others were treated for minor injuries at the scene, Carrasco said.

San Diego officials haven't re-



GREGORY BULL / AP

Authorities work the scene of the crash in a San Diego neighborhood, setting several homes on fire and forcing evacuations along several blocks early Thursday.

leased details about the plane but said it was a flight coming in from the Midwest. The flight originated Wednesday night in Teterboro, N.J., according to FlightAware.

In the San Diego neighborhood, smell of jet fuel lingered in the air hours after the crash while authorities worked to put out one stubborn car fire. They described a frightening scene in the aftermath of the crash.

"I can't quite put words to describe what the scene looks like, but with the jet fuel going down the street, and everything on fire all at once, it was pretty horrific to see," San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said.

Half a dozen fully charred cars sat on the street and tree limbs, glass and pieces of white and blue metal were scattered on the road. At the end of the street black smoke billowed as the site continued to burn.

Wahl said more than 50 police officers were on the scene within minutes and began evacuating homes. At least 100 residents were displaced to an evacuation center at a nearby elementary school.

Christopher Moore, who lives one street over from the crash site, said he and his wife were awakened by a loud bang and saw smoke when they looked out the window. They grabbed their two

young children and ran out of the house. On their way out of the neighborhood they saw a car engulfed in flames.

"It was definitely horrifying for sure, but sometimes you've just got to drop your head and get to safety," he said.

The neighborhood is made up of single family homes and townhomes. Officials were looking into whether the plane clipped a power line before crashing into the neighborhood on land owned by the U.S. Navy.

The Federal Aviation Administration said the National Transportation Safety Board will lead the investigation.

Court rejects public funds for Catholic school

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Thursday effectively ended a publicly funded Catholic charter school in Oklahoma, dividing 4-4.

The outcome keeps in place an Oklahoma court decision that invalidated a vote by a state charter school board to approve the St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School, which would have been the nation's first religious charter school. But it leaves the issue unresolved nationally.

The Catholic Church in Oklahoma had wanted taxpayers to fund the online charter school "faithful to the teachings of Jesus Christ." Opponents warned that allowing it would blur the separation between church and state, sap money from public schools and possibly upend the rules governing charter schools in almost every state.

Only eight of the nine justices took part in the case. Justice Amy Coney Barrett didn't explain her absence, but she is good friends and used to teach with Notre Dame law professor Nicole Garnett, who has been an adviser to the school.

The issue could return to the high court in the future, with the prospect that all nine justices could participate.

The case came to the court amid efforts, mainly in conservative-led states, to insert religion into public schools.

Those include a challenged Louisiana requirement that the Ten Commandments be posted in classrooms and a mandate from Oklahoma's state schools superintendent that the Bible be placed in public school classrooms.

A key unresolved issue is whether the school is public or private. Charter schools are deemed public in Oklahoma and the other 45 states and the District of Columbia where they operate. North Dakota recently enacted legislation allowing for charter schools.

They are free and open to all, receive state funding, abide by antidiscrimination laws and submit to oversight of curriculum and testing. But they also are run by independent boards that are not part of local public school systems.

Proponents of publicly funded religious charter schools were quick to point out that the decision was limited to Oklahoma.

On the other side, the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State applauded the outcome.

2 staff members of Israeli Embassy killed in shooting in DC

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two staff members of the Israeli Embassy in Washington were shot and killed while leaving an event at a Jewish museum, and the suspect yelled, "Free, free Palestine" after he was arrested, police said.

The stunning attack on Wednesday evening prompted Israeli missions to beef up their security and lower their flags to half-staff. It came as Israel has launched another major offensive in the Gaza Strip in a war with Hamas that has heightened tensions across the Middle East and internationally and as antisemitic acts are on the rise.

The two people killed, Yaron Lischinsky, an Israeli citizen, and Sarah Milgrim, an American, were a young couple about to be engaged, according to Yechiel Leiter, the Israeli ambassador to the U.S.

The couple were leaving an event at the Capital Jewish Mu-



EMBASSY OF ISRAEL IN THE US/AP

Staff members of the Israeli Embassy in Washington, Israeli citizen Yaron Lischinsky, right, and U.S. citizen Sarah Milgrim.

seum when the suspect, seen pacing outside the museum, approached a group of four people and opened fire, Metropolitan Police Chief Pamela Smith said at a news conference.

The gunman, identified by police as Elias Rodriguez, 31, of Chi-

cago, then walked into the museum, was detained by event security and began chanting, "Free, free Palestine," Smith said.

"These horrible D.C. killings, based obviously on antisemitism, must end, NOW!" President Donald Trump posted on social

media early Thursday. "Hatred and Radicalism have no place in the USA."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Thursday he was shocked. "We are witnessing the terrible price of antisemitism and wild incitement against Israel," he said in a statement.

The shooting followed the AJC's annual Young Diplomats reception at the museum.

Yoni Kalin and Katie Kalisher were inside the museum when they heard gunshots, and a man came inside looking distressed. Kalin said people came to his aid and brought him water, thinking he needed help, without realizing he was the suspect. When police arrived, he pulled out a red keffiyeh, the Palestinian headscarf, and repeatedly yelled, "Free Palestine," Kalin said.

The museum said in a statement it is "deeply saddened and horrified by the senseless violence."

NATION



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Freshly-made pennies sit in a bin at the U.S. Mint in Denver.

US Mint moves forward with plans to kill the penny

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Mint has made its final order of penny blanks and plans to stop producing the coin when those run out, a Treasury Department official confirmed Thursday.

An immediate annual savings of \$56 million in reduced material costs is expected by stopping penny production, according to the official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity to preview the news.

In February, President Donald Trump announced that he had ordered his administration to cease production of the 1-cent coin.

“For far too long the United States has minted pennies which literally cost us more than 2 cents. This is so wasteful!” Trump wrote at that time in a post on his Truth Social site. “I have instructed my Secretary of the US Treasury to stop producing new pennies.”

The nation’s treasury secretary has the authority to mint and issue coins “in amounts the secretary decides are necessary to meet the needs of the United States.”

Advocates for ditching the penny cite its high production cost — almost 4 cents per penny now, according to the U.S. Mint — and limited utility.

Fans of the penny cite its usefulness in raising funds during charity drives and relative bargain in production costs compared with the nickel, which costs almost 14 cents to mint.

Pennies are the most popular coin made by the U.S. Mint, which reported making 3.2 billion of them last year. That’s more than half of all the new coins it made last year.

Congress, which dictates currency specifications such as the size and metal content of coins, could make Trump’s order permanent through law.

RFK Jr. report raises concerns about vaccines, food, drugs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A government report released on Thursday covering wide swaths of American health and wellness reflects some of the most contentious views on vaccines, the nation’s food supply, pesticides and prescription drugs held by U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

The much-anticipated “Make America Healthy Again” report, led by Kennedy and other top Trump administration officials, calls for increased scrutiny of the childhood vaccine schedule, a review of the pesticides sprayed on

American crops and a description of the nation’s children as over-medicated and undernourished.

While it does not have the force of a law or official policy, the report will be used over the next 100 days for the MAHA commission to fashion a plan that can be implemented during the remainder of President Donald Trump’s term, Kennedy said in a call with reporters.

He refused to provide details about who authored the report.

“We will save lives by addressing this chronic disease epidemic head on, we’re going to save a lot more money in the long run — and

even in the short run,” he said.

But the most contentious parts of the report were already creating factions within the MAHA commission even as it strained to appease opposing forces within Trump and Kennedy’s coalition.

The report raises concerns about corporate and industry-funded research skewing the results of studies on chemical and environmental impacts.

Despite numerous studies and statements throughout the MAHA report that raise concerns about American food products, Trump Cabinet officials insisted that the nation’s food supply is safe.

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WORLD

Merz inaugurates historic German brigade in Lithuania

Associated Press

VILNIUS, Lithuania — Chancellor Friedrich Merz inaugurated a groundbreaking German brigade in Lithuania that is meant to help protect NATO's eastern flank and declared Thursday that "the security of our Baltic allies is also our security" as worries about Russian aggression persist.

He said Berlin's strengthening of its own military sends a signal to its allies that they should also invest in security.

The stationing in Lithuania marks the first time that a German brigade is being based outside Germany on a long-term basis since World War II.

"This is a historic day," Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda said after meeting Merz. "This is a

day of trust, responsibility and action."

Germany has had troops in Lithuania — which borders Russia's Kaliningrad exclave and Moscow-allied Belarus — since 2017, as part of efforts to secure NATO's eastern fringe, but the new brigade deepens its engagement significantly.

An advance party started work on setting it up just over a year ago and expanded into an "activation staff" of about 250 people last fall. The 45 Armored Brigade is expected to be up to its full strength of about 5,000 by the end of 2027, with troops stationed at Rukla and Rudnikai.

Dozens of military helicopters roared over the central cathedral square in Lithuania's capital, Vil-

nius, as the inauguration wrapped up on a rainy Thursday afternoon, with hundreds of troops and spectators attending. Merz told the event that "protecting Vilnius is protecting Berlin."

The deployment in Lithuania has been taking shape as Germany works to strengthen its military overall after years of neglect as NATO members scramble to increase defense spending, spurred by worries about further potential Russian aggression and pressure from Washington.

Merz said that, beyond the new brigade, "Germany is investing massively in its own armed forces."

"With this, we also want to send a signal to our allies: let us now invest with determination in our



MINDAUGAS KULBIS/AP

German soldiers march Thursday at the formal inauguration of a German brigade for NATO's eastern flank in Vilnius, Lithuania.

own security," he added. "Together with our partners, we are determined to defend alliance territory

against every — every — aggression. The security of our Baltic allies is also our security."

No new direct Russia-Ukraine peace talks scheduled, Kremlin says

Associated Press

Russia and Ukraine have scheduled no further direct talks on ending their more than three-year war, the Kremlin said Thursday, almost a week after the first face-to-face engagement between their delegations since 2022 and days

after President Donald Trump announced they would start ceasefire negotiations "immediately."

"There is no concrete agreement about the next meetings," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "They are yet to be agreed upon."

During two hours of talks in Istanbul last Friday, Kyiv and Moscow agreed to exchange 1,000 prisoners of war each, in what would be their biggest such swap. Apart from that step, the meeting delivered no significant breakthrough.

Several months of intensified U.S. and European pressure on the two sides to accept a ceasefire and negotiate a settlement have yielded little progress.

Meanwhile, Russia is readying a summer offensive to capture more Ukrainian land, Ukrainian

government and military analysts say.

Putin said earlier this week that Moscow would "propose and is ready to work with" Ukraine on a "memorandum" outlining the framework for "a possible future peace treaty."

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LIFESTYLE



RENEE JONES SCHNEIDER, THE MINNESOTA STAR TRIBUNE/TNS

University of Minnesota medical school liaison librarian Ryn Gagen uses a virtual reality headset to experience what it's like to die at the University of Minnesota Health Sciences Education Center in Minneapolis. In this scene, Gagen looks down at their own body as loved ones say their goodbyes.

Ever wonder what it's like to die?

Embodied Labs' VR simulation designed to help foster empathy and understanding among caregivers of older adults

By RICHARD CHIN

The Minnesota Star Tribune

When the University of Minnesota offered to let me experience what it's like to die, naturally I said yes.

Aren't we all morbidly curious about the undiscovered country, as Hamlet put it, from which no traveler returns?

Except this time, happily, I would get to return because it would be a virtual death, an experience in a virtual reality studio that's part of the university's Health Sciences Library system.

The dying experience is part of a series of VR simulations developed by a nine-year-old California-based company called Embodied Labs.

The company has also created immersive, first-person experiences of what it's like to have dementia, Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease, vision or hearing loss, to be socially isolated or to age as a LGBTQ+ person.

Admittedly, these experiences don't sound as fun as using VR to play a video game or pilot a jet plane. Instead, the simulations are designed as training tools to foster empathy and understanding for caregivers of older adults.

At the University of Minnesota, medical school students have been using an Embodied Labs experience to understand the perspective of a woman named Beatriz in the advancing stages of Alzheimer's. Students in the Mortuary Science program have experienced an Embodied Labs simulation where they take on the role of a 74-year-old man named Alfred who has age-related macular degeneration and high-frequency hearing loss.

I'm not sure if I'll be a caregiver, or if I'll experience Alzheimer's or macular degeneration myself. But I do know that someday I'm going to die. Which is why I wanted to try the end-of-life Embodied Labs experience called the Clay Lab.

You take on the role of a 66-year-old man named Clay Crowder, coming to terms with the reality of a Stage 4 terminal lung cancer diagnosis.

"Strong emotional reactions are common," warns an introduction to the VR experience.

"That one is intense," said Carrie Shaw, Embodied Labs CEO and founder. "We wanted to portray what active dying is like."

The experience includes one scene where your wife and daughter are taking you to a doctor's appointment.

"I'm afraid it's not good news," says an oncologist. "The latest scan that was repeated unfortunately did not look good."

My daughter is in denial. "You're going to repeat the treatments, correct?"

But the doctor says continuing treatments will likely do more harm than good. She gently guides us to accept that palliative care is the best option now.

Next, I'm in my final days, seeing myself lying prone in bed, looking down at my feet and torso.

For a brief period, my skin becomes transparent and I see my struggling organs and my rib cage moving as I'm panting in discomfort. If I hold up my hands, my fingertips look bluish. But I get some pain medication and my breathing and heart rate ease.

I look around the bedroom in my home. My loved ones are gathered around me, watching me intently but sadly. I hear them talking about diapers, catheters and the rattling secretions from my lungs.

A hospice nurse recommends against giving me a feeding tube, which will get in the way of the "natural process" of my journey.

"At this stage, he's really not hungry," she says of me. I fade in and out of consciousness.

"Your eyes are open. Good morning, Clay. How are you feeling?" says the hospice nurse at one point. Apparently, not so hot, I'm thinking.

My daughters remark about how cold my body feels. Then at one point, the hospice nurse sends for my wife because "it's time."

"Have you told him that it's all right for him to go?" she asks everyone.

One of my daughters is tearfully reading aloud from a poem as my vision fades. Then everything disappears, and all I see is a bird — a blue heron, I think — flying away toward a white light. I didn't create these images in my head; they're all part of the VR program.

"Our intent, from an emotional standpoint, was to give some space," Shaw said of that scene.

Next, the VR program shifts my perspective. I seem to be floating somewhere near the ceiling of the room. I'm looking down on my own body. My loved ones give me final hugs and kisses. I can hear the caregivers talking to me.

"We're going to bathe you and put some lotion on your skin," they say. I watch my body being wheeled out of my home on a gurney and placed in a vehicle.

"I don't think a lot about death," said Ryn Gagen, a 29-year-old medical school librarian. But trying out the Clay experience made Gagen empathize and wonder about the loved ones and caregivers who might be by their side at the end of life.

"I think about me in the future in that situation," Gagen said. "I should think about what I want to happen, what I want around me."

I had a similar reaction. When I went through the Embodied Labs experience, I was struck and saddened by the silent, miserable faces staring at me. In real life (or death), I think I'd like a television in the room, with some of my favorite movies playing. Alternatively, I'd like to have some music playing. Even if I wasn't always awake to appreciate it, at least it would give those around me something pleasant to do while they were waiting.

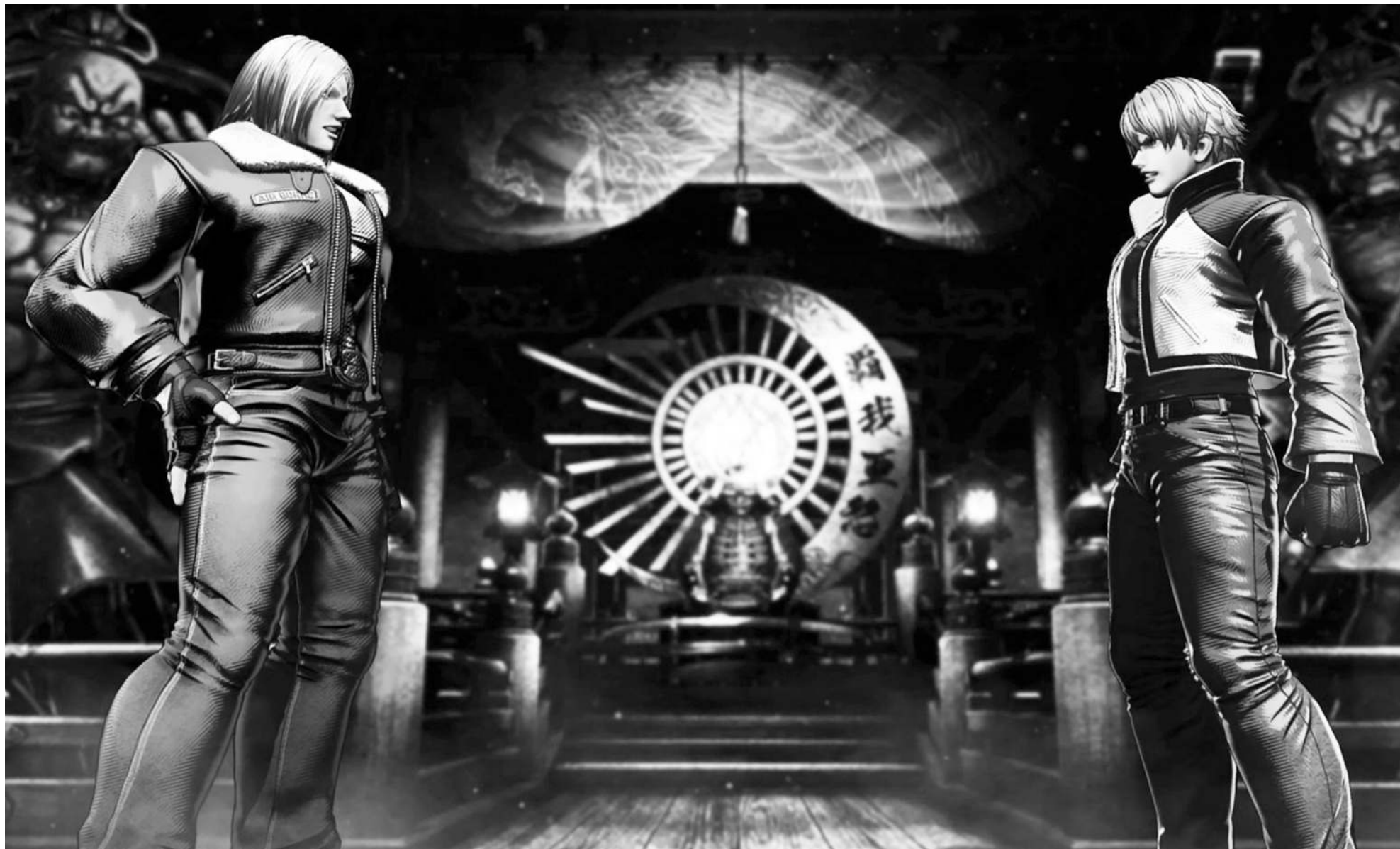
Seeing my future dead self has also prompted me to take a continuing education class to finally write a will. As Hamlet also said, when it comes to death, the readiness is all.

Shaw, who studied biomedical visualization and game development at the University of Illinois, Chicago, said her company grew out of her background being a caregiver for her mother, who suffered from early-onset Alzheimer's disease.

She said the videos with real people — actors portraying relatives and caregivers — have greater impact for the viewers than computer-generated scenes. The goal is to remind caregivers that they're dealing with a person, not just a disease.

"We're really trying to capture the narrative of real lived experiences," Shaw said.

VIDEO GAMES



SNK/TNS

Terry Bogard, left, and Rock Howard are the two of the central characters in *Fatal Fury: City of the Wolves*, the franchise's first entry in more than 25 years.

City of Wolves keeps pace with an old rival

Fatal Fury's new entry features a great roster, strategic fighting system but falls short of high bar set by *Street Fighter 6*

BY GIESON CACHO
The Mercury News

Fatal Fury has always felt like the Pepsi to the Coca-Cola of *Street Fighter*. SNK's fighting game series emerged around the same time as Capcom's iconic franchise but never rose to its iconic heights.

At 1990s arcades, when fans huddled around cabinets featuring Ryu and company, the ones showing Terry Bogard were usually open.

That isn't to say *Fatal Fury* was a bad series, but it was never as popular despite having a more compelling story and experimental gameplay mechanics such as the two-plane battle system. The SNK franchise has been dormant, but the publisher resurrected it after 25 years.

(Bogard and other characters have been mainstays in *The King of Fighters*, though.)

Melding the new and old

The latest entry, *Fatal Fury: City of the Wolves*, focuses on a new generation of fighters while maintaining ties to the old guard. Series protagonist Bogard remains at the forefront along with mainstays Mai Shiranui and Billy Kane, who come along for the ride. The roster also includes Rock Howard, who represents the future of the series, other characters who debuted in

Fatal Fury: Mark of the Wolves and celebrity and crossover fighters. They include Ronaldo (Yes, the soccer player is in a video game not named EA Sports FC) and Salvatore Ganacci, the famed DJ. Like other fighting games, *City of the Wolves* will add more characters after launch like *Street Fighter* icons Ken Masters and Chun-Li.

Diving into the fighting systems

When it comes to the mechanics, the new *Fatal Fury* again fuses the old and new but unifies them under what the developer calls the REV system. Similar to what *Street Fighter 6* did, the combat system amalgamates disparate ideas from previous entries into a cohesive whole. The Tactical Offense Position from *Mark of the Wolves* has morphed into the Selective Potential Gear, or SPG.

Before a match, players can decide on which third of their life bar to use the SPG, and when their health reaches that extremity, a special line of moves can be used. That creates a fascinating level of strategy, signaling an aggressive or defensive approach to a match. The SPG allows players to use a REV Blow, which works similarly to *Street Fighter 6*'s Drive Impact, allowing them to absorb attacks and deal damage. Players also have REV Arts, which are comparable to EX moves in the

mentioned Capcom game.

On the defensive side, SNK added a REV button that acts as a more powerful guard from attacks. It puts more space between the player and attacker while avoiding chip damage. The REV button is also used in Dodge Attacks that can avoid a strike and counter at the same time. Lastly, players have a Just Defense, which is a parry that slightly regains health and boasts other benefits. It seems more forgiving than comparable moves in other games.

Higher-level techniques

Players can use most of these REV moves at any time, with the main limit being an REV meter. If players use REV commands too often, the meter overheats, putting fighters in a weakened state. Their guard can be broken and they won't have access to the key moves. It's best for players to judiciously use REV attacks instead of carelessly spamming them.

In addition, players have access to feints and a technique that lets them cancel out of certain moves to extend combos. It normally takes a higher degree of expertise to access these intricate commands, but in *City of the Wolves*, they seem easier to pull off and the timing seems more forgiving.

That's a notable element for this fran-

chise revamp, which does a lot to bring *Fatal Fury* to a new generation of fans while satisfying loyal veterans. SNK didn't forget where the fighting game came from and even added a two-lane system that's still gimmicky but has been a staple of the series since the original. In a primitive attempt at a 2.5D battle arena, the system lets players fight in two different planes of the screen. Unfortunately, the two-lane system is limited to one stage at the moment.

SNK tries to keep up with the rest of the genre by adding a more role-playing game-inspired mode called *Episodes of South Town Mode*. In it, players choose a character and they run through a long story where they level up their fighter, adding new skills that gives them an edge in increasingly difficult scenarios.

It's a welcome addition, but that and the training mode fall short of the high bar set by *Street Fighter 6*.

Despite that, *City of the Wolves* has plenty going for it with its strategic fighting game system and great cast of fighters. It feels like an entry that still hasn't lost ground to its rival, yet also hasn't closed the distance.

Platforms: PlayStation 5, PlayStation 4, Xbox Series X and Series S, PC

Online: snk-corp.co.jp/us/games/fatal-fury-cotw

TELEVISION

Tucci finds new angles on Italy

Actor aiming to show the diversity of the land of his heritage in new food-travel docuseries

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

You can't keep Stanley Tucci from his beloved Italy just like you can't keep cheese from

lasagna.

The Golden Globe- and Emmy-winning actor is once again elegantly roaming through the land of his heritage in National Geographic's new food-travel series "Tucci in Italy," less than three years after a similar show was axed.

"I think that visually it's more interesting this time around, and I think that we try to go more in-depth into the stories as much as you can, given the format," he says.

Tucci goes from a three-Michelin-star restaurant in Milan where the staff grow their own vegetables — "Stop it!" he half-heartedly begs a chef adding salmon eggs to a pesto risotto — to cooking fish for anglers on the banks of the Sarca River.

"I'm exploring the complex connections between the land, the people and the food they eat in order to discover the essence of each region in the country I love — Italy," the "Conclave" and "The Devil Wears Prada" star tells viewers in each installment.

Each episode of the first season of "Tucci in Italy" explores a different region — from Tuscany to Trentino-Alto Adige, Lombardy, Abruzzo and Lazio. It was shot over six months, from January to July in 2024.

"It's a lot of planning; it is a lot of logistics. But ultimately, once you get to where you're supposed to be, which isn't always easy in Italy, especially in the mountainous areas, it's great," Tucci says. "The people are great, extraordinary."

In Tuscany, the cradle of the Renaissance, Tucci eats lampredotto, a sandwich made with the cow's fourth stomach, and a beef tongue stew. In the Alpine region of Trentino-Alto Adige, he skis and munches on beef goulash and polenta near the Austrian border.

National Geographic greenlit Tucci's new docuseries a year after CNN canceled his "Searching for Italy" despite winning Emmys for Outstanding Hosted Nonfiction Series or Special.

Much of the same production staff and crew transferred over

with Tucci to his new TV home, and they embraced the use of the latest drones, giving the series a sweep and majesty.

Executive producer Lottie Birmingham, who worked on "Searching for Italy" and jumped aboard "Tucci in Italy," says the new series pushes viewers into new parts of the European nation.

"I think before we did focus quite a lot on the major cities, whereas this time we've kind of gone out into the wider regions," she says. "In Lazio, for example, we haven't just focused on Rome or in Tuscany; we haven't just focused on Florence."

The series also stops to look at some of the social issues roiling Italy, like immigration and gay rights. Tucci and his team spotlight Punjabi migrants, particularly Sikhs, who have a significant presence in the nation's dairy industry, and the impact that Ethiopian immigrants have had despite facing racism and being treated as "other."

"Every country does it, and it's never a helpful thing," Tucci says. "And after people assimilate, then they often find others to become 'others.' So it's just this sort of weird, vicious circle."

The new series — produced by Salt Productions and BBC Studios — in many ways is more true to Tucci's initial vision, which was to look carefully at trends below the surface of what appears to be a happy, sun-blasted land.

"The original idea of the show that I had almost 20 years ago, at this point, was to show the diversity of Italy. But also to, in a weird way, dispel the myth that it's sunny all the time and everybody's eating pizza and pasta and everybody is happy and smiling all the time. Yeah, that exists, but that's not everything."

It was Tucci who suggested a stop in Lombardy after reading an article about a gay couple who haven't been able to legally adopt their baby boy since the government doesn't recognize adoptions by same-sex couples.

"There's a darker side, as there are with every country," Birmingham says. "Italians are so focused on food and family, but what does family mean? That was what we wanted to look at in that story."



MATT HOLYOAK, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC/AP

Stanley Tucci, left, prepares a dish for anglers on the banks of the Sarca River in Italy's northernmost region during the filming of his series "Tucci in Italy," a new docuseries that explores more of the country's regions than his last one, "Searching for Italy," which was axed despite winning Emmy awards.

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MUSIC



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

Kali Uchis poses for a portrait on April 22 in Los Angeles. Uchis' latest album, the largely autobiographical "Sincerely," was released on May 9.

Emotional rescue

Kali Uchis pours her heart into new album she needed, 'Sincerely,'

BY LESLIE AMBRIZ
Associated Press

Kali Uchis wrote the album she knew her future self would need to listen to. The Grammy-winning artist unknowingly was crafting her own audible remedy.

"I really did make the music that I needed for my grieving process, for just the place that I'm at in my life right now," she said of the album, released May 9.

"Sincerely," (yes, the title includes the comma) began as a collection of letters to herself, friends and loved ones but took on a deeper meaning as the Colombian American songwriter gave birth to her first child and processed her mother's recent death. The first single, "Sunshine & Rain..." includes a clip of Uchis' mother saying, "Good morning, sunshine."

"I wanted to immortalize her in the project," Uchis said. "I thought it was just a beautiful way to open the album."

The 14-track album finds Uchis proudly wearing her heart on her sleeve with songs like "Daggers!," where Uchis encourages a

close friend to lean into self-love, or "ILYSMIH," which includes baby coos at the beginning and was written as she lay in her hospital bed with her newborn.

Uchis hopes that after listening to her fifth full album, fans will feel more connected to themselves and more in touch with their emotions: "I hope it will give them some type of solace."

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Associated Press: When you decided to step into this album and encompass that world of tenderness and strength, what was your thought process of the themes that you wanted to follow?

Uchis: I'm a very deep feeler. I'm very empathetic. I feel a lot. And I wanted to make a body of work that fully showed that vulnerability and that actually really dug deep into my heart in a way that none of my other albums ever had.

I felt like I was ready to do that because I've been making music long enough that I felt that it was that time for me, and then it just so happened that, shortly after working on the album, I became pregnant, which was such a big part of being able to feel even deeper than I ever have.



Colombian American artist Kali Uchis processed the birth of her first child and the loss of her mother through the recording of her fifth full-length album.

How was working on this album healing for you?

It's crazy because a lot of times I feel, and especially with this album in particular, I felt that I really made music that my future self would need, that I didn't

SEE UCHIS ON PAGE 17

MUSIC

Blondshell

If You Asked for a Picture (Partisan)

Sabrina Teitelbaum, who records under the band name Blondshell, is a longtime student of alt-rock. She knows a thing or two about all the ways in which a cutting lyric and thunderous guitar can rejuvenate the soul and soundtrack rage. On her sophomore album, "If You Asked for a Picture," named after Mary Oliver's 1986 poem "Dogfish," she builds from the success of her earlier work — 2023's self-titled debut and its haunting single "Salad."

Over the course of 12 tracks, much like on her first album, Blondshell reckons with a woman's role in her various relationships, personally and societally. Those messages — gritty, real, existential and fluid as they are — arrive atop visceral instrumentation, hearty guitars and punchy percussion.

"Oh well you're not gonna save him," she reminds listeners in "Arms."

Much of "If You Asked for a Picture" sits at the intersection of modern indie, '90s grunge and '80s college radio rock, like that of "Event of a Fire." On the acoustic fake-out "Thumbtack," instrumentation builds slow and remains restrained. "Man" is muscular, with its soaring distortion and layered production.

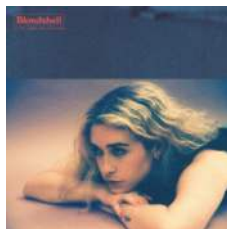
On "If You Asked for a Picture," relationships are nuanced, awkward and honest — her flawed and frustrated characters show how easy it is to succumb to the whims of someone who doesn't have your best interest in mind, to become someone else when you don't know who you are. That's clear on "Change," where she sings, "It's not my fault it's who I am / When I feel bad I bring it back and leave it all at your door." And the anxious complications compound: "A parting gift / Kiss me back / I'm sorry for changing."

If there is a weakness in "If You Asked for a Picture," it is that a number of the tracks bleed together sonically near the record's end, making it hard to distinguish a three-song run: "Toy" to "Man." Fans will likely label it stylistic consistency rather than tiresome repetition.

The swaying mellotron of "Model Rockets" ends the album. "I'm a bad bad girl / Bad bad girl," she adds to the closer. "Life may have been happening elsewhere / And I don't know what I want anymore."

It might serve as a mission statement for the album — where identity and desire are malleable, influenced by relationships and the evolving nature of the world, made more complicated by simply being a woman in it.

— Rachel S. Hunt
Associated Press



Cautious Clay

The Hours: Morning (Concord)

Cautious Clay, the multi-instrumentalist whose dreamy R&B and indie-pop sound has earned him the attention of everyone from Arooj Aftab and John Mayer to Taylor Swift, embraces the passing of time on his latest EP, "The Hours: Morning."

Across eight tracks each representing an hour from 5 a.m. to 12 p.m., Clay documents the clarity, optimism and sometimes sinking reality of the start of each day through soulful, funk-pop beats.

"The Hours: Morning" follows Clay's 2023 biographical album "Karpeh" (titled after his given name, Joshua Karpeh) and joins a discography that shows his instrumental and vocal prowess. Clay's moody, breakout track, 2017's "Cold War," was interpolated by Swift on "London Boy" for her 2019 record "Lover," shortly after it featured in a scene in Olivia Wilde's coming-of-age comedy "Booksmart." His 2021 song "Wildfire" accumulated tens of millions of streams on its own before being covered by Rosé of the mega-popular K-pop girl group Blackpink.

It's a simple idea, framing songs around eight morning hours, but the structure of "The Hours: Morning" allows for complex sonic exploration. Clay tasked himself with producing a distinct sound for each, emulating a specific mentality associated with the hour.

The smooth R&B opener "Tokyo Lift (5 am)" embraces early morning limbo, in his case, the afterglow of late-night karaoke. Unburdened by the realities of the day — "You're in denial / But I'm not talking 'bout a river," Clay sings in a raspy, whispered tone — the mood is light, the production mellow and synth-heavy. A flute solo adds brightness to the final verse, like a bird's call meeting the morning sun.

"Traffic (7 am)" starts with a string of relationship reflections. "Every morning felt like traffic / Brain full of static," he begins, eventually arriving at a sensual chorus of overlapping vocals. "It's like poetry," Clay sings, "I felt the hair on my skin / Raising when you crashed in / To me." The song is capped by Clay's crisp saxophone.

Clay isn't restricted by his hourly concept. Each song is engaging enough to exist outside of its designated time block, free of its parenthetical label. But together, Clay creates a colorful world — a morning listeners will want to wake up early for.

— Elise Ryan
Associated Press



Blake Shelton

For Recreational Use Only (BBR Music Group/BMG Nashville)

Blake Shelton's 13th studio album, "For Recreational Use Only," opens with a fitting declaration for both his latest project and the current state of his career: "Stay Country or Die Tryin'."

It would be more accurately phrased like a question. At this stage, Shelton is a longtime veteran of Hollywood on "The Voice" stage with a pop superstar wife in Gwen Stefani, far removed from his Nashville roots, all while maintaining the position of one of the most high-profile country stars of the current moment.

But if country is a lifestyle and an image beyond its musical forms — saying nothing of the opening track's arena-sized rock elements — is he staying true to some ethos? Is Shelton speaking diaristically when he sings "Boots ain't never seen easy street" in the album's opening verse?

Perhaps not. In 2025, he performs between worlds, but no matter. He's long dedicated himself to big country radio hits and returns to those roots across "For Recreational Use Only." The songs here concern themselves with lived-in bars ("Cold Can") and backroad acuity ("Some things we all gotta get through / 'Til it's goin', goin', gone in the big rear view," Shelton sings on "Life's Been Comin' Too Fast.")

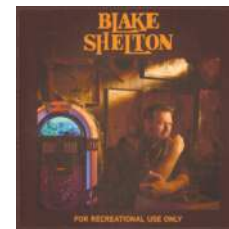
"The Keys" is haunted by past lives, or at least the achingly sentimental in his jukebox country style; "Don't Mississippi" offers whiskey wisdom: "You might die from a broken heart," he sings. "But you ain't gonna die of thirst."

Charms are found across the release, like in the honky-tonk happy "Texas," and its cheerful reference to George Strait's classic "All My Ex's Live In Texas," or the big-hearted and big-voiced ballad on God and grief, "Let Him In Anyway."

Collaborations are few and pointed. Shelton and Stefani harmonize beautifully on "Hanging On"; he does the same with Craig Morgan on "Heaven Sweet Home," an affecting meditation of mortality. He taps Josh Anderson for the slow-burn closer "Years."

Shelton might live a very different life than the characters found in his songs, as is often true of any larger-than-life celebrity performer. But make no mistake, this is a giant pop country record, with limitless potential for radio ubiquity.

— Maria Sherman
Associated Press



Uchis: Singer says nature has been a consistent inspiration

FROM PAGE 16

realize I was going to need at that time.

The album is actually dedicated to my mom. My mom later ended up getting diagnosed, and she's no longer here. ... And so pretty much all of the songs ended up taking on a deeper meaning to me because of that and because of it being dedicated to her. ... At the time, I might not have even realized subconsciously that I was making all of this to heal myself.

Is that how you got to the title "Sincerely,"?

At one point, I was like, "I'm gonna make sure each of these songs is like, this is my letter to the world, this is my letter to this person, this my letter to that, this one to myself." I tried to really conceptualize in a different way that I never have when making any other album. And then ... when my mom passed, a lot of what I had left from her is letters that she wrote to me, and so it ended up, like I said, just more and more reasons for me to realize that it was the correct title for the project.

When you are in that studio space by yourself, what comes first? Is it the melody? Is it the lyrics? How did you specifically craft this album?

I never stick to one process, but one particular process that stuck out to me on a lot of the songs was that most of them were written with no music, just songs that came to me.

For instance, "ILYSMIH" — that one literally I was just recovering from labor, my son was sleeping next to me; I was still in my hospital bed when I got this idea for this song and started it, started recording it on my phone, started writing some lyrics down. ... There's one called "All I Can Say." I wrote that whole song in the car on the way to the studio. ... I try to just make beauty out of all of my experiences.

Fans online were saying "Sunshine and Rain" is the answer to "After the Storm." Do you agree with that and if so, how does it feel to now, five albums later, do you agree with the correlation?

Thematically, nature is kind of a recurring theme in my music because I am so inspired by nature and I feel nature is where God exists and nature is where a lot of my creativity just thrives.

I feel like it just happened. Afterwards, I even thought, "Is this too similar to what I've already done?" But ... I just love the things that I love, and I just returned back to those nostalgic elements. I may branch out and try what people think is different sounds. Like on "Orquídeas," I did a lot of different genre-bending on "Sin Miedo (del Amor y Otros Demonios)" as well, but to me, that's still nostalgic because it's still music I grew up listening to.

I return a lot to things that are core memories for me. It's soothing to my nervous system. I'm the person who

watches the same episodes of my favorite TV shows over and over again ... I think that's what makes it beautiful too, is to see the evolution and know that it's still true to me. It's still true to my roots in music and where I started, but an evolved version.

What does that mean to you to have your mother's voice be a part of the album?

After she passed, one of the first things I did was go through all of the audio messages that she had ever sent me and I was just listening to all her messages over and over, wanting to hear her voice. When I heard that one I just thought of, "Oh how perfect is this that the song is called 'Sunshine & Rain...,' and she had said, "Good morning, sunshine." It was for my son that she sent that message. I thought it was just a beautiful way to open the album, considering that it's dedicated to her.

I struggled a lot with whether or not I wanted to share because I'm a very, very private person. So I struggled a lot with if I even wanted to share that my mom was no longer here, but I felt I just had to not be afraid of that vulnerability and not pretend like it didn't affect me or didn't have some type of impact on me when it had such a big impact on me and still does. And I wanted to also honor her and honor her life in a way through art that I know that she would have loved and that she would have been proud of.

TRAVEL

A slower, quieter version of Bahrain

Karzakkan forest and beach and their uncommon, unpolished landscapes provide places for relaxation, reflection

BY SHANNON RENFROE
Stars and Stripes

The winds were fierce at the end of the Karzakkan forest trail, and the coastline — usually dotted with fishermen — sat nearly empty.

Only one man remained, his line cast quietly into the murky water. I'd learned that high winds churn up sediment, making it harder for fish to spot the bait.

Just before the sea, a rusted compound offered shade. A Bahraini flag snapped overhead. Under the awning, mismatched chairs, worn cushions and a scrap of black cloth near a sink painted the picture of a place lived in. Tacked to the concrete wall was a small mirror, mottled with decay.

I wondered why it was there. A friend suggested it was for fishermen to tidy up before heading home. But the mirror didn't show me — it reflected only the sea and docked boats behind me. A quiet lesson in perspective, perhaps.

This wasn't the polished Bahrain of air-conditioned malls and Friday brunches. It was slower, rougher and quieter. The water, though clear, revealed algae-covered tires. Venture farther and a strip of makeshift shore emerges, more debris than beach.

I had hoped the island might offer a public beach that didn't belong to a gated resort. But an island doesn't guarantee beaches, at least not the kind you can easily access for free. What it did offer instead was something better.

Karzakkan forest is a shaded corridor of mesquite trees arched like a natural cathedral. As I stepped beneath them, the air cooled — a rare mercy in Bahrain's bleached landscape. It's not a forest in the traditional sense, but a form of quiet therapy.

This kind of immersion in nature is what Japan calls "forest bathing," or Shinrin-yoku. Studies from around the world link time in green spaces to reduced stress and improved well-being. In a place where greenery is scarce and walking often impractical, even a short stroll here offered a moment of restoration.

But like the coastline, the illusion breaks — abruptly. The canopy opens to a jarring pile of trash. Still, just beyond that, the road empties into the sea again and the calm returns.

On my way home, I stumbled on Al Hamoor Grills, a small fish grill that doesn't stand out from the road, but local families clearly know it.

The menu was scrawled in Arabic on a dry-erase board, without a word of English in sight. That's usually a good sign in my experience. A crowd gathered around the register; 40 or so bags of to-go orders were lined up at the pickup window.

I was only seeking a few photos, hoping to win over friends who found the beach experience underwhelming. Instead, the co-owner greeted me like family and ushered me inside.

The kitchen was a study in organized chaos.

Plastic buckets brimmed with freshly gutted catch from the morning, their silver skin stained a deep turmeric orange from a marinade.

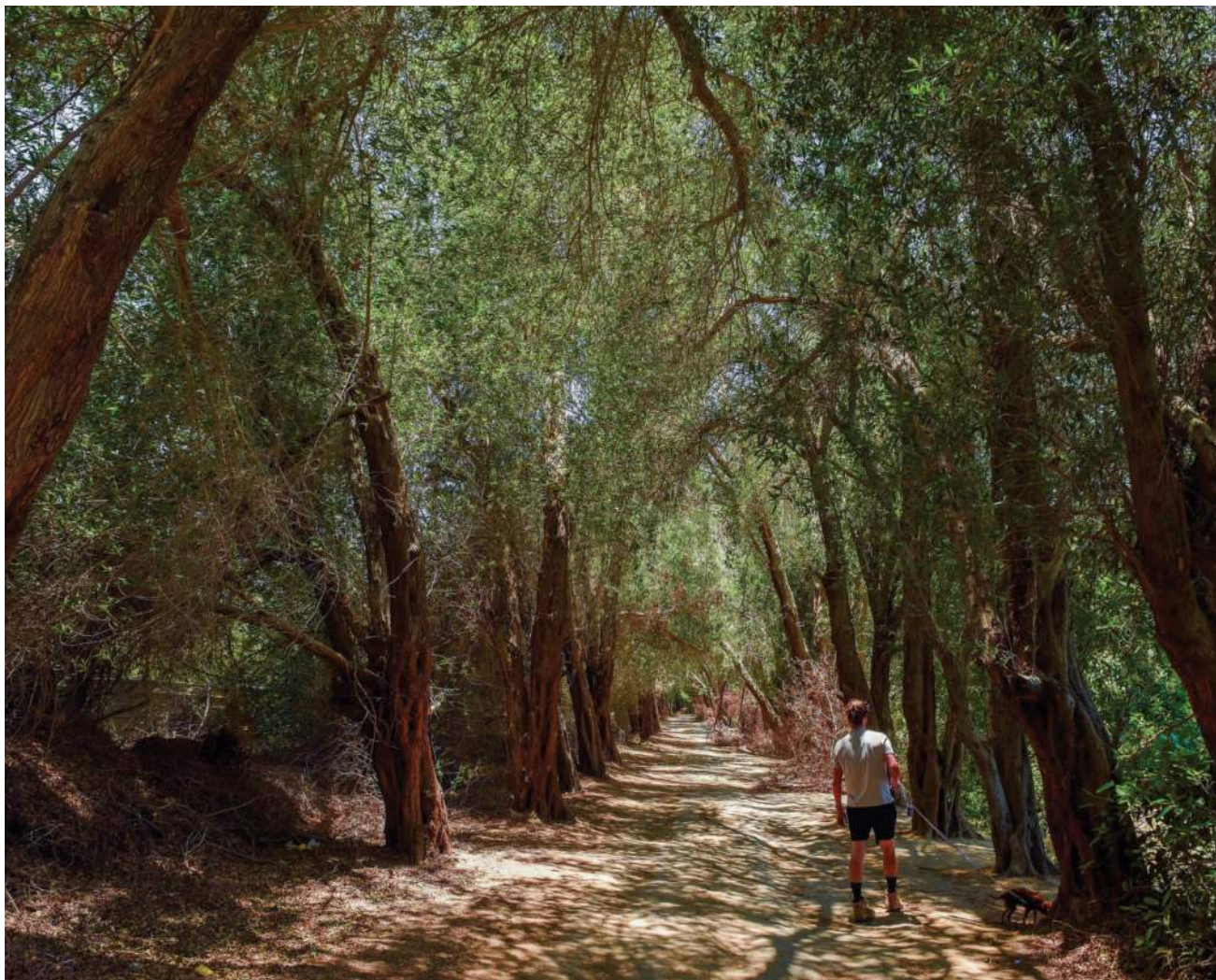
The grill was a long, low altar of glowing embers, lined with butterflied fish. Nearby, enormous pots held biryani rice studded with cardamom and flecked with saffron.

Each plate of fish and rice came with thick-cut white onions, a heap of spicy arugula and a handful of lemon slices.

At a fridge, the co-owner pointed out the fish — snapper, sea bream, shrimp — and insisted I try them.

The grilled snapper flaked beautifully; the sea bream, fried until golden, was rich and peppery. No forks in sight, just black latex gloves. A woman nearby saw me hesitate and offered a tip: "Skip the gloves — get your hands dirty." She was right.

Karzakkan forest isn't pristine. The coast isn't curated.



PHOTOS BY SHANNON RENFROE/Stars and Stripes

The mesquite-lined Karzakkan forest, one of Bahrain's few accessible green corridors, offers natural shade and quiet.



The renovated and covered dining area is air-conditioned at Al Hamoor Grills in Karzakkan, Bahrain.



Sea bream and snapper cook on a long grill at Al Hamoor Grills in Karzakkan. Each plate of fish and biryani rice comes with thick-cut white onions, a heap of spicy arugula and a handful of lemon slices.

If you go

Karzakkan forest and beach

Address: Road No. 2732, Karzakkan, Bahrain

Transportation: Uber 7 BD (19 USD)

Hours: Open seven days a week, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Al Hamoor Grills

Prices: 4 BD to 8 BD (10 USD to 21 USD)

Address: Block 1028 Street 28 Karzakkan, Ash Shamaliyah Bahrain

Hours: Sunday through Thursday, 7 a.m.-11 p.m.; Friday through Saturday, 9 a.m.-11 p.m.

Information: +973 77999101; Instagram @hamoorgrills

Shannon Renfro

And Al Hamoor Grills isn't fancy. But together, they offer something increasingly rare: authenticity. If you're willing to look past the surface, you'll find a version of Bahrain that's real, quiet and generous.

Sometimes, that's more than enough.

renfro.shannon@stripes.com
@ShannonStripes



Fishing boats anchored off Karzakkan beach on April 28.

CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

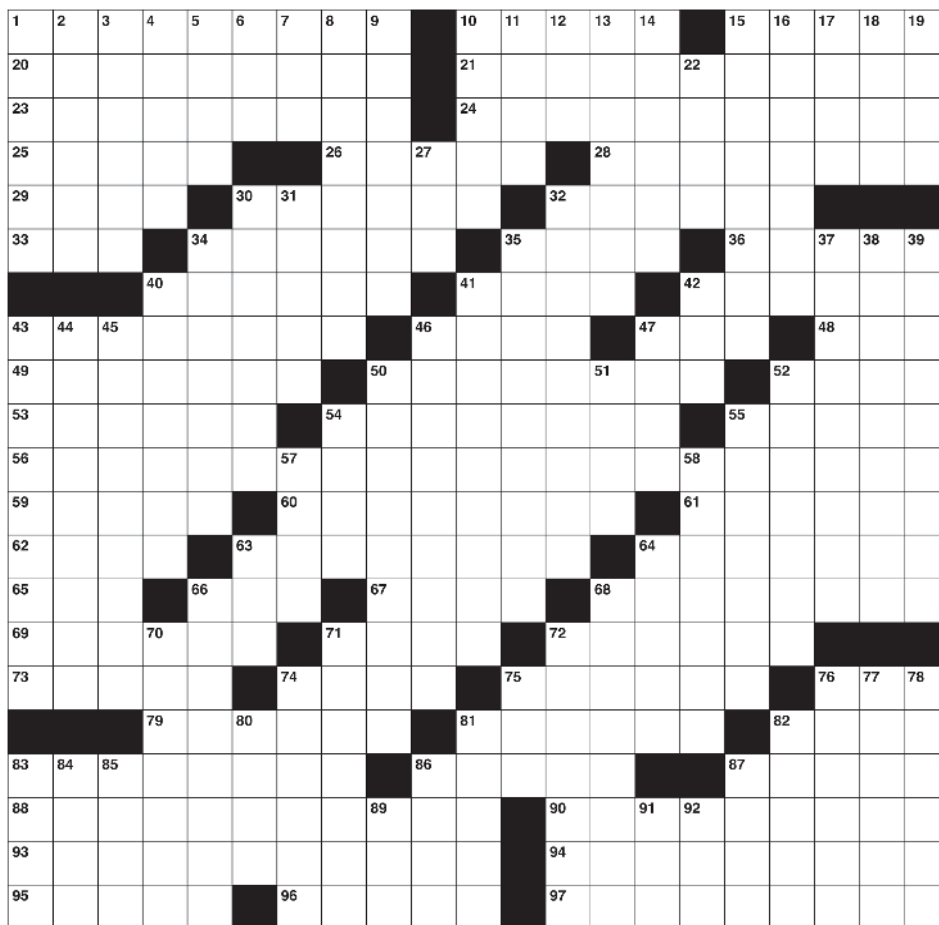
POWER GRID

BY BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Brendan Emmett Quigley is a full-time crossword constructor in Brookline, Mass. He creates a Sunday puzzle every other week for The Boston Globe and, since 2008, a couple puzzles a week for his blog, brendanemmettquigley.com. "A few weeks after I got married, I told my wife that I was going to be giving away puzzles on the site for free," he says. "That she didn't divorce me then and there was something of a miracle." — W.S.

ACROSS

- 1 Cartridge from the 1980s
- 10 Source of the words "galore" and "smithereens"
- 15 "Nice!"
- 20 Drag-racing venue
- 21 Nature personified
- 23 "Pinky-swear?"
- 24 Step on a scale?
- 25 The Beatles' "White Album" has four of them
- 26 Sphere of influence
- 28 1957 Isaac Asimov novel, with "The"
- 29 Command that might be represented by a curved arrow pointing left
- 30 Outer layer of the brain
- 32 Inveigle
- 33 Package drop-off sites: Abbr.
- 34 "Council," in Russian
- 35 "Flower Myth" painter Paul
- 36 Takes a bit off the top
- 40 Showed off on an instrument
- 41 Follow closely
- 42 Note-to-self medium, perhaps
- 43 Beers from Bremen, informally
- 46 Zingy flavor
- 47 Way off in the distance
- 48 Agreeable words
- 49 Defeated decisively
- 50 Fish that passes the "mirror test" of self-recognition
- 52 Salon sound
- 53 Poker declaration
- 54 "I've Been Everywhere" singer in the Country Music Hall of Fame
- 55 Mass agreements
- 56 "Whoever did this has it coming!"
- 59 Lynn _____, Super Bowl X M.V.P.
- 60 At the end of the day
- 61 Recently
- 62 "Phooey!"
- 63 Right of way, say
- 64 Cornmeal dish at a trattoria
- 65 "I _____ you!"
- 66 Eternity
- 67 Partner of 74-Across
- 68 Acted diplomatically
- 69 Organ above the trachea
- 71 Comic Ali
- 72 Black out
- 73 Big name in the cleaning aisle
- 74 Partner of 67-Across
- 75 Embody something proudly
- 76 _____ Fring, "Breaking Bad" antagonist
- 79 Spots for lavalier mics
- 81 Hebrew greeting
- 82 Turn to pulp
- 83 1999 Maeve Binchy novel
- 86 Young salmon
- 87 Unit of magnetic flux density
- 88 Spirit with a citrus flavor
- 90 Head cheese
- 93 Minor crime
- 94 Adding up (to)
- 95 Joy on TV
- 96 Button on many appliances
- 97 "Network" co-star, 1976
- 13 Climbed, as a rope
- 14 Greek goddess depicted holding torches and snakes
- 15 Person on a nominating committee, say
- 16 Goes nowhere in particular
- 17 Psyche's partner
- 18 Accusatory words
- 19 "Well _____"
- 22 Twice-distilled Turkish beverage
- 27 Item in a hedge
- 30 Lass
- 31 Semicircular?
- 32 With style
- 34 "Let's eat!"
- 35 School whose sports teams are known as the Golden Flashes
- 37 Traveling from place to place
- 38 Shopgirl in a Paris boutique
- 39 Freezes
- 40 Homo _____ neanderthalensis
- 41 Strong urge
- 42 Cough up
- 43 Cake with a distinctive swirl
- 44 Casual and not meant to be taken seriously, as a remark
- 45 Spinal cord membranes
- 46 Shade akin to pumpkin
- 47 Court favor in a cringey fashion
- 50 Beasts with enormous tusks
- 51 Shake up
- 52 Show warmth to
- 54 Like recording studio equipment
- 55 Plague
- 57 Take in
- 58 Archer's gift
- 63 Old curse word
- 64 Actor Pascal of "Gladiator II"
- 66 What provides the big picture?
- 68 Noon or 6 p.m., for some
- 70 Reality TV star Hadid
- 71 Something sown, per an idiom
- 72 Macho stereotype
- 74 Goes in and out
- 75 Word before knows or cares
- 76 Chess opening
- 77 Dime store?
- 78 In need of a haircut, say
- 80 Limerick, e.g.
- 81 Tricked out with the latest technology, say
- 82 One-named Brazilian soccer star who is a six-time FIFA World Player of the Year
- 83 Body building?
- 84 _____ Crown Theater (downtown Chicago landmark)
- 85 Acting without thinking
- 86 Candy brand with a crown in its logo
- 87 See 89-Down
- 89 87-Down makeup
- 91 It may be rolled out in the backyard
- 92 Setting for Jacques-Louis David's painting "The Death of Marat"



GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

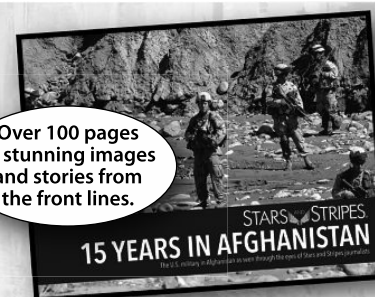
RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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FACES

Q&A



JOEL C. RYAN, INVISION/AP

Harris Dickinson, shown May 18, is in Cannes in southern France this year to promote his directorial debut with the film "Urchin."

Dickinson already branching out

'Babygirl' star discusses directorial debut, 'Urchin,' and his artistic journey to this point

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Harris Dickinson is sitting on a rooftop terrace in Cannes, trying to find all the movie tattoos on his body.

There's a little one for 2001's "Donnie Darko," but there's a much larger one on his arm for "Kes," Ken Loach's seminal British social realism drama from 1969.

"I'm sure there's a few more on my legs," Dickinson says, smiling. "I can't remember."

But the spirit of Loach runs strong in Dickinson's directorial debut, "Urchin." The film, which premiered in the Un Certain Regard section of the Cannes Film Festival, stars Frank Dillane as a homeless London drug addict.

A sensitive and perceptive character study, "Urchin" has been widely hailed as a standout at Cannes. Just as the 28-year-old Dickinson, who starred in last year's "Babygirl," is emerging as a major movie star, he's revealed himself to be a filmmaker to watch, too.

"Before we screened, I was debilitated by nerves," Dickinson said the day after the premiere. "I felt so vulnerable — which I do normally with acting, but not as much. I suddenly realized what an exposing thing this is. Like you said, it's showing a different side of myself and putting that out there to be obliterated."

But Dickinson, who first emerged in Eliza Hittman's 2017 film "Beach Rats," only expanded audiences' notions of him with "Urchin." As he explained, making it was important enough to him, even if it meant sacrificing parts at the very moment Hollywood won't stop calling.

This Associated Press interview has been edited for clarity and brevity:

Associated Press: How did your artistic journey start? Was acting or directing first?

Dickinson: I wanted to direct from a very

young age. I wanted to make films. I was making these skateboard videos and I was doing a lot of short films on YouTube. I had a web series where I would release episodes weekly. It was like a sketch show. That was my first love, just making things.

Acting kind of kicked off a little bit once "Beach Rats" came out at Sundance. It was weird. I had to earn my stripes, of course, as an actor. But I couldn't go to film school because I was acting. So I just carried on my own interest in it and thought: Hopefully someday I can do it. Then the short film happened and the BBC took a chance on me, commissioning "Urchin."

Was it hard to juggle your priorities?

Hard to figure out, yeah. And particularly when we're in a world where people don't always love someone trying to do multiple things. And rightly so. There are times when you shouldn't be trying to be a basketball player, or whatever. A lot of people do go, "Oh, I fancy doing that now," particularly when they get to a more successful position. But this has always been a love of mine and I've just been waiting for the moment to do it.

That must have required a lot of effort, especially after all the attention of "Babygirl." Did it mean saying no a lot?

Yeah, for sure. But it's easy to say no to things. "Urchin" was all I could think about. It was pouring out of me. It was all that was on my mind.

What was it about this character that compelled you?

The discovery of Mike happened over a long time. I really started with the intention to create a very focused character study of someone who was ultimately battling against themselves. I wanted to show a full person in all of their ugliness and all of their humanity and their charm. And that was a hard process to get right. It also happened with Frank, who came on and tapped into those things so beautifully. I kept coming



LEWIS JOLY, INVISION/AP

From left: Dickinson poses May 17 in Cannes with "Urchin" actors Megan Northam and Frank Dillane.

back to the no judgment thing, not allowing us to feel sorry for him too much. Just observe him and go through situations and see how he acts.

Did the film proceed out of work you've done with a charity for homeless people or were you inspired firstly by social realists like Ken Loach?

I'm always a bit reluctant to talk about this because it's something I've been doing in private and not trying to be like a heroic thing of a cause. I'm just a minor, minor part of a much bigger cause that is ultimately made up of hundred of thousands of individuals that are collectively working toward change. But it was always important to have the bones of this film lay in that space. It had to have the undercurrent to it. It had to have that factual reality to it.

And, yeah, Loach, (Shane) Meadows. Ken Loach, he's one of the greats, for good reason. He's made incredibly important films. And I don't know if this film has the throughline of a social realism drama or a social political film.

Do you expect to keep making films interspersed between acting?

I hope so. I hope people let me do it again. That's the goal. But it takes a lot of you.

New Springsteen EP includes recent anti-Trump rants

From wire reports

The Bruce Springsteen-President Donald Trump back and forth continues.

The latest salvo is the rush release of "Land of Hope and Dreams," a six-track EP issued on streaming services on Wednesday. It draws from the Boss' European tour opening show with the E Street Band in Manchester, England, last week where he made headlines by calling the Trump administration "corrupt, incompetent and treasonous."

The new live EP contains four songs in the gospel-fired title track, which envisions an America where "dreams will not be thwarted" and "faith will be rewarded." Another song, "Long Walk Home," is introduced by Springsteen as "a prayer for my country." The other two songs in the EP are "My City of Ruins" and a cover of Bob Dylan's "Chimes of Freedom."

The music, however, is not the most noteworthy part of the release. It's the speechifying. "Land of Hope and Dreams" includes two song introductions that feature Springsteen labeling Trump "an unfit president" who leads "a rogue government."

By commercially releasing his critiques, he seems intent on making it as easy as possible for Americans to hear what he has to say.

In the 3½-minute-long "My City of Ruins" intro, Springsteen alleges that under the Trump administration, "the richest men are taking satisfaction in abandoning the world's poorest children to sickness and death" while "taking sadistic pleasure in the pain they inflict on loyal American workers. They're rolling back historic civil rights legislation that has led to a more just and plural society," he says, "removing residents off American streets and, without due process of law ... deporting them to foreign detention centers and prisons."

News reports of Springsteen remarks in Manchester — which he has repeated during all three of his shows so far — angered Trump last week. On Truth Social, he called Springsteen "not a talented guy" and a "dried out 'prune' of a rocker (his skin is all atrophied!)," while warning "we'll all see how it goes for him!"

Trump has yet to react to the commercial release of Springsteen's anti-Trump rants, which are now easily accessible to subscribers to music streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music. But on Wednesday, the president did post a video on social media that was altered to make it appear like he knocked Springsteen down by hitting him with a golf ball.

Springsteen is releasing a box set, "Tracks II: The Lost Albums," on June 27.

Other news

■ The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers said Wednesday that **Cardi B** will receive the Voice of the Culture Award. She'll be honored at ASCAP's invite-only event celebrating the top hip-hop, R&B and gospel songwriters on June 8 in Los Angeles. The Voice of the Culture Award is presented to ASCAP members who have had a major influence on music and culture, recognizing their success as creators and changemakers. Usher was the recipient of the honor last year.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Flight evacuated following reports of bomb threat

CA SAN DIEGO — One person was arrested following reports of a possible bomb threat on a Hawaiian Airlines flight set to take off from San Diego International Airport, leading to the evacuation of the plane, officials said.

The Airbus A330 bound for Honolulu had just pushed back from the gate around 8:45 a.m. Tuesday when “a flight attendant informed the flight’s captain that a passenger reported a possible bomb onboard,” according to a statement from Port of San Diego Harbor police.

The captain called police and SWAT officers, and the FBI responded to search the aircraft. Nothing suspicious was found, and there was no threat to travelers, the police statement said.

A 35-year-old man was arrested on charges of making a false bomb threat and false report of a security threat, according to a news release from the Port of San Diego. The man allegedly told a flight attendant that the passenger next to him had a bomb.

All 293 people aboard Hawaiian Airlines Flight 15 were evacuated and transported by bus to a safe area. The plane was cleared by law enforcement and the passengers were able to reboard. It departed for Honolulu around 2:15 p.m., the airline later said.

Man charged with giving alcohol to fan who fell

PA PITTSBURGH — A man has been charged with providing alcohol to the 20-year-old who fell from the outfield stands at a Pittsburgh Pirates game on April 30.

Ethan Kirkwood, 21, of McKeesport, Pa., was arrested Tuesday on misdemeanor charges of furnishing alcohol to a minor and has a preliminary hearing scheduled for June 23, according to court documents.

Kavan Markwood suffered serious injuries after falling from the top of a 21-foot-high wall onto the warning track at PNC Park during a game between the Pirates and the Chicago Cubs. Markwood was admitted to the trauma center at Allegheny General Hospital in critical condition, but has made substantial progress since the fall.

Kirkwood said he bought alcohol for Markwood at the ballpark, according to a criminal complaint obtained by WTAE-TV in Pittsburgh.

Capitol rioter charged with recent burglary

VA RICHMOND — A Virginia man has been charged with felony burglary after being pardoned for his role in the U.S. Capitol riot, which included smashing the door panel that rioter Ashli Babbitt tried to breach before police shot her.



JESSICA CHRISTIAN, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE/AP

His board will go on

RJ Andrews paddleboards past a massive ship in the waters off of Crane Cove Park in San Francisco, on Tuesday.

Zachary Jordan Alam, 33, of Centreville, was arrested May 9 in a neighborhood outside of Richmond, Henrico County police said in a statement.

Officers had responded to a call of breaking and entering, where the homeowner said an unknown man came in through a back door, police said.

“The man took several items before he was observed by people in the home and was asked to leave,” police said. “Officers located the man in a nearby neighborhood and arrested him.”

On his first day back in office in January, President Donald Trump pardoned, commuted the prison sentences or vowed to dismiss the cases of all of the 1,500-plus people charged with crimes in the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol riot. They included Alam, who was sentenced to eight years in prison in November. The federal judge who handed down the punishment described Alam as one of the most violent and aggressive rioters.

Criminal probe launched related to charity

FL TALLAHASSEE — Leon County prosecutors have opened a criminal investigation relating to the Hope Florida Foundation.

In response to a request by the Miami Herald/Tampa Bay Times for Hope Florida Foundation-related records, the records custodian for State Attorney Jack

Campbell said the information couldn’t be released because it was “part of an open, on-going investigation.”

The response is the first confirmation of any law enforcement investigation related to the foundation, which was set up to support the Hope Florida program championed by Gov. Ron DeSantis and his wife, first lady Casey DeSantis.

Earlier this year, House Republicans alleged that the DeSantis administration illegally diverted \$10 million from a settlement with a Medicaid contractor to a political committee controlled by the governor’s then-chief of staff.

Hope Florida is a state program created by Casey DeSantis designed to move Floridians off of government welfare by connecting them to churches and nonprofits who can offer them help. Its charity arm, the Hope Florida Foundation, is supposed to aid that mission.

Hot dog: Weinermobiles to race each other at Indy

IN INDIANAPOLIS — Indianapolis 500 fans can spend Friday afternoon “hot dogging” it as Oscar Mayer’s six iconic Weinermobiles come to town for the inaugural “Wienie 500” race.

The race is scheduled for Friday at 2 p.m. during race week’s annual Carb Day festivities.

It marks the first time in a decade all six vehicles in the company fleet will be at the same location,

and it’s the first time they’ve ever raced.

Each Wienermobile will represent a regional favorite — the New York Dog for the East, Slaw Dog for the Southeast, Chilli Dog for the South, Chi Dog for the Midwest, Seattle Dog for the Northwest and Sonoran Dog for the Southwest.

Farmer guilty of crop fraud, must pay \$9.9M

KY DANVILLE — A Kentucky farmer agreed to pay at least \$9.9 million to the federal government over fraudulent crop insurance claims.

Larry Walden pleaded guilty to one charge of conspiracy to commit money laundering. The restitution agreement is part of his plea.

Walden also faces up to 20 years in prison under the charge, though his sentence will likely be less under sentencing guidelines used in the federal court system.

According to court documents, Walden, of Barren County, owned and rented farmland in the county and grew crops that included burley tobacco.

Walden admitted he wrote checks to Farmers Tobacco Warehouse in Danville to show he had bought tobacco from the warehouse, even though he hadn’t.

That was part of a scam to make it appear he hadn’t raised enough tobacco to fulfill the amount he had contracted to provide to tobacco

companies, according to the court record.

In reality, the warehouse paid Walden back for the checks, minus a fee, and Walden used the checks to support insurance claims that his tobacco crops had been short, his plea agreement said.

That happened in crop years 2014 through 2019, according to his plea.

First utility seeks permit for small nuclear reactor

TN OAK RIDGE — For the first time in the United States, a utility is asking federal regulators for a permit to build a small nuclear reactor.

The nation’s largest public power company, the Tennessee Valley Authority, announced Tuesday it submitted a construction permit application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a small, modular nuclear reactor. It wants to develop next-generation nuclear power in Oak Ridge, Tenn., at its Clinch River site.

TVA President and CEO Don Moul said that by going first, they can show other utilities a way to accelerate the development of small nuclear reactors.

The federally owned utility provides electricity to seven states and operates three traditional, large nuclear power plants, which provide 40% of the Tennessee Valley’s power.

Bizarro

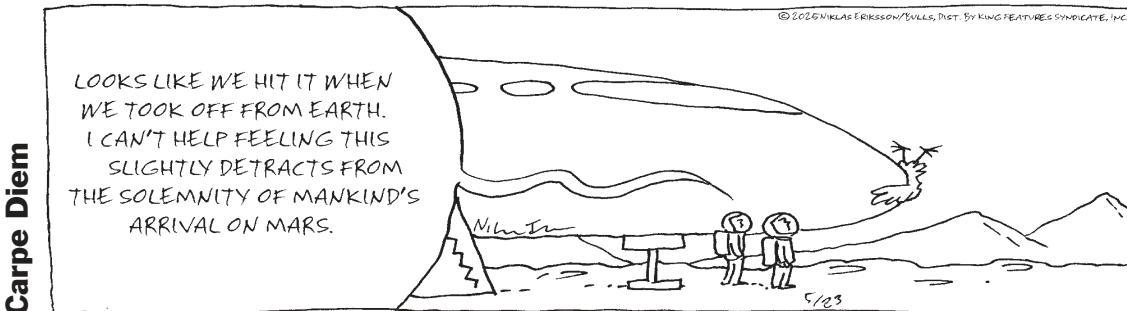
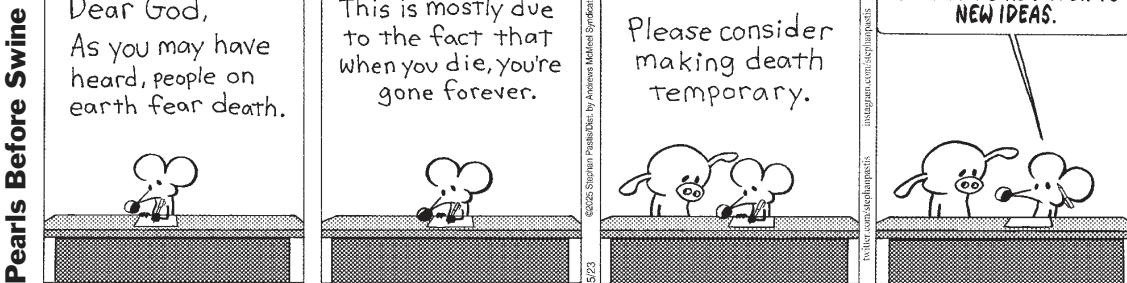


Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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



ACROSS

- 1 "Humbug!"
- 4 Baseball great Seaver
- 7 Brought under control
- 12 Consumed
- 13 "... cone — cup?"
- 14 Martini garnish
- 15 Online guffaw
- 16 Short-term investor
- 18 Right angle
- 19 Leek's kin
- 20 No neatnik
- 22 "Today" alternative, briefly
- 23 Funny Lucille
- 27 Wish undone
- 29 Nine-to-five gig
- 31 Sir's counterpart
- 34 Aristotle's teacher
- 35 Place for a massage
- 37 Dean's list stat
- 38 "I'll have what — having"
- 39 Author Deighton
- 41 Wizard's prop
- 45 Italian port
- 47 Wye follower
- 48 Reveries
- 52 Coffee vessel
- 53 Butler's love
- 54 Ho-hum grade
- 55 Hwys.
- 56 Unclothed

- 57 Airport screening org.
- 58 Jargon suffix

- 24 WNBA star — Wilson
- 25 Parcel of land
- 26 Wall St. deal
- 28 Ref
- 30 PC program
- 31 ER workers
- 32 Foot rub response
- 33 Use a henna rinse
- 36 Sheltered
- 37 Garden figurines
- 40 Pass
- 42 Sky blue
- 43 Dweebs
- 44 Tightly packed
- 45 Alum
- 46 On the Adriatic, say
- 48 Mafia boss
- 49 "Caught ya!"
- 50 Tibetan bovine
- 51 Dad on "Black-ish"

DOWN

- 1 Hay bundles
- 2 Coral island
- 3 Conversation starter
- 4 Commotion
- 5 Yam color
- 6 Actress and neuroscientist Bialik
- 7 Undecided
- 8 In the manner of
- 9 Central
- 10 Wife of Adam
- 11 German article
- 17 Frog's kin
- 21 Army bigwigs
- 23 Corporate regulation

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

5-23

CRYPTOQUIP

MVW - C P U K Y M U K W P Y O Y C M X
 S J M S O A D I M S I C M N K
 G Q N P V O I C C J X M Q Z J M Q C J P A
 Y O X K K X : G O Y D P K Z V K K A M U K .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS ALWAYS THE PREFERRED MUSICAL KEY OF OPTOMETRISTS AND OPTICIANS? C SHARP.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals W

Bizarro

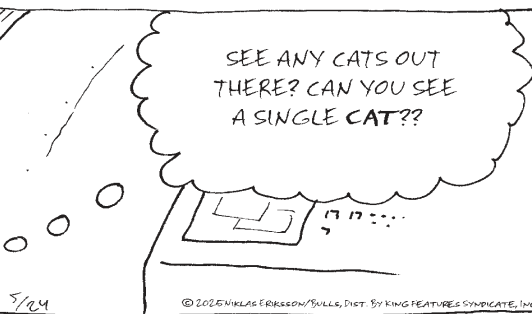
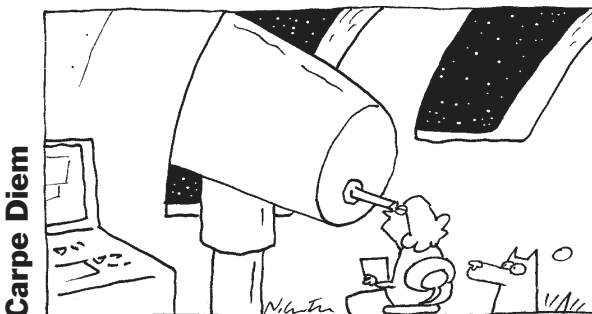
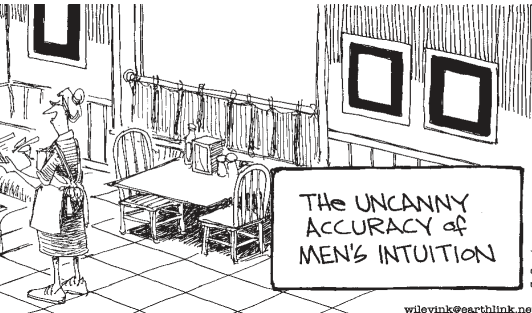
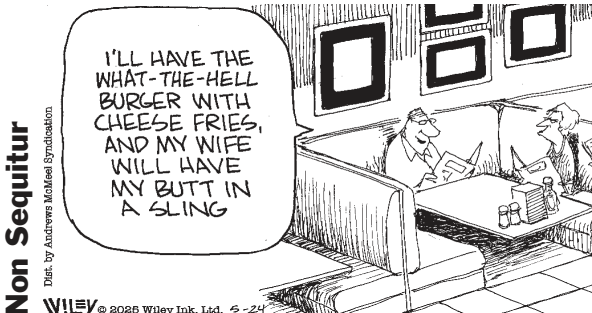
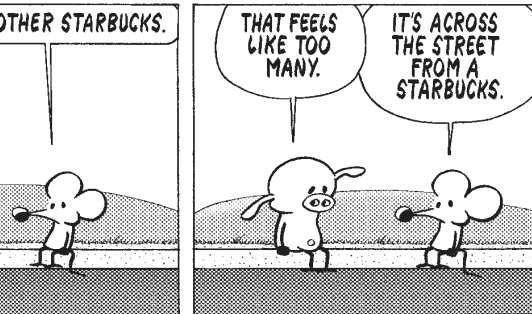
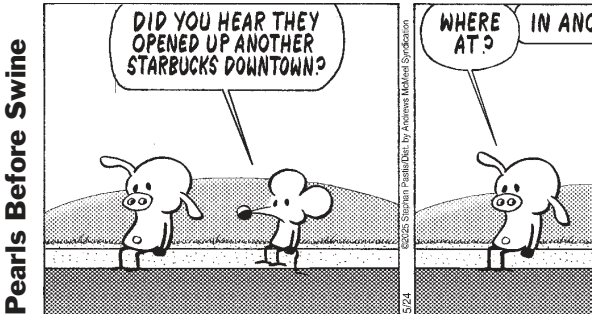
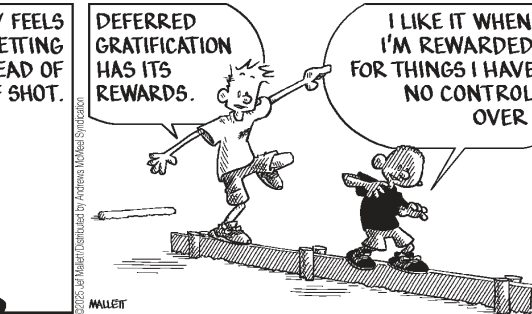


Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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



ACROSS

- 1 Tippy
- 4 Wild party
- 8 Gush
- 12 Sports drink suffix
- 13 Intro studio class
- 14 Green smoothie veggie
- 15 "Give — break!"
- 16 Unforeseen problem
- 17 — Minor
- 18 Thrift shop regular
- 21 Land in la mer
- 22 Chiding sound
- 23 Gymnast's maneuver
- 26 Service charge
- 27 Winter bug
- 30 Ale measure
- 31 — Maria (coffee liqueur)
- 32 Leeway
- 33 "No seats"
- 34 Suffix with hotel
- 35 Connection
- 36 Atty.'s title
- 37 Long lunch?
- 38 Places for marked-down clothing
- 45 Former QB Tony
- 46 Hosp. areas
- 47 Jump
- 48 Military no-show
- 49 Mai Tai garnish

- 50 "Blonde" actress — de Armas
- 51 Creche trio
- 52 Nile vipers
- 53 Author Fleming

- 25 Family card game
- 26 Fragrant tree
- 27 Sly one
- 28 Singer Reed
- 29 Sounds of hesitation
- 31 Margarita ingredient
- 32 Country's McEntire
- 34 Equal (Pref.)
- 35 Sips slowly
- 36 Dangerous bacteria
- 37 Baffle
- 38 Small amount
- 39 Caucus state
- 40 Urban haze
- 41 Mark Harmon TV series
- 42 Spiced tea
- 43 Coffee variety from Hawaii
- 44 Bridge

DOWN

- 1 Gentle soul
- 2 Notion
- 3 Rip
- 4 Volcanic rock
- 5 Golfer Palmer, to fans
- 6 Ollie's pal
- 7 Londoner's early evening meal
- 8 Striped critter
- 9 Fraction
- 10 Different
- 11 Sport
- 19 Coated with gold
- 20 Work with
- 23 They may report to a CEO
- 24 Melody

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

5-24

CRYPTOQUIP

SJ RBYI JCKSU JZCYICR TAZP
 TBDIC, NWZU HB PBK UWSMD
 NBKAH VI ZM ZOOITUZVAI
 WZMH? UNB TIZCR.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: OLD-TIME COMEDIC ACTOR WHO WAS KNOWN TO BE JUBILANT THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER: JACKIE GLEESOME.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals P

STARS AND STRIPES.

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OPINION

There's a history of presidential health cover-ups

BY MARK Z. BARABAK

Los Angeles Times

Suddenly, it's 2024 all over again.

Once more we're litigating Joe Biden's catatonic debate performance, his lumbering gait, his moth-eaten memory and his selfish delusion he deserved a second term in the White House while shuffling through his ninth decade on Earth.

Biden's abrupt announcement he faces an advanced form of prostate cancer has only served to increase speculation over what the president's inner circle knew, and when they knew it.

"Original Sin," a book by journalists Jake Tapper and Alex Thompson, published this week, is chock-full of anecdotes illustrating the lengths to which Biden's family and palace guard worked to shield his mental and physical lapses from voters.

John Robert Greene is not at all surprised.

"It's old news, hiding presidential illness," said Greene, who's written a shelf full of books on presidents and the presidency. "I can't think of too many... who've been the picture of health."

Before we go further, let's state for the record this in no way condones the actions of Biden and his political enablers. To be clear, let's repeat it in capital letters: **WHAT BIDEN AND HIS HANDLERS DID WAS WRONG.**

But, as Greene states, it was not unprecedented or terribly unusual. History abounds with examples of presidential maladies being minimized, or kept secret.

Grover Cleveland underwent surgery for oral cancer on a yacht in New York Harbor to keep his condition from being widely known. Woodrow Wilson suffered a debilitating stroke, a fact covered up by his wife and confidants, who exercised extraordinary power in his stead.

Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy both suffered serious, chronic ailments that were kept well away from the public eye.

Those surrounding Ronald Reagan downplayed his injuries after a 1981 assassination attempt, and the Trump administration misled the public about the seriousness of the

president's condition after he was diagnosed with COVID-19 a month before the 2020 election. The capacity to misdirect, in Biden's case, or mislead, as happened under Trump, illustrates one of the magical features of the White House: the ability of a president to conceal himself in plain sight.

"When you're in the presidency, there is nothing that you can't hide for awhile," Greene, an emeritus history professor at Cazenovia College, said from his home in upstate New York. "You've got everything at your disposal to live a completely hidden double life, if you want. Everything from the Secret Service to the bubble of the White House."

Greene likened the Neoclassical mansion at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW to a giant fish bowl — one that is painted from the inside. It's highly visible, but you can't really see what's happening in the interior.

That deflates the notion there was some grand media conspiracy to prop Biden up. (Sorry, haters.)

Yes, detractors will say it was plain as the dawning day that Biden was demented, diminished and obviously not up to the job of the presidency. Today, Trump's critics say the same sort of thing about him; from their armchairs, they even deliver quite specific diagnoses: He suffers dementia, or Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease.

That doesn't make it so.

"It's a very politicized process. People see what they want to see," said Jacob Appel, a professor of psychiatry and medical education at the Icahn School of Medicine in New York City, who's writing a book on presidential health.

"You can watch videotapes of Ronald Reagan in 1987," Appel said, "and, depending on your view of him, you can see him as sharp and funny as ever, or being on the cusp of dementia." (Five years after leaving the White House, Reagan — then 83 — announced he was in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease.)

To an uncomfortable degree, those covering the White House — and, by extension, the public they serve — are forced to rely on what-

ever the White House chooses to reveal.

"I don't have subpoena power," Tapper told The Times' Stephen Battaglio, saying he would have eagerly published the details contained in his new book had sources been willing to come forth while Biden was still in power. "We were just lied to over and over again."

It hasn't always been that way.

In September 1955, during his first term, President Dwight D. Eisenhower suffered a heart attack while on a golf vacation in Denver. "It was sudden," said Jim Newton, an Eisenhower biographer. "One minute he's fine and the next minute he was flat on his back, quite literally."

The details surrounding Eisenhower's immediate treatment remain a mystery, though Newton suggests that may have had more to do with protecting his personal physician, who misdiagnosed the heart attack as a bout of indigestion, than a purposeful attempt to mislead the public.

From then on, the White House was forthcoming — offering daily reports on what Eisenhower ate, his blood pressure, the results of various tests — to a point that it embarrassed the president. (Among the information released was an accounting of Ike's bowel movements.)

"They were self-consciously transparent," Newton said. "The White House looked to the Wilson example as something not to emulate."

Less than 14 months later, Eisenhower had sufficiently recovered — and voters had enough faith in his well-being — that he won his second term in a landslide.

But that 70-year-old example is a notable exception.

As long as there are White House staffers, campaign advisers, political strategists and family members, presidents will be surrounded by people with an incentive to downplay, minimize or obfuscate any physical or mental maladies they face while in office.

All we can do is wait — years, decades — for the truth to come out. And, in the meantime, hope for the best.

Mark Z. Barabak is a Los Angeles Times columnist.

Was Biden too frail? Voters should have been informed

A Washington Post editorial

Former President Joe Biden's announcement that he has an aggressive form of prostate cancer is a sad reminder that none of us, even the mightiest, is immune to the illnesses that arrive with age. Americans rightly wish for him a successful treatment.

The timing of this news is particularly difficult, coming just as CNN anchor Jake Tapper and Axios journalist Alex Thompson release "Original Sin," their chronicle of Biden's cognitive decline. They describe how his mental slips accumulated during his presidency, leading to his disastrous performance last June at a debate with Donald Trump, and his subsequent exit from the presidential race.

Biden is owed respect for his decades of public service. But the office he held must be respected, too, and this is why, despite his latest malady, the public conversation must continue about his — and all other presidents' — fitness for office.

The U.S. presidency is the biggest, most taxing job there is, demanding an almost superhuman level of basic intelligence, clear thinking and wisdom. In addition to managing a political agenda, negotiating with foreign leaders,

making legislative deals and representing the nation at home and abroad, the president also must be prepared to handle an unexpected crisis at any hour of the day or night.

It now seems that, for a considerable time, Biden might have lacked the stamina and cognitive capacity the job demands — and that his family and closest aides concealed this from the public. Their apparent decision to put personal loyalties ahead of their duty to the country must be reckoned with. A legal mechanism should be considered to ensure that this doesn't happen again.

The people closest to Biden could hardly have avoided observing his infirmity — indeed, the actions they took to hide it indicate that they knew all too well. Early issues surfaced in the 2020 campaign, when he had memory lapses, including forgetting the name of one of his closest advisers and the opening lines to the Declaration of Independence.

"Since at least 2022," Tapper and Thompson write, "he has had moments where he cannot recall the names of top aides whom he sees every day. He can sometimes seem incoherent. He is increasingly prone to losing his train of thought."

"By late 2023," the authors say, "Biden's

staff was pushing as much of his schedule as possible to midday, when Biden was at his best." Even in small groups, the president often read from notes or a teleprompter.

This suggests that Biden might have been too impaired to responsibly lead the U.S.

The situation might have been prevented had the president and his team been open with the public about his condition. If Biden had admitted his difficulties and stepped out of the running for the 2024 election, the Democratic Party would have been able to select a stronger candidate via competitive primaries. This is the way the system is designed to work. Covering up reality undermines it.

Can steps be taken to ensure that voters remain aware of their leaders' frailties? Perhaps some objective cognitive testing should be required, in addition to a physical examination, with the results made public annually.

In a democracy, the voters, when selecting a commander in chief, need to be discerning, to elevate candidates who have the stamina and the smarts to serve. Four years later, they can assess that person's ability to take on another term. If problems arise between elections, then White House officials and Congress must be counted on to responsibly act.

SCOREBOARD/SOCCER

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Reinstated RHP Andrew Kittredge from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Chayce McDermott to Norfolk (IL).

CLEVELAND GUARDIANS — Recalled LHP Doug Nix from Columbus (IL).

DETROIT TIGERS — Sent CFs Parker Meadows, Matt Vierling and RF Wenceel Pérez to Lakeland on rehab assignments.

HOUSTON ASTROS — Reinstated RHP Forrest Whitely from the 15-day IL. Optioned LHP Brandon Walter to Sugar Land (PCL). RHP Tayler Scott has cleared waivers and elected free agency.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Recalled 2B Mickey Gasper from St. Paul (IL). Sent RF Matt Wallner to St. Paul on a rehab assignment.

SEATTLE MARINERS — Selected the contract of RHP Jesse Hahn from Tacoma (PCL). Designated RH Casey Lawrence for assignment.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Sent RHPs Ryan Burr and Erik Swanson to Dunedin (FSL) on rehab assignments.

National League

CHICAGO CUBS — Sent RHP Tyson Miller to Iowa (IL) on a rehab assignment. Sent 3B Nicky Lopez outright to Iowa.

CINCINNATI REDS — Reinstated LHP Sam Moll from the 15-day IL and optioned him to Louisville (IL). Optioned RHP Chase Petty to Louisville. Reinstated RHP Ian Gibaut from the 15-day IL.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Sent RHP Brandon Woodruff to Nashville (IL) on a rehab assignment.

NEW YORK METS — Sent RHP Paul Blackburn to Syracuse (IL) on a rehab assignment.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Optioned RHP Carmen Mlodzinski to Indianapolis (IL). Recalled RHP Mike Burrows from Indianapolis.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Recalled OF Robert Hassell III from Rochester (IL). Placed OF Dylan Crews on the 10-day IL.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed LB J.J. Russell. Released LB Milo Eifler.

BUFFALO BILLS — Waived WR Hal Presley.

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Reverted WR Moose Muhammad to injured reserve after clearing waivers.

DETROIT LIONS — Signed DT Tyleik Williams to a rookie contract.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed CB Gregory Junior to a contract. Waived CB Kaleb Hayes.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Signed CB Myles Bryant to a contract. Signed CB Keydrain Calligan to a rookie contract. Waived G Jerome Carvin and DE Kingsley Jonathan.

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Signed LB Michael Barrett to a contract. Waived LB Wesley Steiner.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Signed G Nick Broeker to a contract. Released G Lecitus Smith. Signed DT Derrick Harmon to a rookie contract.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Signed QB Jalen Milroe to a rookie contract.

TENNESSEE TITANS — Signed QB Cam Ward to a rookie contract.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

NBA — Fined Minnesota Timberwolves G Anthony Edwards for using profane language during a media interview following their loss to Oklahoma City May 20.

COLLEGE SOFTBALL
Division I Super Regionals

Best-of-3
At Norman, Okla. Friday-Sunday

No. 2 Oklahoma (48-7) vs. No. 15 Alabama (40-21)

At Gainesville, Fla. Friday-Sunday

No. 3 Florida (46-14) vs. Georgia (34-21)

At Fayetteville, Ark. Friday-Sunday

No. 4 Arkansas (43-12) vs. Mississippi (40-18)

At Tallahassee, Fla. Thursday-Saturday

No. 5 Florida St. (49-10) vs. No. 12 Texas Tech (48-12)

At Austin, Texas Thursday-Saturday

No. 6 Texas (49-10) vs. No. 11 Clemson (47-12)

At Knoxville, Tenn. Friday-Sunday

No. 7 Tennessee (43-14) vs. Nebraska (42-13)

At Columbia, S.C. Friday-Sunday

No. 8 South Carolina (43-15) vs. No. 9 UCLA (52-10)

At Eugene, Ore. Friday-Sunday

No. 16 Oregon (51-8) vs. Liberty (50-13)

PRO SOCCER

MLS
Western Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	8	1	4	28	24	10
Minn. United	7	3	4	25	22	13
San Diego FC	7	4	3	24	25	16
Portland	6	3	5	23	23	20
LAFC	6	4	4	22	25	20
Seattle	5	4	5	20	21	19
Colorado	5	5	4	19	16	20
San Jose	5	6	3	18	29	23
Austin FC	5	6	3	18	9	16
Houston	4	6	4	16	15	19
FC Dallas	4	5	4	16	15	22
Real Salt Lake	4	8	2	14	13	19
Sporting KC	3	8	3	12	19	24
St. Louis City	2	7	5	11	11	19
LA Galaxy	0	10	4	4	12	33

Eastern Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Philadelphia	9	3	2	29	27	14
Cincinnati	9	3	2	29	19	15
Columbus	7	1	6	27	22	14
Nashville	7	4	3	24	24	16
Orlando City	6	2	6	24	27	16
Inter Miami CF	6	3	4	22	24	21
NYC FC	6	5	3	21	15	14
Charlotte FC	6	7	1	19	21	21
Chicago	5	4	4	19	24	24
New York	5	6	3	18	20	17
New England	5	4	3	18	12	10
D.C. United	3	6	5	14	13	25
Toronto FC	3	7	4	13	16	18
Atlanta	2	7	5	11	14	24
CF Montréal	1	9	4	7	8	23

Saturday's games

FC Dallas at Seattle
LA Galaxy at San Diego FC
Columbus at Charlotte FC
New York at D.C. United
Los Angeles FC at CF Montréal
Portland at Orlando City
Miami at Philadelphia
Nashville at Toronto FC
New England at Sporting Kansas City
Austin FC at Minnesota
St. Louis City at Colorado
Vancouver at Real Salt Lake
Houston at San Jose

Sunday's games

Chicago at New York City FC
Cincinnati at Atlanta

Wednesday, May 28

Orlando City at Atlanta
FC Dallas at Cincinnati
New England at D.C. United
CF Montréal at Miami
Charlotte FC at New York
Houston at New York City FC
Philadelphia at Toronto FC
Nashville at Columbus
Real Salt Lake at Austin FC
San Diego FC at Seattle
San Jose at LA Galaxy
Colorado at Portland
Minnesota at Vancouver

Saturday, May 31

San Jose at St. Louis City
New York City FC at Nashville
D.C. United at Cincinnati
Columbus at Miami
New England at CF Montréal
Atlanta at New York
Chicago at Orlando City
Charlotte FC at Toronto FC
Philadelphia at FC Dallas
Sporting Kansas City at Houston
Portland at Vancouver
Real Salt Lake at LA Galaxy
Austin FC at San Diego FC

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Kansas City	7	2	0	21	19	6
San Diego	5	2	2	17	16	10
Orlando	5	3	1	16	15	7
Portland	4	2	4	16	16	11
Washington	5	3	1	16	16	15
Seattle	4	3	2	14	8	7
Angel City	4	3	2	14	15	16
Gotham FC	3	4	3	12	12	10
North Carolina	3	3	3	12	11	10
Bay FC	3	4	2	11	10	12
Louisville	3	4	2	11	9	14
Houston	3	5	1	10	8	14
Utah Royals FC	1	6	2	5	7	16
Chicago	1	7	1	4	5	19

Friday's games

Orlando at Utah Royals FC
Washington at Seattle

Saturday's games

Bay FC at Houston
Kansas City at Chicago
Louisville at Angel City

Sunday's game

North Carolina at San Diego

TENNIS

Strasburg Open
Wednesday
At Strasburg, France
Purse: Euro 925,661
Surface: Red clay
Seedings in parentheses
Women's Singles
Round of 16

Beatriz Haddad Maia (9), Brazil, def. Ashlyn Krueger, United States, 7-6 (3), 6-3.
Emma Navarro (2), United States, def. Anna Blinkova, Russia, 6-4, 6-1.
Danielle Collins, United States, def. Emma Raducanu, Britain, 4-6, 6-1, 6-3.
Anna Kalinskaya, Russia, def. Jessica Pegula (1), United States, 4-6, 6-4, 6-2.

Hamburg Open
Wednesday
At Hamburg, Germany
Purse: Euro 2,158,560
Surface: Red clay
Seedings in parentheses
Men's Singles
Round of 16

Roberto Bautista Agut, Spain, def. Frances Tiafoe (2), United States, 6-2, 6-3.
Jiri Lehecka, Czechia, def. Francisco Cerundolo (4), Argentina, 7-5, 6-2.
Tomas Martin Etcheverry, Argentina, def. Camilo Ugo Carabelli, Argentina, 6-4, 6-4.
Andrey Rublev (3), Russia, def. Justin Engel, Germany, 6-3, 7-5.
Flavio Cobolli, Italy, def. Alejandro Davidovich Fokina (5), Spain, 6-4, 7-5.
Alexandre Muller, France, def. Alexander Zverev (1), Germany, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (5).
Luciano Darderi, Italy, def. Brandon Nakashima (7), United States, 7-5, 6-7 (7), 6-2.
Felix Auger-Aliassime (6), Canada, def. Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard, France, 6-2, 6-4.

Geneva Open
Wednesday
At Geneva
Purse: Euro 596,035
Surface: Red clay
Seedings in parentheses
Men's Singles
Round of 16

Taylor Fritz (1), United States, def. Quentin Halys, France, 6-4, 7-6 (5).
Sebastian Ofner, Austria, def. Nuno Borges, Portugal, 7-6 (2), 7-6 (4).
Hubert Hurkacz (6), Poland, def. Arthur Rinderknech, France, 6-4, 6-1.
Matteo Arnaldi (8), Italy, def. Fabian Marozsan, Hungary, 6-3, 7-6 (3).
Novak Djokovic (2), Serbia, def. Marton Fucsovics, Hungary, 6-2, 6-3.
Alexei Popyrin (5), Australia, def. Jacob Fearnley, Britain, 6-4, 6-3.
Cameron Norrie, Britain, def. Tomas Machac (3), Czechia, 3-6, 6-2, 4-3, ret.

PRO BASKETBALL
WNBA
Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	1	0	1.000	—
Washington	2	1	.667	—
Atlanta	1	1	.500	½
Indiana	1	1	.500	½
Connecticut	0	2	.000	1½
Chicago	0	1	.000	1

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	3	0	1.000	—
Phoenix	2	0	1.000	½
Golden State	1	1	.500	1½
Seattle	1	1	.500	1½
Las Vegas	1	1	.500	1½
Los Angeles	1	2	.333	2
Dallas	0	3	.000	3

Tuesday's games

Las Vegas 87, Connecticut 62
Atlanta 91, Indiana 90

Wednesday's games

Minnesota 85, Dallas 81
Phoenix 89, Los Angeles 86
Golden State 76, Washington 74

Thursday's game

Indiana at Atlanta
New York at Chicago

Friday's games

Connecticut at Minnesota
Golden State at Los Angeles
Phoenix at Seattle
Washington at Las Vegas

Saturday's games

New York at Indiana
Dallas at Atlanta

Sunday's games

Connecticut at Atlanta
Chicago at Los Angeles
Washington at Phoenix
Las Vegas at Seattle

AP SPORTLIGHT
May 23

1935 — The first major league night game, scheduled for Cincinnati, is postponed because of rain.

2018 — Owners approve a new NFL national anthem policy requiring players to stand if they choose to be on the field for pre-game presentations.



SPADA/AP

Christian Pulisic is among the core players who will not play for the United States in the CONCACAF Gold Cup, which starts next month.

US dealt depleted roster for Gold Cup

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Christian Pulisic is among a slew of regular starters who will be missing when the United States plays in next month's CONCACAF Gold Cup, another blow for a team coming off dismal performances at the Copa America and CONCACAF Nations League.

Given the absences, coach Mauricio Pochettino wants players who will convince worried fans a turnaround is ahead.

"It's our responsibility to send some signal to them," he said Thursday during a Zoom news conference after announcing his 27-man roster. "I think our fans need to see our team fighting and playing and performing and playing well, yes, but fighting for the flag and being always in every single game (to) match the aggressivity of the opponent."

Pulisic, the top American player, asked to be left off the roster for the last competitive matches before the 2026 World Cup in order to rest after playing about 120 games for club and country over two seasons.

Yunus Musah also asked out, Antonee Robinson was dropped because he has been playing with an injury and Weston McKennie, Tim Weah and Gio Reyna were blocked because FIFA gave the expanded Club World Cup priority over national teams.

Josh Sargent, Joe Scally, Cameron Carter-Vickers and Tanner Tessmann were omitted in what Pochettino called "football decisions."

U.S. Soccer Federation sporting director Matt Crocker said Pulisic and his advisers asked for the possibility to be left off because of the amount of games he has played in the last two years.

"Many people can say it's really important for us to be all together

for the last time before the World Cup," Pochettino said. "We decided the best for him, the best of the team, the best for the national team is the decision that we made."

Pochettino replaced Gregg Berhalter after the team's first-round elimination at the Copa America last summer. After the Gold Cup, he will have just four brief training windows on FIFA international dates before players report ahead of the World Cup.

In the team's first significant test under Pochettino, the Americans lost to Panama and Canada in the Nations League in March. Without saying players had been complacent, Pochettino said "we learned a lot in the last few camps, for sure in March, and it's about to be — maybe use a different way to approach these opportunities."

Sixteen of the players picked are from Major League Soccer, the most in a FIFA window since the U.S. sent a B team to the 2023 Gold Cup.

"If you arrive to the camp and you want to spend nice time, play golf, go for a dinner, visit my family, visit my friend, that is the culture that we want to create?" Pochettino asked out loud. "No, no, no, no, no. What we want to do is to go to the national team, arrive and be focused and spend all my focus and energy in the national team. ... If we want to be good in one year time, we need to think that today is the most important day."

Outside back Sergiño Dest returns to the national team for the first time since March 2024 after recovering from a torn ACL. Forward Folarin Balogun is with the team for the first time since last September following his recuperation from shoulder surgery.

Players will start reporting June 1 for training in Chicago, and the 26-man Gold Cup roster is due June 4.

COLLEGE



MEREDITH SEAVER/AP

Liberty's Alyssa Henault, left, and Paige Doerr react to home run by teammate KK Madrey (not shown) against Texas A&M during an NCAA game last Saturday in College Station, Texas. The Flames knocked off the overall No. 1 seed to reach the super regionals.

After steady climb, Flames ignite

Liberty's remarkable journey: From double-wide trailers to NCAA super regionals

By MIKE BARBER
Associated Press

When Dot Richardson took over the Liberty softball program in July 2013, the coaches' offices, locker room and training room were located in double-wide trailers.

"We had a rec field," recalled Richardson, a two-time Olympic gold medalist. "The previous staff had built the dugouts with cinder blocks and painted them blue. It was like a hobbit dugout. It was perfect for me, but everyone else had to bend down to get in it. Humble beginnings."

Those sparse roots are part of the reason last weekend's upset of No. 1 overall seed Texas A&M is so remarkable. It gave the Flames a program-record 50 wins, saddled the Aggies with the dubious distinction of being the first top seed to fall in NCAA regionals and — most significantly — put Liberty in the super regionals for the first time in school history.

"We just played with so much to prove and a chip on our shoulder, knowing we could do it and that we believed in each other," said outfielder Paige Doerr. "I don't think I'll ever forget that feeling."

Richardson's team won 11 games in 2014, her first season at the campus in Lynchburg, Va. A year later, Liberty opened a new state-of-the-art stadium and notched 29 victories. By 2018, Ri-



MEREDITH SEAVER/AP

Liberty's KK Madrey celebrates at third base against Texas A&M in the regionals on May 24. Madrey hit a homer in the game.

chardson had the Flames in the NCAA regionals.

This year, Liberty is playing in the NCAAs for the fifth straight year. And, after coming painfully close to advancing to supers last season, the Flames took that next step, beating Texas A&M on Saturday, losing to the Aggies Sunday afternoon and then rallying for the clinching 6-5 victory in the winner-take-all final game that night.

That one sent them on to face

Oregon in the best-of-three super regional in Eugene starting Friday. The winner advances to the Women's College World Series starting May 29 in Oklahoma City.

"We've done that through the years," Richardson said. "But this year, we've been able to go over that hump. This team has never really focused on winning or losing. We've focused on being the best we can be. And our best was good enough to be where we are now."

This team, Richardson says, is her most talented and complete in her Liberty tenure. After having one or two hitters she confidently could pencil into her lineups her first few years coaching, Richardson said it's a daily struggle to find at-bats for all the capable hitters on this year's roster.

That depth has been on display all season, as 11 players have hit multiple home runs, six have driven in at least 30 runs and six have tallied over 50 base hits, led by Rachel Roupe's outstanding year at the plate. Roupe is batting .392 with team highs in home runs (23) and RBI (73).

In the circle, five pitchers have won multiple games and three have racked up more than 75 strikeouts, paced by Elena Escobar's 25-3 mark, 2.43 ERA, 15 complete games and 175 strikeouts.

"I'm not surprised where we are," Richardson said. "They just

play with so much freedom. That's what happens when you see great athletes play with freedom."

Freedom and drive.

Liberty has reached a regional final in each of the last three years. Last season, the Flames were one out away from beating Georgia and advancing to supers, but the Bulldogs hit a pair of RBI singles in the bottom of the seventh to walk off with the win.

"I think that the reason why we were here and why we were able to win this game was because of last year," sophomore catcher Savannah Jessee said. "It left such a sour taste in our mouths that we were so close and we couldn't get the job done last year. But we proved ourselves. We proved we could hang with anyone. I think having the confidence from being one out away last year helped us with this weekend."

The Flames celebrated their historic win in the wee hours by hopping a fence at the team hotel and jumping into the pool, Roupe said. The Aggies' logo was emblazoned on the pool's floor below them and — in that moment — Liberty was atop the college softball world.

It hopes to stay there this weekend in Oregon.

"Finally, I think people are starting to see that we don't play around," Jessee said. "We're ready to take it on to the next level."

Power 4 tries to bind teams to settlement

Associated Press

The biggest conferences in college sports are working to tie their schools to the pending \$2.8 billion NCAA antitrust settlement, with drastic penalties for anyone refusing to comply.

Officials from the Atlantic Coast Conference, the Big Ten, the Big 12 and the Southeastern Conference have drafted a document intended to prevent their members from using state laws to breach or subvert enforcement that would come with the settlement, according to a person familiar with the pending contract. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of ongoing negotiations.

Yahoo Sports first reported details of the document, which is viewed as a way of providing stability around the enforcement of new rules.

The settlement itself is before U.S. District Judge Claudia Wilken has given preliminary approval but asked both sides to come up with a way to address details around roster limits that many schools are already putting in motion.

The document would bind institutions to enforcement policies even if their state laws are contradictory, the person said. It would require schools to waive their right to pursue legal challenges against the new enforcement entity, the College Sports Commission.

The document would exempt the commission from lawsuits from member schools over enforcement decisions, instead offering arbitration as the main settlement option.

A working copy has been distributed to school presidents, general counsels and athletic directors, the person said. Legal concerns remain, though, especially for public institutions that would essentially be agreeing not to follow state laws.

Consequences for not signing the agreement would include risking the loss of league membership and participation against other teams from the Power Four conferences. A finalized version of the document could be signed once the House settlement is granted approval by a federal judge.

The settlement — a \$2.8 billion agreement by the NCAA and power conferences to settle antitrust lawsuits over athlete compensation — would rewrite the college sports rulebook and usher in a professionalized model that allows schools to share millions in revenue with athletes in a capped system that features a new enforcement arm to police booster deals.

NFL

Colts owner, CEO Irsay passes away at 65

By MICHAEL MAROT
Associated Press

Jim Irsay started his football career as a ball boy. He finished it as a team owner.

The NFL's music man created his own, unique brand.

Irsay worked his way up through the organization, learning how to run a football team, restoring the Indianapolis Colts' once-proud tradition to glory and created what some have dubbed the greatest guitar collection on Earth — all while battling health issues and addictions to alcohol and painkillers.

On Wednesday, Irsay's remarkable journey ended at age 65. Pete Ward, Irsay's longtime right-hand man, made the announcement in a statement, saying he died peacefully in his sleep.

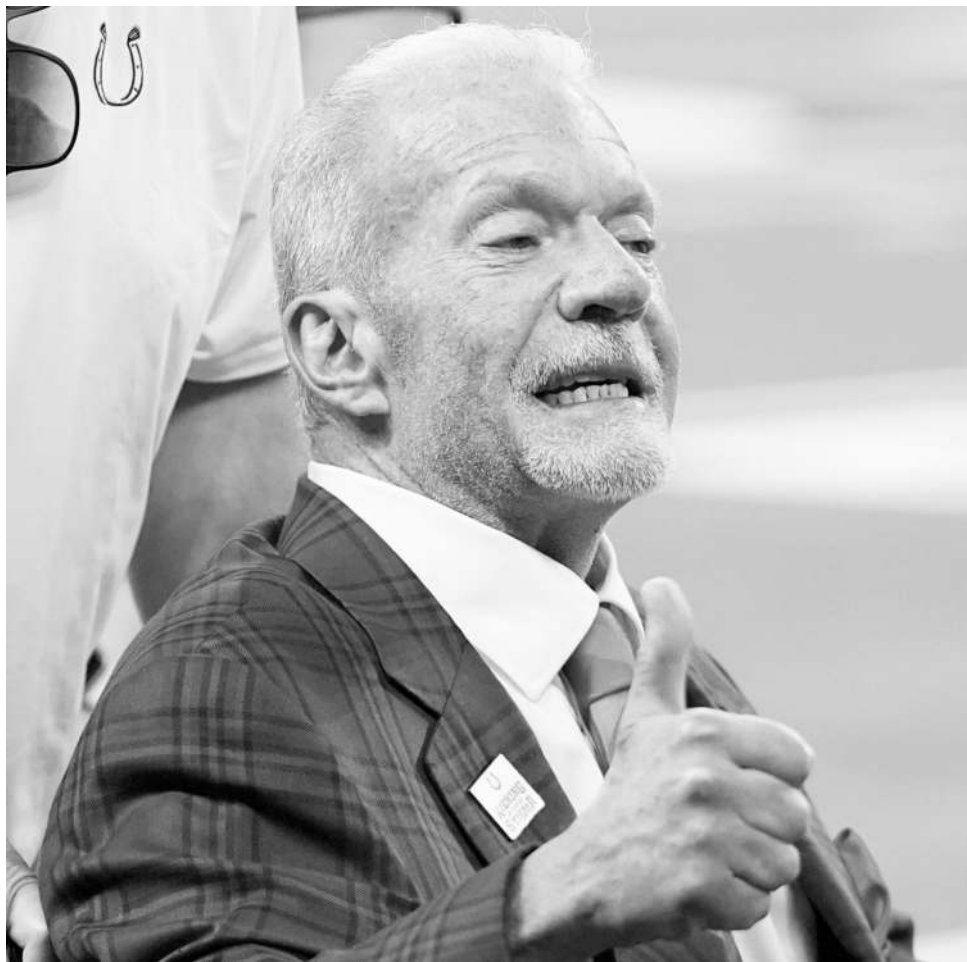
"Jim's dedication and passion for the Indianapolis Colts in addition to his generosity, commitment to the community and, most importantly, his love for his family were unsurpassed," Ward said. "Our deepest sympathies go to his daughters, Carlie Irsay-Gordon, Casey Foyt, Kalen Jackson and his entire family as we grieve with them."

With the help of Hall of Fame general manager Bill Polian, Hall of Fame coach Tony Dungy and Hall of Fame quarterback Peyton Manning, Irsay turned the Colts from a longtime laughingstock into a perennial title contender, even winning a Super Bowl title. He then used that success — and Manning's aura — to help convince city leaders to build a retractable roof dome stadium that opened in 2008 and eventually allowed Indianapolis to host a Super Bowl.

"I am heartbroken to hear about Jim Irsay's passing," Manning said on social media. "He was an incredibly generous and passionate owner and I will always be indebted to him for giving me my start in the NFL. His love for the Colts and the city of Indy was unmatched. His impact on the players who played for him will not be forgotten."

More recently, Irsay battled health issues and became far less visible following a fall at his home Dec. 8, 2023.

Police officers from Carmel, Ind., a northern suburb of Indianapolis, responded to a 911 call from Irsay's home. According to the police report, the officers found him breathing but unresponsive and with a bluish skin tone. A month later, he was diag-



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Jim Irsay was general manager of the Indianapolis Colts from 1984 to 1996, became owner, chairman and CEO of the team in 1997 and led them to a Super Bowl win in 2007.

nosed with a respiratory illness.

During his annual training camp news conference last summer, Irsay told reporters he was continuing to rehab from two subsequent surgeries.

"It's great to see you guys, the fans and to be out here," Irsay said at the time. "I'm feeling great, you know, just trying to get this left leg stronger, which it will be."

Irsay also did not speak during the recent NFL draft as he usually did.

As a teenager, Irsay tossed footballs with MVP quarterbacks Johnny Unitas and Bert Jones. Irsay relied frequently on the lessons he learned from rubbing elbows with some of the game's most important owners — Al Davis, Lamar Hunt, Wellington Mara and Art Rooney — as they worked through the 1982 players' strike and the implementation of a salary cap.

And Irsay presided over the greatest quarter-century of Colts football thanks to Manning and quarterback Andrew Luck. Irsay handled everything from ticket sales to public relations as he rose through the organization even watching No. 1 overall pick John Elway force a trade to Denver in 1983.

When Irsay took over as owner following his father's death in 1997, things were different. The arrival of Manning helped Irsay — and Indianapolis — create a passionate local following that hadn't previously existed but still remains strong today.

It wasn't always easy, either. When a 55% inheritance tax threatened his hold on the team, the younger Irsay found enough cash to keep the family business. When his most prominent players were about to cash in during free agency, he often ponied up top dollar to keep them.

And though some criticized Irsay for focusing too much on offense and not enough on defense, the combination allowed the Colts to find their place in a small-market city that revered basketball.

"The man hates to lose more than he likes to win," current general manager Chris Ballard often said.

Things didn't always go smoothly, though. Robert Irsay was reviled in Baltimore following the move. Decades later, even after the Ravens won a Super Bowl, and after Jim Irsay repeatedly explained the move was precipitated by the city's attempt to take the franchise through eminent domain, Baltimore still referred to the team as the Indianapolis football club.

A quarter-century later, Irsay tested the fans' loyalties by releasing a 34-year-old Manning, who missed the entire season with a neck injury. The rebuild began around rookie QB Andrew Luck — a move that drew comparisons to his father's trade of Unitas in 1973.

The impending decision about Manning became a public spectacle throughout the 2011-12 offseason and again in 2013 when Manning returned to Indy for the first time with his new team, the Denver Broncos.

"It was the right move to make. Peyton and I talked about it. He said it best in the press conference: I didn't decide, he didn't decide, the football gods had laid the cards out and we both knew it was best for him and us," Irsay said later.

"Emotionally, it was the hardest thing I've ever had to do. In professional football, it's about winning and you have to be able to make the decisions that are best for the franchise."

Irsay leaves a legacy that won't be blowing in the wind. Aside from the images of him wearing a tie wrapped around his forehead on a magazine cover, tossing footballs in a suit or his utterances on Twitter, he was a shrewd businessman with a big heart. When the Colts won the Super Bowl, he even sent a ring to two-time rushing champ Edgerrin James, who had left in free agency before the championship season.

"The guy grew up with this team," then-coach Chuck Pagano said in January 2015. "He's got so much insight and so much knowledge. He's a football man through and through. It runs through his veins and he's got so much wisdom to share with all of us. He makes a huge impact."

Bears coach praises silent Williams in wake of QB book

By ANDREW SELIGMAN
Associated Press

New Chicago Bears coach Ben Johnson praised Caleb Williams while the quarterback remained mum Wednesday in the wake of a book excerpt detailing how the 2022 Heisman Trophy winner and his father wanted nothing to do with the founding NFL franchise leading up to last year's draft.

The account of the Williams' feelings about the Bears in "American Kings: A Biography of the Quarterback" by author Seth Wickersham was reported by ESPN last week. Johnson said Caleb Williams gave no indication he would rather play elsewhere when

they discussed it.

"I can't speak too much in terms of what it was like before he got here and when he got here last year, but from my four months on the job, he's been outstanding to work with and we just are focusing on getting a little better every day," Johnson said.

Chicago did not make Williams available to reporters following their workout.

In the book, Wickersham describes how Williams and his father, Carl Williams, asked attorneys to find a workaround to the NFL's collective bargaining agreement, explored signing with the United Football League and

considered publicly ripping Chicago and the Bears to create an untenable situation for the team.

"Chicago is the place quarterbacks go to die," Carl Williams said ahead of the draft, according to the book.

Johnson grinned when asked about that comment.

"I love it. I love it," he said when asked about Carl Williams' comment.

"I love the opportunity to come on in and change that narrative. That's where great stories are written. So we're looking to write a new chapter here — 2025 Chicago Bears — and looking forward to the future."

Wickersham reported Caleb Williams indicated to confidantes he didn't think he could work with then-offensive coordinator Shane Waldron. Bears general manager Ryan Poles told Williams, "We're drafting you no matter what."

Williams resigned himself to being selected by Chicago with the No. 1 pick, and after a pre-draft visit to the team facility, he believed he could help lead a turnaround.

Williams threw for 20 touchdowns, was intercepted six times and took a franchise-record and league-leading 68 sacks as a rookie. The Bears lost 10 straight and finished last in the NFC North at 5-12.



NAM Y. HUH/AP

Chicago Bears quarterback Caleb Williams warms up during practice in Lake Forest, Ill., on Wednesday.

MLB

Mariners have taken road to top

By JAY COHEN
Associated Press

CHICAGO — When it comes to life on the road, the Seattle Mariners are making themselves right at home.

Seattle is on top of the AL West, and its 15-9 road record is a big reason. It is 5-1 on a 10-game trip, with the lone loss a 1-0 setback against the White Sox on Tuesday when the Mariners had just four hits.

Offense was not a problem in a 6-5 win Wednesday, their fifth win in six games, which clinched Seattle's seventh consecutive winning road series.

"We treat every single game the same, but obviously, when you're on the road, you're like the bad guys. Nobody likes you," center fielder Julio Rodríguez said after Monday night's 5-1 victory at Chicago. "I guess that adds a little bit more to us. We stick together pretty well as a team and I think that might play something into it."

Pitching helps, too. The Mariners entered Wednesday's game with a 3.60 road ERA, ranking fifth in the majors. They allowed one run in each of the first five games on their current trip.

And now the rotation is getting a boost. Workhorse right-hander George Kirby was expected to start and make his season debut Thursday night when Seattle opened a four-game series in Houston.

Kirby had been on the injured list since March 24 with inflammation in his throwing shoulder. He started 33 games last season to tie for the major league lead, going 14-11 with a 3.53 ERA with 179 strikeouts and 23 walks in 191 innings.

The Mariners also have a dominant closer in Andrés Muñoz, who hasn't allowed an earned run in 20% innings this season. The bases



NAM Y. HUH/AP

Seattle teammates J.P. Crawford, left, and Julio Rodriguez celebrate after they defeated the White Sox in Chicago on Monday. The Mariners won again Wednesday to take their seventh straight road series.

were loaded when he entered Monday night's victory, and he struck out Michael A. Taylor for his 15th save.

Muñoz worked around a single in the ninth Wednesday for his AL-leading 16th save.

"Pitching is kind of what's built our (organization), and kind of where our success has started," catcher Cal Raleigh said. "It's one of the most important things in the game. We do a good job of getting those guys rolling and try to piggyback off of them."

The strong start on the road comes after Seattle struggled outside of T-Mobile Park in 2024. It finished with a 36-45 road record while going 85-77 last year, contributing to the team's second-

place finish in the AL West behind Houston.

Asked about the team's road success this season, manager Dan Wilson praised Muñoz and the rest of the team's bullpen. But he also highlighted the importance of timely offense.

"I think, offensively, being able to strike early on the road is important, and so far as we've started off this season, they've been able to do that," Wilson said. "I think that's put us in good positions to win late in the ballgame."

That was the case Wednesday when Leody Taveras hit a two-run homer in the eighth inning to put the Mariners ahead.

Rowdy Tellez singled with Seattle down 5-4. Taveras drove the next pitch to the right-center bleachers for his second hit of the game.

Raleigh slugged his 16th homer, tying the Yankees' Aaron Judge for the AL lead, and tying the game, 4-4, in the sixth. He also doubled and walked twice.

Rodriguez got things going with a three-run homer in the first.

Leaders

American League

BATTING — Judge, New York, .402; Ja.Wilson, Athletics, .341; Goldschmidt, New York, .339; Kwan, Cleveland, .317; M.Garcia, Kansas City, .315; Aranda, Tampa Bay, .306; Meyers, Houston, .306; O'Hearn, Baltimore, .306; Witt, Kansas City, .305.

RUNS — Judge, New York, 45; Buxton, Minnesota, 33; Torkelson, Detroit, 33; Bregman, Boston, 32; Goldschmidt, New York, 32; Raleigh, Seattle, 32; Ju.Rodriguez, Seattle, 32.

RBI — Judge, New York, 44; Torkelson, Detroit, 39; Devers, Boston, 39; Bregman, Boston, 35; Greene, Detroit, 34; Raleigh, Seattle, 33; Mullins, Baltimore, 31; Polanco, Seattle, 30; Soderstrom, Athletics, 30.

HITS — Judge, New York, 74; Ja.Wilson, Athletics, 62; Goldschmidt, New York, 60; Kwan, Cleveland, 60; Witt, Kansas City, 60; Bichette, Toronto, 59; Bregman, Boston, 58; Ja.Duran, Boston, 57; M.Garcia, Kansas City, 56; Peña, Houston, 55.

DOUBLES — Witt, Kansas City, 19; Bregman, Boston, 17; Bichette, Toronto, 15; Devers, Boston, 14; Perez, Kansas City, 14; Volpe, New York, 14.

HOME RUNS — Raleigh, Seattle, 16; Judge, New York, 16; Ward, Los Angeles, 13; Grisham, New York, 12; Torkelson, Detroit, 12; Greene, Detroit, 12; O'Hoppe, Los Angeles, 11; W.Abreu, Boston, 11; Bregman, Boston, 11; 10 tied at 10.

STOLEN BASES — Robert, Chicago, 17; Witt, Kansas City, 16; Caballero, Tampa Bay, 15; Ja.Duran, Boston, 12; Ramirez, Cleveland, 12; Simpson, Tampa Bay, 12; M.Garcia, Kansas City, 10.

ERA — Fried, New York, 1.29; Bubic, Kansas City, 1.47; Mahle, Texas, 1.47; Eovaldi, Texas, 1.61; Crochet, Boston, 1.98; H.Brown, Houston, 2.04; deGrom, Texas, 2.33; S.Smith, Chicago, 2.36; Woo, Seattle, 2.65; Ryan, Minnesota, 2.68.

STRIKEOUTS — Skubal, Detroit, 79; Crochet, Boston, 78; Ragans, Kansas City, 72; Rodón, New York, 72; H.Brown, Houston, 71; Ryan, Minnesota, 67; Eovaldi, Texas, 65; deGrom, Texas, 62; Bassitt, Toronto, 61; Bubic, Kansas City, 61.

National League

BATTING — F.Freeman, Los Angeles, .371; W.Smith, Los Angeles, .339; Donovan, St. Louis, .323; Machado, San Diego, .314; Abrams, Washington, .313; Ohtani, Los Angeles, .311; Stowers, Miami, .309.

RUNS — Ohtani, Los Angeles, 52; Carroll, Arizona, 40; Betts, Los Angeles, 39; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 38; Tucker, Chicago, 38; Tatis, San Diego, 37.

RBI — Suzuki, Chicago, 43; Flores, San Francisco, 42; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 39; E.Suárez, Arizona, 38; Perdomo, Arizona, 37; Schwarber, Philadelphia, 37; Alonso, New York, 37; T.Hernández, Los Angeles, 35; Tucker, Chicago, 35.

HITS — Donovan, St. Louis, 61; Ohtani, Los Angeles, 59; T.Turner, Philadelphia, 58; Carroll, Arizona, 57; Lindor, New York, 56; Riley, Atlanta, 56; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 55; Ramos, San Francisco, 55; Alonso, New York, 54; Machado, San Diego, 54; Tucker, Chicago, 54.

DOUBLES — Alonso, New York, 16; Donovan, St. Louis, 16; Machado, San Diego, 15; Chourio, Milwaukee, 14; J.Lee, San Francisco, 14; F.Freeman, Los Angeles, 13; Lux, Cincinnati, 13; Perdomo, Arizona, 13.

HOME RUNS — Schwarber, Philadelphia, 17; Ohtani, Los Angeles, 17; Carroll, Arizona, 15; E.Suárez, Arizona, 14; Tatis, San Diego, 12; Suzuki, Chicago, 12; Wood, Washington, 12; Tucker, Chicago, 12; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 12; 5 tied at 10.

STOLEN BASES — On.Cruz, Pittsburgh, 18; E.De La Cruz, Cincinnati, 16; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 14; Tucker, Chicago, 14; V.Scott, St. Louis, 13; Turang, Milwaukee, 13.

ERA — Senga, New York, 1.43; Yamamoto, Los Angeles, 1.86; Luzardo, Philadelphia, 1.95; Skenes, Pittsburgh, 2.44; M.King, San Diego, 2.59; F.Peralta, Milwaukee, 2.59; Ray, San Francisco, 2.67; Webb, San Francisco, 2.67; Wheeler, Philadelphia, 2.67.

STRIKEOUTS — Gore, Washington, 84; Wheeler, Philadelphia, 80; Webb, San Francisco, 74; Sale, Atlanta, 72; Yamamoto, Los Angeles, 68; Luzardo, Philadelphia, 67; Ty.Megill, New York, 66.

Scoreboard

American League

East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	29	19	.604	—
Toronto	24	24	.500	5
Boston	25	26	.490	5½
Tampa Bay	23	26	.469	6½
Baltimore	16	32	.333	13

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	33	17	.660	—
Minnesota	27	22	.551	5½
Kansas City	28	23	.549	5½
Cleveland	26	22	.542	6
Chicago	15	35	.300	18

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	28	20	.583	—
Houston	25	24	.510	3½
Texas	25	25	.500	4
Los Angeles	23	25	.479	5
Athletics	22	28	.440	7

National League

East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	31	18	.633	—
New York	30	20	.600	1½
Atlanta	24	24	.500	6½
Washington	22	27	.449	9
Miami	19	29	.396	11½

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	30	20	.600	—
St. Louis	27	23	.540	3
Cincinnati	25	26	.490	5½
Milwaukee	24	26	.480	6
Pittsburgh	17	33	.340	13

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	31	19	.620	—
San Francisco	29	21	.580	2
San Diego	27	20	.574	2½
Arizona	26	24	.520	5
Colorado	8	41	.163	22½

Wednesday's games

Pittsburgh 3, Cincinnati 1
Tampa Bay 8, Houston 4
Minnesota 6-1, Cleveland 5-5
Chicago Cubs 2, Miami 1
Baltimore 8, Milwaukee 4, 11 innings
Detroit 5, St. Louis 1
Seattle 6, Chicago White Sox 5
Kansas City 8, San Francisco 4
N.Y. Mets 5, Boston 1
N.Y. Yankees 4, Texas 3
Toronto 14, San Diego 0
Philadelphia 9, Colorado 5
L.A. Angels 10, Athletics 5
L.A. Dodgers 3, Arizona 1
Atlanta at Washington, ppd.

Thursday's games

Texas at N.Y. Yankees
San Diego at Toronto
Philadelphia at Colorado
L.A. Angels at Athletics
Cleveland at Detroit
Milwaukee at Pittsburgh
Baltimore at Boston
Atlanta at Washington
Seattle at Houston

Friday's games

Chicago Cubs (Boyd 4-2) at Cincinnati (Greene 4-2)
Milwaukee (Peralta 5-3) at Pittsburgh (Skenes 3-5)
San Francisco (Roupp 2-3) at Washington (Gore 2-4)
Toronto (TBD) at Tampa Bay (Rasmusen 2-4)
Baltimore (Morton 0-7) at Boston (Bello 2-1)
Cleveland (Cecconi 0-1) at Detroit (Jobe 4-0)
L.A. Dodgers (Kershaw 0-0) at N.Y. Mets (Canning 5-1)
San Diego (Pivetta 5-2) at Atlanta (Sale 2-3)
Texas (Mahle 5-1) at Chicago White Sox (Burke 2-5)
Kansas City (Cameron 1-1) at Minnesota (López 4-2)
Seattle (Hancock 1-2) at Houston (Gusto 3-2)
Arizona (Gallen 3-5) at St. Louis (Mikolas 3-2)
N.Y. Yankees (Schmidt 1-1) at Colorado (Dollander 2-5)
Miami (Alcantara 2-6) at L.A. Angels (Kikuchi 0-4)
Philadelphia (Wheeler 5-1) at Athletics (Springs 5-3)

Saturday's games

Kansas City at Minnesota
Arizona at St. Louis
Milwaukee at Pittsburgh
San Francisco at Washington
Baltimore at Boston
N.Y. Yankees at Colorado
Seattle at Houston
Texas at Chicago White Sox
Chicago Cubs at Cincinnati
San Diego at Atlanta
Toronto at Tampa Bay
Cleveland at Detroit
L.A. Dodgers at N.Y. Mets
Philadelphia at Athletics
Miami at L.A. Angels



ERIN HOOLEY/AP

The Seattle Mariners' Leody Taveras hits a go-ahead, two-run home run during the eighth inning against the White Sox on Wednesday in Chicago.

FRENCH OPEN/INDY 500

Alcaraz soaring while Swiatek struggling

BY SAMUEL PETREQUIN
Associated Press

PARIS — Carlos Alcaraz will open his defense of the French Open title against veteran Kei Nishikori and said he's "excited" to be back in Paris on the back of an excellent clay-court season.

Alcaraz has been the dominant player in the weeks leading to Roland-Garros and is the clear-cut favorite after claiming trophies in Barcelona and Rome. Nishikori is a former top-five player who has been struggling on the dirt in recent years.

Alcaraz holds a 15-1 record on clay this season. Having moved back to No. 2 in the rankings, he can't play top-ranked Jannik Sinner before the final in Paris because they are on opposite sides of the draw.

"It's been a great clay season so far," Alcaraz said after Thursday's draw in Paris. "I'm excited. The confidence is really high right now."

Alcaraz or Sinner have won the last five Grand Slam titles.

Back from his three-month doping suspension, Sinner pushed Alcaraz when they met in the Rome final this month, yet lost in straight sets. Sinner opens against local hope Arthur Rinderknech and could meet three-time champion Novak Djokovic in the semifinals.

Alcaraz beat Sinner over five



ALESSANDRA TARANTINO/AP

Carlos Alcaraz poses with the trophy after winning the Italian Open at the Foro Italico in Rome on May 18.

sets in the French Open semifinals last year. Alcaraz then successfully defended his Wimbledon title for his fourth Grand Slam trophy.

Sinner has won only one of his 19 career titles on clay, in Umag, Croatia, in 2022 — when he beat Alcaraz in the final.

Djokovic, who finally won a match on clay this year at the Ge-

neva Open on Wednesday, will face Mackenzie McDonald of the United States in the first round. The 24-time Grand Slam singles champion won the Paris Olympics gold medal last August at Roland-Garros, but has struggled on clay since then.

Sinner could run into No. 5 seed Jack Draper in the quarterfinals,

with other possible matchups featuring Alexander Zverev (3) vs. Djokovic (6), Taylor Fritz (4) vs. Lorenzo Musetti (8), and Alcaraz vs. Casper Ruud (7).

In the women's draw, four-time champion Iga Swiatek is still searching for her best form.

Swiatek has dropped outside the top four and has not won a title

or reached a final since her victory at Roland-Garros last year. She dealt with a doping suspension last year after failing an out-of-competition drug test in August for a banned heart medication. The International Tennis Integrity Agency accepted her explanation that she was taking the medication for issues with jet lag and sleeping.

Seeded No. 5 in Paris, Swiatek will open her campaign against Rebecca Sramkova, ranked No. 41. She could meet former U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu in the second round.

"I'm proud of my achievements here," Swiatek said. "I'm working hard to be ready. For sure this season had more ups and downs than the years before. But I know my game is here."

No. 1 seed Aryna Sabalenka faces Kamilla Rakhimova while No. 2 Coco Gauff will take on Olivia Gaedeck. An interesting matchup will pit No. 10 Paula Badosa against four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka.

The possible women's quarterfinals are Sabalenka against No. 8 Qinwen Zheng, last-year's runner-up Jasmine Paolini against Swiatek, Jessica Pegula (3) vs. Mirra Andreeva (6), and Gauff against Madison Keys (7)

The French Open starts Sunday and concludes June 8.

Hybrid power could dramatically reshape race

BY DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Helio Castroneves felt an immediate difference — a subtle but noticeable uptick in speed — the first time he utilized the boost of horsepower offered by IndyCar's novel hybrid engines around the imposing oval of Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The question now facing the four-time Indianapolis 500 winner, along with the rest of the drivers on the 33-car starting grid for the 109th running on Sunday, is how best to capitalize on the hybrid over 200 laps spent entirely on edge.

Empty it entirely and then wait for it to recharge, which might take several laps? Save it for short bursts for passes or to defend? Perhaps use it slowly to run down the leader or build a big advantage once out front?

"There is so much more that goes into this than I think people realize or recognize," acknowledged Indy 500 veteran Graham Rahal, whose father Bobby Rahal won the 1986 race. "It's an interesting thing. I mean, the hybrid, it's quite powerful here. On a single lap if you utilize it correctly, it does make a hell of a difference in

lap time or lap speed."

The genesis of the hybridization began years ago, when IndyCar manufacturers Chevrolet and Honda wanted to better align their racing programs with a shift in consumer demand toward hybrid and electric vehicles. But the project was beset by delays as engineers struggled to fit a bespoke hybrid unit into the IndyCar chassis designed more than a decade ago, and that had to meet certain requirements for weight and safety, among other things.

The result was finally unveiled before last year's Indy 500, a design based around ultracapacitors rather than heavy batteries. It provides a quick boost to the existing 2.2-liter, twin-turbocharged V-6 engines before recharging to be used again.

The system was introduced at Mid-Ohio midway through last year's IndyCar season and has been in use ever since.

But it has never been used somewhere like Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where speeds at the end of each straight can hit 240 mph, and the difference between winning and losing can be measured in thousandths of a second.

"I've had some really interesting conversations with drivers about how of all places where the hybrid is going to make a huge difference, it's going to be at Indianapolis," IndyCar president Doug Boles said. "I asked why and they say, 'Well, you think about Indianapolis, how trimmed out we are — especially in qualifying — any incremental difference in horsepower makes a difference.'

"We're going to see some exciting racing," Boles continued, "and the strategies that I have heard from drivers in terms of talking about how to deploy the hybrid vary wildly. It's going to be fascinating to watch how this goes."

It hasn't gone without its share of problems, either, dating to an open test last month and right through practice Monday.

For one thing, the hybrid still checks in at about 100 pounds, which is significant on a car that weighs just 1,600. And all of that weight is in the back of the car, which has dramatically altered the way they are balanced and ultimately perform.

"That's a lot of mass percentage-wise you are adding," two-time defending Indy 500 winner Josef



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Josef Newgarden, left, and Graham Rahal drive into the first turn during Indy 500 practice at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway on Monday.

Newgarden said. "It's almost like adding 200, 250 pounds to a stock car. If you said, 'Hey, guys, we're going to bolt 250 pounds to these stock cars, see what you think,' I bet they would all go, 'OK, this drives differently.' And now we have to counteract it."

Andretti Global driver Kyle Kirkwood is among many who believe the additional weight makes cars harder to drive, and Meyer Shank Racing's Marcus Armstrong said, "I do believe the window is considerably smaller, the balance window."

Armstrong crashed in practice last Saturday and had to squeeze into the field in a backup car Sunday.

Nevertheless, the hybrid tech-

nology will play a part in "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing" on Sunday. And if it comes down to the final laps, it could be a big part, as the leader tries to hold on and the chasers try to time their boost for a winning pass.

"I think it definitely adds some variables," said Dixon, who will start on the second row. "If you're sitting out front, you could be a bit of a sitting duck, especially if everybody is kind of recharged and ready to go behind you."

"I think the biggest thing that we've probably all learned so far, you've got to be ready for change, is probably the biggest thing," he added. "But I think it could ultimately change how the end of the race plays out."

NHL PLAYOFFS

Power-play goals lift Stars against Oilers in Game 1

By **STEPHEN HAWKINS**
Associated Press

DALLAS — The Dallas Stars powered their way to a series-opening victory in their Western Conference final rematch with the Edmonton Oilers.

And it was quick turnaround. Miro Heiskanen, Mikael Granlund and Matt Duchene scored power-play goals in a 5:26 span early in the third period, when the Stars overcame a two-goal deficit in a 6-3 victory Wednesday night.

“It started with a power play,” Duchene said. “You get one right way, and it’s like, ‘Hey, we’re back in it now with momentum.’ Get another one right away.”

Dallas opened the third period with a man advantage from a penalty that carried over from the second. Heiskanen scored 32 seconds in on a shot from near the blue line, Granlund tied it at 3 and Duchene put the Stars ahead to stay with a second-effort score.

“I didn’t feel through 40 minutes that we had made (the Oilers) earn the position they were in. So, guys responded. We got fortunate. We got some power-play goals,” Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said. “Happy for our power play. It took a lot of heat last year at this point of the year. It was the difference to-

Scoreboard

Conference Finals

Best-of-7; x-if necessary
EASTERN CONFERENCE
Florida 1, Carolina 0

Florida 5, Carolina 2
Thursday: at Carolina
Saturday: at Florida, **AFN-Sports2, 2 a.m.**
Sunday CET, 10 a.m. Sunday JKT
Monday: at Florida
x-Wednesday, May 28: at Carolina
x-Friday, May 30: at Florida
x-Sunday, June 1: at Carolina
WESTERN CONFERENCE
Dallas 1, Edmonton 0

Wednesday: Dallas 6, Edmonton 3
Friday: at Dallas, **AFN-Sports2, 2 a.m.**
Saturday CET, 10 a.m. Saturday JKT
Sunday: at Edmonton
Tuesday: at Edmonton
x-Thursday, May 29: at Dallas
x-Saturday, May 31: at Edmonton
x-Monday, June 2: at Dallas

night for us, so it’s great.”

Tyler Seguin had two goals and an assist for the Stars. Esa Lindell added a empty-netter that went almost the entire length of the ice for their first five-goal third period in a playoff game. Jake Oettinger stopped 24 shots.

Game 2 is Friday night in Dallas.

The Stars went 0-for-14 on power plays in losing the West final last year in six games, and gave up two short-handed goals in the process. Dallas also failed to convert with a man advantage only 7½ minutes into this opener, but



LM OTERO/AP

From left, Stars center Mikael Granlund celebrates a goal with Jason Robertson and Mason Marchment during the third period in Game 1 of the West finals against the Edmonton Oilers on Wednesday in Dallas.

quickly turned that around in the third period.

Leon Draisaitl had a goal and two assists for the rested Oilers, who played for the first time since wrapping up their second-round series a week earlier in Game 5 at Vegas. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins had a power-play goal and an assist, defenseman Evan Bouchard had his fifth goal and Connor McDavid two assists.

Stuart Skinner, who had lost his starting job in these playoffs before Calvin Pickard got hurt in the last series, stopped 22 of 27 shots. Skinner had closed out the Golden Knights with consecutive shutouts.

“Goals have been going in a little differently, in different ways.

Again, it’s a different series so they show us different things,” Skinner said. “The PK, it’s been a little bit up and down. It was bad at the start of the first round then got better. It was great all series against Vegas and (now) a struggle for one game. I mean, again, it’s one game.”

Heiskanen and Duchene both scored for the first time this postseason.

It was only the fourth game for Heiskanen since missing the last 32 regular-season games and first 10 playoff games because of left knee surgery. He scored a wrister from near the boards just inside the blue line.

Duchene got his goal after his initial shot went off teammate

Roope Hintz, who was laid out on the ice after getting knocked down. The puck went right back to Duchene, who then flicked it into the net.

“The first one that hit him, I’m like, this is kind of par for the course this postseason for me. If there’s something that could go wrong, it did, and then it comes back and goes in,” Duchene said. “I couldn’t believe I still had room. Kind of a funny one. But it feels good.”

The Stars won their seventh consecutive home game this postseason, a first since the franchise moved to Dallas in 1993. The Stars have also won back-to-back series openers after losing eight consecutive Game 1s.

Mobile



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NBA

Heights: SGA used close MVP finishes as motivation

FROM PAGE 32

ish in the NBA's top three in all three of those categories.

It was the sixth instance of a player finishing a season averaging a triple-double — at least 10 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds per game. Russell Westbrook did it four times and Oscar Robertson once, but only one of those triple-double seasons led to an MVP win.

"He's a special player," Jokic said of Gilgeous-Alexander earlier this week when Oklahoma City eliminated the Nuggets in the Western Conference semifinals. "His shot selection, his shot capability ... he's always there. He's a special player."

Antetokounmpo, who averaged 30.4 points, 11.9 rebounds and 6.5 assists per game, was third. Being of Greek and Nigerian descent, he started this run of international players winning MVP with back-to-back awards in 2019 and 2020.

Jokic, a Serbian, won in 2021, 2022 and 2024. And Philadelphia's Joel Embiid, who was born in Cameroon but since became a U.S. citizen, won the award in 2023.

Now, it's Gilgeous-Alexander — a son of Ontario, where hockey reigns — carrying the MVP flag. He was fifth in the voting two years ago, second behind Jokic last year, and used being so close to the award as fuel this season.

"There are voters every year. That will never change," Gilgeous-Alexander said on TNT during the broadcast when the results were revealed. "And last year, all it meant was that more people thought I shouldn't have won than should have won. This year I wanted to change the narrative and have it flipped. I think I did a good job of that."

Boston's Jayson Tatum was fourth, Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell was fifth and the Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James was sixth — the 20th time in his 22-year career that he got some MVP votes.

Detroit's Cade Cunningham and Minnesota's Anthony Ed-

wards tied for seventh, Golden State's Stephen Curry was ninth and three players — the Los Angeles Clippers' Harden, New York's Jalen Brunson and the Cavaliers' Evan Mobley — tied for 10th.

The MVP award, like most other NBA honors, was voted on by a global panel of 100 writers and broadcasters who cover the league and cast ballots shortly before the start of the playoffs.

The other awards that were part of that voting process and have already been unveiled: Cleveland's Kenny Atkinson winning coach of the year, Atlanta's Dyson Daniels winning most improved player, San Antonio's Stephon Castle winning rookie of the year, the Cavs' Evan Mobley winning defensive player of the year, the Knicks' Jalen Brunson winning clutch player of the year and the Celtics' Payton Pritchard winning sixth man of the year.

Other awards announced by the league since the end of the regular season: the Warriors' Stephen Curry won the Twyman-Stokes teammate of the year award, Golden State teammate Draymond Green won the hustle award, the Thunder's Sam Presti won executive of the year and Boston's Jrue Holiday won the sportsmanship award for the second time in his career as well as the league's social justice award.

The award will likely come at a price for OKC, as Gilgeous-Alexander is in line for an extension that will easily top \$300 million and could even see him make about \$1 million per regular-season game in 2030-31 and 2031-32.

Gilgeous-Alexander promised teammates watches if he won the MVP; those guys have those watches now, and they deserve all that and more, he said.

"This is nothing compared to what they've been to me," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "I would rather have the MVP over a Rolex every day of the week and without them, I wouldn't have the MVP."



NATE BILLINGS/AP

Denver's Nikola Jokic, right, fell short of a fourth NBA MVP award, finishing behind the Oklahoma City Thunder's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander.



ADAM HUNGER/AP

Indiana Pacers guard Tyrese Haliburton is mobbed by teammates as he makes a choking motion after tying Game 1 of the Eastern Conference final against the Knicks at the end of regulation Wednesday in New York.

Haliburton, Pacers rally fast to beat Knicks in OT

BY BRIAN MAHONEY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Tyrese Haliburton was sure his jumper as regulation ended was going in, then wasn't certain it had after it bounced high off the rim and hung in the air for what felt like an eternity.

He thought it was a 3-pointer to win the game, then quickly realized it was a 2 to tie. A lot to process, followed by just one thought with overtime looming.

"Then my focus just became winning it," Haliburton said.

Indiana did, finishing off its stunning rally by beating New York 138-135 in overtime Wednesday night in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals.

The Knicks led by 14 points with under three minutes remaining in regulation, but Aaron Nesmith brought the Pacers back with a flurry of 3-pointers.

Haliburton then hoped he had won it with another. With Indiana down two and time running down, he started to lose control of his dribble, regained it and dribbled back out toward the 3-point line. He fired up his jumper and when it finally fell in, he raced toward the sideline and made a choke signal to the crowd, like Pacers Hall of Famer Reggie Miller did to Spike Lee while leading an Indiana comeback in a playoff game in 1994.

Replay confirmed that Haliburton's toe was on the line and it was a 2-pointer that tied it at 125. An-

Scoreboard

Conference Finals

Best-of-7; x-if necessary
Eastern Conference
Indiana 1, New York 0

Wednesday: Indiana 138, New York 135, OT
Friday: at New York, **AFN-Sports, 2 a.m.**
Saturday CET, 10 a.m. Saturday JKT
Sunday: at Indiana
Tuesday: at Indiana
x-Thursday, May 29: at New York
x-Saturday, May 31: at Indiana
x-Monday, June 2: at New York

Western Conference

Oklahoma City 1, Minnesota 0

Oklahoma City 114, Minnesota 88
Thursday: at Oklahoma City
Saturday: at Minnesota, **AFN-Sports, 2:30 a.m.**
Sunday CET, 10:30 a.m. Sunday JKT
Monday: at Minnesota
x-Wednesday, May 28: at Oklahoma City
x-Friday, May 30: at Minnesota
x-Sunday, June 1: at Oklahoma City

drew Nembhard eventually made the go-ahead basket with 26 seconds remaining in OT.

Game 2 is Friday night.

Haliburton had 31 points and 11 assists. Nesmith finished with 30 points, going 8-for-9 from 3-point range.

The Pacers won a game against the Bucks in the first round when they trailed by seven points with 40 seconds left in overtime, then stole one from the top-seeded Cavaliers when they were behind by seven with 46 seconds remaining in regulation.

Another round, another comeback.

"It's always special. It's always fun," Nesmith said. "This is what we live for."

It was a thrilling start to the ninth playoff matchup between

these fierce rivals from the 1990s — but a deflating finish for New York in its first Eastern Conference finals game since 2000.

Jalen Brunson scored 43 points and Karl-Anthony Towns had 35 points and 12 rebounds. But the Knicks couldn't protect the big lead they built while Brunson was on the bench in foul trouble in the fourth quarter and had a collapse unlike any other in the postseason.

Teams leading by at least 14 points in the final 2:45 of the fourth quarter had been 994-0 since detailed play-by-play began being kept in 1997-98.

"Give them a lot of credit. They closed the game out like they've been doing all playoffs," Brunson said. "Just not really good on our part."

Indiana beat New York in Game 7 of the East semifinals at Madison Square Garden last year, routing a team that had been decimated by injuries.

This was an entirely different way to win, with the Pacers looking all but out of the game after the Knicks' 14-0 run with Brunson on the bench pushed New York's two-point lead to 108-92.

Even after Nesmith started to get hot, the Knicks seemed safe when Brunson's 3-pointer made it 119-105 with 2:51 to go. But Nesmith would later hit consecutive 3s and both free throws when New York fouled him intentionally so he couldn't try to tie it with another, giving Indiana the chance to tie on Haliburton's shot.

SPORTS



Powerful showing

Rapid, late goals give Stars victory in Game 1 over Oilers » NHL playoffs, Page 30

NBA

Reaching new heights

Gilgeous-Alexander wins MVP over Jokic following contested 2-man race

By TIM REYNOLDS

Associated Press

The case for Shai Gilgeous-Alexander was simple. He's the best player on an Oklahoma City Thunder team that had the best record this season and set a league mark for margin of victory. If that wasn't enough, he also won the scoring title.

That's an MVP year.

Gilgeous-Alexander was announced Wednesday as the NBA's Most Valuable Player, his first time winning the award. It's now seven straight years that a player born outside the United States won MVP, extending the longest such streak in league history.

And when it happened, Gilgeous-Alexander said a life of moments — getting cut, traded, overlooked, celebrating, the wins, the good times — all flooded into his mind.

"I don't think there's enough emphasis on how much off the court influences on the court," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "And once I became better off the court, my career started to skyrocket. It's no coincidence."

It ultimately was a two-person race. Gilgeous-Alexander got 71 first-place votes and 29 second-place votes; Denver's Nikola Jokic got the other 29 first-place votes and the other 71 second-place votes.

Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo was third, getting 88 of the 100 possible third-place votes.

Gilgeous-Alexander — the No.

11 pick in the 2018 draft — averaged 32.7 points, 6.4 assists and five rebounds per game this season, leading Oklahoma City to a 68-14 record. The Thunder outscored teams by 12.9 points per game, the biggest margin in league history.

He becomes the second Canadian to win MVP; Steve Nash won it twice.

"He set the foundation," Gilgeous-Alexander said of Nash. "He was the first Canadian basketball player I knew of. And without seeing guys go to the NBA from Canada, it wouldn't have been as much of a dream as it was for us as kids growing up. So to be in a conversation with a guy like that and what he has meant to not only basketball but to the country of Canada, it's special."

And Gilgeous-Alexander is the first guard to win MVP since James Harden in 2018.

"His value is his confidence," OKC's Kenrich Williams said of Gilgeous-Alexander, his Thunder teammate for the last five seasons. "His confidence that he has in himself and the confidence that he instills in every one of his teammates, including the coaches."

Jokic — a winner of three of the last four MVP awards — was second, despite a season for the ages. He averaged 29.6 points, 12.7 rebounds and 10.2 assists per game, the first center to average a triple-double and the first player since all those stats were tracked to fin-

SEE HEIGHTS ON PAGE 31



KYLE PHILLIPS/AP

The Thunder's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander leaps for a dunk in Game 7 of a Western Conference semifinals on May 18 in Oklahoma City. Gilgeous-Alexander was named league MVP on Wednesday.

INSIDE

Pacers get Game 1 win vs. Knicks in OT
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Colts owner Irsay, who oversaw Indy revival, dies at 65 » NFL, Page 27