Sailor helps spread word on marrow donations

BY JOSHUA KARSTEN
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — Navy Lt. Kawika Segundo’s bone marrow had less than a 4% chance to match that of a terminally ill 7-year-old, but that slim chance turned out to be enough.

Segundo’s marrow donation five years ago saved the life of Kyle Crawford, who had suffered from severe aplastic anemia. That experience has spurred Segundo to push for more bone marrow donor registrations at the U.S. Navy base in Bahrain, a place where he says that sailor turnover and diversity could improve the odds of finding more matches.

“All the technology we have, all the great doctors and medicine — and there’s nothing that can cure a child except for one donor,” said Segundo, a Maui-raised medical planner who is also a Purple Heart recipient for his service in Iraq.

A weeklong bone marrow registration drive at the Naval Amphibious Force 5/5 command netted more than 50 volunteer donors, and Segundo is trying to set up a similar drive at the Navy Exchange. All it takes to join the C.W. Young Bone Marrow Donor Program’s rolls is about 10 minutes and a cheek swab.

Segundo registered for the program while stationed at Annapolis, Md., in 2009. His sample was stored in a nationwide repository affiliated with the civilian Be The Match organization. Five years later, he received a call asking for his help.

SEE MARROW ON PAGE 2

A BREED APART

A dog helped kill al-Baghdadi, joining a long history of canine war heroes

BY ALEX HORTON
The Washington Post

The artillery barrages of World War I were long dormant when Gen. John Pershing readied an award for a wounded combat veteran. The soldier took shrapnel to the chest in the brutal Seicheprey campaign in France, survived gas attacks and caught a German scout.

Pershing, the commander of U.S. forces in the war, summarized his valor in a speech and pinned a medal to the soldier, who did not say a word that day in July 1921.

“He merely licked his chops and wagged his diminutive tail,” The New York Times wrote of Stubby, a Boston bull terrier already famous as a four-legged version of Sgt. Alvin York.

On Sunday, another dog was added to the hall of canine heroes: a Belgian Malinois that tore after Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a darkened tunnel in Syria. Al-Baghdadi killed himself with a suicide vest as the dog closed in, and the pup suffered minor wounds before returning to duty.

A photo of the dog, assigned to the Army’s secretive Delta Force, was posted by President Donald Trump, who said the dog did “a GREAT JOB” in the Saturday raid. The dog’s name is classified, Trump and the Pentagon said, though Newsweek reported its name is Conan (after the comedian, not the barbarian).

That very good dog is part of a long, scruffy line of war canines that have served alongside U.S. troops for more than a century. And in each major campaign, dogs have become remarkably agile on battlefields as some of the most fearsome and effective weapons.

SEE BREED ON PAGE 9
Marrow: Donor shares story and inspires others based at US installations to help also

From Front Page

Segundo said he had initially grown determined to donate bone marrow once he learned about the lack of multiracial donors in the registry.

Segundo’s European, Hawaiian and Chinese ancestry was at first considered a roughly 4% likelihood of a match for Kyle, who has a European and Chinese background.

When further tests showed a match, Segundo traveled to MedStar Georgetown University Hospital in 2014 for the surgical procedure.

Doctors use needles to withdraw liquid marrow — where the body’s blood-forming cells are made — from the pelvic bone. The donor is anesthetized during the donation, but common side effects afterward include temporary back or hip pain, throat and muscle pain, Be The Match’s website says.

Segundo spent a couple of days in the hospital for observation and felt some fatigue but said the recovery was easy.

Kyle received Segundo’s donation at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Stanford soon afterward and fully recovered from his life-threatening illness.

“I am so grateful … I am so grateful for my son … being grateful has helped us stay focused on what is truly important in life,” Kyle’s mother, Angie, said at a Be The Match ceremony honoring the Segundo and Crawford families in 2015.

Segundo now shares his story everywhere he goes and conducts registration drives wherever base leadership will allow.

Earlier this month, Navy Capt. Charles McDermott donated a swab simply because he was asked to while walking by the amphibious command’s drive.

“Wear the uniform and that’s what we do,” McDermott said. “We volunteer for whatever the requirement is. I can spare the 10 minutes.”

Marine Staff Sgt. Jose Beltran was motivated once he heard that a young kid’s life was saved.

“I’m a father, and when I heard that he saved a child’s life, it reminded me that if my child needed help, I would want someone to help,” he said.

Beltran, a former Marine recruiter, added that he was so motivated to help that he walked around base “snatching up” more Marines to volunteer.

“The donor program has been around since 1991 and has recruited more than 1 million new potential donors and coordinated more than 8,000 cellular donations” according to the Salute to Life website, which includes information on how to register and start drives.

Segundo will lead another drive at 5th Fleet’s Marine Corps antiterrorism company Thursday morning and is planning another in Bahrain during the holiday season.

“Registration drives are rare,” Segundo said. “Let’s make this a thing,” he said. “I want to see more of it.”

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PHOTOS BY JOSHUA KARSTEN/Stars and Stripes

Above: Navy Capt. Charles McDermott, right, provides a cheek swab as Lt. Marisol Armora explains the procedure during a bone marrow drive at Naval Amphibious Task Force 51/5 headquarters in Bahrain on Oct. 24. Below: A cheek swab kit like this one can be sent individually or in bulk to a command anywhere in the world.
‘He always seemed to be there’

Green Beret becoming second Medal of Honor recipient for actions in Battle of Shok Valley

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — With the Green Berets pushed down against a cliff atop an icy, jagged 10,000-foot Afghan mountain where they were hunting an entrenched enemy leader whose forces had launched a hellish defense, then-Army Sgt. Matthew O. Williams’ comrades recalled he always seemed to be where he was needed.

After Green Beret Master Sgt. Matthew O. Williams, shown Tuesday at the Pentagon, will receive the Medal of Honor on Wednesday,

shocked,” said Williams, who was familiar with the 2016 Pentagon-ordered review of high-level, post 9/11 combat awards, which would result in his and Shurer’s medal upgrades. “I remember when Ron told me about his upgrade, I thought, ‘Of course that makes perfect sense. Ron was the guy that day.’ … To find out about myself — it was definitely a shock. A little bit overwhelming.”

Shurer said Tuesday that he felt exactly the opposite about his own actions during the battle. It was not until Shurer learned of Williams’ award upgrade that his own Medal of Honor seemed warranted.

“It was obviously humbling and an incredible honor, but it was confusing. I was the medic. I was out there being the medic, just doing my job,” he said. “What else was I going to do that day? But when I found out that Matt was going to be receiving the medal — to me that made more sense.”

The mission seemed ominous from the start, according to Green Berets who served on that operation targeted at a stronghold of an Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin terrorist group where Americans had never previously fought.

Army Lt. Col. Kyle Walton, then a captain and the Green Beret leading the mission, recalled the weather was terrible. Snow fell. When the unit arrived near its target about dawn, the Chinook helicopters ferrying them toward the fight could not land, forcing them to jump some 10 feet from the back of the aircraft onto the rocky cliffs or, in some cases, into the freezing, fast-moving river below them.

“Within just a few minutes, enemy forces had pinned down our initial assault element and the command and control element,” Walton said Tuesday. “We had multiple casualties. Our team interpreter was killed instantly. Everyone else [in the lead element] was either hit by enemy fire or actually wounded by enemy fire.”

Williams was in the rear assault element, remaining below the cliff as his teammates were pinned down by rifle, machine-gun and rocket fire. Seeing the need to help his comrades, Williams rallied the Afghan commandos and forced the freezing river then scaled the near-vertical cliff to establish fighting positions, according to his award citation. He then moved forward, braving a “gauntlet of heavy machine gun fire” to reach one injured Green Beret, render first aid and evacuate him down the cliff to a position from where they could be evacuated, the citation reads.

Meanwhile, Williams killed insurgent fighters, led a counterattack and helped move additional wounded soldiers.

“He was always looking for work,” Walton said. “He was never not prepared. You can quit and kind of sit on the sidelines … or you can take as much control of a terrible situation as you can and find things to make it better,” he said. “In this situation, it was finding out how to get our guys down or whatever we needed to do.”

Williams, who has deployed at least four additional times to Afghanistan and recently completed a deployment in Africa, said he never previously fought the 14-year veteran has survived — and applied them to other missions. But he rarely talks about that battle, he said.

The soldiers who he now responsible for as the top enlisted Green Beret in his unit probably are not aware of his heroism was a blur, but it has given him the opportunity to advocate for Special Forces veterans and support charity initiatives.

“At first, it definitely felt a little bit overwhelming,” Shurer said of receiving the Medal of Honor last year. “There are certainly some times where — it’s a lot to carry. I think [Williams] is going to be a great representation of the United States military, especially the Army special operations community. I am very excited to see him get the medal tomorrow.”

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MILITARY

Military wants more rules for turbines near nuclear missiles

By James MacPherson
Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. — The military wants North Dakota and four other states with nuclear missile arsenals to consider introducing new rules aimed at preventing conflicts between wind and nuclear facilities and the helicopters that provide security at launch facilities.

The Defense Department last month asked the North Dakota Public Service Commission to consider new rules, including increasing the distance tenfold to more than 2 miles between a wind turbine and missile launch facility. The military also wants special lighting added to wind towers that is compatible with night vision goggles worn by the helicopter pilots who patrol the 8,500-square-mile missile field in northern North Dakota.

The commission, which approves siting and state lawmakers but was barred after military officials protested.

The military said it’s also “an issue of concern” in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska.

Mark Mahoney, the regional environmental coordinator for the Defense Department, told the AP after the meeting that the military would ask other states to also consider the changes proposed in North Dakota.

“We want consistency,” he said.

Tom Vinson, vice president of regulatory affairs for the American Wind Energy Association, said wind developers already work with the Defense Department to mitigate any potential risks from wind farms.

“We in the wind industry would prefer not to see state legislation,” Vinson said.

“The federal review process is already robust,” Vinson said “one-size-fits-all” state rules could be overly restrictive and hurt projects.

“There may be ways to mitigate concerns that would allow a project to move forward,” he said.

Vinson noted that 45% of the nation’s wind farms operate within 50 miles of a military facility without harming national security or altering military training.”

The Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota is the only U.S. base capable of nuclear strikes by both plane and missile. Minot has one of the nation’s two B-52 bomber bases and oversees 150 of the Air Force’s 450 Minuteman 3 nuclear missiles.

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Navy upholds SEAL’s sentence for posing with corpse

BY ANDREW DYER
The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — The top officer in the U.S. Navy ruled Tuesday that a jury-imposed sentence in the war crimes court-martial of SEAL Edward R. Gallagher will stand, with one deviation, the Navy said in a statement.

Gallagher, formerly a chief petty officer from San Diego, was acquitted in July of most charges against him, including a charge he murdered a wounded Islamic State fighter in his care in 2017. However, Gallagher was convicted of one count of appearing in a photo with the fighter’s dead body.

The jury reduced his rank from chief petty officer to petty officer 1st class, or from an E-7 to E-6.

The SEAL, who had deployed several times in the war on terrorism, had been charged with multiple war crimes including shooting civilians during a deployment to Iraq.

Several of his Navy SEAL teammates came forward with eyewitness allegations.

However the case was plagued by leaks, so a Navy prosecutor, in coordination with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, violated Gallagher’s constitutional rights by sending email trackers to Gallagher’s defense attorneys and to a reporter weeks before trial, according to court documents.

Also, one of the prosecution’s key witnesses testified that he not Gallagher — killed the wounded fighter.

A jury comprising mostly Marine combat veterans sentenced Gallagher to a reduction in rank and four months of confinement, which the SEAL had already served before trial.

One hiccup in the sentencing became apparent immediately after trial. Service members sentenced to confinement are usually automatically reduced to E-1, the lowest grade in the military, not to E-6 as Gallagher had been.

On Tuesday, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday overruled the requirement, his spokesman, Cmdr. Nate Christensen, said, in a statement. Gilday reviewed the record of the trial and a request for clemency from Gallagher’s defense attorneys, Christensen said.

“After careful consideration as the convening authority, Adm. Gilday decided to uphold the sentence as adjudged by a jury of Gallagher’s peers, but disapproved the automatic reduction in rate to E-1,” Christensen said.

Timothy Parlatore, one of Gallagher’s attorneys, said Tuesday he is disappointed Gilday did not grant clemency, given the misconduct of Navy officials during the court-martial and the less serious nature of the offense for which Gallagher was convicted.

“We’re disappointed,” Parlatore said. “For an offense that ordinarily would mean verbal or written counseling, [Gallagher] will lose a significant amount of money in a retirement pension. He’s convicted of being in a photograph.”

The pay grade in which military members retire affects their pensions.

Before the trial, the Gallagher case became a cause celebre in conservative media as Gallagher’s wife and brother made rounds on several cable news shows. Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., was an early supporter of Gallagher and lobbied President Donald Trump on the SEAL’s behalf.

In March, Trump intervened and released Gallagher from the Miramar brig, where he’d been held since his arrest Sept. 11, 2018. One of the president’s personal attorneys, Marc Mukasey, joined the defense team soon after.

Trump also considered pardoning Gallagher before the trial before deciding against it. He congratulated Gallagher on his acquittal on most charges via Twitter.

Hunter issued a statement Tuesday calling on Trump to pardon Gallagher.

“Today’s decision is further evidence that the Uniform Code of Military Justice system is completely broken and desperately requires a complete overhaul,” Huntersaid in his statement. “Due to this mindboggling ruling, I, along with many of my colleagues from the Justice for Warrior Caucus, will be immediately reaching out to President Trump requesting that he exercise his authority and issue a Presidential pardon for Chief Eddie Gallagher.”

The Justice for Warriors Caucus, founded this year by Hunter and Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Texas, advocates for service members with cases in the military justice system.

After the court-martial, the Navy and Marine Corps launched comprehensive reviews of the Judge Advocate General Corps. Also Adm. John M. Richardson, who recently retired as CNO, stripped authority in the case from Navy Region Southwest commander Rear Adm. Bette Bolivar as he took authority over several outstanding SEAL cases.

Gallagher also has become embroiled in a legal fight with some of his former lawyers over hundreds of thousands of dollars that his supporters raised to fund his defense. The cases are playing out in a Texas district court.

Parlatore said he expects Gallagher will begin processing out of the Navy once he returns to San Diego this week.

The San Diego Union-Tribune

The San Diego Union-Tribune
Popeyes’ chicken sandwich back, but still not overseas

Stars and Stripes

Service members overseas will have to wait a little longer for a taste of Popeyes’ chicken sandwich after all.

After Army and Air Force Exchange Service announced that the crispy morsels would be sold at all Popeyes Exchange locations starting this weekend, a spokeswoman said the sandwiches would be available only at locations within the United States starting Sunday.

Information posted Tuesday on the Exchange’s website under Community Hub and on its Facebook page said the sandwich would be “at all Exchange Popeyes locations.” That was an error, said the spokeswoman, Julie Mitchell.

The Exchange is working with Popeyes to bring the sandwich to locations overseas, Mitchell said.

“As soon as we know when we can launch it globally, we’ll tell the world,” she said.

Two weeks after the launch, Popeyes announced it was suspending sales because “game changer in the fast-food world.”

Popeyes introduced the $3.99 sandwich Aug. 12, only to see sales skyrocket amid the fuss was all about.

During the two weeks of sales, Popeyes sold about 1,000 chicken sandwiches per store each day, doubling its store traffic, according to an industry analyst at KeyBanc Capital Markets.

“We, along with our suppliers, are working tirelessly to bring the new sandwich back to guests as soon as possible,” Popeyes said in September.

Sales have proved a bonanza for Popeyes and its owner, Restaurant Brands International, which spent the last weeks working to secure ingredients and negotiate prices with suppliers. The company hopes the sandwich will also pave the way for an international expansion, The Wall Street Journal reported last week.

Highway near bases in Germany to close to defuse a WWII bomb

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — A portion of the A6 autobahn will be closed in both directions Thursday while a 500-pound unexploded bomb from World War II is defused near the U.S. Army’s Rhine Ordnance Barracks.

The bomb was found about six to 10 feet underground Tuesday by construction crews near the former Opel automobile factory next to ROB, a Kaiserslautern city spokesman said Wednesday.

The highway will be closed between the Landstuhl and Kaiserslautern West exits starting at 10 a.m. until the bomb is safely defused, the city spokesman said.

The Opel traffic circle will remain open, while Von-Miller-Strasse from Ikea to Carl-Billand-Strasse will be shut down.

A handful of buildings on ROB and their parking lots will be cleared during the bomb deactivation, Army officials said.

The installation’s access gates will not be affected.

It’s the second unexploded bomb found in Germany’s Rheinland-Pfalz state this week. About 3,000 people were evacuated from their homes and offices Tuesday afternoon in downtown Zweibruecken — about 30 miles southwest of Kaiserslautern — after a 500-pound bomb was found in a meadow where a kindergarten is under construction, the Rheinpfalz newspaper reported.

That bomb, determined to be dropped by the British during WWII, was defused safely defused, the city spokesman said.

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Faulty fridge puts flu shot program on ice at Yokota

By Seth Robson Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Mechanical failure of a medical refrigerator that stored the influenza vaccine has put the flu shot program on ice at Yokota, said Kaori Matsukasa, Yokota spokeswoman.

“Due to a mechanical failure of a medical refrigerator where the influenza vaccines were stored, the temperature inside the refrigerator rose above the set temperature range required for the safe administration of the influenza vaccine,” she said. “This rendered the current supply unusable,” she said.

Air Force officials did not provide the number or value of doses rendered unusable at Yokota, which is home to about 11,500 service members, civilians and family members.

Sadat is a top priority for the 374th Airlift Wing, Matsukasa added.

“The influenza vaccine is a temperature sensitive medical product… that must stay between 2-8 degrees Celsius,” she said.

“Although there are currently no vaccinations for persons above the age of 36 months, the 374th Medical Group responded quickly and the reorder of the vaccination should arrive within the next few weeks.”

Flu season began Sept. 26 in metropolitan Tokyo, 11 weeks earlier than last year, according to a recent report by the Mainichi Shinbun. Japanese citizens were advised to take precautions since the number of flu cases usually peaks five to 10 weeks after flu season sets in, the newspaper reported.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states on its website that everyone 6 months or older should get a flu vaccine every season, with rare exceptions.

“Flu vaccination has important benefits. It can reduce flu illnesses, deaths, visits to doctors, time lost from work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations,” the website says. “Flu vaccination is especially important for children because they pass the virus to others.”

People should get vaccinated before flu viruses start to spread since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection, the agency advises.

“Make plans to get vaccinated early,” CDC says. “CDC recommends that people get a flu vaccine by the end of October, if possible. Getting vaccinated later, however, can still be beneficial and vaccination should continue to be offered throughout the flu season, even into January or later.”

Pence praises soldiers, vets at Fort Hood: ‘You are the best of us’

By Rose L. Thayer Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Vice President Mike Pence made a two-day stop at Fort Hood, Texas, where he met with soldiers and veterans, watched a tank training exercise and visited a memorial to the people who died in the Nov. 5, 2009, shooting at the Army base.

“You come from the rest of us, but, make no mistake about it, you are the best of us,” Pence said to about 1,000 soldiers and civilian personnel gathered in a 1st Cavalry Division aircraft hangar. He spoke for more than 20 minutes Tuesday morning in his culminating event at the base. His speech touched on several topics including the 77-year history of Fort Hood, Sunday’s military operation that brought down Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and various ways that President Donald Trump’s administration has benefited the military.

The fight against ISIS is one Fort Hood troops know well. III Corps is deployed for a third rotation to oversee operations in Iraq and Syria.

In closing, Pence challenged the soldiers to be vigilant.

“Keep taking care of each other. Never doubt that every decision you make matters to the American people and to the security of this nation,” he said. “Give America your best every day. The American people are counting on you.

“Given the long and storied history of III Corps and Fort Hood, we know we can."

Pence arrived Monday evening at Fort Hood, which has about 36,500 soldiers, and stopped in the nearby city of Killeen to pay his respects at a memorial to the Fort Hood shooting. On Nov. 5, 2009, Nidal Hasan, then an Army major, shot and killed 13 people on base and wounded more than 30 others at a deployment personnel processing center.

“As the 10th anniversary of that terrible day approaches next week, let me say on behalf of American people to the families of the fallen and to our brothers and sisters in arms, the American people are with you and this nation will never forget or fail to honor the service and sacrifice of our heroes who fell on Nov. 5, 2009. That is my solemn pledge,” Pence said.

Following his visit to Fort Hood, Pence traveled about 70 miles south to Austin for a luncheon. From there, he is expected to return to Washington.

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Russian drills in Egypt prompt concern from US officials

By John Vander

STUTTGART, Germany — The Russian military for the first time Wednesday launched large-scale air defense drills in Egypt, serving as the latest sign of Moscow’s deepening ties with African militaries, which has captured the attention of U.S. commanders.

The exercises come one week after President Vladimir Putin held a summit for African leaders in Sochi focused on enhancing Russia’s role across the continent, ranging from trade and weapons sales to military partnerships.

“For the first time, the two friendly nations’ military will act hand-in-hand,” Russian Col. Valery Chernysh, who oversees the Arrow of Friendship drills, said in a statement. “The Russian and Egyptian servicemen will execute the exercises and learn how to work together when using modern air defense systems.”

While China is the U.S.’ main rival in Africa — Beijing is the continent’s largest trade partner and has ramped up economic and military partnerships for more than a decade — Russia’s attempt to gain a larger foothold is more recent.

Egypt developed close relations with the Soviet Union, Russia’s predecessor state, in the 1950s but reversed course when President Anwar Sadat expelled Russian military advisors in 1972 and became one of Washington’s closest Arab partners.

U.S.-Egyptian ties have since strained in connection with restrictions on weapons sales over human rights issues. Moscow has stepped in with numerous deals of its own, including a $2 billion agreement reached this year to supply Egypt with more than 20 Su-35 fighter jets.

In 2017, Moscow and Cairo also agreed to allow, if needed, the joint use of military air bases between the countries.

The two countries also see eye-to-eye on Libya, where both sides back Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar, a high-powered militia leader and political rival to the country’s weak U.S.-backed central government.

For the U.S., Russia’s expanding presence in Africa and China’s large economic influence has brought on a shift in military strategic focus.

In late 2018, the Trump administration rolled out a new Africa strategy that put countering Russia and China as the top priority, even as U.S. troops continue to conduct counterterrorism missions in places like Somalia.

“The predatory practices pursued by China and Russia stunt economic growth in Africa, threaten the financial independence of African nations, inhibit opportunities for U.S. investment, interfere with U.S. military operations and pose a significant threat to U.S. national security interests,” former national security adviser John Bolton said at the time.

U.S. Africa Command Gen. Stephen J. Townsend said in April that the Russians “are after access and influence to our detriment.”

During the Russian exercises in Egypt, an array of weaponry will be on display. Among the systems being tested are Buk-M2E and Tor-M2E air defense missiles as well as the Pechora S-125 surface-to-air system, the Russian military said.
Texas military families sue over housing issues

By Rose L. Thayer

AUSTIN, Texas — Six years ago, Leilani Hamilton and her family of four moved into an historic home at Randolph Air Force Base near San Antonio.

Within a week, Hamilton submitted her first request to Hunt Military Communities, the company responsible for base housing, to make a repair to the duplex, which was built in 1932 and is part of the Randolph Field National Historic District.

For the five years that the Hamiltons lived there, they continually filed reports with Hunt and worked to help keep the house habitable for their family.

“In my son’s room, it took the walls to come crumbling down under the window sill for them to act,” Hamilton said.

By the time that the walls had been repaired, the 16 windows of the house leaked so much that the walls began to deteriorate beneath them. The air vent in the bathroom blew directly into the attic instead of out of the house. Once, the Hamiltons left for a week and came home to orange spots growing on the walls of the children’s bathroom.

Her husband, Air Force Tech. Sgt. Samuel Hamilton, waged war against “innumerable” cockroaches that invaded the house by sealing openings under the house himself.

Though the Hamiltons relocated to Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash., where they purchased a home off base, they are one of eight military families who filed a federal lawsuit Tuesday against Hunt Military Communities for mold- and pest-infested housing at Randolph, which is part of the Western District of Texas, San Antonio.

“The people need their day in court, and they need it now. These families have been dramatically and adversely affected,” said Jim Moriarty, a Houston-based attorney representing the families in the lawsuit.

Last month, a San Diego jury awarded $2 million to a Marine Corps family for mold problems in family housing managed by Lincoln Military Housing. The company said in a statement following the verdict that they intend to appeal. Another Marine Corps family received $350,000 in a lawsuit against Lincoln in Virginia in 2016, but it took more than five years to close the case.

On Tuesday, a spokesperson for Hunt Military Communities said the company is aware of the lawsuit.

“We believe the lawsuit is without merit and intend to vigorously defend the company against these baseless claims,” according to a housing company statement.

According to the lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas, San Antonio Division and assigned to Magistrate Judge Richard B. Farrer, Hunt Military Communities “systematically under-maintained the military housing, subjected service members and their families to atrocious conditions, including pervasive mold that sickened them and destroyed their possessions, utilized sub-standard service providers to allegedly remediate the mold problems, subjected service members and their families to pest infestations and misled tenants about the remediation actions allegedly undertaken.

Moriarty said they are seeking personal injury damages, primarily for the children involved, but he did not include a dollar amount. He said he will wait to hear what a jury will do when they have heard the facts.

Another family’s story stood out to Moriarty, he said. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Thomas and Kassandra Wolf and their four children lived at Randolph for three years. But when they moved out in May, their son was bitten by ants so often that the school contacted Child Protective Services, according to court documents.

“When I listen to Kassandra talk about her little boy and the fact that he wouldn’t wear shorts because of all the scars on his legs from ant bites, that is beyond the pale. That is not acceptable. No child of any service member ought to live in what borders on being slums,” Moriarty said.

The housing companies need to change their ways, or the military should change companies, he said. Hunt signed a 50-year contract with the Air Force in 2007, according to court documents.

Other families listed on the lawsuit are Capt. Michael J. Daniels, his wife, Barbara High-Daniel and their two children; Capt. Jonathan and Saraha Kline and their three children; Lt. Col. Mark and Rachel Hiatt and their four children; Lt. Col. Shane and Becky Vinales and their two children; Petty Officer 1st Class Jon and Allison Alexander and their two children, and 2nd Lt. Lance and Megan Konzen, who are the only family suing from Laughlin Air Force Base. The service members are in the Air Force, Army and Navy.

“Put these people in jail for the docto,” because no one believed me. No one did anything about it, so I just suffered,” Hamilton said.

Following congressional hearings on the poor conditions of military family housing, Hamilton said Hunt seemed to be finally taking her maintenance requests seriously. The family spent 11 days displaced from the house in June while mold remediation occurred. They also elected to participate in a pilot program through Hunt, which the company refers to as the Humidity Project.

New York-based Makovsky, a public relations firm employed by Hunt, has said the scope of work included in the Humidity Project was developed in accordance to guidelines from the Environmental Protection Agency and the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation’s rules and regulations to address humidity challenges that exist in the historic homes on Randolph.

The Humidity Project includes the installation of a whole-home dehumidifier, the cleaning of ducts, gutters and windows, sealing all penetrations from under the home and installing humid-ity-controlled exhaust fans in full basements, among other areas.

The project allowed the Hamiltons to increase overall spending by about $5 million to address all concerns as they arise and to specifically fund the Humidity Project based upon 27 homes that have been through the inspection process. Ten homes have already had work completed through the project as of Sept. 16, according to information from Makovsky.

“Our house was actually worse than before they did it,” Hamilton said of the cleaning and upgrades.

The air conditioning stopped cooling the downstairs of the home, so Hunt provided a portable unit for the children in their third-floor bedroom at Randolph. The windows in the home also continued to leak after the repairs. On July 31, the family moved and in the following months, many of the health conditions that they faced cleared up.

“They are more active. They’re not sleeping half the day away,” Hamilton said of her kids. “They’re both more pleasant, not grumpy, and that’s just my kids. I’ve seen the difference in myself and my husband as well.”

Other families included in the lawsuit also note their symptoms diminished once they moved away from their homes. Thomas Wol from San Antonio disappeared once he deployed, according to court documents.

“They put people in jail for the misconduct they’ve done or put them out of business, or fire them from the contracts that they’re not honoring and if you did that maybe they’d straighten up,” Moriarty said. “But I don’t think they’re going to do anything until someone gets their attention.”

Thayer.rose@stripes.com

TUESDAY, Oct. 30, 2019

Pentagon announces death of soldier deployed to Iraq

A soldier deployed to Camp Taji in Iraq has died, the Department of Defense said Wednesday.

Sgt. Nathaneil G. Irish, 23, of Billings, Mont., died on Sunday in a non-combat related incident, a statement said.

Irish was assigned to 25th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Fort Wainwright, Alaska, it added.

The incident is under investigation.

Irish joined the Army in January 2015 and served at Fort Bliss, Texas, before reporting to Fort Wainwright in November 2018, where he worked as a small arms/artillery repair NCO, a statement from his unit said.

He served in Kuwait from October 2017 to July 2018, it added.

His awards included the two awards of the Army Commendation Medal, three awards of the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal and the National Defense Service Medal, the statement said.

news@stripes.com
Al-Baghdadi given up by ISIS insider

Informant’s detailed knowledge of leader proved to be crucial in raid

BY JORY WARRICK, ELLEN NAKASHIMA AND DANNY LAMOTHE

The Washington Post

U.S. commandos zeroed in on Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s final hideout with the help of an extraordinarily well-placed informant, an Islamic State operative who facilitated the terrorist group’s self-proclaimed leader’s movements around Syria and even helped oversee construction work on his Syrian safe house, according to U.S. and Middle East-based officials knowledgeable about the operation.

The mole’s detailed knowledge of al-Baghdadi’s whereabouts as well as the room-by-room layout of his sanctuary proved to be critical in the Oct. 26 raid that ended with the death of the world’s most-wanted terrorist, the officials said.

The informant was present during the assault on al-Baghdadi’s compound in the Syrian province of Idlib, and he was exfiltrated from the region two days later with his family. The man, whose nationality has not been revealed, is expected to receive some or all of the $25 million U.S. bounty that had been placed on al-Baghdadi’s head, according to the officials.

One official said he was a Sunni Arab who turned against ISIS because one of his relatives had been killed by the group.

The ISIS defector had been cultivated as an asset by the Syrian Democratic Forces, the predominantly Kurdish militia that became the ground troops for the U.S.-led campaign that brought down the terrorist group’s self-proclaimed caliphate in eastern Syria. SDF leaders then handed control of the agent to U.S. intelligence operatives, who spent weeks vetting him until they were sure he was genuine, the officials said.

A monthslong effort to exploit the intelligence breakthrough began in the summer, but only in the past month did the informant’s tips lead to an opportunity to act.

“I was assessed for quite a while that the person might have the key to the lock,” said one U.S. official familiar with the matter. “That only really seriously became clear within the last couple of weeks.”

The Washington Post previously reported the contributions of a disaffected ISIS operative in exposing the location of al-Baghdadi’s hideout. SDF leader Gen. Mazloum Abdi told NBC News on Monday that one of his organization’s informants had helped lead the Americans to al-Baghdadi’s compound, and said personal items, including underwear, were taken from the compound for DNA testing to confirm al-Baghdadi’s presence in the building. Neither the Pentagon nor the White House has officially commented on the presence of a high-level mole inside the mission to kill or capture al-Baghdadi.

Arny Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, answered indirectly when asked Monday whether someone affiliated with the SDF was directly involved in the raid.

“I’m not going to comment on what may or may not have happened with the SDF on the objective,” he said. “The actions on the objective, the aircraft coming in, the aircraft overhead and the soldiers conducting the assault, was a U.S.-only operation.”

The description of the informant and his contribution was provided by two current and former U.S. officials and a Middle East-based official, all privy to details of the search said the official.

To the description of the informant and his contribution was provided by two current and former U.S. officials and a Middle East-based official, all privy to detailed information about the raid. All three spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe what was a highly secret intelligence and military operation.

One official knowledgeable about the informant said the man was a trusted facilitator and logistics aide who was involved in helping al-Baghdadi move among safe houses in the Idlib area before relocating to the compound where he met his end. The informant, who was described as a committed and even enthusiastic participant in the mission, provided essential personal details about the group leader, including the fact that he always traveled with a suicide belt so he could kill himself if cornered. The informant was so trusted that at times he escorted members of al-Baghdadi’s family to get medical care.

Al-Baghdadi’s compound was stormed by members of the military’s elite Delta Force and 75th Ranger Regiment, several U.S. officials have said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the operation. Along with them were military working dogs that chased the militant leader as he tried to flee.

The commandos blasted their way into the house after a firefight and later cornered al-Baghdadi in a tunnel beneath the building. The Iraqi terrorist had taken three of his children with him, apparently as human shields.

Al-Baghdadi detonated his suicide belt after one of the U.S. team’s military dogs charged him. He and his three children were killed and their bodies partly buried in debris. The tunnel’s ceiling collapsed. Two of his wives also were killed in the operation.

U.S. officials said the informant was vetted with particular care as intelligence agencies sought to avoid a repeat of the CIA’s 2009 disaster at Khost, Afghanistan, when a Jordanian informant with promising information about al-Qaeda leaders detonated a bomb during a meeting, killing seven American intelligence operatives along with a Jordanian and an Afghan driver.

One U.S. official said the informant flipped sides because he had “clearly lost faith” in ISIS. Despite their help, plans to kill or capture al-Baghdadi were scuttled or shifted multiple times as the situation changed on the ground.

“I can’t remember how many times that we felt like, ‘OK, we’ve got him,’” the official said. “The last couple of months, we felt it was coming together, but it wasn’t until about the last month where we felt, ‘OK, this time it’s for real.’”

U.S. and Middle Eastern officials say the raid was the culmination of years of work involving a half-dozen foreign partners and allies. Since at least 2015, teams of U.S. commandos, accompanied by Iraqi and Kurdish forces, were embedded in the region specifically to search for al-Baghdadi and other senior ISIS leaders.

The teams achieved multiple successes, such as the killing of ISIS propaganda chief Abu Muhammad al-Adnani in 2016. But al-Baghdadi proved to be a much more elusive quarry because of his frequent movement and refusal to use cellphones or other trackable devices.

A Middle Eastern official privy to details of the search said the focus of the manhunt shifted to Idlib over the summer, with teams of U.S. and French operators and top-of-the-line surveillance equipment scouring the region for al-Baghdadi’s whereabouts.

Idlib, a province occupied by rival militias and far from the ISIS’ base, initially seemed an unlikely choice, the officials said.

“Nobody at part in there,” the U.S. official said, describing it as riddled with Islamic extremists. “The Russians own the airspace.”

With the informant’s help, U.S. officials narrowed their focus to the town of Barisha, in northwest Idlib province, where al-Baghdadi moved into a highly secure compound complete with tunnels. The planning for the raid began Oct. 23, with the expectation that the terrorist chief might be taken alive.

The assault force surrounded the compound and did a “call in” tooord at him, reassembling and telling the occupants to surrender.

Almost a dozen children emerged along with several adults, but al-Baghdadi remained inside, fleeing with three of his children into the tunnel where he was finally cornered and triggered the suicide vest.

The assault force commander opted not to retrieve the bodies of those killed with al-Baghdadi who were still wearing suicide vests, the official said. “People were lying there dead under all this rubble,” the official said. “We’d have to dig them out. And they’re very sensitive explosives on them. It’s just too dangerous.”

The mole’s detailed insight into the leader’s movements proved to be crucial in the raid.

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U.S. official
Breed: Canines routinely prove their worth on battlefield

FROM FRONT PAGE

“They have to adapt the same way humans adapt,” said Rebecca Frankel, the author of “War Dogs: Tales of Canine History, Heroism and Love.” As long as combatants plant their feet on soil, Frankel told The Washington Post, “dogs are the best nonhuman partners on the ground.”

But the United States was slow to learn that. While dogs in the Civil War were brought in as mascots, they were helpful in ad hoc ways, like finding sources of water.

In World War I, the Russians and Germans were using dogs on the battlefield before the Allies, Frankel said, until British Lt. Col. Edwin Hautenville Richardson, already a noted dog training expert, lobbied for their use. “The affection for a master and the love of reward” is a powerful tool, he wrote.

War dogs proved themselves as uncanny messengers when communications were compromised. Dogs, after learning some trench lines, could rush messages at vital moments of attack. A small retriever named Darkie sped through seven miles of bombardment in 55 minutes to deliver a message. One dog finished its mission after its jaw was nearly severed by a bullet.

“Their will to complete a mission is pretty unflappable,” Frankel said.

Other dogs were shot and enemy troops would try to lure them with food to prevent them from delivering their messages. But their training compelled them to stay with their friendly handlers, Frankel said.

Stubby was injured by enemy gas, and after becoming especially sensitive to the poison, he would trip enemy troops awake with barks and bites, according to the Smithsonian, which now houses Stubby as a stuffed exhibit.

But dogs were not used for their full battlefield potential until World War II, Frankel said, after formal training was provided, and dogs were donated by civilians through the program Dogs for Defense.

Suddenly family pets from five breeds — German shepherds, Belgian sheep dogs, Doberman pinschers, farm collies, and giant schnauzers — were on battlefields helping U.S. troops on sentry duty.

They could sniff out enemy troops at a range of 1,000 yards — a useful tactic to flush out Japanese troops lurking in underbrush, Frankel noted in her book.

Chips, perhaps the most famous dog of World War II, was shot in the face after rushing an enemy machine gun position in Sicily. He was awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart. He later bit Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower on the hand before returning to his family in New York.

His family noted the trauma evident in Chips. The dog “doesn’t seem to wag his tail as much before going to war,” the Times reported then, according to Frankel.

In the jungles and rice paddies of Vietnam, an elusive enemy guerrilla force made patrol and detection dogs an even more fundamental asset. Handlers adapted by sending their dogs out in front on long leashes, and a tight hold indicated few dangers around.

But if the dog stopped and the leash sagged, it meant enemy troops could be nearby, Frankel said, with the dogs head turning toward the threat.

Working dogs were not utilized in meaningful ways in Iraq until several years after the 2003 invasion, when improvised explosive devices became the signature enemy weapon in Iraq and later in Afghanistan.

Bomb sniffing dogs were sped to combat zones to help. By 2010, the Pentagon spent $19 billion on technology to combat IEDs that were killing and maiming troops by the thousands.

But U.S. troops still found only about half of IEDs on patrol. That number jumped to 80% when dogs were involved, Wired reported then. “Dogs are the best detectors,” Lt. Gen. Michael Oates conceded in a briefing.

Now war dogs are most prominent in Special Operations raids. In 2011, a dog named Cairo accompanied Navy SEALs on the raid to kill Osama bin Laden.

Troops navigating IED-laced objectives rely on dogs to sniff out bombs. But they also use the jarring, ferociously fast attack of dogs to terrify would-be threats, like Conian. In the case of a handler and their dog, “the enemy now has two threats,” Frankel said.

But they can’t stay on the battlefield forever. When military dogs are retired, finding a suitable home is challenging, Frankel said. Sometimes they live with their former handlers, whose companionship helps them recover with their time in combat, Frankel said.

After delving into the war dog world for her book, she took a shining to a Belgian Malinois named Dyno. He served three tours of duty in Afghanistan. He was awarded a Bronze Star.

But at Frankel’s home in Washington, Dyno wanted to keep working after he retired. He had to relearn how to be a normal dog, Frankel said, and that included hobbling along with a cast on his leg after two surgeries.

“He carries on,” Frankel said. “He’s like a little tank.”

War dog Stubby walks in a homecoming parade for World War I veterans in Hartford, Conn., in 1919.

Pfc. Rez P. Hester of the Marine Corps 7th War Dog Platoon on Iwo Jima takes a nap while Butch stands guard in 1945.

Chips served in the U.S. Army during World War II.

Connecticut State Library/AP

U.S. MARINE CORPS/National Archives

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Iran, Russia decry US plan to protect Syrian oil fields

BY JAMEY KEELEN
Associated Press

GENEVA — Iran and Russia on Wednesday condemned two resolutions passed by the U.S. House of Representatives that symbolize deteriorating Turkish-American relations.

Addressing his ruling party, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he would recognize the non-binding House resolution to recognize the centuries-old territorial claims of Armenians by Ottoman Turks as genocide. The bill passed 405-11.

“Turkey strongly condemns” a bipartisan bill to sanction Russia, Iran and its army for Turkey’s incursion into northeastern Syria, which passed 444-15. “This was a sign of further deterioration in Turkish-American relations, which have been strained over multiple issues, especially U.S. relations for Syrian Kurds considered terrorists by Ankara,” Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed Thursday two resolutions expressing its opposition to Turkey’s incursion into northeastern Syria. The measure would bar most foreign arms sales to Turkey, and slap sanctions on foreign entities that symbolize deteriorating Turkish-American relations.

The bill marks both parties’ latest show of disapproval for Trump’s decision this month to abandon the U.S.’s longtime Kurdish allies against Islamic State fighters by pulling American forces away from northern Syria.

The measure also underscores lawmakers’ wariness of the cease-fire that Vice President Mike Pence struck with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and of the subsequent agreement between Turkey and Russia to split the control of the territory.

Despite Congress’ acrimonious partisan divisions, lawmakers’ impatience, impeachment investigation of Trump, lawmakers approved the measure by a lopsided 403-16. Republicans supported the measure 176-15, while the only voting Democrat to oppose it was the measure’s sponsor, Rep. Ilhan Omar, of Minnesota.

Trump has declared victory in the region as long as the U.S. has little stake in its conflicts. Critics say his moves have bolstered Turkish, Iranian and Russian efforts to snap at the Kurds. Erdogan has said that it summoned the Russian military to create a safe zone in northeastern Syria to ensure that Turkish and Iranian and Russian forces say his moves have bolstered Turkish, Iranian and Russian efforts to snap at the Kurds.

Erdogan: Patrons with Russia to start Friday

BY ALAN FRAM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan bill punishing Turkey for its invasion of northern Syria and illustrating both parties’ dismay with President Donald Trump’s retreat from the region sailed easily through the House Thursday.

The bill marks both parties’ latest show of disapproval for Trump’s decision this month to abandon the U.S.’s longtime Kurdish allies against Islamic State fighters by pulling American forces away from northern Syria.

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Vindman's firsthand account puts GOP in bind

By Rachael Bade, Karoun Demirjian, Mike DeBonis and Seung Min Kim

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A top National Security Council official on Tuesday delivered a firsthand account of President Donald Trump pressuring Ukraine to investigate his political rivals, putting congressional Republicans in a bind and emboldening Democrats as they moved toward their first impeachment vote Thursday.

Trump and his allies on TV lashed out at Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, who said his concerns about what he heard in Trump's July 25 call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy drove him to notify his superiors. Trump dismissed Vindman as a “Never Trumper,” while some of his allies questioned the patriotism of the Army combat veteran because his family emigrated from the Soviet Union when he was 3.

Trump's attack on the Purple Heart recipient unnerved Republicans in Congress, with several pushing back, albeit without naming the president. Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, called the offensive “misplaced and very unfortunate.”

Giuliani is Trump's personal lawyer

Another foreign service officer who will testify for more than 10 hours, Vindman said he was listening in on the July 25 call between Trump and Zelenskiy, along with three other high-ranking officials.

He testified for more than 10 hours.

Army Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, second from left, a military officer at the National Security Council, departs a closed-door meeting Tuesday after testifying as part of the House impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump.

Vindman’s account of the phone call denies Republicans of the complaint that the witnesses called by Democrats have relied on hearsay when discussing the president’s interactions with Zelenskiy. And as Democrats moved to vote on a resolution to hold open hearings on impeachment, Republicans faced the prospect of losing their complaint that the inquiry is being conducted in secret.

The resolution, set to come before the full House on Thursday, would empower Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., to take the lead on public hearings. It would also enable House Republicans for the first time to make requests before Schiff’s committee for testimony and documents — a practice that matches the minority party powers in the 1998 impeachment of President Bill Clinton.

Republicans have raised questions about Trump’s right to be personally represented by attorneys during the impeachment proceedings, noting that Clinton had lawyers present during the House Judiciary Committee’s consideration of articles of impeachment in 1998.

The committee on Tuesday issued a three-page summary of procedural safeguards for the president. They include the right of the president or his counsel to request additional testimony or evidence for the committee’s review and to question witnesses who testify, among other provisions.

Several Democrats said they believed the vote would undermine Republicans, who for weeks have raised objections to the process Democrats have undertaken and have called for a formal vote on launching impeachment proceedings.

“The message this week is going to be: ‘You asked for it, you got it,’” said Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, D-N.J.

As the Capitol's Senate Democrats plotted their own offensive on Trump and his dealings with Ukraine, they planned to use a Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmation hearing Wednesday to press Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan on why he recalled the former ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch. Sullivan has been nominated to be U.S. ambassador to Russia.

Democrats want to question Sullivan about his treatment of Yovanovitch, who was targeted by a smear campaign by Trump allies because she did not subscribe to conspiracy theories about Ukrainians and their efforts to undermine Trump in the 2016 election.

In his testimony over more than 10 hours, Vindman said he was listening in on the summertime call between Trump and Zelenskiy from the Situation Room, along with other NSC officials and members of Vice President Mike Pence’s office.

Vindman said he was so worried about Trump’s request that Zelenskiy investigate his political foes that he reported it to the NSC’s lead counsel, just as others at the NSC did at the direction of John Bolton, the former national security adviser who found the Ukraine pressure unsavory.

Diplomat: Bolton cautioned him about Giuliani, Ukraine

By Eric Tucker, Lisa Mascaro and Mary Clare Jalonick

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A State Department foreign service officer was to tell House impeachment investigators Wednesday that former national security adviser John Bolton cautioned him Rudy Giuliani was a “key voice with the president on Ukraine,” which could complicate U.S. goals in the Eastern European country.

The testimony from Christopher Anderson makes clear that administration officials were concerned about Giuliani’s back-channel involvement in Ukraine policy, and his push for investigations of Democrats, even before the July 25 phone call between President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart at the center of the House impeachment inquiry.

Anderson will describe a June meeting in which he said Bolton expressed support for the administration’s goals of strengthening energy cooperation between the U.S. and Ukraine and getting new Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskiy to undertake anti-corruption reforms.

However, he cautioned that Mr. Giuliani was a key voice with the president on Ukraine which could be an obstacle to increased White House engagement. Anderson will say, according to a copy of his prepared remarks obtained by The Associated Press, that Giuliani is Trump’s personal lawyer.

Another foreign service officer who is to testify Wednesday, Catherine Croft, will say that during her time at the National Security Council, she received multiple phone calls from lobbyist Robert Livingston telling her that then-Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch should be fired.

He characterized Ambassador Yovanovitch as an “Obama holdover” and associated with George Soros. It was not clear to me at the time — or now — at whose direction or at whose expense Mr. Livingston was seeking the removal of Ambassador Yovanovitch, she will say.

Their testimony follows that of Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, an Army officer with the National Security Council who testified that he twice raised concerns over the administration’s push to have Ukraine investigate Democrats and Joe Biden.

Vindman, who served in Iraq and later as a diplomat, was the first official to testify who actually heard Trump’s July 25 call with Zelenskiy. He reported his concerns to the NSC’s lead counsel.

Vindman also told investigators Tuesday that he tried to change the White House’s rough transcript of the call by filling in at least one of the omitted words, “Burisma,” a reference to the company linked to Biden and his son, according to people familiar with his testimony. Vindman was unsuccessful.

His concerns, though, were far bigger than the transcript. Lawmakers said his failed effort to edit it didn’t significantly change their understanding of what transpired during Trump’s call that sparked the impeachment inquiry.

Vindman’s arrival in Army dress blues, with medals, created a striking image at the Capitol as the impeachment inquiry reached deeper into the White House. He testified for more than 10 hours.

“I was concerned by the call,” Vindman said, according to prepared remarks. “I did not think it was proper to demand that a foreign government investigate a U.S. citizen, and I was worried about the implications for the U.S. government’s support of Ukraine.”

Vindman, a 20-year military officer, added to the mounting evidence from other witnesses who are corroborating the initial whistleblower’s complaint.
Amazon puts money behind effort to get pro-business Seattle councilors

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Brian Sweeney has a long list of complaints about Amazon, from the way it treats warehouse workers to the low taxes it pays and its effort to win concessions from cities to bring in jobs. So when he learned the online retail giant had poured $1 million into the Seattle City Council with more business-friendly candidates, he pulled out his wallet.

The New York resident sent $15 to socialist council member Kshama Sawant, a target of the online retail giant. While that doesn’t compare to Amazon’s unprecedented spending Oct. 14, about 1,900 others also have donated to Sawant or her campaign, says a spokesman. It’s a dramatic rise in support and a reflection of the risk Amazon is taking as it splashes into the politics of its liberal hometown.

Many in Seattle aren’t happy with Amazon, which also may not like a company headed by the world’s richest man, Jeff Bezos, trying to build a city that’s known for historic income inequality fuels homelessness and soaring housing prices, some progressives elsewhere don’t like it either. “Amazon could do this in hundreds of places around the country with all the money they’re not paying in taxes,” said Sweeney, 28, a software engineer-turned-carpenter in Valley Stream, N.Y.

Without the support of the council, Amazon might not get the concessions it wants. Business-backed candidates are mod­erate to pro­gressive Democrats.

The council is officially non­partisan, but Republicans stand little chance of getting elected in Seattle, and many of the busi­ness-­backed candidates are moder­ate to pro­gressive Democrats.

The race will decide whether the council is dominated by socialists and extremely liberal Democrats or more centrist ones.

“We are contributing to this election because we care deeply about the future of Seattle,” Amazon spokesman Aaron Toso said in a statement. “We believe it is critical that our hometown has a City Council that is focused on pragmatic solutions to our shared challenges in transportation, homelessness, climate change and public safety.”

Progressive Democratic pres­i­den­tial candidates Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders are among those accusing Amazon of trying to buy the council.

The elections come a year after a political debacle that damaged the council’s popularity. The leaders unanimously passed the “Amazon tax,” designed to make local businesses contribute more to affordable housing for the homeless.

It repealed the tax after a revolt from Amazon, which would have had to pay around $11 million a year and threatened to halt its growth in the city. The company said Seattle didn’t need more money and that it was “highly uncertain whether the City Coun­cil’s anti­business positions or its spending inefficiency will change for the better.”

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A day before the acting Homeland Security secret­ary is set to leave his job, it remained unclear who will be tapped to run the sprawling agency tasked with national security, disaster response and protection of the president and his family.

Kevin McAleenan had told col­leagues that he would be depart­ing Thursday. While he could choose to stay on, a goodbye party to fete him was scheduled for Wednesday afternoon.

Weeks of varying factions have been looking for legal blocks and workarounds as they spar over who is eligible to succeed McAleenan in the role. Federal vacancy rules that place restric­tions on the position had been thought to bar immigration hard­liner Ken Cuccinelli, currently the acting head of U.S. Citizen­ship and Immigration Services, and Mark Morgan, the current acting commis­sioner of U.S. Cus­toms and Border Protection, from taking the job.

But officials have recently identified a “loophole” in which President Donald Trump could appoint otherwise eligible indi­viduals by first tapping them to lead the Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office — a post that is vacant. The discovery of the work-around was first report­ed by The New York Times.

In addition to Cuccinelli and Morgan, the White House has also been weighing Chad Wolf, for­mer chief of staff to ex-Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, as possible McAleenan successor. Another name that has been mentioned is Kenneth Rapuano, who is cur­rently the assistant secretary of defense for homeland defense and global security and previously served as deputy homeland secu­rity adviser to President George W. Bush.

The sprawling 240,000-person Department of Homeland Security oversees a huge portfolio that includes election and cybersecurity, disaster response, child traffick­ing investigations, the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Secret Service. In Trump’s administra­tion, DHS has typically meant one thing: immigration enforcement.

McAleenan, who led U.S. Cus­toms and Border Protection before taking on his current job, had years of experience on the bor­der and was viewed at the White House as someone who could get the job done. He successfully bro­kered agreements with Central American nations, which other secretaries could not, and over­saw a dramatic drop in border cross­ings during his six-month tenure.

But McAleenan often dis­agreed with the president’s public messaging, and his style stood in marked contrast with that of the department’s two acting immig­ration leaders who are very vocal supporters of Trump’s policies. The jockeying for power caused friction between McAleenan and his component heads.

Speaking Wednesday before a House committee, McAleenan, who officially tendered his resig­nation earlier this month, said he was closing this stage of his gov­ern­ment career.

During the hearing, House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson, D­Miss., voiced concerns about the leadership void at the 240,000-member department.

“It has been 203 days since the Department last had a confirmed secretary,” he said. “And even though acting Secretary McA­leenan is leaving tomorrow, the president has yet to announce who his replacement will be.”

Associated Press

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For several Democrats in the room, the yearbook scandal was a long-­ago mistake outweighed by the governor’s accomplish­ments and values. Those include passing Medicaid expansion and public safety.

“We live in a very diverse so­ciety, and that’s a good thing,” Northam said. “It’s who we are. We’re going to be inclusive. We’re going to welcome people to Virginia.

Northam drew repeated ap­plause from the audience in the Virginia Beach event as he lauded the state legislative candidates  .

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam has so far survived a blackface scandal and is actively campaigning for Democratic state legislative candidates.

Steve Helber/AP

As leader leaves, it’s still unclear who will run DHS

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Wildfire erupts near Reagan library in Calif.

By Marcio Sanchez and Gregory Bull
Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — A new wildfire erupted Wednesday in wind-whipped Southern California, forcing the evacuation of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and nearby homes, as both ends of the state burned amid strong Santa Ana winds blowing from inland California toward the coast.

Library spokeswoman Melissa Giller said the hilltop museum was safe. She said hundreds of goats are brought in each year to eat away vegetation that could fuel wildfires on the 300-acre grounds, where Reagan and his wife, Nancy, are buried next to each other on a hillside.

Meanwhile, frustration and anger mounted across Northern California as Pacific Gas & Electric Co., the state’s largest utility, undertook its third round of sweeping blackouts in a week, hoping to prevent its electrical equipment from toppling or coming into contact with branches and sparking fires.

PG&E said Tuesday’s power shutoffs affected about 1.5 million people in some 30 counties including the Sierra foothills, wine country and San Francisco Bay Area. They included 1 million still without power from a blackout over the weekend.

As the darkened neighborhoods, people worried about charging cellphones and electric vehicles, finding gasoline and cash, staying warm and keeping their food from spoiling. Some ended up at centers set up by PG&E where people could go to power their electronics and get free water, snacks, flashlights and solar lanterns.

Without electricity for the fourth straight day, chef and caterer Jane Sykes realized she would have to throw out $1,000 worth of food, including trays of brownies, cupcakes and puff pastry. She also had little hope of getting a good night’s sleep — there wasn’t any way to run the machine she relies on to counter her apnea.

“I don’t think PG&E really thought this through,” she said.

PG&E officials said they understood the hardships caused by the blackouts but insisted they were necessary.

In wine country north of San Francisco, fire officials reported progress in their battle against a 120-square-mile blaze in Sonoma County; saying it was 30% contained.

The fire destroyed at least 206 structures, including 94 homes, and threatened 90,000 more, most of them homes, authorities said. More than 150,000 people were under evacuation orders.

Winds topped out at 70 mph north of San Francisco Bay and began to ease early Wednesday, but forecasters said the fire danger would remain high because of continuing breezes and dry air.

In Southern California, where fire crews were trying to snuff out a wildfire in the celebrity-studded hills of Los Angeles that destroyed a dozen homes on Monday, Santa Ana winds topped 50 mph in some areas before dawn.

The National Weather Service issued an extreme red flag warning for high winds for much of Southern California through Thursday evening, with some gusts expected to reach 80 mph. It could be the strongest bout of winds in years.

No deaths have been reported from the fires, but toppled trees claimed three lives.

Gov. Gavin Newsom and top utility regulators have accused PG&E of mishandling its power system and failing for decades to make the investments needed to ensure it is more durable.

PG&E President Bill Johnson said he talked to the governor and agreed to give customers affected by an Oct. 9 blackout a one-time credit on their bills, but he did not say how much.

Mo. agency tracked clinic patients’ menstrual periods

By Jim Salter
Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Missouri’s health department director on Tuesday said he tracked the menstrual cycles of Planned Parenthood patients in an effort to identify what the agency says were “failed abortions” at a St. Louis clinic.

Department of Health and Senior Services Director Randall Williams made the revelation during the second day of an administrative hearing to determine whether Missouri’s only abortion clinic will lose its license to perform the procedure.

Williams said an investigator made a spreadsheet at his request that included the dates of patients’ last periods, The Kansas City Star reported. He said the goal was to find women who needed multiple procedures to complete an abortion.

The head of the St. Louis clinic called the move “deeply disturbing.”

“Missouri’s top health official, Randall Williams, scrutinized menstrual cycles of women in this state in order to end abortion access,” Yasmine Rodriguez, president and CEO of Reproductive Health Services of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region, said in a statement.

Missouri House Minority Leader Crystal Quade, a Democrat from Springfield, called for an investigation to see if patient privacy was compromised or if laws were broken. She also was critical of Williams’ actions.

“State law requires the health department director to be of recognized character and integrity,”’ Quade said in a statement. “This unsettling behavior calls into question whether Dr. Williams meets that high standard.”

The state had moved to revoke the clinic’s license in June, citing concerns about a series of “failed abortions” and a lack of cooperation from some of the doctors involved.

While Williams said concerns about the clinic are “grave,” he said the issues are “imminently fixable.” He believes there are solutions that both the state and Planned Parenthood would agree to that would allow for licensure.

Planned Parenthood says there are no deals on the table.

Wrangling over the license began when an investigator involved in a March inspection of the clinic found that a woman had undergone an abortion that took five attempts to complete. William Koebel, director of the section of the health department responsible for abortion clinic licensing, said Monday that the clinic failed to provide a “compilation report” for that incident.

That failure led the health department to launch an investigation of other instances where women were required to undergo multiple procedures before an abortion was completed, Koebel said.

As part of that investigation, the state obtained medical records of women who had abortions at the clinic. They found four women who required multiple procedures, including one where the physician apparently missed that a woman was pregnant with twins. The woman underwent two procedures five weeks apart.

Planned Parenthood officials contend the state “cherry-picked” a handful of difficult cases out of thousands of otherwise successful abortions. They have accused the state of using the licensing process as a tool to eliminate abortions in Missouri, saying the state is among several conservative-led states seeking to end abortion through tough new laws and tighter restrictions.

The Administrative Hearing Commission isn’t expected to rule on the licensing issue until February at the earliest. In the meantime, the clinic remains open.
By COLLEEN LONG and CEDAR ATTANASIO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A top U.S. Border Patrol official has a warning: The crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border is not over.

Even though crossings have been down over the past few months and news of custody deaths and teeming facilities full of children and families has faded from front pages and talking points of politicians, the number of migrants coming over border is still high, and resources are still stretched.

“It is kind of a new norm. We’re at risk at any time” if some recent deterrent efforts are blocked by the courts, like a policy forcing asylum-seekers to wait out their claims in Mexico, Hastings said, chief of law enforcement operations at Border Patrol, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

“We will go back, mark the words; we will go back to the crisis level that we had before.”

Immigration has been a top issue since President Donald Trump took office almost three years ago, with Democrats heavily critical of his administration on border conditions. But Washington is now dominated by talk of impeachment and immigration seems somewhat less pressing, with monthly apprehension numbers declining and Mexico and other nations enhancing cooperation with the U.S. on immigration issues.

Still, Trump has not forgotten an issue that was key to his 2016 victory, pointing to it often at public events and rallies. As he ramps up his campaign heading into 2020, he’s likely to invoke it once more as a measure of his success, telling his supporters that construction is happening on the long-promised wall he promised alongside the southern border and that far fewer people are being apprehended crossing the border illegally — if current numbers hold, that is.

Border Patrol data shows that the number of families crossing the border in May this year was slightly higher than the entire budget year of 2014. In 2014, there were about 68,000 families for the entire budget year compared with 84,000 in May 2019 alone.

Border agents saw more families crossing the border in May than the entire budget year of 2014. In 2014, there were about 68,000 families for the entire budget year compared with 84,000 in May 2019 alone.

Hastings said the so-called main in Mexico program that is expanding in parts of California and Texas, plus a new rule barring asylum to those who pass through a third country and crackdowns as Mexico at its border, have helped. More than 55,000 people have been turned back, and officials say many have gone home.

The program won’t be extended into the Arizona border right now, Hastings said, because officials are focused on increasing the number of people returned in the areas where it is already in place. And he’s seen Mexico crack down on border conditions and surging numbers of detainees and children dying were published that Congress authorized additional funding to increase capacity. That funding expired at the end of the fiscal year.

There were more than 200 large groups of more than 100 migrants dropped off by smugglers in southern U.S. states, something that could shut down an entire station for the day for processing — and there were at least 140,000 people who ended up in custody.

Previously, 2014 was considered a crisis year, when the decline in both family and unauthorized crossings was much more pronounced. There were as many as 600,000 people who tried to enter legally but were deemed inadmissible. There were nearly 1 million crossings from the early 2000s, but those were mostly single men from Mexico who were easily returned, not families from Central America who require much more care.

While the numbers surged, Homeland Security agents and officials were overwhelmed with the numbers of families crossing the border as they continued to rise. Families with small children require much more care.

Border officers pleaded for help but it wasn’t until over the summer, when conditions and surging numbers of detainees and children dying were published that Congress authorized additional funding to increase capacity. That funding expired at the end of the fiscal year.

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Small plane crash leaves pilot dead, houses on fire

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BY DAVID PORTER
Associated Press

WOODBRIIDGE, N.J. — A small plane crashed through the roof of a home Tuesday, killing the pilot and causing an explosion that sent two houses ablaze in a New Jersey suburb of New York City. No one was in the house at the moment the Cessna 414 crashed into, but flames spread to another house, where a woman escaped injury.

The plane went down not far from an elementary school about 11 a.m., according to National Transportation Safety Board investigator Adam Gerhardt.

The crash sent flames into the attic and caused smoke for hours as fire fighters worked to extinguish the blaze, Gerhardt said. The wreckage could take up to three days to clear from the house, whose second story had nearly fallen off before becoming embedded in the basement.

he said a third home was also affected.

The flight left Leesburg, Va., with only the pilot aboard, before 10 a.m., authorities said. The pilot was cleared to land at the Linden Airport, roughly 4 miles from the crash, but he suddenly lost contact with air traffic control, according to Gerhardt.

Gerhardt said the pilot was flying using instrument flight rules typically used by experienced pilots when flying with reduced visibility. The weather in the area was cloudy and misty at the time of the crash.

The fires were brought under control by early afternoon, the mayor said.

Students’ performance is seen falling behind on Nation’s Report Card

Students’ performance is seen falling behind on Nation’s Report Card

By DAVID PORTER
Associated Press

ATLANTA — America’s eighth graders are falling behind in reading, while fourth graders are doing slightly better in reading, according to the latest results from the Nation’s Report Card.

But there were no improvements to the findings, which also showed declines among fourth graders in math. Mississippi and the District of Columbia showed gains, along with some other big-city school districts.

“Nationwide, at least more than a third of eighth graders are proficient in reading and math. About a third of fourth graders are proficient in reading, while more than 40% of fourth graders are proficient in math.

“This country is in a student achievement crisis,” said Petrilli, adding that the past decade it has continued to worsen, especially for our most vulnerable students,” Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said.

The nationwide test is given to a random sample of students in fourth and eighth grades every two years.

Students made big gains in math in the 1990s but have since stagnated.

Reading scores have risen a little since the tests began in 1992.

The decline in both reading and math performance among eighth grade students preparing to enter high school was especially concerning, authorities said.

“Eighth grade is a transitional point in preparing students for success in high school, so it is critical that researchers further explore the declines we are seeing here, especially the larger, more widespread declines across states we are seeing in reading,” Peggy Carr, associate commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics told reporters during a conference call.

Both low- and high-achieving eighth graders slipped in reading, but the declines were generally worse for lower-performing students.

Carr said it’s up to researchers and other to figure out why scores fell.

“The assessment is designed to tell you what, not why,” she said.

DeVos pointed to a widening achievement gap between the highest- and lowest-performing students and used the results to push for expanded school choice, including her proposals for federal tax credits for donations made to groups offering scholarships for private schools, apprenticeships and other educational programs.

One theory is that decreased performance is a residue of trauma suffered by families and spending cuts by school districts during the Great Recession.

Michael Petrilli, president of education reform group the Thomas Fordham Institute, has pointed to data showing that performance has risen and fallen on the test in the past in sync with the economy.

“We saw that there was great calamity having lingering impacts,” Petrilli said.

He said that could also be why “we’d be seeing particularly disappointing results at the lowest end of the spectrum.”
WASHINGTON — Russia interfered in the 2016 election and may try to sway next year's vote as well. But it's not only nations with an eye on U.S. politics, American officials sounding the alarm about foreign efforts to disrupt the 2020 election include multiple countries in that warning. Concerns abound not only about possible hacking of campaigns but also about the spread of disinformation on social media and potential efforts to break voting databases and even alter votes.

The anxiety goes beyond the possibility that a new campaign could interfere in election results. The mere hint of foreign meddling could undermine public confidence in vote tallies, a worrisome possibility in a tight election.

"Unfortunately, it's not just Russia anymore. In particular, China, Iran, a couple of others, studied what the Russians did in 2016," said James Lewis, a cybersecurity expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

U.S. intelligence agencies reported Russian, Chinese and Iranian influence operations targeting last year’s midterms, and a senior FBI official recently singled out Beijing as a particular source of concern. Meanwhile, Microsoft recently reported that Iranian hackers had targeted an unidentified presidential campaign along with government officials, journalists and prominent expatriate Iranians.

Any foreign effort to interfere in the 2020 election won't necessarily mirror Russia's attack in 2016, when Kremlin-linked military intelligence officers hacked Democratic emails and shared them with WikiLeaks to try to help Republican Donald Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

More likely are the social media campaigns, like the Russia-based one that shaped public opinion in the 2016 election and divided Americans on hot-button topics like race and religion. Facebook announced recently that it has removed four networks of fake, state-backed misinformation-spread accounts based in Russia and Iran. The company said the networks sought to disrupt elections in the U.S., North Africa and Latin America.

A Senate Intelligence Committee report described Russia's social media activities as a "vastly more complex and strategic assault on the United States than was initial-ly understood." A recent memo prepared by the FBI and Department of Homeland Security warned that Russia may use social media to exacerbate divisions within political parties during primaries or hack election websites to spread misinformation on voting processes.

Concerns about foreign influence coincide with stepped-up enforcement of a law requiring the registration with the Justice Department of lobbyists, media organizations and other entities that do the bidding of foreign government. Special counsel Robert Mueller exposed through his investiga-tion the unregistered, covert Russian campaign to spread disinformation.

The Justice Department is concerned about China undertaking similar activities. Twitter said it has suspended more than 200,000 accounts that it believes were part of a Chinese government influence campaign targeting the protest movement in Hong Kong. The department last year also required China's state-owned television network, CGTN, to register.

The awkward moment for Biden over the weekend because of Biden’s stance on abortion.

Biden's communion denial shows line candidates walk on politics and faith

Biden's communion denial shows line candidates walk on politics and faith

BY ERIC TUCKER

WASHINGTON — A cyber security expert who served on the board of advisers for a documentary series about their interactions with the Russian government has resigned from the project, due to concerns about the Russian government's influence in the project.

Papadopoulos was the first of five Trump aides to plead guilty as part of Robert Mueller's investigation and admitted to lying to federal agents about his conversations with a professor. He also agreed to cooperate in Mueller's investigation. He wants the government to declassify material, including authorizations by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, that his health could prove he was unlawfully targeted.

The FBI's counterintelligence investigation that later became the Mueller probe was triggered, in part, by a tip from an Australian diplomat who had communicated with Papadopoulos. Papadopou-los told the diplomat, Alexander Downer, in May 2016 that Russia had thousands of stolen emails that would be potentially damage-ning to Hillary Clinton.

His lawyers have sought a pardon from the president. In the last few months, he's been working on a working on a documentary series about his interactions with the special counsel's team. He's also on the board of advisers for a medical marijuana company that is hoping to help use cannabis to combat the opioid epidemic.

The episode recalled the di-

Biden's communion denial also raises questions about whether other Democrats might face similar tests of their ability to balance personal beliefs and their public stances on key issues.

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tion. Asked about it Tuesday on MNSBC, the former Delaware senator shifted to a dis-
cussion of his views on faith.

"I practice my faith," Biden told the network. "But I’ve never let my religious beliefs, which I accept based on church doctrine... impose that view on other people."

The denial prompted Faithful and Yorkshire to launch an online petition calling on the Church of England to direct Robert to apologize.

Biden long Catholic — made a stop at a local Catholic parish, attending services without the press before stepping out of other churches with reporters. The Rev. Robert Morey at St. Anthony Church in Charleston, S.C., in July. A Catholic priest at South Carolina denied communion to Biden over the weekend because of Biden's stance on abortion.

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Protests in Iraq, Lebanon pose challenge to Iran

By Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Joseph Krauss
Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The day after anti-government protests erupted in Iraq, Iranian Gen. Qassim Soleimani flew into Baghdad late at night and took a helicopter to the heavily fortified Green Zone, where he surprised a group of top security officials by chairing a meeting in place of the prime minister.

The arrival of Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force and the architect of its regional security apparatus, signaled Tehran's concern over the protests, which had erupted across the capital and in Iraq's Shiite heartland and included calls for Iran to stop meddling in the country.

Protests in Iraq and Lebanon are fueled by local grievances and mainly directed at political elites, but they also pose a challenge to Iran, which closely backs both governments as well as powerful armed groups in each country.

An increasingly violent crackdown in Iraq and an attack by Hezbollah supporters on the main protest camp in Beirut have raised fears of a backlash by Iran and its allies.

"We in Iran know how to deal with protests," Soleimani told the Iraqi officials, according to two senior officials familiar with the meeting who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the secret gathering. "This happened in Iran and we got it under control."

But nearly a month later, the protests in Iraq have resumed and demonstrations continue in Lebanon, both directed at governments and factions allied with Tehran. The protests threaten Iran's regional influence at a time when it is struggling under crippling U.S. sanctions.

The day after Soleimani's visit, the clashes between the protesters and security forces in Iraq became far more violent, with the death toll soaring past 100 as unidentified snipers shot demonstrators in the head and chest.

Nearly 150 protesters were killed in less than a week.

During renewed protests this week, men in black plainclothes and masks stood in front of Iraqi soldiers, facing off with protesters and firing tear gas. Residents said they did not know who they were, with some speculating they were Iranians.

"Iran is afraid of these demonstrations because it has made the most gains in the government and parliament through parties close to it" since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, said Hisham al-Hashimi, an Iraqi security analyst.

Later, a man's body was found in the snow, rock and part of the frame of the snow, rock and part of the snow-covered slope.

During the climb, the climbers encountered several calls from viewers watching the man's ascent, public broadcaster NHK reported.

Police sent a helicopter to look for the climber, while a 10-member rescue team began scouring the area, finding signs of a fall that day but no body.

Now police from Shizuoka prefecture say they have found a body but have not yet identified it, NHK reported.

The mountain season for the area, 1,288-foot peak ended on Sept. 20, with the official website advising that trails and huts are closed after this date and it is "very dangerous" to climb the mountain during this period.

Christian group wants Belgian opera's naked Joan of Arc canceled

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — A Christian association is trying to prevent Brussels opera house La Monnaie from staging a production of Arthur Honegger's "Joan of Arc au bucher," or "Joan of Arc at the Stake," in which the heroine appears dressed in men's clothes and, at one point, naked.

The Pro Europa Christiana Federation wants the show orchestrated by Italian director Romeo Castellucci to be canceled and has launched an online petition to gather public support.

In a letter sent to the Monnaie's director and to Didier Reynders, the Belgian minister in charge of cultural affairs, the association argues that the production is "obscene and hurting Christians."

The show is set to run Nov. 1-12.

The petition, which has gathered more than 10,000 signatures, claims that "the symbolic character of Saint Joan of Arc is again the target of a pornographic representation, this time in Brussels. An actress completely naked is meant to represent her and pushes the obscenity to a change of sex during the performance."

La Monnaie director Peter de Caluwe has been unimpressed by the criticism and said the show will go on ahead as planned. He defended Castellucci's artistic choices and said in a statement this week he was "stupefied" by the association's claims.

"As soon as all symbolism has been removed, a naked woman stands on stage," he said. "This is not a revolutionary representation of Joan of Arc. Immediately after she was put to death, paintings and statues represented her half-naked."

Co-produced with the Lyon opera house, "Joan of Arc at the Stake" was first performed in Paris' historic city two years ago, triggering protests from far-right militants who clashed with police before the last performance.

"La Monnaie is particularly committed to freedom of expression," de Caluwe said.

Mount Fuji climber may have live-streamed his own death

By Simon Denyer
The Washington Post

TOKYO — A man's body has been found on Japan's iconic mountain with a fence on the left, before sloping down.

Although more than 300,000 people walk up Japan's iconic mountain every year, authorities say it is prohibited to do so in the winter. That didn't stop a climber, calling himself TEDZO, from live-streaming his attempt to reach the summit of the nation's highest peak Monday afternoon.

The video shows a camera's eye-view of the ascent, with the climber panicking as he said, "I'm rushing to the peak."

He complains repeatedly about his cold hands, which he tries to warm, at one point saying he has stuck them under his arms.

"My fingers are losing sensation. I wish I had brought a smartphone holder. It's in my pocket," he said. "My fingers are killing me. Let's warm them up."

Then the path becomes narrower, with a fence on the left, before sloping down.

"Oh, it's slippery, it's so slippery, it's dangerous," he said, still laughing.

"Here are rocks. We can follow the rocks. It's pretty dangerous. I can climb down by sliding," he said.

"It steep. The path is covered with snow... Am I on the right path? I'm slipping! Here it's also dangerous with this slope.

Finally, he said only "slipping."

The sound of his slide can be heard on the video, along with a jumble of images including his phone holder. It's in my pocket," he said.

Police sent a helicopter to look for the climber, while a 10-member rescue team began scouring the area, finding signs of a fall that day but no body.

Now police from Shizuoka prefecture say they have found a body but have not yet identified it, NHK reported.

The climbing season for the area, 1,288-foot peak ended on Sept. 20, with the official website advising that trails and huts are closed after this date and it is "very dangerous" to climb the mountain during this period.

Christian group wants Belgian opera's naked Joan of Arc canceled

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — A Christian association is trying to prevent Brussels opera house La Monnaie from staging a production of Arthur Honegger's "Joan of Arc au bucher," or "Joan of Arc at the Stake," in which the heroine appears dressed in men's clothes and, at one point, naked.

The Pro Europa Christiana Federation wants the show orchestrated by Italian director Romeo Castellucci to be canceled and has launched an online petition to gather public support.

In a letter sent to the Monnaie's director and to Didier Reynders, the Belgian minister in charge of cultural affairs, the association argues that the production is "obscene and hurting Christians."

The show is set to run Nov. 1-12.

The petition, which has gathered more than 10,000 signatures, claims that "the symbolic character of Saint Joan of Arc is again the target of a pornographic representation, this time in Brussels. An actress completely naked is meant to represent her and pushes the obscenity to a change of sex during the performance."

La Monnaie director Peter de Caluwe has been unimpressed by the criticism and said the show will go on ahead as planned. He defended Castellucci's artistic choices and said in a statement this week he was "stupefied" by the association's claims.

"As soon as all symbolism has been removed, a naked woman stands on stage," he said. "This is not a revolutionary representation of Joan of Arc. Immediately after she was put to death, paintings and statues represented her half-naked."

Co-produced with the Lyon opera house, "Joan of Arc at the Stake" was first performed in Paris' historic city two years ago, triggering protests from far-right militants who clashed with police before the last performance.

"La Monnaie is particularly committed to freedom of expression," de Caluwe said.
Test shows heroin in child’s Halloween bag

MIDDLE TOWNSHIP — Laboratory analysis showed heroin was found in a child’s bag at a southern New Jersey trunk or treat event.

Cape May County Prosecutor Jeffery Sutherland announced it was one isolated incident, but parents should be vigilant and cautious with any suspicious-looking packages.

It’s not known where the heroin came from or how it got in the bag.

The trunk or treat party was held at the Shore Family Success Center in Middle Township.

Man: Fear of zombies motivated stabbing

MONETTA — A South Carolina man arrested for stabbing a woman said he feared she would feed him to zombies.

The Aiken Standard reported William Berry, 29, of Aiken was arrested in Monetta after a woman was stabbed multiple times in the back.

Sheriff’s deputies later found Berry walking along a highway and arrested him. Under questioning, Berry told deputies he “poked someone” because she was trying to feed him to zombies and being mean to him.

The woman, an acquaintance of Berry’s, was taken to a hospital with five or six stab wounds.

Man attacked after jumping on shark

ORLANDO — A 27-year-old man was attacked by a shark that he accidentally jumped on in New Smyrna Beach, according to Volusia County Beach Safety.

The unidentified man was surfing and decided to jump off his board and into the water, said Av Jenkins, deputy chief of operations. The bad timing coincided with a shark that just happened to be swimming nearby.

The surfer sustained minor lacerations and was treated on the scene, Jenkins said.

Man hurt in golf cart crash at nudist resort

DAVIDSONVILLE — A man was injured in a golf cart crash at a nudist resort in Maryland.

Anne Arundel County fire spokesman Erik Kormnney told The Capital that the man suffered serious injuries and was taken by ambulance to a trauma center in Baltimore. He said the injuries weren’t considered life-threatening.

He said the man crashed into a tree, causing the cart to overturn. The man wasn’t wearing a helmet at the time.

Prison inmates get tablet computers

CHARLESTON — Inmates in West Virginia prisons now have access to specially designed tablet computers.

The Register-Herald reported the tablets were provided at no cost to taxpayers by Global Tel Link through its inmate banking services contract with the prison system.

The tablets give the prisoners access to email, video visitation, electronic books, music, games and movies. They lack a normal Internet browser but do allow access to select websites, including educational and career sites.

All apps and websites are approved by the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Plaque stolen from veteran’s cemetery

NATCHEZ — A veteran’s cemetery in Mississippi said a bronze marker was stolen from the entrance of the memorial.

Robert C. Winkler, assistant director of the Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Association, said the marker was posted at the entrance of the Natchez National Cemetery across from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs plaque. He said the bolts holding the marker were pulled from the wall.

Winkler said the cemetery was established in 1866 and the stolen plaque, that reads “Natchez National Cemetery,” was posted in 1930.

Turbulence at the beach

A woman walks past the sculpture Turbulence by artist Denis Folz at Silver Beach in St. Joseph, Mich., on Monday.

The approximate weight in pounds of a great white shark that was tracked to the Gulf of Mexico. Scientists said the 15-foot-5-inch shark entered the Gulf after a journey down the coast from Canada. OCEARCH, which catches and collects samples from marine life before releasing the animals back into the ocean, tracked the female shark, named Unama’ki. OCEARCH tagged 11 white sharks during its expedition off the coast of Nova Scotia this year. Unama’ki was tagged in the area in September more than 2,000 miles away from Florida waters.

Game warden OK after moose attack

WILLOW CITY — Wildlife officials said a state game warden escaped serious injuries when he was attacked by a bull moose in North Dakota.

Game & Fish Department Chief Game Warden Robert Timian told KFRO radio that District Game Warden Jonathan Toftland was in the Willow City area to investigate a report of an injured or sick bull moose. As Toftland approached the animal, it stood up and charged him, knocking him to the ground.

The moose was killed.

420 pounds of pot found in rental truck

DARIEN — Two Los Angeles men face drug charges in Connecticut after troopers pulled over a rental truck filled with marijuana.

Police said the U-Haul truck was stopped on Interstate 95 in Darien for a traffic violation when the trooper noticed that something didn’t smell right.

Drug-sniffing dogs were called in to help and found 420 pounds of marijuana in the truck’s cargo bed.

The men, Kevin Conrado, 27, and Vahe Manjikian, 23, were charged with possession of marijuana and possession of more than a kilo of marijuana with intent to sell.

Rule allowing ATVs in national parks rescinded

SALT LAKE CITY — A rule that would have allowed ATVs on certain roads in the five national parks in Utah was rescinded by the National Park Service.

The agency said it changed its mind after further consultation with Department of Interior secretary David Bernhardt, whose department includes the National Park Service. The agency didn’t provide reasons for the reversal.

The rule would have gone into effect Nov. 1 to conform to a state law that allows any “street-legal” vehicle on state and county roads.

Instead, a long-standing ban on ATVs in parks will remain.

Police shoot, kill woman waving scissors

BOSSIER CITY — A woman who police said was waving a pair of scissors when she was shot twice by a Bossier City officer died.

Bossier City police spokeswoman Traci Landry said Shannon Rupert, 45, of Shreveport, died at LSU Ochsner Hospital.

The deadly shooting happened when Bossier City police responded to a complaint about a disorderly person at the LaQuinta Inn, where Rupert was staying.

Landry said Rupert was waving a pair of scissors while on a phone in the lobby of the hotel.

She said the officer, who was not identified, told Rupert several times to put down the scissors but then aggressively approached the officer, who shot her in the upper torso.

From wire reports
Craig Morgan performs at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville on July 16. Morgan wrote a song about his grief, pain and his faith called “The Father, My Son, and the Holy Ghost” that has taken off thanks to an impromptu social media campaign started by Blake Shelton.

**Morgan sees meaning in tragedy**

Country singer finds God's purpose in song after son's drowning death three years ago

**BY KRISTIN M. HALL**

The last evening that country singer Craig Morgan spent with his 19-year-old son, Jerry, was during one of Morgan's performances at Grand Ole Opry three years ago.

“The last pictures I have of us together is on that stage,” Morgan, 55, said backstage at the Opry this summer to sing a song he wrote about his son called “The Father, My Son, and The Holy Ghost.”

He sang about crying until he passed out, praying until he thought he couldn't anymore and realizing that one day he'll be reunited with his son. Morgan stepped off stage, physically and emotionally exhausted from the performance, and told his friend Ricky Skaggs, the bluegrass singer and Country Hall of Famer, that he didn't know if he could sing that song again.

“Ricky told me, ‘You have to sing this song for the rest of your life,’ ” Morgan recalled.

Morgan’s first song in three years has been championed by his peers at the Opry and the larger musical community. His friend and fellow Opry member, Blake Shelton, spent several days tweeting about the song and urging his 20 million Twitter followers to download the song from iTunes and push it up the charts.

Soon other celebrities like Kelly Clarkson, Ellen DeGeneres, Luke Combs, Carson Daly and more joined Shelton’s impromptu social media campaign. The song hit No. 3 on Billboard's country digital song sales without the help of a label or radio play.

“I didn't even know what was happening,” said Morgan. “I was in Alaska and had no idea what was going on until I started getting texts from everyone.”

“I would much rather none of this stuff happen and him to be able to be here. But that’s not the way it is,” Morgan said.

Morgan, an Army veteran whose had hits like “That’s What I Love About Sunday” and “Redneck Yacht Club,” said that since releasing the song, he’s been reading the hundreds of messages sent daily to him by fans who identify with the grief and pain, but also the hope that he described in the song.

“I felt a push. I felt shoved to do this, and not by people. For me, it was God,” Morgan said.

The song lyrics are also a reference to Morgan’s conversion to Roman Catholicism, which his family, including Jerry, had been going through at the time of his death. That faith and religious education is something he leaned on heavily over the past three years.

“And I know I’ll see my son again because I know his faith,” Morgan said.

Taylor Swift will receive the artist of the decade award at the American Music Awards on Nov. 24. Swift will be honored during an ABC live telecast from the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles, dick clark productions announced Wednesday. She has a chance to break Michael Jackson's record for most wins with 24 trophies. Swift has won 23 AMAs and has five nominations this year.

Another comedian John Witherspoon, who memorably played Ice Cube's father in the “Friday” films, has died. He was 77. Witherspoon's manager, Alex Goodman, confirmed late Friday that Witherspoon died in Los Angeles. No cause of death was released.

**HBO orders 10 episodes of ‘Game of Thrones’ prequel**

HBO is green-lighting a new “Game of Thrones” prequel after reportedly canceling another that starred Naomi Watts.

The cable channel said Tuesday that it’s given a 10-episode order to “House of the Dragon,” set 300 years before the original series that ended its eight-season run in May.

The prequel is based on George R.R. Martin’s “Fire & Blood,” HBO said. The new drama was co-created by Martin and Ryan Condal, whose credits include “Colony.”

It will focus on House Targaryen, made famous in “Game of Thrones” by Emilia Clarke’s Daenerys and her dragons. “House of the Dragon” was announced by HBO programming president Casey Bloys during a presentation for HBO Max, the streaming service launching in May 2020. A spinoff of HBO mega-hit “Game of Thrones” would be a key attraction in the increasingly crowded streaming marketplace.

HBO declined comment on reports Tuesday that it had dropped another “Game of Thrones” prequel set thousands of years before the original. A pilot episode starring Watts had been filmed in Northern Ireland.

The straight-to-series order for “House of the Dragon,” whether a sign of faith in the project or pressure to get it into production, avoids letting devotees of the fantasy saga down once more.
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Young Muslims denounce ISIS, seek change

By David Ignatius
Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON

Making predictions about the Middle East is probably a fickle game, but consider this possibility: The hyper-radicalism represented by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi may have created a movement that was a theater of violence. Its trademark was the videotaping of extreme cruelty: beheading prisoners and burning them in cages, setting them on fire. This photographic mayhem was meant to shock and enrage — and also to draw young recruits.

At first, it succeeded on all counts. It’s hard to remember now the toxic energy that drew Muslims from around the world to this so-called Islamic State at its apogee in 2014.

But the caliphate’s moment has passed. In the week before al-Baghdadi’s death, young Arabs were in the streets in Beirut, Cairo, Baghdad and other Arab cities demanding change — but not in a reversal to the time of the Prophet Muhammad’s birth, in the 6th century. The new protest movements are secular and generally peaceful. It was the caliphate that created them, especially as it embattled remnants seek revenge for their fallen leader. But the survivors will have trouble finding a successor who matches al-Baghdadi’s combination of pious scholar and bloodthirsty executioner.

“The day after there’s a pendulum that’s swinging again toward mass protests,” said William McCants, author of the “ISIS Apocalypse,” which was a backstop for extremist groups that had drawn Muslims from around the world.

This change movement is visible even in authoritarian countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and in both countries, a big factor was women’s empowerment, especially with the novelization of the religious veil and political power. In both Riyadh and Tehran, for example, vocal movements are demanding that women be allowed to appear in public without the hijab, the traditional Islamic headscarf.

Saudi Arabia was once a closed society in which women were invisible. But that’s less true in recent years. A movement for more freedom — and religious veils are so fragmented that popular demands for change something more than a slogan.

But there’s something else animating the Arab world these days, and it’s the Islamic resistance, which has emerged to protect against the state of being dominated. It’s something different — a militant, secular movement demanding change.

Al-Baghdadi’s death will bring Iraq no deliverance

By Bobby Ghosh
Bloomberg Opinion

By rights, the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi should have been met with celebrations in the land of his birth. After all, Iraq has endured more sufﬁcient years of war and peace and bears more scars — from the depredations of Islamic State. Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi should have been the one to share with his countrymen the news from Baria, where, that the monster that their worst nightmares is no more.

Instead, at al-Baghdadi’s death, Abdul-Mahdi was hunkered down in his palace while his countrymen called, in ever larger numbers, for his ouster. For his city from which ISIS’ leader took his nom de guerre was convulsed in yet another night of violence as security forces backed by U.S.-backed militias cracked down on Iraqis protesting against corruption and misuse.

When Baghdad should have been celebrating the ignominious end of the false caliphate, authorities were announcing a curfew.

Al-Baghdadi would have derived some comfort in the last few days among the living from the prospect of a political occupation. After the calm that followed a brutal crackdown on the protest movement, ISIS reportedly was ready to make a deal with the government — and against the security forces and militias they once claimed. That’s not the old ISIS. But majority Shiites were, for the most part, united behind the government in Baghdad. Their support allowed Abdul-Mahdi’s predecessor, Haider al-Abadi, to return from exile with the help of the U.S. military and militias trained, armed and commanded by Iran.

But the Shiites are leading the protests against the government — and against the security forces and militias they once claimed. That’s not the old ISIS. But majority Shiites were, for the most part, united behind the government in Baghdad. Their support allowed Abdul-Mahdi’s predecessor, Haider al-Abadi, to return from exile with the help of the U.S. military and militias trained, armed and commanded by Iran.

December

The quality of the Iraqi military is significant. It was irrelevant when it was in 2014, but Abdul-Mahdi’s decision to sack the general who led the fight against ISIS indicates that all is not well among the men in uniform. The integration of Shiite militias into the military has not gone as smoothly as Baghdad — and Tehran — had hoped. 

It doesn’t help that the American military presence in Iraq depends on the whims and political calculations of the White House’s current occupant. The crush of reception accorded to U.S. troops withdrawing from Syria into Iraqis support poorly.

On top of all this, the Iraqi government is even more corrupt than it had been five years ago — not least because there is now no longer an excuse for growing revenue from oil exports. By Transparency International’s reckoning, between 2015 and 2018 Iraq has slipped seven places to 168th on the world’s most corrupt countries, to 168th (out of 180).

But ISIS made advantage of Iraq’s chaos? It is no longer the irresistible force it seemed to have been. The protests in Basra, where they have been called an illegitimate and illegal occupation, have also been raging for months, pitting fighters against the government — and against the security forces and militias. They once claimed. That’s not the old ISIS.

Debate is healthy. But the very presence of ISIS fighters on the streets of Basra has raised its back to the government. The government has no Syrian stronghold from which to counter the ISIS fighters. Its forces have been driven from Raqqa, but there are still fighters in the country’s north and west.

The real question is: Can the Iraqi government use its military forces to drive out ISIS fighters? That’s a big question, but it is a fair question to ask.
Rust Belt slump could erode Trump’s base

By Josh Boak
and John Seewer
Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio — President Donald Trump once promised that coal and steel would be the beating heart of a revived U.S. economy — a nostalgic vision that helped carry him to victory three years ago in the industrial Midwest.

But a year away from Election Day, that promised renaissance is not maturing and both sectors are faltering in ways that are painfully familiar and politically significant.

Recent data shows manufacturing jobs are disappearing across Pennsylvania, Michigan and Ohio, states critical to Trump’s re-election chances. On Tuesday, Murray Energy, a major mining company, announced that it was filing for bankruptcy this year, rattling communities across Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky.

The news followed recent layoffs at a prominent steel manufacturer in northeastern Ohio and General Motors’ final decision this fall to close its massive plant at Lordstown, Ohio.

The turmoil in the manufacturing and mining sectors threatens to undermine Trump’s claim to a booming economy — the bedrock of his and his Republican allies’ campaign strategy — in places where matters most. While Trump’s economy is benefiting high-tech manufacturing and energy sectors in other regions, the manufacturing slump across the Rust Belt may test whether Trump can retain his appeal to blue-collar workers without having fully delivered on his promise to fatten their bank accounts.

“I don’t think that Ohio is just a lock in the Republican’s column, nor do I think that blue-collar voters are settled on who they’re likely to select,” said Robert Alexander, a political scientist at Ohio Northern University. “There is a lot of economic angst still in the state.”

Recent elections haven’t shown that angst to be aimed at Republicans. After Trump won Ohio by 12 percentage points — the largest margin of any presidential candidate since 1988 — Republicans fared better in Ohio than in many other states in last year’s midterm elections, nabbing every statewide office but one.

Murray Energy is based in St. Clairsville, Ohio, a small city near the West Virginia and Pennsylvania borders in a county that voted for Trump over Democrat Hillary Clinton by a margin of 40 percentage points. But the company’s presence is far larger, including 17 mines across Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Utah and West Virginia, as well as Colombia, South America.

The company’s former CEO, Bob Murray, is a Trump donor and advocate for his company’s interests. Murray openly pressured Trump to issue an emergency order that would have exempted his struggling company from environmental regulations he said were burdensome. Trump flirted with that idea but never approved it.

Murray said Tuesday the company is filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, a restructuring that puts at risk the incomes, pensions and health care benefits of roughly 7,000 workers.

Democratic presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren, a bankruptcy expert, seized on the news as evidence of Trump failing his voters.

“He made promises to working people all across this country that he would be there on their behalf. Instead he’s been there for the lobbyists, he’s been there for the giant corporations, he’s been there to help make the rich richer and leave everyone else behind,” she said.

For the first two years of his presidency, Trump oversaw an economic recovery that extended across sectors and regions — adding manufacturing and factory jobs in the Rust Belt and beyond.

But recent signs show that trajectory shifting downward quickly, fueled by a slumping global economy and the trade wars escalated by the Trump administration.

So far this year, Ohio has shed 2,400 factory jobs. Michigan has lost 6,200. Pennsylvania has 9,100 fewer manufacturing workers. West Virginia employers have cut 400 mining jobs. And Kentucky has let go of 600 mine workers.

General Motors struck a devastating blow to Ohio by ending more than 50 years of car manufacturing at an assembly plant in Lordstown, near Youngstown, a labor stronghold where Trump surprised Democrats by winning half the vote in 2016. But for every GM-scale closure, there are other, lower profile layoffs in other states.

Nearly 950 manufacturing jobs in Pennsylvania were lost in May when the cabinetmaker Wood-Mode shuttered. Bimbo Bakeries closed a plant in July in northern Pennsylvania that cost 151 jobs, according to filings with the state.

EXCHANGE RATES

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No. 2 overall pick Bosa has big impact on 49ers

Associated Press
SANTA CLARA, Calif. — With San Francisco not in the market for a quarterback heading into this year’s NFL Draft, coach Kyle Shanahan was hoping Arizona would take Kyler Murray and leave the 49ers with their choice of defensive players.
When that happened, the Niners leaped at the chance to take defensive end Nick Bosa with the No. 2 overall pick and are quite pleased with how it all worked out.
“Twas a good feeling and I hope we can do it all again,” Shanahan said. “I was very happy about it when the picks came in.”

The top two picks will square off Thursday night for what should be the first of many meetings between the NFC West rivals when the 49ers (7-0) visit the Cardinals leading up to the draft at Arizona Cardinals (3-4-1) San Francisco 49ers (7-0)

BY JOSH DUBOW

The second pick of the NFL Draft. He has seven sacks, a forced fumble and an interception.

You can tell he’s been coached up by the way he’s played and he’s played like a even-keeled persona the 49ers and Cardinals leading up to the draft.

With Bosa and trade acquisition Dee Ford coming off the edge and former first-round pick DeForest Buckner and Arik Armstead steadying pressure from the inside, the Niners have completely shut down opposing passing games last year, with just seven takeaways and two interceptions in large part because of the lack of an edge rush.

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Bengals decide to sit Dalton

By Joe Kay
Associated Press

CINCINNATI — With no wins at the season’s midpoint, the Bengals figured it was time to end Andy Dalton’s tenure and see if rookie Ryan Finley is their quarterback of the future.

Coach Zac Taylor decided Tuesday to bench Dalton, ending his nine-season run as a starter. The move came two days after a 24-10 loss to the Rams in London left Cincinnati 0-8 for the first time in 11 years.

The first-year coach decided to use the bye week to get Finley — a fourth-round pick from North Carolina State — ready to take the place of the Baltimore Ravens’ 10 at Paul Brown Stadium. It’s less of a referendum on Dalton than an indication that the franchise is looking long term now that the season has slipped away.

Finley looked good in the preseason with backups but hasn’t taken a snap in the regular season.

“We need to see what Ryan Finley can do, what he can provide for us,” Taylor said.

“Until you see him live against starters, you really don’t know what you’ve got.”

They know what they’ve got in Dalton, who has one more year left on his contract. He led the AFC in passer rating in 2015, the most recent time Cincinnati reached the playoffs, but has struggled in the past few years as the offensive line deteriorated and top receiver A.J. Green missed a lot of time with injuries.

Dalton led the Bengals to a club-record five straight playoff appearances from 2015-19 but they couldn’t get that elusive postseason win.

“It’s not an easy decision when a guy’s given it his all for nine years,” Taylor said. “He certainly deserves better. You wanted to win games with him.”

Dalton, who turned 32 on Tuesday, wasn’t available for interviews. Finley declined to talk to reporters until after a practice on Wednesday.

Dalton and Green have been the faces of the franchise since the Bengals acquired them with their first two picks in 2011. Each of them missed one of the playoff losses because of injuries. Green has missed all eight games this season while recovering from an ankle injury during the first practice of camp.

Players weren’t shocked by the move, given the team’s 0-8 status.

“They started the season off with a change,” defensive end Carlos Dunlap said. “We’ve got a new head coach and a whole new staff, and the new staff wants their guys in there.”

In many ways, it’s been Dalton’s most challenging season.

The offensive line has been in flux and hasn’t been able to protect Dalton or open holes for the running game, which ranks last in the league with only 59.5 yards per game. During a loss to the Jaguars, Dalton ran for all of the Bengals’ 33 yards. He has all three of their rushing touchdowns this season.

Allen finally gets his shot

By Pat Graham
Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Colo. — It took Brandon Allen four seasons and three different teams to get his shot at starting in the NFL.

The gig may only be temporary, even if Joe Flacco is out for a while with a herniated disc in his neck.

Rookie quarterback Drew Lock could return to the active roster any time now that he’s missed half the season after going on injured reserve with a right thumb injury suffered in the previous game.

Allen’s not looking over his shoulder but straight ahead to Sunday and his debut when the Denver Broncos (2-6) host Baker Mayfield and the Cleveland Browns (2-5).

“This is the opportunity that everybody wants, everybody strives for,” Allen said Tuesday. “I’m going out to do the best I can do.”

Flacco, who was sacked 11 times in his last two games, had a stiff neck after Denver’s 15-13 loss at Indianapolis last weekend and coach Vic Fangio said Monday that Flacco was diagnosed with a herniated disc in his neck. It’s an injury that could sideline him for a significant stretch and land him on injured reserve.

“We’re feeling for Joe right now, but this is the opportunity you work for,” said Allen, who was claimed off waivers from the Rams on Sept. 1. “I’ve learned a lot from him in the few short weeks we’ve been together.”

Broncos fans are brushing up on Allen, a sixth-round pick of Jacksonville in 2016. He spent ’17 and ’18 with the Rams.

This is what the University of Arkansas product wants everyone to know about him: “They’re going to see me play hard. They’re going to see I want to win and that’s kind of the biggest thing I want them to take away.”

Allen will be the Broncos’ sixth starting quarterback since Peyton Manning retired. It will be Allen’s first start since guiding Arkansas past Kansas State 45-23 in the Liberty Bowl on Jan. 2, 2016. His backup? TBD.
NBA roundup

Davis scores 40 as Lakers rout Grizzlies

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Anthony Davis is four games into his first season with the Los Angeles Lakers, and he's already in good company.

Elgin Baylor, Wilt Chamberlain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, George Mikan, Shaquille O'Neal — and now AD.

Davis had the fourth 40-point, 20-rebound game of his seven-year career and set a franchise record with 26 made free throws as the Lakers rallied in the second half for a convincing 120-91 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies on Tuesday night.

He joined those Lakers greats as LA players to get 40 points and 20 rebounds.

"It’s an honor to be on that list with those legends, but more important is we got the win," said Davis, who was 26-for-27 from the line. "I just tried to be a monster on the glass.

It is Davis' first 40-20 game since 2015. He’s the first Laker to do so since O'Neal in 2003.

Davis played only 31 minutes. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, he is the first player to have a 40-20 game in 31 or less minutes since 1954-55.

Perhaps the greatest 40-20 game was 33 minutes by Baylor in 1961.

Davis is also the fourth player in league history and first since Michael Jordan in 1996 to make 26 or more free throws.

"This solidifies why we went out and got him. He was big time for us," said LeBron James, who scored 23 points for the Lakers. Los Angeles is off to its first 3-1 start since winning its first eight in 2010.

Davis was questionable two hours before the game due to a right shoulder injury suffered in Sunday's win over Charlotte. He did some dribbling and shooting on the court before being cleared.

Davis had 16 points and nine rebounds in the first quarter but went back to the locker room at the start of the second to get the shoulder checked and re-taped.

Memphis raced to a 15-2 lead before Los Angeles started to work its way back. Ja Morant led the Grizzlies with 16 points, and Jonas Valanciunas added 14.

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A group of NCAA administrators has been exploring since May the ways in which athletes could be allowed to receive compensation for the use of their names, images and likenesses. The working group, led by Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith and Big East Commissioner Val Ackerman, presented a proposal last month to the NCAA Board of Governors, which is expected to meet next week.

Smith and Ackerman's group laid out principles, in one way or another, that athletic compensation should be allowed to receive compensation for the use of their names, images and likenesses. The working group, led by Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith and Big East Commissioner Val Ackerman, presented a proposal last month to the NCAA Board of Governors, which is expected to meet next week.

"The board is emphasizing that change must be consistent with the values of college sports — higher education and not turn student-athletes into employees of institutions," Drake told The Associated Press.

NBA moves toward athlete compensation

By RALPH D. RUSSO

Associated Press

The NCAA took a major step Tuesday toward allowing college athletes to cash in on their fame, voted to permit them to benefit from the use of their names, images and likenesses.

The nation's largest governing body for college sports and its member schools now must figure out how to allow athletes to profit from the goodwill they've fought against doing for years — while still maintaining rules regarding amateurism.

The NCAA Board of Governors, meeting at Emory University in Atlanta, directed each of the NCAA's three divisions to create the necessary new rules immediately and have them in place no later than January 2021.

President Mark Emmert told the AP. "The whole notion of trying to maintain as a fair a playing field as you can is really central to all this. And using the word 'amateurism' versus 'professional,' that's kind of a red herring, or whatever you want to call it, because everybody is deeply concerned about.

"But we agreed on the challenges in determining what regulations need to be set in place; what markets athletes should be allowed to access; what entities and individuals they should be permitted to work with; and how athletes themselves could provide funds to athletes through licensing deals.

The NCAA's move came a month after California passed a law that would make it illegal for NCAA schools to prohibit college athletes from making money on endorsements, autograph signings and social media advertising, among other activities.

The California law goes into effect in 2023. More than a dozen states have followed with similar legislation, some of which could be on the books as soon as next year.

"This is another attempt by the NCAA at stalling this issue," said Ramsay Huna, executive director of the National College Players Association, an advocate group.

"It's hard to say exactly how much athletes could fetch on an open market for their names. It could range from a few hundred dollars for creating personal video and audio greetings for fans through to several million for endorsements. Athletes themselves are shopping for deals to sell wine and corn syrup, underwear and food. They're selling watches and beer for radio spots, t-shirts and hats for television ads.

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Pittsburgh — Sidney Crosby and Dominik Simon scored during an early four-goal outburst, and the Pittsburgh Penguins cruised to the Philadelphia Flyers 7-1 on Tuesday night.

Crosby, wearing a facemask as extra protection after getting hit in the head by a shot in the late part of the weekend, added two assists to boost his career point total against the Flyers to 102 as the Penguins rolled to a rare victory over their cross-state rivals.

Jared McCann, Justin Schultz, Zach Aston-Reese, Jake Guentzel and Dominik Kahun also scored for Pittsburgh. Matt Murray stopped 29 shots to win for the sixth time in his last seven starts.

Capitals 4, Maple Leafs 3 (OT) — Alex Ovechkin scored his second goal of the game during an overtime power play to complete a four-point night, and visiting Washington beat Toronto.

John Carlson also scored twice for Washington. Nicklas Backstrom added three assists, while Braden Holtby made 27 saves.

Auston Matthews had two goals and an assist and Andreas Johnsson scored the other goal from Toronto, which got 30 shots from Frederik Andersen.

Brui 5, Sharks 1: David Krejci returned with a goal and an assist after missing five games with an injury, David Pastrnak scored his league-leading 12th and host Boston beat San Jose.

Chris Wagner also had a goal and an assist as the Bruins won their fourth straight and improved to 6-0-2 in their last eight. Charlie Coyle and Brandon Carlo also scored for Boston.

Larkin converted on a power play 7:41 into the game, lifting the puck from the front of the crease. The struggling Blackhawks have lost five of six.

Stars 6, Wild 3 — Minnesota had two goals and an assist and Andreas Johnsson scored the other goal from Toronto, which got 30 shots from Frederik Andersen.

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HOUSTON — Major League Baseball executive Joe Torre says the “right call” was made and that a protest was denied after Nationals leadoff hitter Trea Turner was called out for interference during Washington’s 7-2 Game 6 victory in the World Series on Tuesday night.

National manager Dave Martinez was ejected for arguing plate umpire Sam Holbrook’s ruling in the seventh inning, and Torre said Washington’s request to protest the game was denied because it was a judgment call.

Holbrook’s signal came after Turner hit a slope up the third-base line with a runner at first and ran narrowly inside fair territory. Turner stretched longer than 10 minutes. The batter’s box is in fair territory.

Torre said that while MLB and its umpires want “to double and triple-check ourselves” in the World Series, the delay shouldn’t have lasted as long as it did.

“I don’t know if it was the noise or whatever it was. I know we had a hard line in our box and we had trouble reaching people because we tried to make some calls, we couldn’t do it,” Torre said. “It should never be that long. That’s unfortunate. And certainly we have to take ownership of that.”

Manager AJ Hinch weighed in on the bat-carrying anachronism later and had a conversation with Turner.

“Things stepped onto the field to talk with Holbrook and crew chief Gary Cederstrom after the inning and quickly became animated. Six weeks after having a heart procedure, Martinez was restrained by bench coach Chip Hale — or at least Hale should’ve,” Martinez said in response to a question about the scene. “This is not about me or the umpires.”

The Major League Baseball Umpires Association tweeted that the call was correct.

Likely Hall of Famer Verlander World Series loser again

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Justin Verlander is a true top-of-the-line ace, a starter who’s headed for the Hall of Fame.

But in the World Series, he showed he’s no closer.

Verlander wasn’t bad in Game 6 on Tuesday night. Just not good enough to get his first World Series win and give the Houston Astros their second title in three seasons.

Verlander, who led the majors with 21 wins this season, fell to 0-6 with a 5.68 ERA in seven World Series starts.

“I thought we didn’t talk about record anymore,” Verlander said with a smile. “Hey, there’s been some good games mixed in with some not-so-good ones. I can’t point a finger to anything in particular. I’m going out there and trying my best. Just wasn’t able to come away with a win.”

Houston led by one in the fifth before Verlander surrendered a solo homer to Adam Eaton and a second-deck dinger to Juan Soto to put the Nationals on their way to a 7-2 victory to force a Game 7 on Wednesday night.

Verlander gave up five hits and three runs while walking three before Brad Peacock replaced him for the sixth. He fell to 1-4 this postseason.

The 36-year-old World Series ring, MVP and Cy Young trophies, and three no-hitters on a sparkling résumé. But time and time again he’s been unable to get it done on baseball’s biggest stage. 

Snippet?

“I don’t know if I’d say that,” he said. “Hopefully I get another opportunity.”

Bregman regrets carrying bat to first

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Bregman regrets carrying bat to first

Alex Bregman knocked a home run into the Crawford Boxes in the first inning on Tuesday night to put Houston on top.

Then the 21-year-old phenom mimicked Bregman by taking his bat with him before throwing it down at first base, just as Bregman had done four innings earlier.

What did Bregman think about that?

“I deserved it,” he said. “It was my fault and I apologize for doing it. I shouldn’t have done it.”

Manager AJ Hinch weighed in on the bat-carrying anachronism of both players.

“He shouldn’t carry the bat past first base,” Hinch said.

“Soto shouldn’t carry it to first base, either.”

Bregman lamented getting caught up in the moment and wanted everyone to know that he regretted what he’d done.

“It’s not what I’m about,” he said. “I want to play team baseball and try and help this team win. And I just got too excited, and I apologize to their team, my teammates, everybody and I just want to come out and try to help this team win a game tomorrow.”

Soto goes deep again for Nationals

Juan Soto is a youngsters going deep in the World Series.

Soto’s long solo homer in the fifth inning on Tuesday night was his third in the Series, and fifth this postseason.

The Nationals left fielder, whose 21st birthday was Friday, broke a tie with Miguel Cabrera for the most home runs in a single postseason by a player younger than 22.

Soto will have a chance to add to that since Washington forced a Game 7. His homer broke a 2-2 tie and put the Nationals ahead to stay.

Soto, who also homered in Games 1 and 5, is only the fifth player 22 or younger to hit multiple homers in a World Series. The others were Hall of Famers Mickey Mantle (four) and Jimmie Foxx (two), and Tony Kubek (two) and Andruw Jones (two).
WASHINGTON Nationals third baseman Anthony Rendon hits a two-run homer against the Houston Astros during the seventh inning of Game 6 of the World Series on Tuesday night in Houston.

The Nationals force Game 7

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

HOUSTON — It's been an unconventional road to Game 7 of the World Series for Stephen Strasburg and the Washington Nationals.

Seizing the October spotlight he missed out on as a youngster, Strasburg pitched another post-season gem into the ninth inning Tuesday night as the Nationals beat the Houston Astros 7-2 to tie this Fall Classic at 3-3.

If Washington wins Game 7 on Wednesday night, it will become the first franchise to appear in back-to-back World Series.

The lights flicked off. The questions stopped. The cameras and microphones and bodies receded.

Strasburg, free now, resumed his beloved routine. He showered and dressed quickly, pulling on a light blue polo and gray jeans.

He threw his towel in the hamper and, walking toward the clubhouse, stopped. Completely normal. He has, in his own words, "been under a microscope my whole career." He credited his post-season performances to the attention he loathed as a younger pitcher.

"Everything happens for a reason," he said. "I think, without those things, it would be a lot harder to focus on what I can control out there."

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Washington Nationals pitcher Stephen Strasburg, who began his career as a heavily hyped prospect, has developed into a veteran who relies as much on his secondary pitches as he does his fastball. Strasburg called on all of his skills in Game 6 of the World Series to help the Nationals force Game 7 and run his record this postseason to 5-0.

Delivering on his promise

Reluctant star Strasburg saves Nats’ season with heroic performance in World Series Game 6

BY SAM FORTIER
The Washington Post

Stephen Strasburg left the mound as the pitcher he was once promised to be. The last decade — the one filled with expectations, frustrations and, ultimately, acceptance — culminated in this moment, Strasburg walking a few feet toward the dugout at Houston’s Minute Maid Park. He had dominated the Astros into the ninth inning; he had delivered when the team needed him most. He took the biggest stage in Washington Nationals history, faced elimination in Game 6 of the World Series and shoveled.

“I just gave it everything I had,” Strasburg said later. “I’m pretty tired.”

The right-hander’s gem, combined with the offense awakening, key to a 7-2 victory Tuesday that saved the team’s season. Strasburg can opt out of his contract after the season, and it looked like he’d have to decide soon after the first inning, when he allowed his only two runs of the night. Then he heard he was tipping pitches again, tweaked his delivery and mowed through the Astros in what became one of the most clutch playoff starts in recent memory. He became the first pitcher to go at least 8⅓ innings while allowing two or fewer runs in a World Series elimination game since Curt Schilling in 1993.

SEE PROMISE ON PAGE 31

Inside:

■ All roads lead to Game 7 as visitors win 6th straight, Page 31
■ MLB executive Torre says “right call” made on disputed interference, Page 30
■ Verlander falls to 0-6 career in Series, Page 30

Astros pitcher Justin Verlander

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SEE PROMISE ON PAGE 31

Boosted by Bosa
No. 2 overall pick helps turn 49ers defense into dominant unit » NFL, Page 26

Davis has 40-20 as Lakers rout Grizzlies
NBA, Page 28

Crosby, Simon lead Penguins past Flyers
NHL, Page 29