



FACES

Director struck a few chords to get 'Elvis' in tune
Page 14

MILITARY

Government-funded morale flights from Okinawa to end
Page 4



BASEBALL

Can Savannah's amateur team provide the cure?
Page 24

US readies more aid for Ukraine as Russia's military advances >> **Page 7**

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CONTINGENCY EDITION

FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 2022

Free to Deployed Areas



EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AP

A man stands amid the destruction after an earthquake in Gayan village, in Paktika province, Afghanistan, on Thursday.

Afghans dig for survivors

Victims from destructive quake buried as groups work to deliver aid

By **EBRAHIM NOROOZI**
Associated Press

GAYAN, Afghanistan — Villagers rushed to bury the dead Thursday and dug by hand through the rubble of their homes in search of survivors of a powerful earthquake in eastern Afghanistan that state media reported killed 1,000 people. The Taliban and the international community that fled their takeover struggled to bring help to the disaster's victims.

Under a leaden sky in Paktika province, which was the epicenter of Wednesday's magnitude 6 earthquake, men dug a line of graves

in one village, as they tried to lay the dead to rest quickly in line with Muslim tradition. In one courtyard, bodies lay wrapped in plastic to protect them from the rains that are hampering relief efforts for the living.

The state-run Bakhtar News Agency reported the death toll and said an estimated 1,500 more were injured. In the first independent count, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said around 770 people had been killed in Paktika and neighboring Khost province.

It's not clear how the totals were arrived at,

given the difficulties of accessing and communicating with the affected villages tucked into remote mountainsides. Either grim till would make the quake Afghanistan's deadliest in two decades, and officials continued to warn the number could still rise.

"They don't have anything to eat, they are wondering what they can have to eat, and it is also raining," a Bakhtar reporter said in footage from the quake zone. "Their houses are destroyed. Please help them, don't leave them

SEE DIG ON PAGE 11

Army offers \$35K bonus to fill recruit vacancies

By **ROSE L. THAYER**
Stars and Stripes

The Army is offering a \$35,000 bonus to new recruits willing to sign a four-year contract and ship out to boot camp within 45 days as it struggles to quickly fill open training slots.

It is the first time that the service has offered an amount this large for a bonus to any career field, according to Army Recruiting Command.

"Recruiting in the current environment is a challenge, and we have positions we need to fill right now," said Maj. Gen. Kevin Veen, who leads the Recruiting Command. "Our Army is counting on us to fill these training vacancies quickly, so we are able to offer incentives to gain interest in critical career fields."

As of June 14, all career fields had vacancies that qualified for the quick-ship bonus, the Army said. Recruits who joined under the delayed entry program, meaning they've enlisted but have delayed their boot camp arrival to July, August or September can renegotiate their contract to receive the bonus and leave sooner.

The Navy and Air Force announced similar quick-ship bonuses in April, as all the services grapple with recruiting in the post coronavirus pandemic job market that has employers in stiff competition for workers.

The Army did not immediately respond to questions Wednesday about how many vacancies it has in basic training or the specific challenges in getting new recruits. However, military officials told Congress in April that the Army, in particular, was behind in recruiting goals, citing the pandemic and tight labor market.

SEE BONUS ON PAGE 5

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Trains canceled in UK as unions stage 2nd walkout

Associated Press

LONDON — Millions of people in Britain faced disruption Thursday as railway staff staged their second national walkout this week.

The 24-hour strike by 40,000 cleaners, signallers, maintenance workers and station staff canceled about four-fifths of passenger services across the country. A third walkout is planned for Saturday as part of Britain's biggest and most disruptive railway strike in 30 years.

Train stations were largely de-

serted Thursday. Highways also were less busy than expected, and many people appeared to heed advice to avoid travel. Internet provider Virgin Media O2 said its data suggested "millions more people" than usual were working from home.

The dispute centers on pay, working conditions and job security as Britain's train companies aim to cut costs and staffing after two years in which emergency government funding kept them afloat.

The strike pits the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union against 13 privately owned train-operating companies and the government-owned National Rail.

Gas prices

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service did not provide gas prices for facilities in Europe or the Pacific.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates				
Euro costs (June 24)	\$1.03		South Korea (Won)	1298.70
Dollar buys (June 24)	0.9275		Switzerland (Franc)	0.9584
British pound (June 24)	\$1.19		Thailand (Baht)	35.45
Japanese yen (June 24)	133.00		Turkey (NewLira)	17.3566
South Korean won (June 24)	1268.00		(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	
Commercial rates			INTEREST RATES	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770		Prime rate	4.75
Britain (Pound)	1.2290		Interest Rates Discount rate	2.25
Canada (Dollar)	1.2949		Federal funds market rate	0.08
China (Yuan)	6.7015		3-month bill	1.69
Denmark (Krone)	7.0536		30-year bond	3.23
Egypt (Pound)	18.7392			
Euro	0.9482			
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8493			
Hungary (Forint)	379.29			
Israel (Shekel)	3.4471			
Japan (Yen)	134.35			
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3066			
Norway (Krone)	9.9457			
Philippines (Peso)	54.61			
Poland (Zloty)	4.47			
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7521			
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3885			

WEATHER OUTLOOK



TODAY
IN STRIPES

American Roundup 13

Comics 16

Crossword 16

Faces 14

Opinion 15

Sports 17-24

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MILITARY

Appropriations committee approves \$762B bill

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

House appropriators on Wednesday adopted a \$762 billion Pentagon funding bill for fiscal 2023, sending the measure to the full House for consideration despite Republican calls to increase defense spending amid high inflation.

The House Appropriations Committee voted 32 to 26 along party lines to advance its version of the Fiscal Year 2023 Defense Appropriations Act, which fell largely in line with President Joe Biden's budget request for the Pentagon. The full House will consider the bill later this year, as lawmakers seek to complete Pentagon funding legislation — and the separate defense authorization bill — before the beginning of the fiscal year, which is Oct. 1.

The appropriations bill would provide troops and Defense Department civilian workers a 4.6% raise, pours billions into efforts to check China's military ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region, invests about \$1 billion into sexual assault prevention and another \$193 million into suicide prevention, and provides \$300 million to support Ukraine in its fight against Russian invaders. It would also provide nearly \$132 billion for research, development, testing and evaluation, which would be the largest Pentagon investment ever toward developing new technologies.

In passing the bill, Democrats



SGT. CALEB MINOR/7th Army Training Command

Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., meets with 3rd Infantry Division soldiers at Grafenwoehr Training Center in Germany in April.

rejected calls from Republicans on the committee to increase Pentagon funding for next year, pointing to the bill's roughly \$32 billion boost to fiscal 2022 military spending. Republicans argued Wednesday that the proposed bill failed to keep up with more than 8% inflation, labelling it a cut to Pentagon funding.

The bill, said Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Calif., would "directly result in

the loss of combat capabilities and readiness."

The bill's passage out of committee will set up a spending fight on Capitol Hill in the months ahead. Already, the Senate Armed Services Committee adopted an \$847 billion version of the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets Congress' policy and spending priorities for the Pentagon. On Wednes-

day, the House Armed Services Committee also appeared poised to increase defense spending over President Joe Biden's budget request, adopting an amendment to add \$37 billion to the White House's overall request during a hearing to discuss its version of the NDAA.

Republicans also warned Wednesday that measures included by Democrats such as provisions aimed at closing the controversial detention facility at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and language meant to ensure service members could have time off for abortions would inevitably slow the bill. Lawmakers must ultimately reconcile the House- and Senate-passed versions of the Pentagon appropriations bills and their versions of the annual NDAA's to fund the Pentagon each year. The fiscal 2022 funding bill was not passed until March as part of an omnibus package. Biden signed the 2022 NDAA into law in December, about three months into the fiscal year.

The appropriations bill would stop the Pentagon from using funds to operate the Guantanamo detention center beyond September 2023, effectively closing the controversial facility built in 2002 to house law-of-war combatants captured on the battlefield. Its closure has long been a Democratic priority, including for Biden. Democrats have long argued the facility is too expensive and serves as a recruiting tool for terrorists who oppose America's detention

of the inmates there.

Republicans argue the remaining 37 detainees held at Guantanamo cannot be transferred safely to detention facilities on U.S. soil or returned to their home countries. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Fla., labeled them among "the most dangerous terrorists on the planet," in arguing the Guantanamo facility remain open in perpetuity.

Calvert warned another measure included in the bill by Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., the chairwoman of the House Appropriations Committee's defense subpanel, would also slow its progress on the House floor — language meant to ensure service women are guaranteed time off to seek certain health care, including abortions.

McCollum argued it was necessary to protect women who might need to travel to receive an abortion, should the Supreme Court strike down Roe v. Wade, which they said would likely lead to 26 states quickly moving to ban abortions.

Calvert and the panels other Republicans opposed the policy, objecting to its protections for abortion and calling it an attempt at "Congress micromanaging the [military] services."

"Let's remember that we're trying to craft a bill that has a chance of becoming law," Calvert said. "And provisions like this are the surest way to prevent us from passing such a bill."

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House panel votes for \$37B boost to defense budget

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The House Armed Services Committee agreed Wednesday to exceed the Biden administration's fiscal 2023 defense spending plan by \$37 billion, setting up a potential clash with senators who want to increase the budget even more.

Committee members, led by a monthslong push by Republicans, voted 42-17 in support of the overall increase, citing record inflation, the immediate threat of Russian aggression and China's rising military power. The increase is \$8 billion less than the \$847 billion bill approved last week by the Senate Armed Services Committee.

"In our current threat environment ... it's time to grow out military, not shrink our military," said Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va.

She said she hoped the ultimate agreement for the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets policy and funding levels for the military, will be "somewhat north" of the \$37 billion boost.

The White House requested \$813 billion for national defense next fiscal year, including \$773 billion for the Pentagon. The House panel's adopted amendment authorizes extra money for military construction, fuel, bonuses and other support to offset inflation as well as additional ships and aircraft and more aid for Ukraine.

Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., the committee's chairman, argued against bumping up the budget he had proposed — \$802.4 billion — and said lawmakers need to focus on quality rather than quantity.

"I care as much about how the money is spent as I do about how much is spent," he said. "I think making sure the Pentagon has some fiscal discipline and is forced to make tough decisions and not just always rely on another pot of money coming along is crucial for modernization."

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., took issue with the amendment's plan to save five Freedom-class littoral combat ships that the Navy

wanted to retire. She described the ships as "lemons" that are plagued with functionality problems and cost \$59 million a year each to maintain.

"This is ridiculous and it's shameful that we are restoring five of these decommissioned ships into service when all we're going to do is spend money towing them back to port," Speier said before voting against the overall budget increase.

The amendment authorizes \$318 million for the cost of restoring the ships. It also earmarks \$660 million for eight additional F/A-18s jets, \$1.3 billion for nine more Navy and U.S. Marine Corps aircraft than requested, \$1.2 billion for additional air and missile defense systems as well as other weapons and systems procurements. Provisions in the amendment specifically target the effect of inflation on service members and the Defense Department, authorizing \$3.5 billion to keep pace with military construction costs, \$2.5 billion to offset the rising cost

of fuel and \$1.4 billion for bonuses, commissary subsidies and other financial support for personnel. The amendment also authorizes \$1 billion for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative and supports costs for planning troop presence in Europe on NATO's eastern flank. House lawmakers also voted Wednesday to add another amendment requiring TRICARE, the military's health insurance, to provide free contraceptives to service members, their spouses and dependents. The Affordable Care Act eliminated copays and deductibles for contraception under most commercial health plans for civilians in 2012.

Another approved amendment called for the secretary of the Army to establish gender-neutral fitness standards that are higher for soldiers likely to see combat than those with less physical jobs. The Senate panel approved a similar proposal last week.

"It is obvious that a 100-pound artillery shell or a 150-pound rucksack or a 200-pound soldier that

has to be moved to the top of a hill is different than using a keyboard," said Rep. Mike Waltz, R-Fla., the amendment's sponsor. "... The jobs are different, and therefore they should have different standards."

Other amendments adopted Wednesday pave the way for the creation of a Space National Guard and authorize \$45 million to continue the development of a sea-launched cruise missile program that President Joe Biden's administration had wanted to scrap.

As the House Armed Services Committee continued deliberations Wednesday, the House Appropriations Committee voted to approve \$761 billion for defense spending that is in line with the White House's budget request. Congress will spend the next few months reconciling the differences in priorities and funding before bringing a final bill to a floor vote.

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MILITARY

Funded morale flights on Okinawa to end

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Members of the U.S. military population on Okinawa have slightly more than a month to squeeze in a government-funded morale flight to the U.S. mainland.

The Funded Environmental and Morale Leave program, or FEML, is set to expire Aug. 1, according to an announcement Tuesday by III Marine Expeditionary Force. Approved trips scheduled until July 31 are unaffected, including return travel after that date, according to the email from III MEF

spokesman Capt. Gabriel Adibe. He said eligible travelers may still apply for morale leave but individuals intending to use FEML should contact the officials approving their leave to make reservations and seek further guidance.

Japan ended its post-travel quarantine requirements for anyone under the status of forces agreement on June 1, according to Adibe's email. That removed the reason FEML was approved in November. Travelers entering Japan must still pass a molecular test for COVID-19, usually a PCR test, 72 hours before starting their

international travel, according to III MEF.

The Pentagon approved funded morale leave from Okinawa to alleviate the cost of quarantining in Tokyo during the COVID-19 pandemic. Foreign travelers, including SOFA members, had to enter the country through Tokyo and complete 10 days quarantine in the metro area before heading to their destinations. SOFA outlines the rights and responsibilities of the U.S. military population in Japan.

The costs for quarantine lodging and for the travel leg to Okina-

wa added up for military travelers already coping with nearly two years of pandemic life on the island prefecture.

FEML opened up the Patriot Express for service members, Defense Department civilians and their families with flights between Seattle and Kadena Air Base on Okinawa. The Patriot Express is a regularly scheduled, government-contracted flight between the U.S. and overseas military bases. Returning travelers were able to quarantine at their homes on Okinawa.

Restrictions apply to the funded

leave program. Eligible travelers may take one morale leave and must be on orders to Okinawa for at least two years, including back-to-back one-year assignments.

Morale leave falls under a provision in the Pentagon's leave and liberty policy that permits government-funded travel from duty locations "that are truly isolated, austere or unhealthy ..."

More than 6,000 service members and civilians used the program through May, according to Adibe's email. The flights, which are listed online, were often fully booked.

China's new carrier for regional domination, not contesting the US

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

China's newest aircraft carrier boasts some advanced technology and presents a growing challenge to the U.S. and its Indo-Pacific allies, but it falls short of matching U.S. carrier prowess, experts told Stars and Stripes.

The Fujian, a Type 003 carrier launched Friday in Shanghai, features a variety of improvements over China's first two carriers. Most significantly it features an electromagnetic catapult system for launching aircraft that's similar to one on the U.S. Navy's newest carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford.

The transition from "ski-jump" launches off a deck ramp on the first Chinese carriers to an electromagnetic catapult represents a "symbolic and technological leapfrog" for Chinese naval forces, according to Brian Hart, a fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies' China Power Project. He said the catapult allows Beijing to field heavier and larger fixed-wing aircraft.

"The transition away from a ski-jump style system puts China in the elite group of countries field-

ing modern 'flat-top' carriers. Adding to that, China skipped the traditional steam-powered catapult system and jumped straight to the more modern electromagnetic catapults," Hart said. "That's a major technological achievement — assuming it works as intended."

Despite that, the Fujian relies on conventional power for propulsion rather than nuclear power, which severely limits its range. Conventional carriers burn oil or gas for propulsion, according to NavalPost.com. In contrast, the U.S. Navy's 11 aircraft carriers rely on nuclear reactors.

"In terms of size and propulsion, the Fujian is comparable to the U.S. Kitty Hawk class carriers that first when into service in the U.S. Navy in the early 1960s," Hart said. "I expect China to continue growing its fleet of aircraft carriers, but the [Chinese navy] is decades away from matching the U.S. carrier fleet in number or sophistication."

China may not try to match the U.S. Navy carrier-for-carrier, according to Sam Roggeveen, director of the Australian think-tank Lowy Institute's International Se-

curity Program. He suggested that Beijing has longer-term plans.

"I don't think the Chinese carrier project is about matching the U.S.," Roggeveen told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday. "It is more about building a post-American navy, a fleet that can be used for coercion or punishment against smaller states as U.S. influence in Asia diminishes."

China is aware that large, slow ships like aircraft carriers likely wouldn't survive in a prolonged war with a peer, he said.

"Since the end of the Cold War, carriers have proven useful to the US in conflicts against states with minimal maritime capacity — Iraq, Libya, Yugoslavia — and I suspect China sees them in a similar role," Roggeveen said.

Beijing's investments in technology and naval expansion, despite yielding a capability short of U.S. carrier power, are having significant effects in the Indo-Pacific region, Roggeveen said.

U.S. commitments in the area are getting "harder and harder to sustain," he said, and cited Taiwan as an example. The self-governing island is considered by China a



LI GANG, XINHUA/AP

Coloured smoke mark the launch ceremony for China's third aircraft carrier christened Fujian at a dry dock in Shanghai on June 17.

breakaway province that must be reunited with the mainland, by force, if necessary. President Joe Biden in late May said the U.S. would help defend Taiwan militarily against attack from China.

"China's military modernization has now reached the point where, even if the US could prevail in a conflict over Taiwan, the costs would be enormous," he said.

China has modernized and increased the size of its military forces, and last year its navy became the world's largest. The Chinese navy has a battle force of 355 vessels, a number expected to reach 460 by 2030, according to a U.S. Department of Defense report in November.

In comparison, the U.S. Navy has a battle force of 298 ships, according to an April 20 report from the Congressional Research Service. Congress has yet to enact a concrete plan for a future U.S. fleet, but one option calls for 367 ships by 2052.

"China's military buildup is dramatically shifting the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. In 2021, China spent more on its military than the next 13 Indo-Pacific countries combined, excluding the United States," Hart said. "I don't think Washington has yet taken the necessary steps to adequately prepare itself or its allies and partners in the region to respond to China's growing military challenge."

Pilot 'raised in tactical airlift' to lead US airlift hub in Tokyo

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A C-130J Super Hercules pilot who led a tactical airlift squadron in Afghanistan is the new commander of the Air Force's home in western Tokyo.

Col. Andrew Roddan took command of the 374th Airlift Wing at Yokota from Col. Andrew Campbell during a ceremony presided over Thursday by U.S. Forces Japan and 5th Air Force commander Lt. Gen. Ricky Rupp.

A graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Roddan has over 3,850 hours flying C-130E Hercules and C-130J Super Hercules aircraft, according to his official biography.

"I'm a proud member of the U.S. Air Force, raised in the C-130... raised in tactical airlift" he told airmen, civilians, family members and Japanese guests gathered for the ceremony in a hangar near Yokota's runway.

The crowd saw Roddan's name unveiled on the side of a Super

Hercules parked in front of the hangar alongside a CV-22 Osprey aircraft, UH-1N Huey helicopter and C-12J Huron plane.

The father of two previously served at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, and commanded the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, from January to May 2017, the biography states.

His last assignment was as commander of the 19th Operations Group at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark. where he was respon-

sible for four squadrons, including two airlift squadrons operating 29 C-130Js, the biography states.

During Campbell's two-year tenure, Yokota's airlifters excelled amid the challenges of the pandemic and increased volatility in the region, Rupp told those gathered for the command change.

"This ironclad (U.S.-Japan) alliance is critical to deterring China, Russia and North Korea," he said.

Campbell, along with other American base commanders in

Japan, imposed restrictions on members of the military community to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Most of those curbs were lifted earlier this year as the pandemic receded in Japan.

Under Campbell's watch the base reported a comparatively modest 1,000 cases of COVID-19, although it certainly experienced more than that.

Campbell is headed to Scott Air Force Base, Ill., to become Air Mobility Command deputy director of operations, Rupp said.

MILITARY

Chief recalls military experience as gay man during Pride

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — Chief Master Sgt. Jeremiah Grisham walks through base housing every evening with his husband and his dog.

But 15 years ago, Grisham never imagined he'd be where he is today: the top enlisted leader for the 521st Air Mobility Operations Wing at Ramstein. As far as he knows, he's the only openly gay command chief in the Air Force.

Until 2011, when the repeal of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy took effect, openly gay and lesbian people were barred from serving in the U.S. armed forces.

"I didn't really have a plan to make chief, let alone command chief," Grisham told Stars and Stripes. He shared his story during Pride Month, which is observed in June.

Grisham, 42, came out to his military friends in explosive ordnance disposal and to his supervisors when he was a senior airman about 20 years ago.

His sexual orientation "became a little bit of a joke" among the rough-and-tumble EOD crowd, but nobody "really cared," Grish-

am said. The tight-knit EOD community was "willing to close ranks and protect," he added.

"I never felt in danger of being outed to somebody who could impact my career," Grisham said.

Nor did being gay hinder his advancement opportunities in his 20-plus years in the Air Force. Gay and lesbian service members have largely found acceptance in the military, he said.

However, that's not the case for bisexual, transgender and queer armed forces personnel, Grisham said.

"There's still some fear of those communities because there's not a clear understanding of who they are, and so we don't appreciate fully what they can bring to the fight," he said.

Grisham offered a message of hope to those who still feel marginalized.

"I have experienced change in my lifetime," he said. "I have been in the Air Force from the time when it was impermissible to say who you are and love who you



Grisham

need to love in this life, and I have landed in a place in life where I can do all of those things."

But he acknowledges that there's work to be done, and he feels compelled to speak out to counter messages that he regards as hateful.

The rhetoric surrounding the cancellation of a drag queen story hour for children at the Ramstein library earlier this month is one such example for him.

After the planned event was chronicled by a right-wing news magazine based in Canada, base leaders hastily announced that it would not happen because organizers publicized it before official approval had been granted.

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican, sent a letter calling for an Air Force investigation and discipline for the event planners. His office issued a press release touting the cancellation following his "demands."

Lt. Col. Will Powell, a spokesman for the 86th Airlift Wing at Ramstein, subsequently said the reason the base canceled the drag queen reading was that leaders wanted a Pride Month event that was more inclusive for LGBTQ personnel and families.

He added that the decision "was not based on individuals speaking out against the event."

In Grisham's opinion, though, the controversy did lead to something positive. He said a planning committee at Ramstein is developing "a road map where we can continue to have (Pride) events, and maybe partner with other special observance months throughout the year," with the goal "to educate and celebrate."

Pride Month events still to come include the 86th Airlift Wing Dental Squadron's 5K color run Satur-

day on base and a "Proud Voices" question-and-answer panel put on by the KMC Pride Committee, a base official said. Details of the latter are still being worked out.

"All of us have a responsibility to let an airman junior to us see themselves through us," Grisham said.

And he encouraged all airmen to embrace who they are.

"For some people that's a taller mountain," he said. "But don't shy away from it."

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Bonus: Offer highest ever for Army

FROM PAGE 1

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told members of the House Armed Services Committee that recruiting has suffered due to the combination of unemployment below 4%, the decreased amount of people who meet the military's standards and the difficulties that the pandemic has caused for in-person recruiting in high schools.

"As we combine all of those things, there are headwinds," he said.

Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also spoke at the House hearing and said all services except the Army would likely meet their recruiting goals this year.

The Army's new quick-ship bonus can be added to other bonuses that are career-field dependent, the service said. Financial incentives are capped at \$50,000.

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MILITARY

Army weighs 13 bases as sites for new units

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Army is seeking public comment on proposed sites for its new multidomain task forces — field artillery brigades with beefed-up capabilities for long-range fire and air-missile defense.

Public comment is open for the next month on an environmental assessment that found the units pose no “significant” impacts on the installations being considered, the service said in a news release Wednesday.

The Army is evaluating 13 sites at Fort Bliss or Fort Hood in Texas; Fort Bragg, N.C.; Fort Campbell or Fort Knox in Kentucky; Fort Carson, Colo.; Fort Drum, N.Y.; Fort Riley, Kan.; Fort Stewart, Ga.; Joint Base Lewis-

McChord, Wash.; Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson or Fort Wainwright in Alaska; and U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii at Schofield Barracks and Healemano Military Reservation.

The Army plans to establish five Multi-Doman Task Force units, with two aligned to the Indo-Pacific, one in Europe, one in the Arctic and the fifth “aligned for global response,” according to a May 31 report by the Congressional Research Service.

Siting the units is key to the Army’s modernization strategy announced in 2019 under which it intends to transform into a multidomain force by 2035.

The Army “needs to transform from its current state into a multi-domain force that can project

power across all domains of warfare (land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace) throughout the world,” the environmental assessment states.

“A multi-domain operations-capable force would allow the Army, as part of an integrated Joint Force, to expand the options available to the President and Secretary of Defense short of armed conflict, or to allow for timely response to any armed attacks against the Joint Force,” the assessment states.

The Army plans to position the task forces at garrisons and joint bases from which they can quickly deploy to any theater where they are needed, according to the assessment.

The Army has experimented

with the multi-domain task force concept in recent years in Hawaii, units were activated last year at Joint Base Lewis-McChord and in Germany.

The Multi-Domain Task Force unit is a reorganized field artillery brigade but with additional capabilities for long-range weapons fire and air-missile defense, the assessment states.

It combines intelligence, information, cyber, electronic warfare and space capabilities into a single battalion, the assessment states.

The environmental assessment considers two alternate configurations for the Multi-Domain Task Force unit.

The full configuration would comprise about 3,000 soldiers and

require roughly 93 acres of space.

The smaller “base” configuration would employ about 400 soldiers and use 18 acres.

Hawaii is being considered solely for the base configuration due to land restrictions, the assessment states.

Infrastructure for either option includes headquarters, maintenance facilities, cantonment and space suitable for a detachment devoted to intelligence, cyber, electronic warfare and space, the assessment states.

The full configuration includes an additional requirement for airspace, firing range and airfield.

Input from the public is being solicited until July 22.

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Okinawans mark 77th anniversary of WWII battle

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE AND MARI HIGA
Stars and Stripes

OKINAWA PEACE MEMORIAL PARK, Itoman — Matsujin Wakugawa beamed as four generations of his family huddled around him amid a sea of names carved in black granite.

The 92-year-old from Motobu town — hard of hearing, with a wry sense of humor — said he spent World War II as a teenager working on Saipan. He survived a massacre by American troops after a Japanese soldier tossed a grenade into their marching column by playing dead, he said.

When he returned to Okinawa, he found many of his relatives had perished during the Battle of Okinawa, which began on April 1, 1945, and lasted for 82 days. Their names are carved into the Cornerstone of Peace memorial at Okinawa Peace Memorial Park.

Wakugawa was one of approximately 400 attendees at Thursday’s annual Irei no Hi ceremony commemorating the 77th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa. The scaled-back ceremony was the largest in three years as the island prefecture rebounds from the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 36 people were allowed at last year’s event.

Kiku Wakugawa, 90, his wife of 70 years, had stayed on the island, she said.

“I could not continue studying because of the war,” she said from her wheelchair. “I hid in the mountain with my family during the battle.”

More than 14,000 Americans,

about 110,000 Japanese troops and at least 140,000 Okinawans were killed during or after the fighting.

The battle, from April 1 to June 22, 1945, scorched large swaths of Okinawa. The war ended the following August with the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Thursday’s ceremony took place under an unrelenting sun.

The U.S. military sent a small contingent; Ambassador Rahm Emanuel was invited but chose instead to send a message, a spokesman for Okinawa prefecture’s Public Relations Division told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

Attendees packed a large white tent for the ceremony. At 12 p.m., a moment of silence was observed.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was greeted with boos and people shouting “liar” and “go back.” He acknowledged the heavy burden that Okinawa’s population endures due to the large U.S. military presence on the island.

“The government takes this seriously and will continue to do its utmost to reduce the burden,” he said.

He pledged to “make a continuous effort to realize a world where everyone can live in peace and affluence” and “never repeat the tragedy of war.”

Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki, speaking at the ceremony, urged Tokyo to reduce the U.S. military presence on Okinawa.

“Okinawa prefecture strongly demands ... consolidation and re-



Attendees observe a moment of silence during the island’s annual Irei no Hi ceremony at Okinawa Peace Memorial Park in Itoman on Thursday.

duction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa,” along with changes in the Japan-U.S. status of forces agreement, suspension of flight operations at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and a halt to new airfield construction at Camp Schwab, Tamaki said.

The next generation of Okinawans must learn from the World War II generation before it passes on, he said. Nearby, the Wakugawas’ first grandchild, Tomoe Tamashiro, 47, from Yomitan village, nodded in agreement.

“I think peace education is important,” she said. “Humans are stupid. We keep repeating the same mistakes. Okinawa’s history must be taught to children so that they know what is right and what is wrong.”

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A visitor leaves an offering in front of the Cornerstone of Peace monument at Okinawa Peace Memorial Park during Thursday’s annual Irei no Hi ceremony.

EUROPE

US readies more aid as Russians advance

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — The Russian military extended its grip Thursday on territory in eastern Ukraine, capturing two villages and vying for control of a key highway as it seeks to cut supply lines and encircle some frontline Ukrainian forces, British and Ukrainian military officials said.

Also Thursday, the U.S. will send another \$450 million in military aid to Ukraine, including additional medium-range rocket systems, U.S. officials said.

The latest package will include a number of High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems. The initial four

that the U.S. sent have already gone into Ukraine and are in the hand of troops there. The package will also include ammunition and other supplies.

Ukrainian forces withdrew from some areas near the city of Lysychansk to avoid being surrounded as Russians sent in reinforcements and concentrated their firepower in the area, Britain's Defense Ministry said. The city is located in Luhansk province, a major battlefield in Russian President Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine.

Ukraine's General Staff said Russian forces took control of the villages of Loskutivka and Rai-Oleksan-

drivka, and were trying to capture Syrotyne, a settlement outside the province's urban administrative center, Sievierodonetsk.

Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai told The Associated Press that the Russians were "burning everything out" in their offensive to encircle Ukraine's fighters.

"The Russians are advancing without trying to spare the ammunition or troops, and they aren't running out of either," Haidai said. "They have an edge in heavy artillery and the number of troops."

"Part of the Luhansk region still remains under Ukrainian control, defying the Russians and causing

their fury and desire to burn it to the ground," he added.

For weeks, Russian forces have pummeled Sievierodonetsk with artillery and air raids, and fought the Ukrainian army house-to-house. Ukrainian forces remain holed up with about 500 civilians at the Azot chemical plant, the only part of the city still under Ukrainian control.

Haidai said the Ukrainian soldiers ward off the city's seizure from the plant's sprawling underground structures, but he noted that "the shelling has intensified, and even concrete shelters can't withstand the bombardment." The Rus-

sians were using their entire arsenal — heavy artillery, tanks, aircraft," he said.

Haidai said that Lysychansk, which is on a steep river bank facing Sievierodonetsk, also faced a relentless barrage. At least one civilian died and three others were wounded in 24 hours as the Russians concentrated over 100 multiple rocket launchers to "pummel entire blocks," the governor said.

"The Russian army is 'liberating' Sievierodonetsk from life and workplaces," he said in a sarcastic reference to Russia's stated goal of the "liberation" of eastern Ukraine's entire Donbas region.

US, NATO seen in more favorable light abroad as world sours on Putin, poll finds

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

Russian President Vladimir Putin's international favorability ratings have plummeted in the wake of his war on Ukraine, while attitudes toward the U.S. and NATO have improved, according to a new Pew Research Center global opinion survey.

A median of 65% of those polled across 11 alliance member countries held favorable views of NATO, compared with 26% having negative views, Pew said.

Meanwhile, ratings for the U.S. were generally positive, with 61% across 17 nations expressing a favorable view of the country.

Since Russia's full-fledged invasion of Ukraine, NATO's role in defending member states from potential aggression has been brought into sharper focus and likely contributed to its rising favorability.

"Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought war to Europe at a scale unseen since the 1940s," Pew noted.

Poland, which has been among the most vocal supporters of Ukraine in its battle against Russia, had the highest view of NATO, with 89% looking positively on the alliance, Pew found.

But there were exceptions to NATO's popularity. In Italy, ratings dropped from 72% in 2021 to 64% now. And in Greece, where the population has historically been ambivalent about NATO, 64% report-

ed negative views, Pew said.

The survey findings show a contrast between public opinion in Greece and the enthusiasm of the Greek government, which in October 2021 signed a deal to increase the American military footprint in the country.

Meanwhile, Russia's credibility has nose-dived following the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, with 85% of those polled across 18 countries expressing unfavorable views of Russia. Majorities in most nations also say they have a very unfavorable opinions, Pew said.

"In almost every country surveyed, at least seven-in-ten have an unfavorable opinion of Russia. Malaysia is the only country where this is not true," Pew said.

Anti-Russian feelings were strongest in Poland, with 97% holding negative views. In the U.S., 92% of those polled look unfavorably on Russia.

Confidence in Putin to do the right thing in world affairs also reached a 20-year low in most countries with, 90% across 18 countries saying Putin could not be relied on, Pew said.

Generally, the small minorities in Europe who had confidence in Putin were aligned with right-wing populist parties, such as the Alternative for Germany party.

Although the overseas popularity of Putin's U.S. counterpart, Joe Biden, has dipped, 60% of respondents expressed confidence that he

would do the right thing in world affairs.

Biden's 82% approval rating in Poland was tops in the poll, whereas only 41% of Greeks surveyed approve of Biden, the lowest rating among the countries involved.

One possible factor in Biden's decline, Pew reported, was his handling of the messy U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, which resulted in a chaotic evacuation and the Taliban's return to power after two decades of NATO military presence in the country.

Still, while Biden got low marks for his handling of the U.S. departure, a slight majority said the decision to leave Afghanistan was the right one, with 51% across 17 countries saying it was time to go.

The Pew survey included data



WILLIAM TANNER/U.S. Army

A Polish high school student takes a selfie with her friends and U.S. Army 1st Lt. Logan Gearhart in Lobe, Poland, in 2016.

from 18 nations: the U.S., Canada, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Israel, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and South Ko-

rea.

Interviews were conducted from Feb. 14 to May 11.

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NATION

Court strikes NY law, expands gun rights

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court said Thursday that Americans have a right to carry guns in public, a major expansion of gun rights.

The justices' 6-3 decision follows a series of recent mass shootings and is expected to ultimately allow more people to legally carry guns on the streets of the nation's largest cities — including New York, Los Angeles and Boston — and elsewhere.

About a quarter of the U.S. population lives in states expected to be affected by the ruling, the high court's first major gun decision in

more than a decade.

The ruling comes as Congress is actively working on gun legislation following recent mass shootings in Texas, New York and California.

Justice Clarence Thomas wrote for the majority that the Constitution protects "an individual's right to carry a handgun for self-defense outside the home."

In their decision, the justices struck down a New York law requiring people to demonstrate a particular need for carrying a gun in order to get a license to carry one in public.

The justices said the require-

ment violates the Second Amendment right to "keep and bear arms."

California, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island all have similar laws. The Biden administration had urged the justices to uphold New York's law.

In a dissent joined by his liberal colleagues, Justice Stephen Breyer focused on the toll taken by gun violence. "Since the start of this year alone (2022), there have already been 277 reported mass shootings — an average of more than one per day," Breyer wrote.

Backers of New York's law had

argued that striking it down would ultimately lead to more guns on the streets and higher rates of violent crime. The decision comes at a time when gun violence already on the rise during the coronavirus pandemic has spiked anew.

In most of the country gun owners have little difficulty legally carrying their weapons in public. But that had been harder to do in New York and the handful of states with similar laws. New York's law, which has been in place since 1913, says that to carry a concealed handgun in public, a person applying for a license has to show "proper cause," a specific

need to carry the weapon.

The state issues unrestricted licenses where a person can carry their gun anywhere and restricted licenses that allow a person to carry the weapon but just for specific purposes such as hunting and target shooting or to and from their place of business.

The Supreme Court last issued a major gun decision in 2010. In that decision and a ruling from 2008 the justices established a nationwide right to keep a gun at home for self-defense.

The question for the court this time was about carrying one outside the home.



SUSAN WALSH/AP

President Joe Biden talks to riders at the White House in Washington during an event to welcome wounded warriors, their caregivers and families to the White House on Thursday as part of the annual Soldier Ride.

Wounded Warriors praised by president as 'spine of America'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Thursday welcomed members of Wounded Warriors Project to the White House for the annual soldier ride, praising the current and former military service members as the "spine of America."

More than two dozen veteran and active duty troops rode two laps around the South Lawn as part of the multi-day cycling event.

The tradition of the soldier ride at the White House began back in

2008.

"You are the best that America has to offer," Biden said. "You embody the soul and spirit of the nation."

The Wounded Warrior Project was founded in 2003 and assists veterans as well as families and caregivers of service members who suffered a physical or mental injury or illness while serving in the military on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

First lady Jill Biden as well as Vice President Kamala Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff,

also attended Thursday's ride that went on as planned in a light rain.

The first lady thanked the veterans for their service and acknowledged that the path of "healing is not a straight line" for many of those who suffered catastrophic injuries during their service.

"There's a saying in the cycling community that some of you may know: It never gets easier, it just gets faster," she said. "I think there's a truth about recovery in that saying as well."

Biden administration moves to increase Title IX protections

Associated Press

The Biden administration proposed a dramatic overhaul of campus sexual assault rules on Thursday, acting to expand protections for LGBTQ students, bolster the rights of victims and widen colleges' responsibilities in addressing sexual misconduct.

The proposal, announced on the 50th anniversary of the Title IX women's rights law, is intended to replace a set of controversial rules issued during the Trump administration by Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

President Joe Biden's education secretary, Miguel Cardona, said Title IX has been "instrumental" in fighting sexual assault and violence in education.

"As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of this landmark law, our proposed changes will allow us to continue that progress and ensure all our nation's students — no matter where they live, who they are, or whom they love — can learn, grow, and thrive in school," he said.

The proposal is almost certain to be challenged by conservatives, and it is expected to lead to new legal battles over the rights of transgender students in schools, especially in sports.

It now faces a public feedback period before the Biden administration can finalize any changes, meaning the earliest that the policy is likely to take effect is next year.

The step meets a demand from victims rights advocates who wanted Biden to release new rules no later than the anniversary of Title IX, which outlaws discrimination based on sex in schools and colleges. Ad-

vocates say DeVos' rules have gone too far in protecting students accused of sexual misconduct, at the expense of victims.

As a presidential candidate, Biden had promised a quick end to DeVos' rules, saying they would "shame and silence survivors."

In announcing its proposal, Biden's Education Department said DeVos' rules "weakened protections for survivors of sexual assault and diminished the promise of an education free from discrimination."

For the first time, the rules would formally protect LGBTQ students under Title IX. Nothing in the 1972 law explicitly addresses the topic, but the new proposal would clarify that the law applies to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

It would make clear that "preventing someone from participating in school programs and activities consistent with their gender identity would cause harm in violation of Title IX," according to the department. More specific rules dealing with the rights of transgender students in school sports will be released later, the department said.

Biden marked the anniversary of Title IX by acknowledging the impact the law has had in advancing equity but acknowledging there was more to do.

"As we look to the next 50 years, I am committed to protecting this progress and working to achieve full equality, inclusion, and dignity for women and girls, LGBTQI+ Americans, all students, and all Americans," he said in a statement.

NATION

US importing baby formula to ease shortage

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration announced Wednesday that it is providing logistical support to import the equivalent of about 16 million 8-ounce baby formula bottles from Mexico starting this weekend, as part of its efforts to ease nationwide supply shortages caused by the closure of the largest U.S. manufacturing plant.

The Department of Health and Human Services is expediting the travel of trucks that will drive about 1 million pounds of Gerber Good Start Gentle infant formula from a Nestlé plant to U.S. retailers, the White House said, nearly doubling the amount imported to the U.S. to date. Cargo flights from Europe and Australia already have brought baby formula into the U.S., including two new

rounds of air shipments that begin this weekend.

The White House has been working to make supply more available as it has faced pressure from parents over supply issues after regulators in February shuttered a Michigan plant run by Abbott that is the largest domestic manufacturer of baby formula over safety concerns.

The plant reopened on June 4 after the company committed to additional sanitizing and safety protocols, but shuttered again more than a week ago after severe weather caused damage to the plant.

The company said it needs time to assess damage and re-sanitize the factory after severe thunderstorms and heavy rains swept through southwestern Michigan on June 13.



WILFREDO LEE/AP

A can of Toddler Nutritional Drink is shown on a shelf in a grocery store, Friday in Surfside, Fla.

Last month, the Food and Drug Administration moved to ease federal import regulations to allow baby formula to be shipped to the U.S., and Biden authorized the use of the Defense Production Act to provide federal support to move formula from overseas into the

United States.

Wednesday's announcement also includes air shipments of 1.65 million 8-ounce bottle equivalents of Nestlé NAN Supremepro 2 infant formula from Germany to Texas this weekend, and 5.5 million 8-ounce bottle equivalents of

Bubs infant formula in two shipments on June 26 and July 5.

The White House says that by June 26, its efforts, dubbed "Operation Fly Formula," will have brought 32 flights and almost 19 million 8-ounce bottle equivalents of infant formula into the U.S.

Former Florida governor candidate indicted

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Andrew Gillum, the 2018 Democratic nominee for Florida governor, has been indicted on 21 federal charges including conspiracy and wire fraud for funneling donations through third parties back to himself for personal use, prosecutors said Wednesday.

The U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Florida said Gillum, 42, is also charged with making false statements to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for claiming he didn't receive or ask for anything from two undercover agents posing as developers. The undercover agents offered gifts and money in exchange for support for projects.

Sharon Janet Lettman-Hicks, 53 and the owner of a communications company, is a codefendant on the wire fraud charges for funneling money to Gillum in the form of paychecks, U.S. Attorney Jason R. Coody said in a statement.

Prosecutors said the pair "conspired to commit wire fraud, by unlawfully soliciting and obtaining funds from various entities and individuals through false and fraudulent promises and representations that the funds would be used for a legitimate purpose."

Gillum, in a statement released through his lawyers, denied the charges.



STEVE CANNON/AP

Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum speaks at a campaign stop in his bid for governor in 2018 in Crawfordville, Fla.

"Make no mistake that this case is not legal, it is political. Throughout my career I have always stood up for the people of Florida and have spoken truth to power," the statement said. "There's been a target on my back ever since I was the mayor of Tallahassee. They found nothing then, and I have full confidence that my legal team will prove my innocence now."

He made his first appearance in federal court Wednesday afternoon, entering the courtroom shackled at the ankles and wrists. He and Lettman-Hicks pleaded

not guilty to all charges. A trial date was set for Aug. 16. Both were released without bail with instructions not to leave the Northern District of Florida without permission.

Gillum met with undercover FBI agents posing as developers while he was mayor and during his campaign for governor.

His associates sought donations from the agents, and suggested ways to provide money without listing them as political contributions, including paying for a fundraising dinner, according to the indictment.

The agents were asked to contribute \$100,000 to Gillum's campaign and said the money could be given to a private company in order to keep the agents' names out of campaign finance documents.

The agents said they would want favorable consideration on development projects and were told that wouldn't be a problem, according to the indictment.

The agents also met with Gillum in New York City and paid for his hotel, food and drink, a boat ride and a ticket to see "Hamilton," according to the indictment.

Number of jobless aid claims down

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Fewer Americans applied for jobless benefits last week as the U.S. job market remains robust despite four-decade high inflation and a myriad of other economic pressures.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending June 18 fell to 229,000, a decline of 2,000 from the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. First-time applications generally mirror the number of layoffs.

The four-week average for claims, which smooths out some of the week-to-week volatility, rose by 4,500 from the previous week, to 223,500.

The total number of Americans collecting jobless benefits for the week ending June 11 was 1,315,000, up by 5,000 from the previous week. That figure has hovered near 50-year lows for months. Much of the recent job security and wage gains that Americans have enjoyed recently has been offset by inflation levels not seen in four decades.

Earlier in June, the Labor Department reported that consumer prices surged 8.6% last month by three-quarters of a point.

NATION

Bloodhound takes top spot at Westminster

Associated Press

TARRYTOWN, N.Y. — Now this hound has something to toot his horn about.

A bloodhound named Trumpet won the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show on Wednesday night, marking the first time the breed has ever snared U.S. dogdom’s most coveted best in show prize.

Rounding the finalists’ ring with a poised and powerful stride, Trumpet beat a French bulldog, a German shepherd, a Maltese, an English setter, a Samoyed and a Lakeland terrier to take the trophy.

“I was shocked,” said handler, co-breeder and co-owner Heather Helmer, who also goes by Heather Buehner. The competition was stiff, “and sometimes I feel the

bloodhound is a bit of an under-dog.”

After making dog show history, does Trumpet have a sense of how special he is?

“I think he does,” his Berlin Center, Ohio-based handler said.

After his victory, Trumpet posed patiently for countless photos, eventually starting to do what bloodhounds do best — sniff around. He examined some decorative flowers that had been set up for the pictures, not appearing to find anything of note.

Winston, a French bulldog co-owned by NFL defensive lineman Morgan Fox, took second in the nation’s most prestigious dog show.

“I’m just so proud of him and the whole team,” Fox said by text afterward.



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Heather Helmer poses for photographs with a bloodhound named Trumpet, who won best in show at the 146th Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show on Wednesday in Tarrytown, N.Y.

Feds: Ghislaine Maxwell deserves to spend at least 30 years in prison

Associated Press

NEW YORK — British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell should spend at least 30 years in prison for her role in the sexual abuse of teenage girls over a 10-year period by her onetime boyfriend, financier Jeffrey Epstein, prosecutors said Wednesday in written arguments.

Prosecutors said she should serve between 30 years and 55 years in prison, reflecting the federal sentencing guidelines. They made their recommendations to the judge who will preside over a sentencing hearing on Tuesday in Manhattan federal court.

The 60-year-old Maxwell was convicted in December of sex trafficking and other crimes after a month-long trial that featured testimony from four women who said they were abused in their teens.

Defense lawyers said in a sentencing submission last week that she should spend no more than

five years in prison and shouldn’t pay for Epstein’s crimes, since he was the mastermind and principal abuser and “orchestrated the crimes for his personal gratification.” Epstein took his own life in 2019 in jail as he awaited a Manhattan federal sex trafficking trial.

But prosecutors said Maxwell played an “instrumental role in the horrific sexual abuse of multiple young teenage girls” between 1994 and 2004 at some of Epstein’s palatial residences. They called her crimes “monstrous.”

“As part of a disturbing agreement with Jeffrey Epstein, Maxwell identified, groomed, and abused multiple victims, while she enjoyed a life of extraordinary luxury and privilege. In her wake,



Maxwell

Maxwell left her victims permanently scarred with emotional and psychological injuries,” prosecutors wrote.

“That damage can never be undone, but it can be accounted for in crafting a just sentence for Maxwell’s crimes,” they added.

Prosecutors also urged the judge to reject Maxwell’s pleas for leniency on the grounds that she has suffered in extraordinary ways in jail while awaiting trial and afterward. Defense lawyers said she has faced death threats and harsh conditions that have caused her to lose hair and weight.

Maxwell’s appearance at trial proved those claims were wrong, prosecutors said, adding: “The defendant is perfectly healthy, with a full head of hair.”

They said Maxwell “has enjoyed remarkable privileges as a high-profile inmate that vastly exceed the benefits accorded to the average inmate.”

Many decades later, ‘Torso Killer’ charged in killing at NY mall

Associated Press

MINEOLA, N.Y. — More than five decades after Diane Cusick’s lifeless body was discovered in the parking lot of a mall on New York’s Long Island, authorities have linked her death to the so-called “Torso Killer,” a serial killer already convicted in 11 other killings.

The suspect, Richard Cottingham — believed to be one of America’s most prolific serial killers — was arraigned Wednesday on a second-degree murder charge in connection with Cusick’s 1968 killing. From a hospital bed in New Jersey, where he’s already serving a life sentence for other killings, Cottingham pleaded not guilty.

While he has claimed he was responsible for up to 100 homicides, authorities in New York and New Jersey have officially linked him to only a dozen so far, including Cusick’s death. He has been imprisoned since 1980, when he was arrested after a motel maid heard a woman screaming inside his room. Authorities found her alive but bound with handcuffs and suffering from bite marks and knife wounds.

Cottingham asked to be arraigned Wednesday by video feed from the New Jersey hospital because he was in poor health, bedridden and not ambulatory, Judge Caryn Fink said. He needed his lawyer, Jeff Groder, to repeat the judge’s questions several times because he has difficulty hearing, Groder said.

“He is a violent predator and no matter how he looks today in a hospital bed he was not always a fee-

ble older man,” Nassau County District Attorney Anne Donnelly said in an interview with The Associated Press. “He was a young 22-year-old when he committed the murder of Ms. Cusick. He was strong, stronger than these women were, and he was violent.”

Authorities believe Cusick, 23, left her job at a children’s dance school and then stopped at the Green Acres Mall in Nassau County to buy a pair of shoes when Cottingham followed her out. Detectives believe he pretended to be a security guard or police officer, accused her of stealing and then overpowered the 98-pound Cusick, Nassau County Police Detective Capt. Stephen Fitzpatrick said.

She was “brutally beaten, murdered and raped in that car,” Fitzpatrick said. The medical examiner concluded that Cusick had been beaten in the face and head and was suffocated until she died. She had defensive wounds on her hands and police were able to collect DNA evidence at the scene. But at the time, there was no DNA testing.

Police interviewed dozens of people, retraced her steps and never stopped hunting for her killer. But the trail went cold.

“The police did a great job looking for any leads they could find. “They spoke to hundreds of people at the Green Acres Mall to see if anyone had seen Diane,” Donnelly said. “Unfortunately, the trail went cold and the case went cold.”

Cottingham was working as a computer programmer for a health insurance company in New York at the time of Cusick’s death.

Seniors told to get souped-up flu vaccines

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Americans 65 and older should get newer, souped-up flu vaccines because regular shots don’t provide them enough protection, a federal advisory panel said Wednesday.

The panel unanimously recommended certain flu vaccines that might offer more or longer protection for seniors, whose weakened immune systems don’t respond as well to traditional shots.

Options include: Fluzone High-Dose, Fluad with an immune booster, or Flublok which is made with insect cells instead of chicken eggs.

The panel’s recommendations usually are adopted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and become the government’s guidance for U.S. doctors and their patients. This would be the first time the government has stated a flu vaccine preference for older adults.

U.S. officials currently say that all Americans 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every season.

Flu shots tend to be less effective than other common vaccinations, but they have often been particularly disappointing in seniors. Health officials say there is

persuasive research indicating some of the new shots work better in older adults, especially at preventing flu-related hospitalizations. Studies are limited, though, and there’s little research comparing the three new versions.

“These influenza vaccines are better but are not yet the home run that we would love to have,” said panel member Dr. Helen Keipp Talbot of Vanderbilt University.

The new shots have caught on. About 80% of Medicare beneficiaries get the souped-up vaccines each year, mostly the high-dose one, officials said.

WORLD

Dig: Devastating earthquake centered in Paktika province

FROM PAGE 1

alone.”

The disaster heaps more misery on a country where millions already faced increasing hunger and poverty and the health system has crumbled since the Taliban retook power nearly 10 months ago amid the U.S. and NATO withdrawal.

How the international humanitarian community, which has pulled back significant resources from the country, will be able to offer aid and to what extent the Taliban government will allow it to remain in question. The Taliban’s takeover led to a cutoff of vital international financing, and most governments remain wary of dealing directly with them.

U.N. agencies and other organi-

zations still operating in Afghanistan said they sent supplies to the area, including medical kits, tents and plastic tarps, but the needs appeared immense as whole villages sustained massive damage.

“We ask from the Islamic Emirate and the whole country to come forward and help us,” said a survivor who gave his name as Hakimullah. “We are with nothing and have nothing, not even a tent to live in.”

Search and rescue remained a priority. In hard-hit Gayan District, much of the rubble was too large for people to move with their hands or shovels. They said they hoped large excavators would make it out to their remote homes. For now, there was only one bulldozer in the area.

On Wednesday, a U.N. official said the government had not requested that the world body mobilize international search-and-rescue teams or obtain equipment from neighboring countries, despite a rare plea from the Taliban’s supreme leader, Haibatullah Akhundzadah, for help from the world.

U.N. agencies are facing a \$3 billion funding shortfall for Afghanistan this year, and Peter Kessler, a spokesman for the United Nations’ refugee agency, said that means there will be difficult decisions about who gets aid.

In addition to the political and financial concerns, there were also logistical challenges to getting aid to remote villages. The roads, which are rutted and difficult to

travel in the best of circumstances, may have been badly damaged in the quake, and landslides from recent rains have made some impassable. Though just 110 miles south of the capital, Kabul, some villages in Gayan District took a full day’s drive to reach.

Rescuers rushed in by helicopter — and Associated Press journalists also saw ambulances in the quake zone on Thursday — but heavier equipment will be difficult to deliver.

Walls and roofs of dozens of homes in Gayan collapsed in the quake, and villagers said whole families were buried under the rubble. Associated Press journalists counted some 50 bodies in the area alone, as people laid out their dead in front of their houses and in

their courtyards.

While modern buildings withstand magnitude 6 earthquakes elsewhere, Afghanistan’s mud-brick homes and landslide-prone mountains make such quakes more dangerous. Shallow earthquakes also tend to cause more damage, and experts put the depth of Wednesday’s at just 6 miles.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid wrote on Twitter that eight trucks of food and other necessities from Pakistan arrived in Paktika. He also said Thursday that two planes of humanitarian aid from Iran and another from Qatar had arrived in the country.

Wednesday’s quake was centered in Paktika province, about 31 miles southwest of the city of Khost.

WHO considers declaring monkeypox health emergency

Associated Press

LONDON — The World Health Organization convened its emergency committee Thursday to consider if the spiraling outbreak of monkeypox warrants being declared a global emergency.

Declaring monkeypox to be a global emergency would mean the U.N. health agency considers the outbreak to be an “extraordinary event” and that the disease is at risk of spreading across even more borders, possibly requiring a global response.

The WHO said it did not expect to announce any decisions made by its emergency committee before Friday.

Many scientists doubt any such declaration would help curb the epidemic, since the developed countries recording the most recent cases are already moving quickly to shut it down.

Last week, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus described the recent monkeypox epidemic identified in more than 40 countries, mostly in Europe, as “unusual and concerning.” Monkeypox has sickened people for decades in central and west Africa, where one version of the disease kills up to 10% of people infected. In the epidemic beyond Africa so far, no deaths have been reported.

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WORLD

‘Mermaiding’ subculture is making a splash

BY KRISTEN GELINEAU
Associated Press

SYDNEY — There was a pivotal moment in Queen Pangke Tabora’s life that eclipsed all others: It was the moment, she says, when she first slid her legs into a mermaid tail.

For the transgender Filipina woman approaching middle age, seeing her legs encased in vibrant, scaly-looking neoprene three years ago was the realization of a childhood dream. And it marked the beginning of her immersion into a watery world where she would find acceptance. The former insurance company worker described the experience of gliding under water, half-human and half-fish, as “meditation in motion.”

“The feeling was mermai-zing,” Tabora said one recent morning while lounging in a fiery red tail on a rocky beach south of Manila, where she now teaches mermaiding and freediving full-time. “The world outside is really noisy and you will find peace under water. ... It’s a good skill in the real world, especially during the pandemic.”

Across the world, there are thousands more merfolk like her — at its simplest, humans of all shapes and backgrounds who enjoy dressing up as mermaids. In recent years, a growing number have gleefully flocked to mermaid conventions and competitions, formed local groups called “pods,” launched mermaid magazines and poured their savings into a multimillion-dollar mermaid tail industry.

On a planet plagued by war, disease and social upheaval, many merfolk have found life in the water a refuge. Perhaps Sebastian, the ornery crab in the 1989 film “The Little Mermaid,” said it best in his warning to land-loving mermaid Ariel: “The human world, it’s a mess. Life under the sea is better than anything they got up there!”

Away from the critics and chaos of life on land, mer-world is the kinder, gentler and more joyful alternative to the real world. It is also a world, merfolk say, where you can be whoever and whatever you want.

That openness attracts some transgender people who empathize with Ariel’s agony of being trapped in a body that feels wrong. It is also inspiring to merfolk like Che Monique, the Washington, D.C.-based founder of the Society of Fat Mermaids, which promotes body-positive mermaiding.

“I’m a 300-pound Black mermaid in America over 35, and hopefully that tells somebody they can do whatever they want to do,” says Monique, whose group sells shirts that read ‘Fat mermaids make waves’ and ‘Gender is fluid under the sea.’ “Sure, on the one



AARON FAVILA/AP

Queen Pangke Tabora, right, and her students prepare for a mermaiding class at the Ocean Camp in Mabini, Batangas province, Philippines, on May 22.



MARK BAKER/AP

Lauren Metzler, founder of Sydney Mermaids, prepares for a swim at Manly Cove Beach in Sydney, Australia, on May 26.

hand it is really silly, but I’ve watched it change people’s lives.”

After all, the ocean is vast, she notes, and most of the planet is covered in water. So why not dive in?

“I think there’s room under the sea for all of us,” Monique says.

The lure of mermaiding is clear from the Montreal home of Marielle Henault, which is stuffed to the gills with mermaid tails.

They line her clothes rack and drawers, are squeezed into suit-



AARON FAVILA/AP

Filipina Jennica Secuya, left, swims with other students during a mermaiding class in Mabini.

cases and drip from plastic storage tubs, ready for sale by the 31-year-old AquaMermaid CEO to “mers” the world over. About 20 tails belong to Henault herself.

“When you put your mermaid tail on at the beach or pool, you become a superstar,” says Henault, whose company runs mermaiding schools across Canada and the United States. “Kids and adults, everybody’s happy to see a mermaid!”

When mermaiding first started to catch on, most tails for sale were custom-made silicone creations that weigh up to 50 pounds, cost upwards of \$6,000 and take a surprising amount of time and lubricant to wrestle into. But over the past few years, the increasing

availability of cheaper, lighter fabric options — some of which sell for less than \$100 — has transformed the mermaiding community from an exclusive enclave for privileged professionals into an achievable dream for the wider public.

As mermaiding went mainstream, glamorous photos of mermaids resplendent in glitzy tails began gaining traction on social media, further fuelling mer-mania. An obsession with “The Little Mermaid” is common among merfolk, and there is anticipation of a fresh wave of mermaiding interest when a live action reboot of the film is released next year.

Swimming in the tails takes practice, and requires a piece of

equipment long used by freedivers called a monofin — a single fin into which both feet are inserted. A mermaid’s mastery of the dolphin kick is key, along with equalization techniques to alleviate ear pressure under water.

PADI, SSI and NAUI, the world’s major scuba diving certification organizations, now offer mermaid courses. There’s even a World Mermaid Championship, last held in China in 2019, which featured 70 mermaids flipping and posing in a giant glass tank before a panel of pensive judges.

Henault, who competed at the world championship, hopes to help get mermaiding to the Olympics, potentially as a demonstration sport. Multiple “Merlympics” events have been held in Europe and the U.K. in recent years.

For most merfolk, it’s all a little tongue-in-cheek. But it’s also enormously meaningful. Floating in the Sacramento pool where fellow attendees of the California convention had gathered, Merman Maui summed up the importance of the community this way: “I have a new family with all these people.”

“Life is so much better when you learn to have just a little bit of fun, or a lot bit of fun, because we all believe in magic at some point,” Maui says. “A lot of times, life can get pretty dull and boring. So why not just enjoy every aspect of it that you can?”

The tails have also raised safety concerns with several consumer groups. A 2018 study of 25 children by the Royal Life Saving Society of Western Australia found that a majority experienced an average decrease in their swimming ability of 70% while using mermaid fins and 60% while using tails. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission said it has received three reports of incidents involving mermaid tails over the past four years, the most serious of which resulted in a 5-year-old girl being hospitalized after she tucked her arms inside the tail along with her legs and became trapped underwater.

All the more reason why proper training is key, says Lauren Metzler, founder of Sydney Mermaids. Metzler received her advanced mermaid certification this month with a goal of teaching rookie merfolk how to avoid sinking to the seabed.

And at its core, merfolk are in it for the fun. There is a strong need, especially after COVID-related lockdowns, to simply play and enjoy creativity, Metzler says.

“The more we open up our imagination and accept everyone for how they are, it makes it more of a beautiful experience,” she says. “The sky — or ocean floor — is the limit of what you can do with mermaiding.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Agency: Military-style bunker was built by kids

MI TYRONE TOWNSHIP — State officials have determined that a 3-foot-deep military-style bunker surrounded by sand bags in a western Michigan game area was built by kids.

A Kent County man came across the bunker in the Rogue River State Game Area, WOOD-TV reported.

After news reports, a woman contacted the Kent County sheriff's office and told them it was constructed for fun by her 15-year-old son and his friends, according to Michigan's Department of Natural Resources.

The DNR told WOOD-TV that cutting down trees, digging large holes and leaving sandbags on state land is illegal. A conservation officer was expected to meet with the boys and have them refill the hole and restore the area.

No charges were expected, the DNR said.

Police: Man nabbed with \$1M worth of opioids

ND MINOT — Authorities said a Michigan man appeared in court after Minot police seized 15,000 fentanyl pills and 80 grams of fentanyl powder with an estimated street value of more than \$1 million.

The drugs were found after a search warrant was executed at a storage garage where police say they found the powerful opioid along with a large amount of marijuana. A search at a second site resulted in the seizure of two firearms and \$18,000 in a case.

Ryan Rattler, 30, of Flushing, Mich., was charged with possession with intent to deliver more than 40 grams of fentanyl, a Class A felony, and possession with intent to deliver marijuana, a Class C felony.

Officials: Teen loses hand playing with fireworks

WA FEDERAL WAY — A 14-year-old lost his left hand and injured his other hand while reportedly playing with fireworks, South King Fire said.

Firefighters were called to 19th Avenue Southwest in Federal Way. A firework had blown up in the teen's hand.

A 10-year-old was also injured, but it is unclear how bad the child's injuries were, KIRO-TV reported.

Both kids were taken to Harborview Medical Center for treatment. It is not yet known what kind of fireworks the teen was handling.

Dog dragged into water, eaten by gator

FL TALLAHASSEE — A man was playing with his dog at a Florida park when it was attacked by an alligator,



WILFREDO LEE/AP

New 'officer' in town

Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman hugs "Officer Mike," Surfside Police Department's therapy dog, during a news conference to introduce him near the site where the Champlain Towers South collapsed killing 98 people last year, in Surfside, Fla. K9s for Warriors helped provide Officer Mike to provide emotional support to first responders after the condominium collapse. The town will host a one-year remembrance event Friday, to honor those that perished in the collapse.

dragged into the water and eaten earlier this month, wildlife officials said.

Joshua Wells told wildlife authorities that he was playing with his unleashed dog near water at a popular park in Tallahassee on June 6 when the alligator snatched his dog, according to a report from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Wells, 44, said he grabbed the alligator, cuffing its legs, but realized that was dangerous, according to the report.

Wildlife officials later trapped two alligators in the area — one that was 9-feet, 2-inches long and another that was 6-feet, 6-inches long. A trapper found the dog's body floating below the surface of the water in the same area where the larger alligator was caught.

Trout to be euthanized after bacteria outbreak

CA INDEPENDENCE — Nearly 350,000 rainbow trout must be euthanized as California wildlife officials battle bacteria outbreaks at two fish

hatcheries in the eastern Sierra.

The naturally occurring bacteria, *Lactococcus petuarius*, was first detected in April at Black Rock and Fish Springs hatcheries in Inyo County, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife said in a statement.

The facilities provide fish for stocking waterways in California's inland deserts, the department said.

The fish will be euthanized and Fish and Wildlife is contracting with an external vendor to provide catchable rainbow trout for planting in waterways later this summer, the statement said.

New mural to complete wall begun in 1996

KY PADUCAH — A new 10-panel mural is being added to a Kentucky project that began in 1996 to ornament Paducah's floodwall with portraits of the area's history.

The new mural will depict trains traveling from New Orleans to Chicago and highlight Paducah's importance in railroad trans-

sit, the Paducah Sun reported. Once it is completed, murals will fill every panel of a three-block stretch on Water Street.

Muralist Robert Dafford and several assistants from Dafford Murals will work to complete the mural over the next several weeks. They will get help from the Paducah School of Art and Design, where Dafford has been teaching a 12-day murals master workshop.

Man pleads not guilty in deaths of 3K hogs

IA RANDALIA — A northeast Iowa farmer pleaded not guilty to neglect charges after more than 3,000 feeder hogs died on his property.

Derek David Smith, 41, of Randalia, waived an arraignment and filed a written not guilty plea to one count of livestock neglect, the Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier reported.

Court records indicate Smith was hired by Valley Farms to care for the hogs. Authorities found more than 3,000 hogs dead at

Smith's confinement operation on June 2, according to court records.

The animals died from lack of feed and another 200 hogs had to be euthanized for health reasons, according to the records.

Fire at historic church deemed 'suspicious'

ND HARWOOD — A fire at one of southeastern North Dakota's oldest churches is being investigated as "suspicious," authorities said.

The blaze at Maple Sheyenne Lutheran Church near Harwood was reported by a passing motorist who saw smoke coming out of the windows.

Cass County Sheriff Jesse Jahn said an initial investigation shows "some things that are suspicious." State and federal agents have joined in the probe.

Church board member Keith Munson said the church, which is located about 10 miles northwest of downtown Fargo, was founded about 150 years ago.

FACES

Hitting the right notes

Director Baz Luhrmann had to blend old and new recordings to perfect ‘Elvis’ soundtrack

By MARK MESZOROS
The News-Herald (Willoughby, Ohio)

On a recent Saturday afternoon, Baz Luhrmann is at a famous tourist attraction in Memphis, a place that has become quite familiar to him.

The Australian filmmaker, whose credits include “Strictly Ballroom,” “Romeo + Juliet,” “Moulin Rouge!” and “The Great Gatsby,” first came to Graceland five years ago to begin research that would lead to his latest work, “Elvis.” The film debuts in theaters this weekend.

And yet while sitting at the one-time home of its subject, late rock pioneer Elvis Presley, Luhrmann begins a video interview by saying he never really wanted to do a biopic. Furthermore, he says that although he used to go see Presley’s movies at the local cinema when he was a kid, “It’s not like I’m this devoted Elvis fan who always wanted to do an Elvis movie.”

However, he compares “Elvis” to how William Shakespeare “would take a historical figure and use it as a canvas to explore larger ideas.” He also cites the 1984 film “Amadeus.”

“I always thought, ‘That’s great — whether you care about Mozart or not, it doesn’t matter; it’s just a great drama about jealousy,’” Luhrmann says. “There’s something there in Elvis that is all about America, particularly in the ‘50s, ‘60s and ‘70s.”

He didn’t find the window into telling that story until about seven years ago, he says, when he became interested in the mysterious figure who managed and took advantage of him.

“I really started to understand Colonel Tom Parker — (who was) never a colonel, never a Tom, never a Parker,” Luhrmann says, referring to the man’s wholly fabricated identity. “I went, ‘Oh, this is the way in. This could be a great drama.’”

To him, Parker was “this hard-to-put-your-finger-on, smoke-and-mirrors snake oil salesman but also a genius,” he says. “That’s when I realized, ‘I should do this,’ because it speaks a bit to where we are in the world.”



From left, Austin Butler, Baz Luhrmann and Tom Hanks attend the “Elvis” U.K. special screening May 31 at the BFI Southbank in London, England. The biopic is told from the point of view of Elvis Presley’s manager, Col. Tom Parker.

Casting his leads correctly would be crucial.

He received an audition tape from American actor Austin Butler, in which the “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood” cast member cries and performs “Unchained Melody” before he, according to Luhrmann, “slams down the piano.”

“I’m like, ‘What’s that?’” he says of the odd recording.

“Then I got a call from Denzel Washington, who says, ‘You’re about to meet someone whose work ethic is off the charts.’”

Luhrmann says that Butler lost his mother around the same age that Presley did, which he thinks helped the actor find the vulnerability of the character and disappear into him.

“The whole mission here was, how do you make him a man, not an icon or a joke? How do you humanize him?” Luhrmann says. “They sort of blend — it’s a blend between Austin and Elvis, which is why I think it’s so real.”

That’s literally true when it comes to some of the music in the movie.

Luhrmann and his team faced a challenge when they determined recordings of early Presley songs were not in good enough condition to suit their needs.

“I was going to get a voice impersonator, but then I asked Austin, ‘Do you think you could sing?’ He said, ‘I sing a bit.’”

Early tests, before Butler received any vocal training, suggested he was up for the challenge.

“Even then, before the coaching, he’s channeling (Presley’s) voice,” Luhrmann says. “So that was going to be my way: Austin sings the young Elvis; mix some Austin with Elvis; and then use Elvis where it really counts because it’s

a big screen or (because) nobody could sing THAT, you know?”

If Butler is a relative unknown, the man acting alongside him is anything but — and Luhrmann definitely went after Tom Hanks for the role of Parker.

The writer-director had been listening to recordings the Graceland folks had lent him of Parker talking in “lots of crazy voices” — “sometimes he sounds like Bela Lugosi,” Luhrmann quips — and thought he couldn’t go small.

“The character is so huge, I thought, ‘Well, I’m going to need a really great actor to do this — big actor,’” he says. “Tom’s not just one of the great actors of our time — I think he’s one of the great actors of all time. There’s just nothing he can’t actually do.”

Often, Luhrmann says, it may take a month to convince an actor of his stature to take on a role like this.

“I reckon I was 10 minutes into describing this toxic relationship between Never a Colonel-Never a Tom-Never a Parker and Elvis ... he looked at me and said, ‘Well, if you want me, I’m your guy,’” he says. “Ten minutes. Maybe it was 20.”

It’s certainly unusual to see Hanks — a hero in so many beloved movies — inhabit a villain.

“I think that was the other attraction,” Luhrmann says. “He wanted to play a note on his instrument that audiences had not seen him play.

“I think the reason people are so uncomfortable with the character of Tom Parker, as played by Tom Hanks, is because it’s like seeing America’s favorite uncle turn out to be corrupt.”

Filmmaker John Waters to get star on Hollywood Walk of Fame

From wire reports

In the notorious close of John Waters’ 1972 film “Pink Flamingos,” Divine eats dog excrement off a Baltimore sidewalk.

The scene-stealing drag queen who died in 1988 “would be jokingly jealous,” Waters said, to hear that, around 50 years later, the film’s director will be one of 24 celebrities to get a star on another sidewalk: the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Los Angeles.

“What person ever walks down Hollywood Boulevard and doesn’t fantasize their name being a star on the Walk of Fame?” said the filmmaker, 76, who spent his career championing Baltimore’s misfits and other quirky characters.

Waters said he was nominated for the star by Outfest, a California nonprofit that pro-

vides support to LGBTQIA artists and organizes a film festival in Los Angeles.

He said his achievements should “give hope to any crazy kid from anywhere that starts making his first movie on his phone today with his nut friends and everybody tells him he can’t do it and he’s crazy.”

Diary of 12-year-old Ukrainian refugee to be released

The reflections of a 12-year-old refugee from the Russian invasion of Ukraine will be published this fall. Yeva Skalietska’s book is called “You Don’t Know What War Is: The Diary of a Young Girl from Ukraine.” Union Square & Co. will release her account Oct. 25.

“Everyone knows what the word ‘war’ means, but practically no one knows what this word really represents,” Skalietska said in a statement released Wednesday. “I

want the world to know what we have experienced.”

Skalietska’s book begins with her 12th birthday, shortly before the Russians attacked on Feb. 24.

‘Back to the Future’ musical confirmed for Broadway in 2023

Great Scott!

A Hollywood classic — and a DeLorean — are headed for Broadway.

“Back to the Future,” the West End hit musical based on the 1985 hit movie starring Michael J. Fox and Christopher Lloyd, will debut in 2023 on Broadway, producers announced Wednesday.

“Synchronize Your Watches — The Future’s coming to Broadway in 2023!!!” a tweet from the producers announcing the news went up Wednesday.

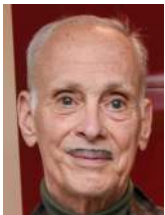
No details on casting, which Broadway

theater or the specific opening date were made available.

Other news

■ More than 11 years after signing to MBK Entertainment at the age of 14, H.E.R. is suing to be released from the label. In a lawsuit filed in a Los Angeles County Superior Court on June 16, the artist born Gabriella Sarmiento Wilson accused the label of violating the California Labor Code 2855, which limits personal service contracts to no more than seven years. Along with her release from MBK, she is suing for her catalog rights, restitution, legal fees and other relief “as the Court deems just and proper.”

■ **Broadway** will adopt a “mask optional” policy for the month of July, the district announced Tuesday. Theatergoers are still encouraged to mask, but will not be required to do so.



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Finland, Sweden joining NATO is the opposite of what Putin wanted

BY STEVEN LAMY
USC Dornsife
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No one should be surprised by the decision made by the governments of Sweden and Finland to apply for full membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Since the start of the Russian assault on Ukraine on Feb. 24, both countries have given Ukraine missile systems, assault rifles, ammunition and money for refugee resettlement.

In my view as a scholar of international relations, Finland and Sweden essentially gave up their political neutrality and non-alignment — key aspects of their national identity — when they both joined the European Union in 1995.

The Russian assault on Ukraine was the last straw that broke down any remaining barriers to full integration with the NATO alliance.

Finland's history with Russia

With a combined population of 16 million, Finland and Sweden, as nonmembers, don't have the protection of NATO's collective security guarantee that an attack on one ally is an attack on all.

Russian aggression is of particular concern to Finland.

Though Finland and Sweden are both sandwiched between Russia and NATO-member Norway, only Finland shares a land border — about 830 miles — with Russia.

And only Finland has a recent history of fighting against Russian assaults.

Between 1939 and 1944, about 96,000 Finns, or 2.5% of the population, died during two separate wars with Russia during the concurrent Russo-Finnish War and World War II and more than 400,000 people lost homes.

Fighting under the cover of snow and dense forests, the Finnish army repelled Russian attacks but lost around 10% of Finland's territory in the subsequent peace agreement in 1948.

The Finns were also forced by the Soviets to adopt neutrality after the country's loss in World War II.

That changed with the latest Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In setting aside Finland's neutrality with its application for NATO membership, Finland Prime Minister Sanna Marin had a sobering observation: "Russia is not the neighbor Finland thought it was."

In early 2022, public opinion polls in Finland indicated only 24% of the public supported NATO membership.

But four days after the Russian invasion, Finns favored joining NATO alliance by 68%.

On May 9, that figure was 76%.
"You (Russia) caused this," explained Finnish President Sauli Niinisto. "Look in the mirror."

Swedish hesitancy

Three days after Russia launched its assault on Ukraine, Sweden provided Ukraine with 5,000 anti-tank weapons, 5,000 body shields, 5,000 helmets and 135,000 field rations.

"It is not Swedish practice to send mili-



ELIZABETH MACPHERSON/U.S. Army

A Finnish soldier enjoys a moment of reprieve from simulated combat during the multinational Exercise Arrow 22 in May at Niinisalo Training Area, Finland. The nation announced on May 1 its intent to join NATO.

tary equipment to conflict zones," Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson said. "The last time Sweden did so to any great extent was when the Soviet Union attacked Finland in 1939."

In fact, the last time Sweden fought in a war was against its neighbor Norway, in 1814.

"We would be rather naive not to recognize that there is a threat" from Russia toward Sweden, Swedish Major Stefan Nordstrom told Reuters.

"The security situation in the whole of Europe has changed and we have to accept that, and we have to adapt."

Sweden has a very capable military that includes a navy with Baltic Sea expertise and experience chasing Russian submarines.

Global Fire Power, a military analysis website, says that Sweden has 16,000 active military personnel and 22,000 paramilitary forces. Sweden has 121 tanks, according to the website.

Those numbers are sure to grow now. Sweden plans to raise its military spending as a result of the Ukraine war.

In 2020, that spending accounted for 1.2% of the country's GDP, but now it will rise to 2% by 2028.

Sweden's 2022 military budget is about U.S. \$8.9 billion.

Swedish public support for joining NATO has increased significantly since the Russian assault, despite its historical opposition to joining an alliance that has nuclear weapons.

"There is no way back to a past of illusionary neutrality," Carl Bildt, a former Swedish prime minister, wrote in April 2022.

Shared European security

The foreign policy DNA of Sweden and Finland emphasizes collective action and solidarity with those who respect a rule-

based system — including the sovereignty and independence of all countries.

Both Finland and Sweden already are active members of the United Nations, the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe.

After Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea, both Finland and Sweden increased their cooperation with NATO by participating in NATO military exercises on land, air and sea.

In addition, because of their common interests in Arctic and European security, Sweden and Finland maintained security arrangements with each other and other countries such as Norway and the United States involving training exercises, intelligence sharing, operational planning and the creation of command and control networks.

Consequences for Russia

The possibility of Finland's and Sweden's joining NATO caused an immediate reaction by Russian President Vladimir Putin — and a realization that what he calls "the special operation" in Ukraine was backfiring.

In my view, the values and traditions of the Western alliance and their security interests moved both Finland and Sweden to abandon their commitment to neutrality.

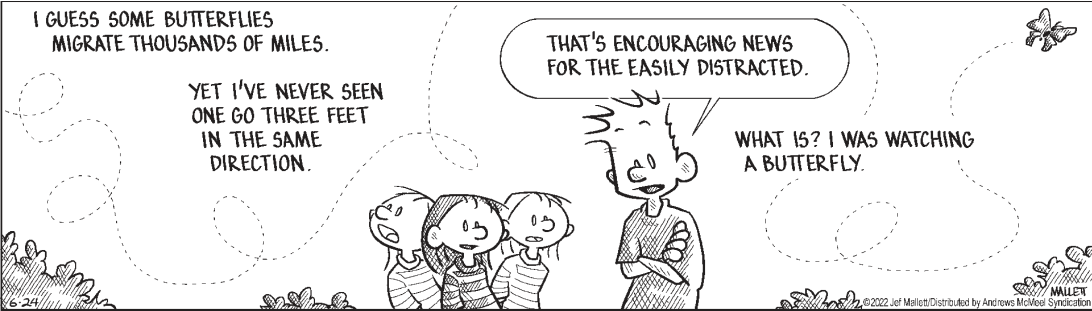
NATO's addition of Finland and Sweden, should it happen, will likely lead to a stronger European pillar in NATO.

The war in Ukraine may very well be the first military conflict in which a coalition of democracies directly confronts authoritarian states.

It is not wise to be alone in a region with an authoritarian neighbor.

Both Sweden and Finland have chosen to be a part of the greater conflict to protect democratic governance and the independence of all countries — including their own.

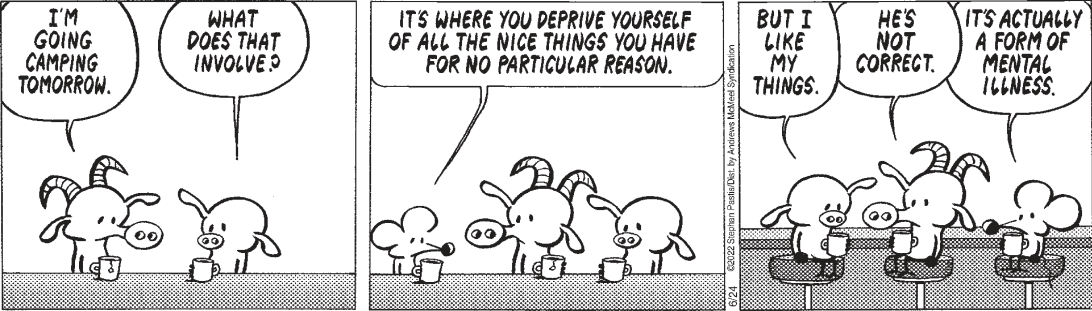
Frazz



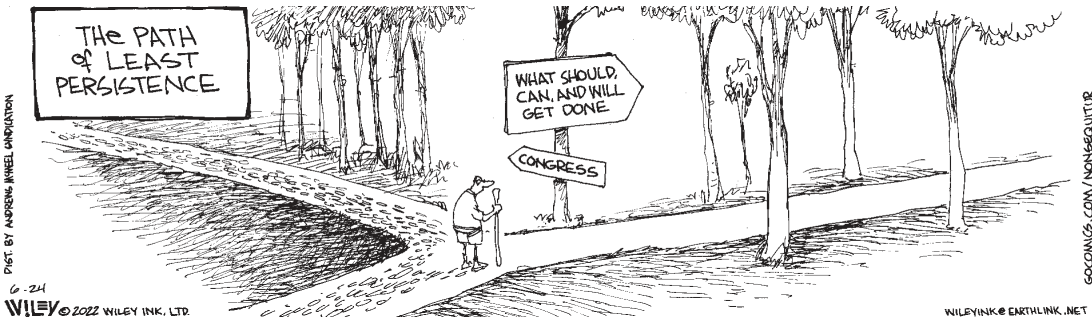
Dilbert



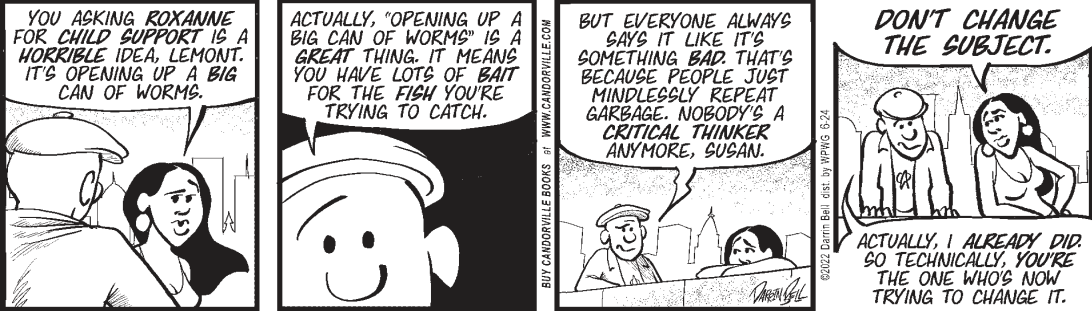
Pearls Before Swine



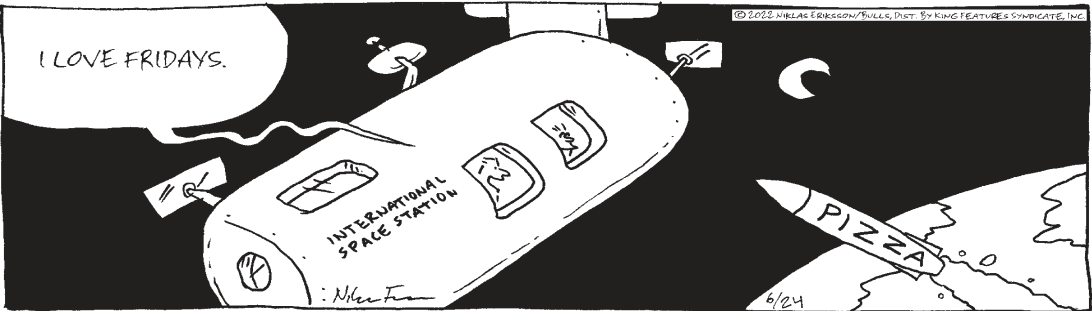
Non Sequitur



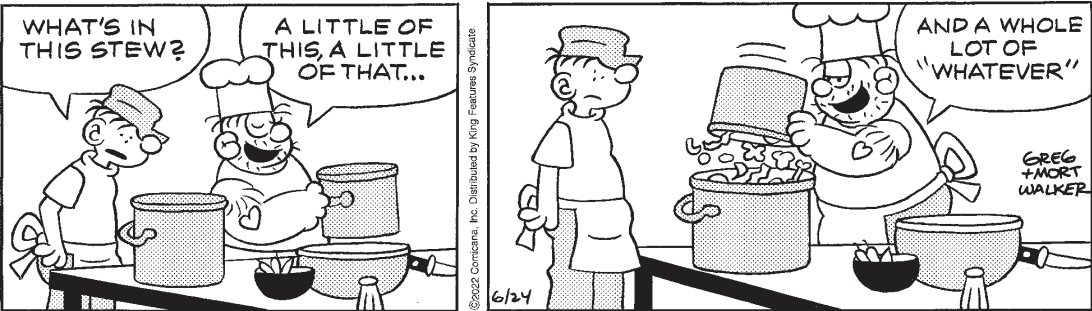
Candorville



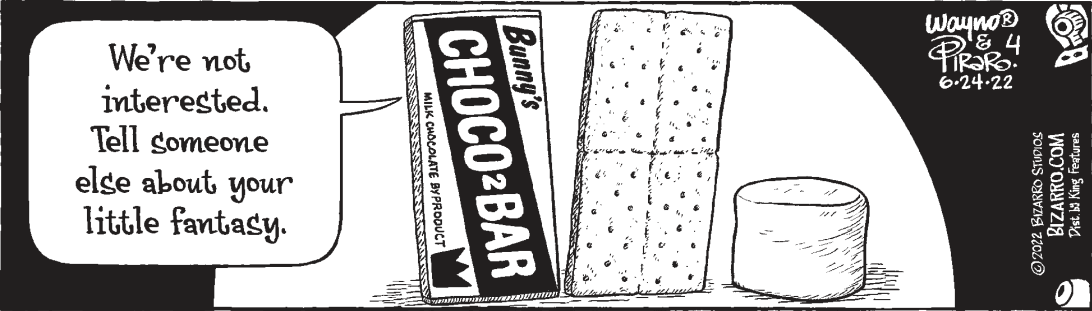
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11
12				13				14				
15				16				17				
18				19								
20				21		22				23	24	25
				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
- DOWN
- 58 Vegas lead-in
- 25 Cacophony
- 1 LAPD alert
- 26 Hot temper
- 4 Roast VIPs
- 28 Sushi fish
- 7 Valleys
- 30 — Claire, WI
- 12 Season opener?
- 31 Plato's P
- 13 "Caught ya!"
- 32 "Yuck!"
- 14 More bizarre
- 33 Three, in Rome
- 15 Cartoonist Chast
- 36 Grime
- 16 Easy wins
- 37 Aromatic herb
- 18 Olympic skater
- 40 Stop
- Midori
- 42 Spreading fast
- 19 Golf great Sam
- on TikTok
- 20 Missing
- 43 Island off
- 22 Curvy letter
- Venezuela
- 23 BMW rival
- 44 Tibetan monks
- 27 Seminary subj.
- 45 Now, on a memo
- 29 Boot camp reply
- 46 Comic Sandler
- 31 Knot again
- 48 IRS employee
- 34 Expiate
- 49 Curved line
- 35 Harbinger
- 50 Tool set
- 37 Cat's coat
- 51 Ostrich's kin
- 38 Unpaid

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

6-24 CRYPTOQUIP

Z T Z Q R W M W C O P W Y T M E S T

SWZZLCLI YT VL AMWUB WVTQY

Y M O Z R L - Y O P L V W R R M T T P

I W C A L G : E W R Y U I O G C L B .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN THE CARTOON ROAD RUNNER WAS VOTED VICE PRESIDENT, IT RACED AROUND GOING "VEEP VEEP!"

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals P

SCOREBOARD/NFL

PRO SOCCER

MLS							
EASTERN CONFERENCE							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
NYCFC	8	3	3	27	26	11	
New York	7	4	5	26	26	17	
Philadelphia	6	1	8	26	20	11	
Orlando City	7	5	4	25	20	22	
CF Montréal	7	6	2	23	28	27	
New England	6	5	5	23	27	26	
Charlotte FC	6	8	2	20	16	19	
Cincinnati	6	7	2	20	22	26	
Atlanta	5	5	4	19	22	20	
Inter Miami CF	5	7	3	18	15	24	
Columbus	4	5	5	17	18	17	
Toronto FC	4	8	3	15	21	29	
D.C. United	4	8	2	14	17	24	
Chicago	3	7	5	14	14	20	
WESTERN CONFERENCE							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
LAFC	9	3	3	30	30	17	
Real Salt Lake	8	4	4	28	20	19	
Austin FC	8	4	3	27	29	18	
FC Dallas	7	4	4	25	24	15	
LA Galaxy	7	5	3	24	18	16	
Nashville	6	5	5	23	19	18	
Seattle	6	6	2	20	20	17	
Vancouver	6	8	2	20	18	28	
Colorado	5	6	4	19	17	18	
Houston	5	7	3	18	18	19	
Minnesota	5	7	3	18	16	17	
Sporting KC	4	9	4	16	16	29	
Portland	3	6	7	16	22	26	
San Jose	3	7	6	15	25	34	
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.							

Friday's game							
Orlando City at Cincinnati							
Saturday's games							
Sporting Kansas City at Seattle Nashville at D.C. United Charlotte FC at CF Montréal Atlanta at Toronto FC Chicago at Houston Minnesota at Miami FC Dallas at Austin FC Columbus at Real Salt Lake LA Galaxy at San Jose Colorado at Portland							
Sunday's games							
New York at Los Angeles FC New York City FC at Philadelphia New England at Vancouver							
Wednesday, June 29							
New York City FC at Cincinnati Columbus at Toronto FC Philadelphia at Chicago CF Montréal at Seattle FC Dallas at Los Angeles FC Houston at Portland Minnesota at LA Galaxy							
Thursday, June 30							
Austin FC at Charlotte FC Atlanta at New York							
Saturday, July 2							
Seattle at Toronto FC Los Angeles FC at Vancouver							
Sunday, July 3							
Atlanta at New York City FC Philadelphia at Columbus Cincinnati at New England Real Salt Lake at Minnesota New York at Sporting Kansas City Charlotte FC at Houston Portland at Nashville Chicago at San Jose							
NWSL							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
SD Wave FC	5	2	3	18	16	8	
Portland	4	1	4	16	21	7	
Chicago	4	1	4	16	14	10	
Houston	4	2	3	15	15	10	
OL Reign	3	2	4	13	7	6	
Angel City FC	4	4	1	13	7	9	
Washington	1	3	6	9	10	12	
Louisville	2	4	3	9	10	14	
Gotham FC	3	4	0	9	5	9	
Kansas City	2	4	3	9	8	13	
Orlando	2	5	2	8	9	24	
North Carolina	2	4	1	7	12	12	
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.							
Saturday, June 18							
Chicago 2, Kansas City 2, tie OL Reign 1, Angel City FC 0							
Sunday, June 19							
Portland 6, Orlando 0 San Diego Wave FC 3, Gotham FC 0 Houston 4, North Carolina 3							
Friday, July 1							
Kansas City at Houston North Carolina at OL Reign Portland at Angel City FC							
Saturday, July 2							
Chicago at Gotham FC							
Sunday, July 3							
Washington at San Diego Wave FC Louisville at Orlando							

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA				
EASTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	11	5	.688	—
Connecticut	12	6	.667	—
Washington	11	8	.579	1½
Atlanta	8	8	.500	3
New York	7	10	.412	4½
Indiana	5	13	.278	7
WESTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Las Vegas	13	3	.813	—
Seattle	10	6	.625	3
Dallas	8	9	.471	5½
Los Angeles	6	9	.400	6½
Phoenix	6	11	.353	7½
Minnesota	4	13	.235	9½
Tuesday's games				
Atlanta 80, Dallas 75 Chicago 104, Las Vegas 95 Minnesota 84, Phoenix 71 Los Angeles 84, Washington 82				
Wednesday's games				
New York 81, Connecticut 77				
Thursday's games				
Indiana at Dallas Phoenix at Minnesota Washington at Seattle Chicago at Los Angeles				
Friday's games				
New York at Atlanta				
Saturday's games				
Phoenix at Dallas Los Angeles at Seattle Washington at Las Vegas				
DEALS				
Wednesday's transactions				
BASEBALL				
Major League Baseball American League				
BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Announced LHP Zac Lowther cleared outright waivers and assigned him to Norfolk (IL).				
CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Optioned RHP Davis Martin to Charlotte (IL). Reinstated RHP Matt Foster from the bereavement list.				
HOUSTON ASTROS — Sent RHP Forrest Whitley to Fayetteville (CRL) on a rehab assignment.				
LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Recalled RHPs Elvis Peguero and Oliver Ortega from Salt Lake (PCL). Optioned LHP Reid Detmers to Salt Lake. Placed RHP Jimmy Herget on the 15-day IL.				
National League				
LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Selected the contract of OF Stefan Romero from Oklahoma City (PCL). Placed INF Hanser Albera on the paternity list. Transferred INF Edwin Rios to the 60-day IL.				
PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Selected the contract of RHP Jared Eickhoff from Indianapolis (IL). Designated RHP Heath Hembree for assignment. Transferred OF Jake Marisnick from the COVID-19 list to the 60-day IL.				
FOOTBALL				
National Football League				
MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Signed CB Akayleb Evans to a rookie contract.				
SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Waived G Pier-Olivier Lestage. Signed DT Bryan Mone to a contract extension.				
HOCKEY				
National Hockey League				
FLORIDA PANTHERS — Named Paul Maurice head coach.				
MINNESOTA WILD — Signed F Connor Dewar to a two-year, one-way contract.				
SOCCER				
Major League Soccer				
MLS — Fined Real Salt Lake assistant coach Brett Jacobs an undisclosed amount for exhibiting irresponsible behavior and using inappropriate language towards officials in a match against on June 18, against San Jose.				
NASHVILLE SC — Traded an international roster slot to Atlanta United in exchange for \$175,000 general allocation money (GAM) and a third-round pick in the 2023 MLS SuperDraft.				
NEW YORK RED BULLS — Signed M Steven Sserwadda and D Juan Castillo to short-term loans.				
SEATTLE SOUNDERS SC — Acquired \$175,000 in general allocation money (GAM) from Atlanta United in exchange for a 2022 international roster slot.				
COLLEGE				
GEORGETOWN — Named Pat Baldwin assistant men's basketball coach and Vernon Hamilton director of player development.				
N. MICHIGAN — Named Adam Kelemet assistant men's soccer coach.				
SOUTH ALABAMA — Named Cori Scherbring assistant athletic director of fan engagement.				

World rankings				
Through June 20				
1.	Scottie Scheffler	USA	10.95	
2.	Rory McIlroy	NIR	7.78	
3.	Jon Rahm	ESP	7.76	
4.	Collin Morikawa	USA	7.20	
5.	Justin Thomas	USA	7.13	

TENNIS

<

INTERNATIONAL SPORTS

Will other sports follow FINA lead?

Ban on transgender women in swimming opened the door for track and others to consider following suit

By Eddie Pells
Associated Press

Bans on transgender women in international swimming and rugby this week opened the door for track and field to consider following suit in what could turn into a wave of policy changes in Olympic sports.

The announcement Sunday by swimming’s governing body, FINA, was followed quickly by a show of support from World Athletics President Sebastian Coe, who was in Hungary for the swimming world championships. He said FINA’s decision was in the best interest of swimming and that his own federation, which oversees track and field and other running sports, would review its policies on transgender athletes and intersex athletes at the end of the year.

“If we ever get pushed into a corner to that point where we’re making a judgment about fairness or inclusion, I will always fall down on the side of fairness,” Coe said.

Experts viewed that as a signal that World Athletics officials could use the FINA precedent to block all transgender and intersex athletes — the latter referred to by clinical terminology as having differences in sex development — from competing in women’s events.

FINA’s new policy bans all transgender women from elite competitions if they didn’t begin medical treatment to suppress testosterone production before either the onset of puberty or by age 12, whichever comes later. USA Swimming put its own policy in place earlier this year, with the idea that it would eventually follow FINA’s lead, but this week said it would need time to see how FINA’s policy affects its own.

Should track and field adopt a similar rule to FINA, Caster Semenya, an athlete with differences in sex development, still would be kept out of races at her chosen distance, 800 meters.

It also could bar 200-meter silver medalist Christine Mboma of Namibia, who also is an athlete with differences in sex development and expected to contend for the title at world championships in Oregon next month. Currently, World Athletics rules governing such athletes don’t apply to the 200-meter race.

“By later this year, I think (World Athletics) will have announced a policy that is very similar to swimming,” said Ross Tucker, a

“By later this year, I think (track) will have announced a policy that is very similar to swimming.”

Ross Tucker

World Rugby science and research consultant

science and research consultant for World Rugby. “And they will say that if ever a person has gone through male puberty and has obtained the advantages associated with testosterone, they can’t compete in women’s sports.”

The International Rugby League also barred transgender women from women’s matches until more studies allow for the sport’s regulators to come up with a cohesive inclusion policy.

FIFA, which runs soccer, said it is “currently reviewing its gender eligibility regulations in consultation with expert stakeholders.”

Individual sports are taking the lead because of the International Olympic Committee framework that was introduced last November and went into effect in March placed all sports in charge of their own rules regarding testosterone. It replaced an IOC policy that had allowed transgender women who had been on hormone replacement therapy for at least 12 months to compete in the Olympics against other women.

The new guidance, which is not binding, recommends that testosterone levels should not determine whether someone is eligible to compete — a stance that World Athletics has not adopted.

Tucker said he expected maybe the “big four or five” international sports federations to follow FINA’s suit, but not all the others — in part because many are smaller operations that don’t have science and legal teams to do the research for thorough policies. FINA had assigned three groups, athletes, science and medicine and legal and human rights, to work on its policy.

FINA’s decisions and those of other organizations are likely to be challenged either



MARY SCHWALM/AP

University of Pennsylvania transgender swimmer Lia Thomas swims in the first leg of the 800-yard freestyle relay at the Ivy League championships in February. The NCAA had sought clarity from USA Swimming because of Thomas competing.

in court or at the Court of Arbitration for Sport, meaning federations that adopt a rule will need scientific studies and legal funding to back up the policy.

“What swimming did was not easy, and it certainly wasn’t cheap,” Tucker said.

Coe said FINA “spent \$1,000,000 (on legal fees). We’re not FIFA but we’re not bereft. But there are other sports that are genuinely fearful that, if they go down that road, they’ll bankrupt themselves defending this.”

Athletes at the world swimming championships in Hungary mostly steered clear of commenting on the new transgender policy this week.

“I think the question is, if you’re a woman out there and you’re racing someone else, like, how would you feel doing that? It’s just about fairness in sport,” said Australia’s Moesha Johnson, who finished fourth in the 1500 meters.

The FINA decision also sent national swim federations scrambling.

Swimming Australia said it endorses fair and equitable competition for all athletes, adding in a statement: “We also firmly believe in inclusivity and the opportunity for all athletes to experience the sport of swimming in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity and expression.”

In the U.S., the NCAA, which governs college sports, had sought clarity from USA Swimming because of transgender swim-

mer Lia Thomas, who competed on Penn’s women’s team.

USA Swimming created a policy requiring evidence that an athlete had maintained a testosterone level less than 5 nanomoles per liter for a minimum period of 36 months. But the NCAA decided against immediately adopting that rule, which would have made Thomas ineligible for the national championships in March, where she won the 500-yard individual title.

When it released its policy, USA Swimming said it would remain in place until FINA adopted its own policy. In a statement Wednesday, USA Swimming said it would “now take our time to understand the impact of this international standard on our existing policy.”

Thomas has said she would like to pursue the Olympics; if she does, her times would likely put her in the mix to at least earn a spot at Olympic trials for the 2024 Games in Paris.

The Thomas case might ultimately be viewed as the tipping point in international competition, given the relative lack of transgender athletes in elite sports, Tucker said.

“People aren’t really very good at understanding an issue until it’s right in front of them as a physical thing,” Tucker said. “They almost have to be punched in the nose before they think something is real. And Lia Thomas made this real.”

German soccer: transgender players can decide team

Associated Press

BERLIN — German soccer is bucking the recent trend of banning transgender women from women’s competition by allowing all transgender, intersex and non-binary players to decide for themselves whether to play in men’s or women’s teams.

The German soccer federation passed a new regulation for gender-nonconforming players with the civil status “diverse” or “unspecified” on Thursday.

“It also applies to transgender players who can now switch at a self-determined time or remain initially in the team in which they’d been playing previously,” the DFB said in a statement. “As long as the sporting activity

does not affect the health of the person while they are taking medication, the person can take part in the game, which is why the new regulation excludes doping relevance.”

The new rules take effect in the coming season and will be incorporated into the DFB’s game regulations, its youth regulations and futsal regulations for amateur soccer.

Sabine Mammitzsch, who oversees women’s and girls’ soccer at the DFB, says there has long been a need for clarification.

“The state and regional associations, but also relevant people at grassroots level, have been signaling for a long time that there are uncertainties with how to accommodate transgender, intersex and non-binary

players,” Mammitzsch said. “Therefore, they very much welcome the introduction of a national, comprehensive rule on the right to play.”

It follows world swimming’s ban of transgender women from women’s competitions.

“With the regulation of the right to play, we are creating further important prerequisites to enable players of different gender identities to play,” DFB diversity officer Thomas Hitzlsperger said.

German soccer’s new rules have already been tested at local level by the Berlin federation since 2019.

“Experience has shown that this does not jeopardize the integrity of the competition,”

the DFB said. “After all, all people have different physical strengths and abilities that only lead to success together in a team, regardless of gender.”

The German soccer federation is the world’s largest with more than seven million members, more than 24,000 clubs, nearly 130,000 teams, and more than 2.2 million players across all of its leagues, divisions and competitions.

It says its state and regional associations will appoint trusted people to help any gender-nonconforming players in granting their right to play, working closely with local anti-violence and anti-discrimination officers to support them.

TITLE IX

What is it; what is it's impact?

By COLLIN BINKLEY AND ERICA HUNZINGER
Associated Press

Title IX, the law best known for its role in gender equity in athletics and preventing sexual harassment on campuses, is turning 50.

It was signed into law by President Richard Nixon on June 23, 1972, after being shepherded through Congress in part by Rep. Patsy Mink, a Democrat from Hawaii who was the first woman of color elected to the U.S. House.

The law forbids discrimination based on sex in education, and despite its age remains a vital piece in the ongoing push for equality, including in the LGBTQ community.

What does Title IX say?

The statute itself is one sentence long, language that was put together by then-Sen. Birch Bayh of Indiana, who died in 2019.

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Translation: The law is meant to ensure equity between men and women in education, and it's broad, covering most K-12 schools and colleges and universities, as well as vocational schools, libraries and museums. That means it applies to tens of millions of students, as well as educators.

What does it cover?

The law applies to several areas of education: athletics, the classroom, sexual assault and violence on campus, employment, discrimination, admissions, retaliation and even financial assistance with tuition.

It also has been extended to other forms of gender and sex discrimination; Title IX was invoked when the Obama administration advised that transgender people should be allowed to use the bathroom of their choice in schools.

How does it affect athletics?

In so many ways, and at the K-12 and powerful collegiate levels. Women's and men's teams are to be treated equally under the law, and schools should look to expand the opportunities for women to play sports.



BRAD HERRIGAN, HARTFORD COURANT/AP

Members of the UConn women's rowing team rally about being cut by the university after the 2021 season in Storrs, Conn., in April 2021.

This doesn't necessarily mean that each sport will have exactly the same budget for equipment, facilities, travel or meals. For example, the women's tennis team might have more money put toward racquets than the men's tennis team. Athletic departments work under what is known as "equal in effect," meaning a benefit for a men's or women's team in one area can be offset in another area as long as "the overall effects of any differences is negligible."

In the hopes of ensuring compliance with Title IX, each athletic department at a college or university must provide annual Equity in Athletics Data Analysis reports. These track participation, coaching staff and salaries, revenues and expenses, including recruiting and game-day expenses.

Many Title IX athletics disputes deal with what's known as the participation gap. Athletic departments must make sure the ratio of men's athletic participation opportunities to women's participation opportunities are "substantially proportionate" to a school's undergrad enrollment.

For example, the University of Connecticut settled a lawsuit after its women's rowing team won a temporary restraining order against being shut down. UConn was accused of putting inflated women's rowing roster numbers (about 20 more than would compete) on its equity report, meaning the actual participation gap was "well above a viable team size."

How does it affect sexual harassment allegations?

Title IX's protections extend to sexual harassment on campus, including dating violence, domestic violence and stalking.

The bottom line is that all students are supposed to have a learning environment free from sexual harassment. When violations occur, the law is meant to help students get the problem resolved, which can mean moving to a different dorm, for example, or getting an alleged attacker re-

moved from the school entirely.

Under new Title IX regulations that were finalized in 2020, students who come forward with abuse allegations may now face an in-person hearing and cross-examination by a person chosen by the alleged attacker. These rules have been criticized by Democrats and others for not fully protecting victims and for discouraging complaints, and the Biden administration is expected to propose new regulations soon.

The Associated Press reported that some universities saw a decrease in the number of complaints brought to Title IX offices.

What about discrimination?

Under Title IX, there's a broad definition of discrimination that could involve students, faculty, administrators or staff. It also covers discrimination against pregnant people. The law has also been invoked to outlaw discrimination of LGBTQ students and educators.

Nothing in Title IX or its federal regulations explicitly protects LGBTQ people, but the Biden administration said last year that the law should be interpreted to protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. It was based on a 2020 Supreme Court decision ruling that LGBTQ people are protected from discrimination in employment.

As a result, the Education Department said it can launch a civil rights investigation if students are blocked from things like using bathrooms or joining sports teams that match their gender identities.

Tennessee and several other Republican-led states filed a federal lawsuit challenging that guidance; it has yet to be decided.

The Biden administration has signaled that its upcoming regulation will explicitly expand Title IX to protect LGBTQ students from discrimination. If finalized as a federal regulation, it would carry the force of law.

Hoops icons warn of complacency

By TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. Some of the giants of women's basketball say if not for Title IX, doors would not have been open for them to blaze trails to Hall of Fame careers on and off the court, but sound complacency alarms when it comes to the future of the law.

Coach Marsha Sharp takes it a step farther when talking about the significance of Title IX.

"I think the Title IX legislation, you could say is the most impactful piece of information in the 20th century," said Sharp, who guided Sheryl Swoopes and Texas Tech to the 1993 national championship. "And I know the Civil Rights piece was really huge, but you impacted half our population."

"With Title IX, you gave opportunities across the board to women. And it was really an amazing time to watch the growth in sports."

A 2003 inductee, Sharp joined 2008 Hall of Famer Debbie Ryan and a pair of recent inductees — Debbie Antonelli and Carol Stiff — in speaking with The Associated Press about the 50th anniversary of the landmark legislation. Stiff, a basketball player/coach turned TV executive, called Title IX priceless.

"I don't know where we would be today without Title IX," Stiff said.

The icons of the game also agree more work remains even after 50 years.

"There's a lot of battles, but we're not fighting them," said Ryan, who coached Virginia to three straight Final Fours. "And that's one of the problems. I think because of the money that's come into the game, it becomes harder for a coach to kind of put themselves out there. And I think even though they know who's going to win, they just don't do it as much."

At least one of Ryan's former players has been outspoken. Dawn Staley, now the highest-paid coach in the Southeastern Conference, is front and center helping fight for equity while leading South Carolina to two national championships.

For Sharp and Ryan, they worked their way through the nascent days of Title IX to the heights of women's basketball.

Sharp played at Wayland Baptist, a Texas program giving scholarships in the 1950s with a local company flying the team to games. So while most women's programs could only dream of flying to road games, it was nothing new for Sharp when she became coach at Texas Tech in 1982. Sharp's Red Raiders played a national schedule with flights to Tennessee and



TERESA WALKER/AP

Women's Basketball Hall of Famer Marsha Sharp says Title IX is the most impactful legislation of the 20th century.

Stanford.

At Virginia, Ryan had to stay awake to drive the van home from road games. Virginia started with one scholarship for basketball with the first player leaving after a year to care for her sick father. In 1978, Dori Gamble shared that scholarship with Hall of Famer Val Ackerman, currently commissioner of the Big East and the first president of the WNBA.

Using Title IX meant picking battles to get more athletic gear, equipment and facilities for female athletes.

One of Ryan's biggest battles was for athletic bras.

Virginia cited a price of \$32 apiece to avoid buying them for all women's sports until Ryan pushed back with studies about women's health along with a petition backed by all coaches, including football coach George Welsh. After she won, Pat Summitt, Kay Yow, Jody Conradt and Tara VanDerveer all called for guidance to help wage their own fights.

And probably surprising to many, the fight for athletic bras continues.

"Still today women athletes are not provided in their regular gear athletic bras," Ryan said. "They're not provided it at all, which is ridiculous. And it's crazy that they're not provided enough funding to be able to buy them."

Antonelli, who played basketball for Yow at North Carolina State, started the first TV broadcasts of women's games at Ohio State as director of marketing in the 1990s that boosted her own 30-plus year career as a broadcaster. She sees plenty of room for women's sports to grow — as long as the money for diversity, equity and inclusion is used appropriately.

"It should go to women's sports," Antonelli said. "There's more opportunities for girls to play now than they've ever played then there's ever been now. They're not all playing my sport, but they are playing. And that's important because we know what value sport brings, what it teaches."

COLLEGE WORLD SERIES/GOLF

CWS ROUNDUP

Sooners move into title series

OU awaits Arkansas-Ole Miss winner

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Oklahoma’s baseball players came to the College World Series calling themselves “a bunch of Davids,” a nod to their embrace of the underdog identity they adopted after an underwhelming start to the season.

It was one David — David Sandlin — who got most of the credit Wednesday for taking down Texas A&M, the last of the national seeds in the NCAA Tournament.

Sandlin held the Aggies to one run and struck out a career-high 12 in seven innings, Jimmy Crooks’ three-run homer in the first held up and Oklahoma advanced to the CWS finals with a 5-1 victory.

Trying to complete a softball-baseball title sweep, the Sooners (45-22) have won three straight games at Charles Schwab Field by no fewer than four runs and will play for their first national championship since 1994.

Oklahoma’s opponent in the best-of-three finals starting Saturday will be either Arkansas or Mississippi.

As Sooners fans chanted “O-U! O-U!” closer Trevin Michael struck out Brett Minnich to end the game against the Aggies. The celebration was subdued.

CWS scoreboard

World Series	
At Omaha, Neb.	
(Double Elimination; x-if necessary)	
Bracket 1	
Friday, June 17	
Game 1	— Oklahoma 13, Texas A&M 8
Game 2	— Notre Dame 7, Texas 3
Sunday, June 19	
Game 3	— Texas A&M 10, Texas 2, Texas eliminated
Game 4	— Oklahoma 6, Notre Dame 2
Tuesday, June 21	
Game 5	— Texas A&M 5, Notre Dame 1, Notre Dame eliminated
Wednesday, June 22	
Game 6	— Oklahoma 5, Texas A&M 1, Oklahoma advances
Bracket 2	
Saturday, June 18	
Game 1	— Arkansas 17, Stanford 2
Game 2	— Mississippi 5, Auburn 1
Monday, June 20	
Game 3	— Auburn 6, Stanford 2, Stanford eliminated
Game 4	— Mississippi 13, Arkansas 5
Tuesday, June 21	
Game 5	— Arkansas 11, Auburn 1, Auburn eliminated
Wednesday, June 22	
Game 6	— Arkansas 3, Mississippi 2
Thursday, June 23	
Game 7	— Arkansas vs. Mississippi
Championship Series (Best-of-three)	
Saturday, June 25:	Oklahoma vs. TBD
Sunday, June 26:	Oklahoma vs. TBD
x-Monday, June 27:	Oklahoma vs. TBD

“I think those kids are focused,” coach Skip Johnson said. “I don’t know if it’s dog-piling or whatever it is... It’s kind of weird sometimes. I don’t tell them not to dog-pile, I can tell you that.”

Texas A&M (44-20) finished 2-2



Oklahoma starting pitcher David Sandlin delivers Wednesday against Texas A&M during the first inning of their College World Series game in Omaha, Neb. Sandlin struck out 12 in seven innings.

in the CWS under first-year coach Jim Schlossnagle after going 29-27, winning only nine Southeastern Conference games and not even qualifying for the league tournament in 2021.

The Sooners didn’t look like an NCAA Tournament team after losing two of their first three Big 12 series and starting 18-12. They’ve won 27 of 37, including 12 of 14 since the end of the regular season.

Sandlin (9-4), who allowed five hits and walked one in his 100-pitch outing, effectively worked the outside half of the plate with a sharp slider and elevated fastball.

er (1-4) allowed four runs, three earned, in 2⅓ innings. Jacob Palisch went the rest of the way, gave up three hits and a run and struck out eight.

Arkansas 3, Mississippi 2: At Omaha, Neb., Brady Slavens’ home run to the deepest part of the park gave the Razorbacks the lead and they held on to beat the Rebels, who loaded the bases with no outs in the bottom of the ninth inning.

Arkansas (46-20) forced a second bracket final against Ole Miss (39-23) on Thursday, with the winner advancing to play Oklahoma in the best-of-three championship round starting Saturday.

For eight innings, Arkansas all but shut down an offense that had produced 64 runs in its first seven NCAA Tournament games. Kemp Alderman, who hit a tying homer in the second inning, was the only Ole Miss runner to advance past first base to that point.

The Rebels loaded the bases in the ninth after closer Brady Tygart hit two straight batters.

Zack Morris, who had given up two runs in two-thirds of an inning in the Hogs’ 13-5 loss to Ole Miss on Monday, came on and struck out pinch-hitter Hayden Leatherwood and got TJ McCants and Jacob Gonzalez to fly out to end the game.

PGA Tour leaning on loyalty to keep players

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

CROMWELL, Conn. — Commissioner Jay Monahan says the PGA Tour can’t win an “arms race” against Saudi-funded LIV Golf when the weapon is money. His response Wednesday was to boost prize money in eight elite events and rely on loyalty and legacy among his players.

Monahan delivered another round of stinging criticism against Greg Norman and his rival league. LIV Golf has snagged players who have combined to win nine majors in the last five years, including Dustin Johnson, Brooks Koepka and Bryson DeChambeau.

The latest to sign was Koepka, whose deal with LIV Golf was announced just as Monahan began his first press conference in three months at the Travelers Championship.

“I am not naive,” Monahan said. “If this is an arms race and if the only weapons here are dollar bills, the PGA Tour can’t compete. The PGA Tour, an American institution, can’t compete with a foreign monarchy that is spending billions of dollars in attempt to buy the game of golf.



PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan speaks during a news conference Wednesday before the Travelers Championship in Cromwell, Conn.

“We welcome good, healthy competition. The LIV Saudi golf league is not that,” he said. “It’s an irrational threat, one not concerned with the return on investment or true growth of the game.”

The tour, however, appears to be trying to keep up. Monahan said an increase in prize money was in the works from its latest media rights deal it signed in 2020, noting the threat of LIV Golf accelerated some of

those plans.

He announced a streamlined schedule — January to August starting in 2024 — with seven tournaments worth \$20 million or more and fewer spots available for its post-season. The top 125 qualify for the FedEx Cup playoffs. Next year, only the top 70 will be eligible.

The fall would be for the players who finished outside the top 70 to secure cards for the following year, and to give them a chance to move into the top 50 — or try to stay there — to secure spots in some of the elite \$20 million tournaments.

Also planned are three international events in the fall for only the top 50 in FedEx Cup points from the previous season.

Monahan cited Masters champion Scottie Scheffler, who earlier Wednesday was unusually vocal in his support of the PGA Tour. Scheffler had not won on the PGA Tour until February, and then he won four times in two months to reach No. 1 in the world.

He already has set a PGA Tour record for season earnings at nearly \$12.9 million.

“If you’re good enough, you will rise to the top,” Monahan said. “And if you don’t

continue to earn that top spot, someone else as hungry and as talented is right there to take your place. Again, that’s the unique beauty of what the tour has and always will offer to fans.

“It’s damn good and it’s worth fighting for.”

The tour will nearly double the prize money for the winner-only Sentry Tournament of Champions at Kapalua to \$15 million. The invitation events at Riviera, Bay Hill and Muirfield Village increase by \$8 million to \$20 million. The two FedEx Cup playoff events increase by \$5 million to \$20 million. And The Players Championship goes up \$5 million to \$25 million.

That’s an increase of just over \$50 million in prize money, or roughly what Johnson reportedly received annually as a signing fee for the LIV Golf series, and that’s before he and others compete for \$25 million prize funds at each event.

That’s the arms race Monahan and the PGA Tour are facing, though they still have the top 15 players in the world ranking on their side, a core group which is speaking out more forcefully.

Still, some may have a price.

STANLEY CUP FINAL/SOCCER



JOHN BAZEMORE/AP

Colorado Avalanche center Nazem Kadri shoots the puck into the top of the goal past Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevski for the game-winning goal in overtime of Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final on Wednesday in Tampa, Fla. The victory gives the Avalanche a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven series.

Avs on the brink

Colorado wins Game 4 in OT, takes 3-1 series lead

By FRED GOODALL
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — The Colorado Avalanche are on the brink of their first Stanley Cup title since 2001, thanks to Nazem Kadri's overtime goal.

Even if the two-time defending champion Tampa Bay Lightning don't believe it should have counted.

Kadri scored at 12:02 of the extra period to give Colorado a 3-2 victory in Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final and move the Avalanche within a win of their first championship in over two decades.

Without specifically saying Tampa Bay felt Colorado had too many men on the ice for the winning goal, Lightning coach Jon Cooper suggested the goal should not have been allowed.

"We're all in this together. Players, coaches, refs, everybody. But this one is going to sting much more than others," Cooper said.

"It's going to be hard for me to speak. ... I'll speak with you (Thursday). You're going to see what I mean when you see the winning goal," Cooper added. "And my heart breaks for the players. Because we probably still should be playing."

The NHL released a statement saying the penalty is a judgement call that can be made by the on-ice officials. Each of the four officials said they did not see a too-many-men-on-the-ice situation on the winning play. The call is not subject to video review.

NHL scoreboard

Stanley Cup Final	
Best-of-seven; x-if necessary	
Colorado 3, Tampa Bay 1	
Colorado 4, Tampa Bay 3, OT	
Colorado 7, Tampa Bay 0	
Tampa Bay 6, Colorado 2	
Wednesday: Colorado 3, Tampa Bay 2, OT	
Friday: at Colorado, AFN-Sports2, 2 a.m. Saturday CET; 9 a.m. Saturday JKT	
x-Sunday, June 26: at Tampa Bay, AFN-Sports2, 2 a.m. Monday CET; 9 a.m. Monday JKT	
x-Tuesday, June 28: at Colorado, AFN-Sports2, 2 a.m. Wednesday CET; 9 a.m. Wednesday JKT	

Back in the lineup after being sidelined since June 4 with a thumb injury, Kadri skated in on Andrei Vasilevski and slipped a shot under the goaltender's right arm to give Colorado a 3-1 series lead.

"That was a huge win. A resilient win," said Kadri, who had been sidelined since being injured during Game 3 of the Western Conference finals against Edmonton.

"I've been waiting for this my whole life," the Colorado center added. "I figured it was time to join the party."

The Avalanche outshot the Lightning 11-3 in the extra period. Vasilevski stopped Logan O'Connor on a breakaway, and Colorado had a shot clang off the post and another hit the crossbar before Kadri ended it.

Game 5 is Friday night in Denver, where Colorado won the first two games of the series and is 7-2 this postseason.

Anthony Cirelli scored 36 seconds

into the game and Victor Hedman also scored in regulation for the Lightning. They took a 2-1 lead into the third period.

Nathan MacKinnon scored on a second-period power play for Colorado, and Andrew Cogliano tied it early in the third.

Darcy Kuemper, pulled from Game 3 after giving up five goals in a 6-2 loss, stopped 37 shots and had an assist on the winning goal for the Avalanche.

Vasilevski finished with 35 saves. He has rebounded from allowing 11 goals in Games 1 and 2 to limit the high-scoring Avalanche to five the past two games.

The Lightning are trying to become the first team to win at least three straight Stanley Cup titles since the New York Islanders won four in a row from 1980-83. The Avalanche last hoisted the Cup in 2001.

Injuries

Kadri returned to the lineup after missing four games. He had been out since injuring his thumb when he was boarded by Evander Kane in Game 3 of Colorado's sweep of Edmonton in the Western Conference finals.

Kane received a major penalty and was suspended a game.

Helping hands

Mikko Rantanen and Cale Makker assisted on MacKinnon's goal, giving both of them 20 this postseason — a franchise record for a single playoff year. Peter Stastny had 19 with Quebec in 1985.

Sports court sets July dates to hear Russian appeals

By GRAHAM DUNBAR
Associated Press

GENEVA — Russian appeals against bans from international soccer because of the country's war in Ukraine are set to be heard at the Court of Arbitration for Sport in July.

The court on July 5 will hear the Russian soccer federation's appeal against FIFA and UEFA's joint decision to suspend its national and club teams days after Russia invaded Ukraine in February.

A second CAS hearing on July 11 will consider an appeal by four Russian clubs, including national champion Zenit St. Petersburg, against exclusion from the next UEFA club competitions.

UEFA's executive committee made that separate ruling on May 2 among decisions affecting more than 15 European competitions. The Russian women's team was also removed from the European Championship that kicks off next month in England.

Lawyers and officials involved in the cases confirmed the CAS hearing dates which have yet to be listed formally by the court.

Urgent verdicts could be requested by the clubs ahead of scheduled games in qualifying rounds of the Champions League and other UEFA competitions.

The high-profile soccer cases could set the tone for similar appeals cases pending at CAS between Russia and governing bodies of Olympic sports.

The IOC has said suspending Russian athletes and teams is intended not to punish them but to protect the safety and integrity of events at a time of "deep anti-Russian" feelings.

UEFA and FIFA in imposing their bans said on Feb. 28 that "football is fully united here and in full solidarity with all the people affected in Ukraine."

Russian soccer officials tried to freeze the FIFA ban ahead of a World Cup qualifying playoff on March 24, but that was rejected by a CAS judge. Russia's scheduled opponent Poland had refused to play the game citing the invasion of Ukraine.

FIFA lawyers supported Poland's move and later cited the risk of "irreparable and chaotic" consequences for the World Cup in Qatar if Russia was cleared to play and then advanced to the final tournament in November.

"Having considered all these factors, FIFA must act to guarantee the efficient organization and smooth running of its competitions," soccer's governing body argued to the court in March.

Lawyers for the Russian soccer federation argued the ban was "a disguised disciplinary sanction" where the right to be heard at the FIFA Council was denied.

Even if the Russian soccer federation wins its appeal at CAS, it seems unlikely the men's and women's teams could be reinstated in the World Cup or Women's Euro 2022.

Victory for the Russian clubs in their July 11 appeal should lead to reinstatement in the 2022-23 UEFA club competitions which is worth tens of millions of dollars in prize money.

Zenit would have had direct entry to the Champions League group stage starting in September.

League runner-up Sochi would be due on July 18 to play in the Champions League third qualifying round draw. First-leg games are scheduled Aug. 2-3.

CSKA Moscow and Dynamo Moscow also joined the appeal filed in mid-May before the season ended. Dynamo, Krasnodar and Spartak Moscow later finished in European qualifying places.



DMITRY LOVETSKY/AP

A man walks past Gazprom Arena, the stadium that was supposed to host the Champions League 2022 final in St. Petersburg, Russia.

ROUNDUP

Ohtani allows two hits with career-high 13 Ks

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Shohei Ohtani adheres to strict routine in nearly every aspect of his life. When his latest mound start was delayed 12 minutes by a pregame ceremony honoring the Angels’ 2002 World Series champions, his meticulous preparation took a hit before he even threw a pitch.

A slightly bumpy beginning still led to a second straight incredible night for the two-way superstar.

Ohtani struck out a career-high 13 over eight dominant innings of two-hit ball, and the AL MVP also reached base three times in Los Angeles’ 5-0 victory over the Kansas City Royals on Wednesday.

After giving up two singles to start that delayed first inning, Ohtani (6-4) retired 16 straight Royals and 23 of the final 24 batters he faced. While matching the longest start of his major league career, he allowed just one baserunner over his final seven innings — on a walk that was quickly erased by a double play.

“I think the biggest thing was putting up that zero in the first inning after giving up those first two hits,” Ohtani said through his translator. “I was able to do that, and it set the tone for the game. I wanted to go as long as I could, but I wasn’t really thinking about the pitch count early in the game.”

One night after Ohtani hit two three-run homers and drove in a career-high eight runs in an extra-inning loss, he set a new personal best for strikeouts by fanning Emmanuel Rivera on his 108th and final pitch.

“He just put us on his back,” Angels interim manager Phil Nevin said. “I thought about taking him out going into the eighth, and he was adamant: ‘No. This is mine. I’m staying.’ ... What a day. What a performance by him.”

Braves 4, Giants 3: Adam Duvall’s run-scoring single capped a three-run rally in the ninth as host Atlanta beat San Francisco.

Duvall’s single drove in William Contreras from second base as the Giants wasted another strong start by Carlos Rodón, who allowed only three hits and one run in seven innings.

Jake McGee was brought in to close out the 3-1 lead, built on homers by Mike Yastrzemski and

Darin Ruf, because Camilo Doval had pitched back-to-back games. Dansby Swanson led off the ninth with a homer. Marcell Ozuna followed with a single to right field and moved to second on Matt Olson’s fly ball to deep center field.

Contreras added a single to left field to drive in Ozuna for a 3-3 tie. Tyler Rogers struck out Orlando Arcia as Contreras stole second base. The steal proved to be crucial when Duval followed with the game-ending single.

Orioles 7, Nationals 0: Austin Hays became the sixth player in franchise history to hit for the cycle, completing the feat in the midst of a steady shower and shortly before play was halted for good in host Baltimore’s win over Washington.

Soon after Hays doubled in the sixth inning for the cycle, rain stopped play for a second time. The game was eventually called after six innings.

Astros 5, Mets 3: Yordan Alvarez homered twice off Carlos Carrasco as host Houston jumped on him early and held on against New York.

Alvarez hit two of the season-high three homers Carrasco allowed before the pitcher left with lower back tightness in the third inning with the Astros up 5-1.

Alex Bregman added a two-run homer for the Astros, who won their third straight.

Yankees 5, Rays 4: Aaron Judge hit his major league-leading 26th and 27th home runs, Jose Trevino delivered a two-run shot that put visiting New York ahead in the eighth inning on its way to a victory over Tampa Bay.

Judge’s 22nd career multi-homer game helped the Yankees come back from a 4-1 deficit after Isaac Paredes hit his fourth home run in two games for the Rays.

Cardinals 5, Brewers 4: Paul Goldschmidt and Nolan Arenado each hit two-run homers as visiting St. Louis beat Milwaukee and moved into first place in the NL Central.

The Cardinals trailed 4-3 before Arenado’s sixth-inning drive to left-center — his 14th homer of the season — put St. Louis ahead for good.

Rowdy Tellez and Andrew McCutchen hit solo homers for the Brewers.

Rangers 4, Phillies 2: Brad Miller hit a two-run single against his former team and host Tex-



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

Angels pitcher Shohei Ohtani reacts after the sixth inning against the Royals. He retired 23 of the final 24 batters he faced.

as beat Philadelphia for the ninth time in a row to hand Zack Wheeler his first loss in two months.

Guardians 11, Twins 10: Oscar Gonzalez tied the game with a two-run single and scored on Owen Miller’s go-ahead sacrifice fly as visiting Cleveland rallied for four runs in the ninth inning to beat Minnesota.

Gonzalez homered earlier and finished with four RBIs for the surging Guardians, who have won the first two in a three-game series to take a one-game lead over Minnesota atop the AL Central.

Carlos Correa hit two home runs for the Twins, who have lost four of five and are 8-11 in June.

Blue Jays 9, White Sox 5: Bo Bichette hit a grand slam and Alejandro Kirk homered for the second straight game, leading Ross Stripling and visiting Toronto over injury-riddled Chicago.

Bichette’s second career slam capped a five-run fourth inning as the Blue Jays avoided a three-game series sweep.

Padres 10, Diamondbacks 4: Jurickson Proffar had four hits, drove in two runs and scored twice for host San Diego, which jumped on Madison Bumgarner early against Arizona for a three-game sweep.

Bumgarner (3-8) got his 2,000th career strikeout, but lost for the fifth time in six starts. Bumgarner lasted only four innings, giving up six runs, four earned, and four hits. He struck out five and walked none.

Dodgers 8, Reds 4: Freddie Freeman homered and drove in two runs and visiting Los Angeles extended its winning streak against Cincinnati this season to six games.

Freeman extended his hitting streak to five games with an RBI single in the fifth.

Red Sox 6, Tigers 2: Rob Refsnyder hit a two-run homer in the third inning and host Boston posted its third series sweep of the season, powering past Detroit.

Jarren Duran and Alex Verdugo each added a two-run double as Boston won for the eighth time in 10 games.

Marlins 7, Rockies 4: Pablo López allowed one unearned run in seven solid innings, Garrett Cooper, Jazz Chisholm Jr. and Jorge Soler hit home runs and host Miami beat Colorado.

Cubs 14, Pirates 5: Ian Happ and Patrick Wisdom hit two-run homers early and Alfonso Rivas added a grand slam off a position player late as visiting Chicago routed Pittsburgh.

Held to a total of two runs in the first two games of the series, Chicago broke out for seven runs in the second inning.

Mariners 9, Athletics 0: Jesse Winker homered for the second straight day, Cal Raleigh also connected and visiting Seattle won consecutive games for the first time in more than two weeks by routing Oakland.

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	51	18	.739	—
Toronto	39	30	.565	12
Boston	39	31	.557	12½
Tampa Bay	37	32	.536	14
Baltimore	31	39	.443	20½

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	36	28	.563	—
Minnesota	38	32	.543	1
Chicago	33	34	.493	4½
Detroit	26	43	.377	12½
Kansas City	25	43	.368	13

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	43	25	.632	—
Texas	33	35	.485	10
Los Angeles	34	38	.472	11
Seattle	31	39	.443	13
Oakland	23	47	.329	21

National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	45	26	.634	—
Atlanta	40	30	.571	4½
Philadelphia	36	34	.514	8½
Miami	31	36	.463	12
Washington	25	47	.347	20½

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
St. Louis	40	31	.563	—
Milwaukee	39	32	.549	1
Pittsburgh	28	40	.412	10½
Chicago	26	43	.377	13
Cincinnati	23	45	.338	15½

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	42	25	.627	—
San Diego	44	27	.620	—
San Francisco	38	30	.559	4½
Arizona	32	39	.451	12
Colorado	30	39	.435	13

Wednesday's games

Toronto 9, Chicago White Sox 5
Houston 5, N.Y. Mets 3
Texas 4, Philadelphia 2
Baltimore 7, Washington 0, 6 innings
Boston 6, Detroit 2
N.Y. Yankees 5, Tampa Bay 4
Cleveland 11, Minnesota 10
L.A. Angels 5, Kansas City 0
Seattle 9, Oakland 0
San Diego 10, Arizona 4
Miami 7, Colorado 4
L.A. Dodgers 8, Cincinnati 4
Atlanta 4, San Francisco 3
Chicago Cubs 14, Pittsburgh 5
St. Louis 5, Milwaukee 4

Thursday's games

Cleveland at Minnesota
Seattle at Oakland
Houston at N.Y. Yankees
Baltimore at Chicago White Sox
Colorado at Miami
San Francisco at Atlanta
Chicago Cubs at Pittsburgh
L.A. Dodgers at Cincinnati
St. Louis at Milwaukee
Philadelphia at San Diego

Friday's games

Houston (Verlander 8-3) at N.Y. Yankees (Severino 4-1)
Boston (Pivetta 7-5) at Cleveland (Quantrell 4-4)
Pittsburgh (Keller 2-5) at Tampa Bay (Springs 3-2)
Washington (Espino 0-1) at Texas (Dunnen 1-5)
Baltimore (Bradish 1-4) at Chicago White Sox (Kopech 2-3)
Colorado (Márquez 3-5) at Minnesota (Bundy 4-3)
Oakland (Irvin 2-4) at Kansas City (Greinke 0-4)
Toronto (Manoah 8-2) at Milwaukee (Houser 4-7)
Seattle (Flexen 2-8) at L.A. Angels (Lorenzen 6-4)
Detroit (García 1-2) at Arizona (Kelly 6-4)
N.Y. Mets (Walker 5-2) at Miami (Alcantara 7-2)
L.A. Dodgers (Uriás 4-6) at Atlanta (Anderson 6-3)
Chicago Cubs (Hendricks 2-6) at St. Louis (Pallante 2-2)
Philadelphia (Nola 4-4) at San Diego (Gore 4-3)
Cincinnati (Ashcraft 3-1) at San Francisco (Cobb 3-2)

Calendar

July 17-19 — Amateur draft, Los Angeles.
July 19 — All-Star Game, Los Angeles.



HARKIM WRIGHT SR./AP

Braves players celebrate a walkoff RBI single by Adam Duvall during the ninth inning against the San Francisco Giants on Wednesday in Atlanta.

BASEBALL

Banana: It's all about entertaining the fans

FROM PAGE 24

sented to the crowd like Simba in the “The Lion King,” lifted toward the sky by a parent while the entire team kneels in reverence around home plate.

There's the Banana 'Nanas, the senior citizen dance team.

There's Maceo, a choreographer who doubles as the team's breakdancing coach (his tortured convulsions in the first-base box to Miley Cyrus' “Wrecking Ball” were a personal favorite).

There's strutting, preening walks to the plate by the Savannah hitters, a breach of baseball etiquette that would draw an immediate beaming in the big leagues but is an accepted part of the show in Banana Land.

There's the players strolling through the stands between almost every half-inning — doling out roses, tossing T-shirts and hopping on top of the dugout to lead the crowd in song.

Oh yeah, there's also a real-life baseball game amid all the shenanigans. (The Bananas, for what it's worth, went into the weekend with the league's best record at 16-5).

“I am so excited,” said Frances Squyres, who traveled from Los Angeles to attend her first Bananas game. “It looks like just one big party — that also has baseball going on.”

With apologies to Shohei Ohtani, Bryce Harper and the World Series-winning Atlanta Braves, the Bananas might just be baseball's most compelling story.

That's no laughing matter.

Sure, some of the more over-the-top skits might be a bit much for the big leagues, and it's hard to envision a way for stars such as Ohtani or Harper to have the sort of up-close interactions that are possible in a college summer league.

But there are surely some lessons to be gleaned from a team that is bucking the trend of baseball struggling to attract new fans and having so many young people view it as an out-of-touch relic favored by their grandparents.



PHOTOS BY STEPHEN B. MORTON/AP

Above: Molly Knutson holds her baby James Knutson high above the players as the Savannah Bananas present the Banana Baby to the crowd while playing the theme song from the movie “The Lion King” over the public address system on June 11 in Savannah, Ga. Below: A batter's helmet with the Savannah Bananas logo sits on top of catcher's gear before a game against the Florioce Flamingos on June 7.

“I definitely think if this was put on in MLB, it would help the game grow,” said Jestin Jones, a right-handed pitcher who plays collegiately at St. Leo. “This little town of Savannah, there's more people coming here almost than to MLB games.”

Indeed, Savannah has sold out every game at ancient Grayson Stadium since its founding in 2016, when it joined a league that essentially allows college players to stay in shape during their offseason.

The Bananas' antics have brought nationwide attention, fans pouring in from more than 30 states (and even other countries) on any given night, and a waiting list for tickets that Cole claims has reached 50,000.

“We're not in the baseball business. We're in the entertainment business,” Cole said from beneath his yellow bowler hat, which goes well with his yellow tuxedo. “We can never be the best baseball



team in the world. We're not major league. But could we be the most fun team in the world? That's what I wanted to attack.”

He attacks it with a fast-talking gusto befitting a natural-born salesman-slash-carnival barker who counts P.T. Barnum, Walt Disney, Blue Man Group and Cirque du Soleil among his inspirations.

Every nook of Grayson Stadium's aging walls provide an opportunity to bemuse — and move merchandise.

A nondescript closet on the concourse was turned into the “World's Smallest Bookstore” (Occupancy: 1), selling titles written by Cole and his wife, Emily.

A storage room off the home clubhouse was transformed into a prop closet, where a collection of toilet seats hangs on the wall, bins are filled with wigs of all shapes, sizes and colors, and Cole shuffles quickly through a row of costumes that have no rhyme or reason, eve-

rything from French maids to sharks.

When he recruits players to the Bananas, their personalities are just as important as their skills.

“It's not for everybody,” said pitcher Blake McGehee, who recently transferred from Ole Miss to Louisiana-Lafayette. “But once you get here, you kind of adapt to it. It's just the culture around here. If you come in and you're not that outgoing, you're not a performer, you change quickly.”

When Cole runs into a player before the game, he advises the youngster on some moves he should try in his walkup to the plate, all in a bid to acquire more views on TikTok.

Social media is a big part of Cole's marketing skills, and he could surely teach a thing or two to the big boys.

The Bananas have 2.8 million followers on TikTok — more than four times as many as that team in Atlanta. You know, the one that

captured a World Series title.

Cole has even bigger plans, also launching a pro team that is essentially baseball's version of the Harlem Globetrotters. “Banana Ball,” as he dubbed it, includes rules such as a two-hour time limit on games (hmm, that sounds rather appealing.) and outs being recorded when a pop fly is caught in the stands by a fan.

The pro team went on a completely sold-out tour of seven minor league ballparks before the regular season. Cole said he's gotten inquiries from several big league teams that want to bring Banana Ball to their stadiums in 2023.

“I believe Banana Ball is the future of what we're doing,” Cole said, “because it's completely breaking down the rules and barriers of the way the game used to be.”

When minor league baseball abandoned Savannah after the 2015 season, largely over the city's unwillingness to build a new stadium, the Bananas stepped in to fill the void.

Turns out, the rickety, 4,000-seat ballpark — which opened in 1926 and hosted both Hank Aaron (as a minor leaguer) and Babe Ruth (in an exhibition during his final season in the big leagues) — wasn't a hindrance at all.

(That's another lesson for the major leagues: You don't necessarily need the newest stadium to bring in the crowds.)

Cole, his wife and a threadbare staff of 20-somethings pulled an old picnic table into the abandoned stadium and set up shop, calling potential ticket-buyers and plotting ways to make a night at the Bananas more than just a game.

From those humble beginnings, they quickly became a rousing success.

One room of the stadium is now dedicated to the social media staff, another to taking a steady stream of orders that come in from around the world for shirts, caps and other merch.

The formula, in Cole's mind, is obvious.

“Every decision we make has the fans first,” he said.

The Bananas are a perfect fit for Savannah, a city on Georgia's coast that gained renewed prominence in the 1990s with the book “Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil.”

These days, Savannah is overrun most every weekend with tourists, party-goers and bachelorette parties. The Bananas have quickly become a star attraction amid the quirky revelry.

“Positive vibes. Make everybody laugh,” Maceo, the dancing coach, said of his role. “Banana Land is about weirdness — and I'm here for all of it.”



Savannah Bananas first-base coach Maceo Harrison, foreground, teaches a dance routine to members of the team.

SPORTS



Into the championship series

Oklahoma eliminates Texas A&M to move into final » **CWS, Page 20**

COMMENTARY

Welcome to Banana Land

Can Savannah's amateur team provide the cure for baseball ills?

By PAUL NEWBERRY
Associated Press

More than 90 minutes before the first pitch, it's already clear this isn't just any ol' baseball game. The crowd queued up outside the main gate slowly begins to part, clearing the way for a pep band to guide the home team — adorned in bright yellow uniforms — through a rollicking, high-fiving gauntlet.

Once the players reach the concourse outside historic Grayson Stadium, they break into a hasti-

ly choreographed dance routine accompanied by the tune "Hey! Baby."

Welcome to Banana Land, home to baseball's most outrageous — and entertaining — team.

The Savannah Bananas.

When you're done chuckling about that nickname, we'll get to a more serious issue: This amateur team in the little-known Coastal Plain League could be at least part of the cure for what ails the national pastime.

"You guys ready to have some fun?" Bananas owner Jesse Cole, decked out in yellow from head to toe, asked a group of fans on their way into the ballpark for a recent game. "Enjoy the show."

What a show it is!

There's the Banana Baby, an infant who is pre-

SEE BANANA ON PAGE 23

Savannah Bananas owner Jesse Cole emcees a performance with the fans from atop a dugout before a game on June 7 in Savannah, Ga.

STEPHEN B. MORTON/AP



Former Ravens defensive tackle Siragusa dies at 55 » NFL Page 17