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Muted US response



U.S. NAVY/AP

An aircraft launches from the USS Harry S. Truman in the Red Sea before airstrikes in Sanaa, Yemen, on March 15. The U.S. military's recent response to Houthi rebels' attacks is more subdued compared to previous strikes like in March.

Pentagon's lull contrasts with previous firepower display against Houthis

BY LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military spent hundreds of millions of dollars earlier this year in a six-week barrage intended to stop the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen from targeting ships in the Red Sea.

Now, just two months after President Donald Trump received assurances "that they wouldn't be shooting at ships anymore," it appears the Houthis are back at it.

They claimed responsibility for an attack Sunday on a bulk carrier that eventually sank, and they are being blamed by the U.S. and European Union for another attack on the Eternity C cargo ship that sank Wednesday in the Red Sea. At least three members of the crew were killed in the attack, and only six of 25 people on board have been rescued, the Associated Press reported.

The renewed attacks come as the U.S. tries to broker an end to the war between Israel and Hamas while also reopening diplomatic talks with Iran.

Experts say the resumption highlights the Houthis' durability, making the U.S. the latest adversary facing the challenge of figuring out how to deal with a militant group that has fended off all previous military efforts to dislodge them from power.

And with Iran's allies in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza nearly decimated, the Yemen-based fighters have become essential to Tehran.

"The Houthis are the long pole of the tent when it comes to Iranian proxy capabilities," said Behnam Ben Taleblu, senior director of the Iran program at the Foundation for De-

SEE MUTED ON PAGE 7

Trump was unaware of weapon halt for Ukraine

BY AAMER MADHANI, SEUNG MIN KIM AND TARA COPP
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's decision to send more defensive weapons to Ukraine came after he privately expressed frustration with Pentagon officials for announcing a pause in some deliveries last week — a move that he felt wasn't properly coordinated with the White House, according to three people familiar with the matter.

The Pentagon announced last week that it would hold back some air defense missiles, precision-guided artillery and other weapons pledged to Ukraine because of what U.S. officials said were concerns that American stockpiles were in short supply. Trump said Monday that the U.S. will have to send more weapons to Ukraine, effectively reversing the move.

Two of the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity about the sensitive internal discussions, said there was some internal opposition among Pentagon brass to the pause — coordinated by Pentagon policy chief Elbridge Colby — before it was announced.

One of the people described Trump as being caught "flat footed" by the announcement. The White House did not respond to queries about whether Trump was surprised by the Pentagon pause.

SEE UNAWARE ON PAGE 8

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Trump says he's 'not happy' with Russian president
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BUSINESS/WEATHER

Turkish court bans Musk's AI chatbot Grok for offensive content

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — A Turkish court ordered Wednesday a ban on access to Elon Musk's artificial intelligence chatbot Grok from Turkey, after the platform allegedly disseminated content insulting to Turkey's president and others.

The chatbot, developed by Musk's company xAI, posted a number of vulgarities against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, his late mother and other personalities, while responding to users' questions on the X social media platform, the pro-government A Haber news channel reported.

Offensive responses were also directed toward modern Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, other media outlets said.

The responses prompted the Ankara public to file for the imposition of restrictions under Turkey's internet law, citing a threat to public order.

A criminal court approved the request early on Wednesday, ordering the country's telecommunications authority to enforce the ban.

The incident is part of a broader controversy surrounding a recent update to Grok, which resulted in more "politically incorrect" and unfiltered responses.

In response to mounting controversy, X said it was aware of the recent posts and had taken immediate action to remove inappropriate content.

"Since being made aware of the content, xAI has taken action to ban hate speech before Grok posts on X," the company said in a statement.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates

Euro costs (July 10)	0.83
British pound (July 10)	$1.33
Japanese yen (July 10)	142.00
South Korean won (July 10)	1339.00

Commercial rates

Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3743
Britain (Pound)	1.3586
Canada (Dollar)	1.3684
China (Yuan)	7.1738
Denmark (Krone)	6.3742
Egypt (Pound)	49.5201
Euro	0.85427
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8498
Hungary (Forint)	341.731
Israel (Shekel)	3.3216
Japan (Yen)	146.451
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3049
Norway (Krone)	10.1038
Philippines (Peso)	56.527
Poland (Zloty)	3.6253
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7464
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2808
South Korea (Won)	1375.16
Switzerland (Franc)	0.7952
Thailand (Baht)	32.712
Turkey (NewLira)	40.0469

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

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	7.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50
Federal funds market rate	4.38
3-month bill	4.37
30-year bond	4.93

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



This weather is compiled from weather.com reports.

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MILITARY

Soldiers who can't shave may be removed

By Matthew Adams
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Soldiers who require prolonged shaving waivers, which disproportionately affect Black troops, could be removed from the Army under an updated policy, the service announced Tuesday.

"This is about uniformity, discipline and standards. And this is about training," Army spokesman Steve Warren told reporters. "This standard applies equally to all soldiers, not just minorities."

More than 40,000 soldiers have temporary shaving waivers — nearly double the amount from five years ago, he said.

All soldiers must be clean-shaven on duty when in uniform or civilian clothes "with temporary exemptions for medical reasons and permanent exemptions for religious accommodations," the Army said in a statement.

"Soldiers who cannot comply with grooming standards … may be administratively separated," the service said.

The policy bars permanent shaving waivers and requires medical personnel to craft formal treatment plans for affected troops. Soldiers have been able to grow a beard through a waiver process for pseudofolliculitis barbae, which causes painful razor bumps and mostly affects Black men.



Jonathon Alderman/U.S. Army

Soldiers use the mirror of an Army Humvee for an early morning shave in Djibouti in 2024.

"One of the things that we've determined is that we need to train our soldiers better on how to take care of their shaving needs. For whatever reason, kids these days, they're struggling with, you know, proper shaving technique," Warren said. "Pseudofolliculitis barbae, a lot of that just has to do with your shaving technique is what we've determined. A vast majority of minority soldiers, African-American soldiers, are within the standards all the time."

The new policy requires exemptions for non-religious reasons to be supported by a temporary medical profile and an exception-to-policy, or ETP, memo granted by a lieutenant colonel in the chain of command, the service said.

All religious accommodations under this directive will be reviewed in the next 90 days, Warren said.

Army Secretary Dan Driscoll signed the policy Monday and it went into effect the same day, said Lt. Col. Orlandon Howard, an Army spokesman.

All military services have faced growing legal and internal pressure to relax grooming standards as debates on social media and in various other forums highlight the struggle to balance tradition and uniformity with individual rights. Military officials have argued facial hair could prevent a perfect seal of a gas mask.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on March 12 ordered a services-wide review of existing standards for physical fitness, body composition and grooming. The review of grooming standards will also include the wearing of beards, according to the memo.

The following day, the Marines enacted a policy that troops diagnosed with pseudofolliculitis barbae could be separated from the service if grooming exceptions are needed beyond one year.

For years, military branches have carried out various studies on the beard issue to determine whether regulations could be loosened for the rank and file. So far, no branch has taken the step beyond special exceptions.

In the Army, clean shaves became a requirement just before World War I, when chemical weapons were deemed a serious threat. The Navy and the Coast Guard were the last branches to ban beards, doing so in 1985 and 1986, respectively.

"This update reinforces our culture that fosters discipline — and discipline equals readiness," Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Weimer said in a statement. "Through a phased implementation we are working with providers through commanders to effectively address grooming standards to ensure we maintain a professional force."

Nuclear-powered sub makes historic port call in Iceland

By Alison Bath
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — An American nuclear-powered submarine's historic visit to Iceland on Wednesday sends a powerful message to Russia that some of the Navy's most formidable vessels are protecting the High North, the service's top commander in Europe and Africa said.

The attack submarine USS Newport News' port call to Grundartangi also makes a visible statement to allies about U.S. commitment to collective defense and Arctic security, Adm. Stuart Munsch, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, said Wednesday.

Newport News is the first nuclear-powered submarine from any country to make a port call in Iceland, the Navy said.

The port call comes amid rising U.S. and NATO concerns about increased Russian and Chinese activity in a region rich with minerals, oil and gas. Rapid melting of sea ice also offers the possibility of new maritime trade routes in the High North.

Russia's aggression in Ukraine and its behavior in places such as the Arctic have driven unity in NATO to a whole new level, Munsch said.

That commitment is evident in military exercises, operations and other activities that have put the U.S. and its allies in the bloc "in a position where we can deter the adversary and defend against them … and it's been effective," Munsch said.

"Yes, the Russians are more active," he said. "They're doing new and different things, but so are we."

The ability to make the port call to Iceland, which paves the way for visits by other warships, is part of the equation in ensuring the U.S. and NATO stay ahead of competitors, he added.

Cmdr. Eric McCay, the Newport News commanding officer, noted that in 36 years, the submarine had earned three Arctic Service Ribbons, an award recognizing service performed above the Arctic Circle. The visit was further demonstration of the submarine's dedication to safeguarding the region, McCay said.

In April 2023, the now-decommissioned attack submarine San Juan made a brief stop in waters off Iceland's west coast for supplies and a personnel exchange. Wednesday's port call was a significant step from the stopover of San Juan, the Navy said.



Joshua Karsten/U.S. Navy

USS Newport News, seen here in March, made a historic port call in Iceland on Wednesday.

Like San Juan, Newport News does not carry nuclear weapons. It's armed with Tomahawk missiles and MK-48 torpedoes, according to Navy.mil. It has a crew of about 143 and is homeported in Groton, Conn.

Iceland is part of a critical expanse of the north Atlantic Ocean known as the GIUK gap, which spans from Greenland to the U.K.

Controlling that gateway to the Atlantic is essential for homeland defense and blocking Russian submarines from threatening the U.S. eastern seaboard, Munsch said.

He added: "It's important that people understand what a strong ally Iceland is."

Army trying to find quick solution to get small drones to troops

By John Vandiver
Stars and Stripes

The Army is aiming to fast-track production of thousands of small, cheap drones that soldiers can use in the field within about two months, the service said this week.

A statement Monday by the Army's contracting office asks commercial producers to submit proposals by July 18.

The Army wants an initial delivery of drones by September with an "ability to quickly ramp production and larger quantities within 12 months," according to the notice, which doesn't specify the number of drones sought.

Specifications in the notice from the aviation department of the Army's Program Executive Office call on vendors to offer strategies for producing individual drones under $2,000.

Soldiers also must be able to modify the systems, attach a variety of munitions and repair the drones without any contractor involvement, the Army said.

"The Army must expand (drone) production capacity across the industrial base," the notice said. "Funding is available to achieve this."

While the Army has an array of ongoing modernization initiatives focused on big-ticket items such as long-range precision fires, low-cost drones also have emerged as a major focal point.

The emphasis on such technology comes in response to the Russia-Ukraine war, where troops have used various drones to attack combat formations, tanks and even multimillion-dollar bombers and warships.

The war has become a laboratory for the Army, and bases in Germany have been a major testing ground for incorporating drones into unit formations.

For example, soldiers from the Vilseck-based 2nd Cavalry Regiment have been building their own systems in tandem with Ukrainian troops, taking advantage of their combat experience and hands-on experimentation with the technology, Army officials have said.

With small drones in high demand, units have adapted by making their own, using 3D printing capabilities and retooling off-the-shelf equipment.

MILITARY

Army ending five ceremonial horse units

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

The Army is putting to pasture five ceremonial horse units that bring the service's cavalry history from the Old West to life for communities across the country.

Service officials said the move will save $2 million annually and the money will be pumped into weapons and training.

"We're doing this to align more resources with warfighting capability and readiness," said Steve Warren, an Army spokesman.

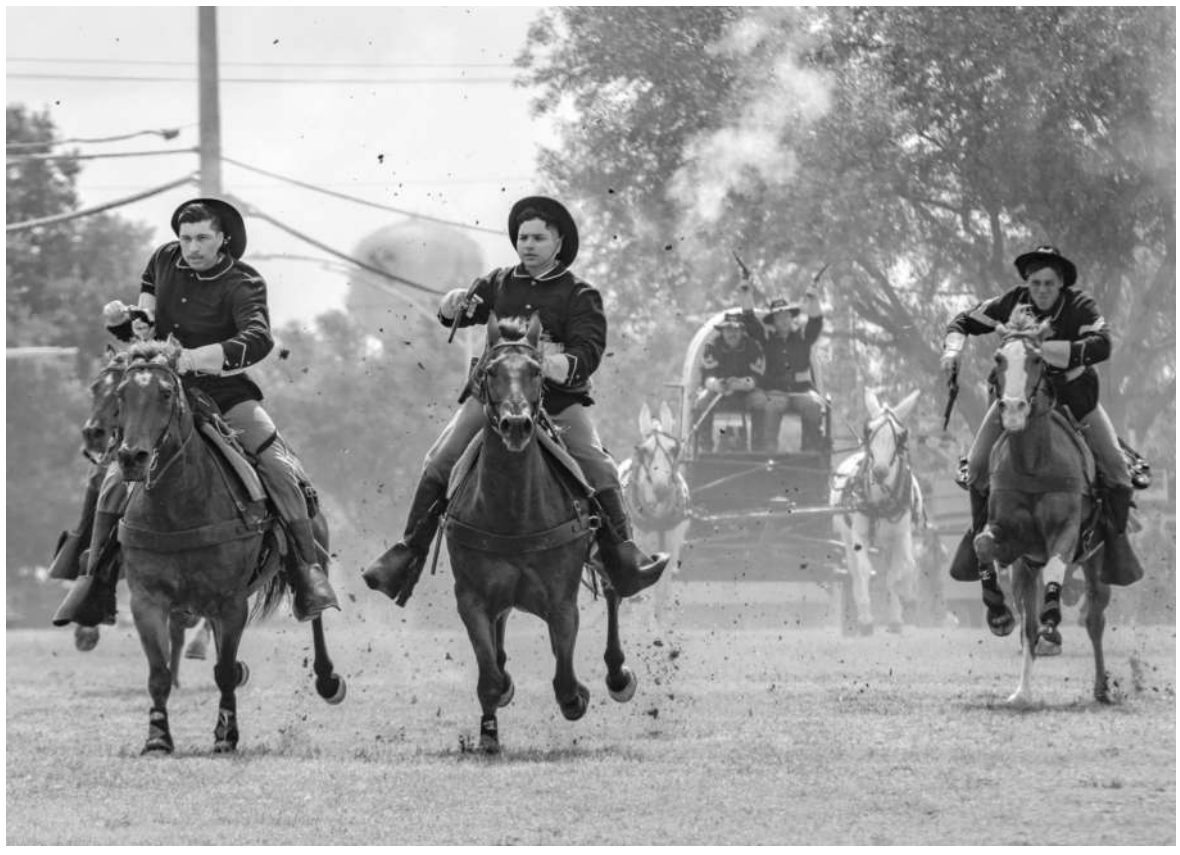
More than 230 horses, mules and donkeys assigned to Fort Irwin, Calif., Fort Huachuca, Ariz., Fort Riley, Kan., Fort Sill, Okla., and Fort Hood, Texas, will be put up for adoption and transferred out of the Army in the next year.

Only the Old Guard caisson units at the Military District of Washington and Joint Base San Antonio, Texas, will remain active. These units participate in funeral services for Medal of Honor recipients, prisoners of war and those killed in action and veterans ranked sergeant major or higher at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in Texas and Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

Each base is responsible for coming up with its own plan to close the unit and move soldiers from their assignment with a horse unit, Warren said. It is possible the horses could remain in the area to provide pomp and circumstance to events but outside of the Army's budget.

"There may be work arounds. We don't know. This is early days," Warren said. "We're not going to assign soldiers to the horse detachment any longer. We're not going to keep horses at Fort Hood any longer."

The budget cuts are part of an ongoing initiative in the Pentagon to rearrange funding to activities and costs that directly support warfighting. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has described cuts such as these as "refocusing and reinvesting existing funds into building the force that protects … the American people."



DAVID DUMAS/U.S. Army

Army troopers assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division Horse Cavalry Detachment conduct a cavalry charge during a ceremony on Fort Cavazos, Texas, on June 5.

It also follows a difficult period for the Old Guard stables in Virginia. It paused funeral honors for two years after the deaths of two horses in 2023 exposed unsanitary living conditions and a lack of open space for the herd to graze. The 3rd Infantry Regiment completely reformed its equine program and horse-drawn caissons returned to Arlington National Cemetery in May.

The Army's other ceremonial horse units typically bring alive the history of the cavalry during weekly public demonstrations and unit ceremonies as well as during parades, rodeos and events throughout local communities.

The Fort Sill Artillery Half Section carries the traditions of World War I, while the 1st Infantry Division Commanding General's Mounted Color Guard is reminiscent of Civil War-era soldiers. The three others all represent the Army of the late 1880s, using Colt revolvers and sabers of the era.

B Troop at Fort Huachuca is unique from the others in that it does not have any authorized personnel and instead relies on volunteers to fill its schedule of events for recruiting, community relations and Army ceremonies.

The 1st Cavalry Division Horse Cavalry Detachment at Fort Hood and Fort Riley's mounted color guard have participated in presidential inauguration parades, while the Fort Hood detachment and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment Horse Detachment from Fort Irwin have walked the annual Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade in California.

Fort Riley's color guard participated in 143 events in 15 states and two countries in 2024, said Maj. Guster Cunningham, spokesman for the division. On average, about 30 soldiers are assigned to the unit at any given time, working alongside its 18 horses, two draft horses and four mules.

"We will work diligently to find suitable homes for our horses and will keep the community informed throughout this transition," Cunningham said. "This change does not impact the 1st Infantry Division's ("Big Red One") core priorities: building warfighting readiness, caring for soldiers, civilians and families, adapting our formations to win and developing inspirational leaders. We remain committed to strengthening partnerships and engaging with our surrounding communities."

The Fort Hood detachment, with roughly 40 soldiers, now owns 29 horses and four mules, according to the 1st Cavalry Division. At division ceremonies, the soldiers typically close the event with a cavalry charge, complete with the mule-drawn Studebaker wagon and Apache helicopters overhead.

Service officials said they aim for a seamless transition for the horses to responsible owners.

"The 1st Cavalry Division Horse Detachment has been a proud symbol of the division's heritage for over 53 years, playing a vital role in community relations and representing the division and the Army with distinction at national events, including the Army's 250th birthday parade. The 1st Cavalry Division remains committed to its mission of warfighting readiness and service to the nation while honoring the legacy of our horse detachment," the division said in a statement.

Other units affected by the change did not respond Tuesday to a request for comment.

Each unit will have six months to create a plan to close the horse units and then each will spend the next six months executing the plan, Warren said. The horses will not be sold, he said.

"We're not trying to try to make money here. We're going to donate them, find adoption for them," Warren said. "Just like our military working dogs, they are part of the Army. They're part of the Army family. We're going to treat them with compassion."

Japan moves Ospreys to new southern island base

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

Japan's army has begun relocating its fleet of V-22 Osprey aircraft to a new base on the southern island of Kyushu, part of an effort to beef up its presence near disputed islands amid aggressive moves by China.

The first of 17 tiltrotors operated by the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force arrived Wednesday morning at Camp Saga, a newly constructed base in Saga prefecture, a Ground Staff spokesman said by phone that day.

The base, built on former farmland west of Saga Airport, was slated to officially open the same day, Defense Minister Gen Nakatani said during a news conference in Tokyo on Tuesday.

A single Osprey arrived from Camp Kisarazu in Chiba prefecture after stopping at Camp Takayubaru in Kumamoto prefecture, southeast of Saga. The remaining aircraft will transfer from Kisarazu by mid-August, the spokesman said, though he did not provide a detailed timeline. It's customary in Japan that some government officials speak to the press on condition of anonymity.

The aircraft had been temporarily based at Kisarazu, east of Tokyo, since 2020.

From their new location, the tiltrotors are expected to operate in conjunction with the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade stationed at Camp Ainoura in Sasebo, about 45 miles west, Nakatani said.

"The security environment surrounding our country has become increasingly severe in recent years, and strengthening our island defense capabilities, including the Nansei region, has become an urgent issue for our country's defense," he said.

On June 23, Nakatani met on Okinawa with Marine Lt. Gen. Roger Turner, commander of the III Marine Expeditionary Force, to discuss expanding joint operations in the Nansei region, he told reporters that day.

The Nansei islands, also known as the Ryukyus, include Okinawa and extend from Kyushu to Taiwan, encompassing Japan's westernmost island of Yonaguni.

The move comes as regional tensions escalate. Last month, China conducted Pacific military drills involving both of its aircraft carriers — the Shandong and Liaoning — for the first time. During the June 7-8 training, Chinese fighter jets came within 150 feet of Japanese patrol aircraft, according to a June 11 release from Japan's Ministry of Defense.

Camp Saga is also expected to absorb 50 helicopters stationed at Camp Metabaru, about 15 miles north of Saga city. Between 700 and 800 personnel will be based at the new installation, including about 420 assigned to the Osprey wing, Takeshi Hirao, then-director of Saga's policy division, said during a February prefectural assembly meeting.

Camp Saga includes offices, aircraft hangars, a parking apron, ammunition storage facilities, fuel tanks and two runway access roads, according to ministry plans. Construction was completed June 30, the Ground Staff spokesman said.

PACIFIC

South Korea redirects Apache funds

Planned $3.5B US helicopter, weapons purchases canceled to fund drones, other projects

BY DAVID CHOI AND YOOJIN LEE
Stars and Stripes

South Korea is canceling its planned purchase of 36 AH-64E Apache helicopters from the United States and redirecting some of the money to unmanned systems, according to a South Korean lawmaker.

The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff decided in May to scrap the acquisition, which would have doubled the South Korean army's fleet of Apache attack helicopters, Rep. Yoo Yong-won wrote in a Facebook post Sunday. He said the government chose instead to invest in other military projects, such as drones.

The initial budget allocation of $7.2 million for administrative fees related to the helicopter purchase was reduced to $220,000, Yoo said.

That amount was later eliminated entirely, a Yoo spokesperson told Stars and Stripes by phone Tuesday. It's customary in South Korea that some government officials speak to the press on condition of anonymity.

The total estimated cost of the proposed purchase — which included gunships, rocket launchers, air-to-ground missiles, technical support and other features — was approximately $3.5 billion, according to an Aug. 19 news release from the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

The primary U.S. contractors were Boeing and Lockheed Martin.

"This is a competition for a limited budget," Yang Uk, a research fellow at the Seoul-based Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said by phone Tuesday.

While drones are playing a growing role on the battlefield, helicopter gunships remain essential, Yang added.

"One of the biggest strengths for Apache is that it allows us to detect the targets from long distances with the Longbow radar and overlook the operation," he said. "There are clear advantages such as the Blue Force Tracker, which lets us coordinate with the allies within the area and avoid damage."

The price of a new Apache prior to negotiations was around $56 million, about 66% more expensive than those in the first batch of 36 gunships delivered to the army in 2017, Minister of Defense Acquisition Program Administration Seok Jong Gun said during a televised National Assembly hearing on Oct. 15.

The increase, Seok said, was due to inflation and technological upgrades, including Longbow — an advanced fire control radar system that allows crews to quickly identify targets.

North Korea's state-run media criticized the proposed sale in August, calling it a "reckless" act that threatened peace on the Korean Peninsula.

South Korea's decision comes two months after Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered the U.S. military to "reduce and restructure manned attack helicopter formations" in lieu of cheaper "drone swarms capable of overwhelming adversaries," according to an April 30 Pentagon memo to the Army secretary.

The restructuring is part of broader efforts to cut "wasteful spending" and modernize the military, the memo said.

South Korea has increasingly focused on countering drone threats following the incursion of five North Korean unmanned aerial vehicles into its airspace on Dec. 26, 2022. One drone came within two miles of the presidential office in Seoul, though none were intercepted.

In response, South Korea launched its Drone Operations Command in September 2023, based in Pocheon, about 21 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone.

Trump: New tariffs aim to offset US troop expenses in S. Korea

BY DAVID CHOI AND YOOJIN LEE
Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump said Tuesday that tariffs he plans to impose on South Korea are intended to "even out" what he described as an imbalance between trade and the cost of stationing U.S. troops on the peninsula.

Speaking at a White House press conference, Trump criticized the United States' trade deficits with countries such as South Korea, calling them part of a series of "bad deals" made by previous administrations.

Trump announced the tariffs Monday in open letters posted to his Truth Social account.

The measures include a 25% tariff on imports from South Korea and Japan and are scheduled to take effect Aug. 1. In total, the tariffs affect imports from 14 countries.

A trade deficit occurs when a country imports more goods than it exports to another nation. U.S. exports to South Korea totaled $65.5 billion in 2024, while imports from the South reached $131.5 billion, according to data from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

"We rebuilt it, and we stayed there, and they pay us very little for the military," Trump said, referring to the U.S. defense of South Korea since the 1950-53 Korean War.

In a text message on Wednesday, the South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it is "inappropriate to respond and evaluate every comment by a foreign leader."

The Special Measures Agreement dictates how much Seoul is expected to pay Washington to station approximately 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea. The money pays a variety of costs, including constructing projects and the hiring of local employees in U.S. bases.

In November, South Korea agreed to pay $1.1 billion annually starting in 2026 — a $200 million increase over the previous five-year agreement. The deal was renegotiated under former Presidents Joe Biden and Yoon Suk Yeol.

Under the terms of the new agreement, South Korea's contribution is expected to rise annually between 2027 and 2030, based on its consumer price index.

During his first term, Trump frequently said South Korea was not paying enough for U.S. protection and suggested Seoul should contribute between $5 billion and $10 billion per year. Independent experts have noted that U.S. presidents have authority to renegotiate the agreement before it expires.

"I got them to pay billions of dollars and Biden then canceled it when he came in," Trump said Tuesday, adding that the U.S. was providing South Korea with a "free military."



ALLAN COGAN/U.S. Army

President Donald Trump, seen here last month, has announced new tariffs on South Korea that he says will offset an imbalance of U.S. troops expenses.

Trump's tariffs may cast pall over Rubio's first official trip to Asia

BY MATTHEW LEE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sweeping tariffs set to be imposed by President Donald Trump next month may cast a pall over his top diplomat's first official trip to Asia this week — just as the U.S. seeks to boost relations with Indo-Pacific nations to counter China's growing influence in the region.

Trump on Monday sent notice to several countries about higher tariffs if they don't make trade deals with the U.S., including to a number of Asian countries. The move came just a day before Secretary of State Marco Rubio planned to depart for a Southeast Asian regional security conference in Malaysia.

Top diplomats and senior officials from at least eight countries that Trump has targeted for the new tariffs, which would go into effect on Aug. 1, will be represented at the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum in Kuala Lumpur that Rubio will attend.

State Department officials say tariffs and trade will not be Rubio's focus during the meetings, which the Trump administration hopes will prioritize maritime safety and security in the South China Sea, where China has become increasingly aggressive toward its small neighbors, as well as combating transnational crime.

However, Rubio may be hard-pressed to avoid the tariff issue that has vexed some of America's closest allies and partners in Asia, including Japan and South Korea, which Trump says would face 25% tariffs absent a deal. Neither of those countries is a member of ASEAN but both will be represented at the meetings in Kuala Lumpur.

Rubio's "talking points on the China threat will not resonate with officials whose industries are being battered by 30-40% tariffs," said Danny Russel, vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute.

MILITARY

DOD not billing satellite firms adequately

GAO says inability to calculate all costs causes Pentagon to miss out on millions

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department must do a better job of recouping costs from companies that use its facilities to launch satellites into space, a congressional watchdog agency said in a recent report.

Inability to calculate all the costs involved in private-sector use of federal space sites is a concern amid the infrastructure strain from ballooning use, the Government Accountability Office said in a report last week.

"As a result, DOD may be missing opportunities to collect millions of dollars that could support infrastructure improvements," the GAO said.

The number of commercial satellite launches from federal sites has quadrupled from 32 to 132 since 2021, according to the June 30 report.

In the face of that increase, the Defense Department has struggled to bill companies accurately for direct costs of launches at federal facilities, and it still lacks clear collection and reimbursement guidance for support services including maintenance, operations and upgrades, the report found.

Private industry has taken on a greater share of launch duties in recent years.

The Pentagon uses commercial businesses to launch military satellites, but the companies often have their own commercial needs, the report said.

The major players at the moment are Elon Musk's aerospace company SpaceX, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos' company Blue Origin and a joint venture between Boeing and Lockheed Martin called United Launch Alliance.



THOMAS SJOBERG/U.S. Space Force

A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket carrying the GPS III SV06 satellite lifts off from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Fla., in 2023. The Defense Department is struggling to bill commercial space companies for launches from government facilities and may be losing out on millions of dollars as a result, according to a recent report by the Government Accountability Office.

The three companies received a contract award of $13.7 billion in April for 54 launches, with the lion's share going to SpaceX, the report said.

Federal government contracts with SpaceX total $22 billion, Reuters reported earlier this month.

Facilities involved in the GAO review were Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida, Vandenberg Space Force Base in California and Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia.

The agency said it looked at Space Force acquisition strategy and contract documentation and interviewed stakeholders from the military and private sector.

Among the findings, auditors learned that SpaceX and United Launch Alliance were not billed at all for high-pressure water production at the launch pads in fiscal year 2021 and were billed for only about half of the $2 million spent to store rockets and boosters.

The review recommended that the Space Force work with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Comptroller to update cost regulations and reimbursement processes.

The GAO also instructed the Space Force to centralize planning for launches and scheduling so things like spy satellites and missile warning systems can be fired into space faster and more efficiently.

USS Arizona Memorial tour reservations paused amid preservation efforts

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The National Park Service is temporarily suspending advance reservations for tours of the USS Arizona Memorial scheduled past Sept. 3 due to ongoing preservation work to the popular tourist site.

Advance reservations made for tours before Sept. 3 will be honored, the park service said in a news release Tuesday.

The pause in advance reservations will continue until further notice, according to the release.

Visitors may still be able to tour the Arizona Memorial after Sept. 3 on a first-come, first-served basis or through the standard process by which reservations can be made one day in advance, the release states.

The Navy, in coordination with the park service, is in the process of removing a pair of mooring platforms that were welded to the Arizona during salvage operations after the Dec. 7, 1941, attack that sank the battleship.

Ferries, barges and ships were tethered to the platforms as workers stripped parts needed for the war effort.

In October 2023, staff with Pearl Harbor National Memorial discovered the smaller of the two platforms had shifted, with its concrete surface now inclined diagonally in the water.

Navy and National Park Service divers assessed the condition of both platforms, and officials concluded that the platforms should be permanently removed to prevent damage to the Arizona's hull.

"During certain periods of the removal operation, it will not be safe for visitors to be on the memorial or to arrive by boat," the park service said in the news release.

"Staff will evaluate the timeline for resuming USS Arizona Memorial advanced reservations based on the completion of the salvage platform removal," the release states.

Updates on the status of reservations will be published at www.nps.gov/pearlharbor.



KATHLEEN GORBY/U.S. Navy

A Navy diver surveys the mooring platforms attached to the deck of the USS Arizona in Pearl Harbor Hawaii, last year.

Guard wing home from Middle East

The Idaho Statesman

More than 300 airmen from the Idaho Air National Guard touched down at Gowen Field, Idaho, just before 1 in the morning on Tuesday, after a three-month deployment to the Middle East.

The airmen from the 124th Fighter Wing were led off the plane by Tech. Sgt. Blake Daquino, who found his wife in the crowd of hundreds awaiting the troops' arrival and, for the first time, met his newborn child.

The airmen, along with several A-10 attack aircraft, deployed to the U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility in March to "support ... combat operations," according to a news release announcing the troops' return. Officials have declined to say where the airmen were located or what the mission entailed.

The 124th Fighter Wing has deployed to CENTCOM's area of responsibility several times in the recent past, including in 2020 as part of U.S. efforts to train Afghan forces and conduct counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan.

MIDEAST



GERALD WILLIS/U.S. Air Force

A U.S. Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet flies over the Red Sea in the U.S. Central Command area of operations, on March 23.

Muted: Expert suggests US probably won't intervene unless high-scale attacks return

FROM PAGE 1

fense of Democracies. "The regime is trying to threaten wider regional ramifications in case Israel or America see that there's an opportunity to go back militarily against (Iran)."

The White House condemned the attacks in a statement Tuesday and alluded to possibility of another American intervention.

"The United States has been clear: We will continue to take necessary action to protect freedom of navigation and commercial shipping from Houthi terrorist attacks, which must be condemned by all members of the international community," State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce said.

But Trump has yet to directly acknowledge the attacks, and it could take a significant escalation to bring the U.S. back into a war with the militant group, which has been careful to frame the strikes as part of its conflict with Israel.

"I assume the U.S. won't intervene unless the attacks return to the scale and momentum seen before its spring military campaign against the Houthis," said Nadwa Al-Dawsari, a fellow at the Geneva-based Center on Armed Groups.

The Houthis first began attacking ships in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden with missiles and drones in late 2023, saying they were retaliating for the Israel-Hamas war. Attacks on merchant ships slowed significantly in January, when the Houthis said they would focus only on Israel-linked vessels.

But maritime traffic through the Bab el Mandeb, a strait connecting the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, remained lower than the levels seen in 2022 and 2023, according to the Joint Maritime Information Center.

Between mid-March and late April, the Pentagon responded with Operation Rough Rider at an estimated cost of $1 billion. U.S. forces expended thousands of missiles and bombs, taking out major Houthi weapons caches, infrastructure and top military leaders.

Over the course of the operation, the U.S. also lost at least seven $30 million MQ-9 Reaper drones, according to the AP, and two F/A-18 Super Hornets that slipped off the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman.

The Houthis, who control the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, have survived 11 years of war with the country's internationally recognized government and a supporting coalition led by Saudi Arabia.

A truce from 2022 has largely held, with the Houthis maintaining their hold on Yemen's critical coastline. Airstrikes could degrade their capabilities, but experts have said a decisive defeat would require an American ground incursion, something the administration was loath to do.

Throughout the 2024 campaign, Trump expressed a desire to stay out of Middle Eastern conflicts, vowing not to let the U.S. get sucked into another decadeslong war.

Even after launching Rough Rider, he wanted to see results quickly, according to reports from The New York Times. Six weeks in, the operation was suddenly halted, with Trump saying the two sides had reached an agreement to stop fighting.

Farea al-Muslimi, a research fellow at the London-based Chatham House and expert on Yemen, said the ceasefire was an "optics and communication deal" that is "extremely fragile."

Tensions are still high after the U.S. and Iran exchanged fire last month, with the U.S. bombing of three major Iranian nuclear facilities followed by Tehran's launch of more than a dozen missiles at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar.

The missile strikes resulted in no reported injuries or deaths to U.S. personnel, most of whom had been evacuated from the base. Both Qatar and Patriot air defense system crews intercepted the missiles, according to U.S. Central Command.

Even with their losses from Operation Rough Rider, the Houthis still have some military capabilities, said Wolf-Christian Paes, a senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies who previously served as the arms expert on a U.N. panel regarding Yemen. He said even the threat of violence is enough to cause a problem.

"You don't need to attack a ship every day if you want to shake the confidence of the shipping community," he said. "And that's what this is about. It's enough to have one successful attack."

Ship attacked by Houthi rebels sinks in Red Sea

BY JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A Liberian-flagged cargo ship attacked by Yemen's Houthi rebels sank Wednesday in the Red Sea, with a European naval force in the Mideast saying that only six of 25 people who were on board have been rescued.

The attack on the Eternity C, which also killed at least three of the crew, represents the most serious assault by the Houthis in the crucial maritime trade route that once saw $1 trillion in cargo pass through annually.

From November 2023 until the following December, the Houthis targeted more than 100 ships with missiles and drones in a campaign the rebels describe as supporting Palestinians in the Gaza Strip during the Israel-Hamas war. The Iranian-backed rebels stopped their attacks during a brief ceasefire in the war. They later became the target of an intense weekslong campaign of airstrikes ordered by President Donald Trump.

The attack on the Eternity C, as well as the sinking of the bulk carrier Magic Seas in an attack Sunday, raise new questions about the Red Sea's safety as ships had slowly begun returning to its waters.

A statement from the European Union naval mission in the Red Sea said the crew of the ship included 22 sailors, among them 21 Filipinos and one Russian, as well as a three-member security team. Those rescued were five Filipinos and one Indian.

The armed rebels had attacked the ship with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms, later using two drones and two drone boats carrying bombs to strike the vessel, the EU force said. The Eternity C sank at 7:50 a.m. Wednesday, it added.

The ship, flagged out of Liberia but owned by a Greek firm, likely had been targeted like the Magic Seas over its firm doing business with Israel. Neither vessel apparently requested an escort from the EU force.

The U.S. military has two aircraft carriers in the Mideast, the USS Nimitz and the USS Carl Vinson, but both likely are in the Arabian Sea, far from the site of the attacks.

There are two American destroyers believed to be operating in the Red Sea.

However, the ships attacked had no U.S. ties and a ceasefire between the Houthis and America announced after the bombing campaign earlier this year still appears to be holding.



MIKE CULLOW/AP

The Liberian-flagged bulk carrier Eternity C is seen near Cathlamet, Oregon, in 2019.

40 Palestinians killed in Gaza as Netanyahu, Trump talk ceasefire

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — At least 40 Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, hospital officials said Wednesday, as international mediators raced to complete a ceasefire deal.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had a second meeting in two days with President Donald Trump at the White House on Tuesday evening. Trump has been pushing for a ceasefire that might lead to an end to the 21-month war in Gaza. Israel and Hamas are considering a new U.S.-backed ceasefire proposal that would pause the war, free Israeli hostages and send much-needed aid into Gaza.

Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis said the dead included 17 women and 10 children. It said one strike killed 10 people from the same family, including three children.

The Israeli military did not comment on specific strikes, but said it had struck more than 100 targets across Gaza over the past day, including militants, booby-trapped structures, weapons storage facilities, missile launchers and tunnels. Israel accuses Hamas of hiding weapons and fighters among civilians.

Netanyahu told reporters in the Capitol on Tuesday that he and Trump see "eye to eye" on the need to destroy Hamas. He added that the cooperation and coordination between Israel and the U.S. is currently the best it has ever been during Israel's 77-year-history.

Later this week, Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, is expected to head to the Qatari capital of Doha to continue indirect negotiations with Hamas on the ceasefire proposal.

Witkoff said late Tuesday that three key areas of disagreement had been resolved, but that one key issue still remained. He did not elaborate.

After the second meeting, Netanyahu said he and Trump also discussed the "great victory" over Iran.

WAR IN UKRAINE

Trump says he's 'not happy' with Putin

BY WILL WEISSERT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he's "not happy" with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, saying Moscow's ongoing war in Ukraine is "killing a lot of people" on both sides.

"I'm not happy with him, I can tell you that much right now. This is killing a lot of people," Trump said of Putin during a meeting with his Cabinet.

The president also acknowledged that his previous suggestions that he might be able to cajole Russia's president into bringing the fighting to a close and quickly ending the war in Ukraine has "turned out to be tougher."

It was notable for a president who has all but aligned himself with Putin at moments in the past and has praised the Russian leader effusively at times — though less so in recent months.

The Cabinet meeting comments came a day after Trump said the United States will now send more weapons to Ukraine — dramatically reversing a previous announcement of a pause in critical, previously approved firepower deliveries to Kyiv in the midst of concerns that America's own military stockpiles have declined too much.

"We wanted (to) put defensive weapons (in). Putin is not, he's not treating human beings right," Trump said during the Cabinet meeting, explaining the pause's reversal. "It's killing too many people. So we're sending some defensive weapons to Ukraine and I've approved that."

Trump's decision to remove the pause follows his privately having expressed frustration with Pentagon officials for announcing a halt in some deliveries last week — an action he felt wasn't properly coordinated with the White House, according to three people familiar with the matter.

But the president refused to provide more details on that matter Tuesday.

"I don't know," he said sarcastically to a reporter who pressed him on the weapons pause's original approval. "Why don't you tell me?"

Still, his expressing open displeasure with Putin — especially after approving a resumption of U.S. weapons to Ukraine — underscores how much Trump's thinking on Russia and Ukraine policy has shifted since he returned to the White House in January. It also lays bare how tricky navigating the ongoing conflict has proved to be.

Asked during Tuesday's Cabinet meeting what his growing displeasure with Putin might mean for U.S. foreign policy, Trump declined to discuss specifics.

Unaware: Shipments to resume after abrupt pause

FROM PAGE 1

Pentagon press secretary Kingsley Wilson denied that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had acted without consulting the president.

"It is the job of the Secretary of Defense to make military recommendations to the commander-in-chief. Secretary Hegseth provided a framework for the President to evaluate military aid shipments and assess existing stockpiles. This effort was coordinated across government. The Department will continue to give the President robust options regarding military aid to Ukraine, consistent with his goal of bringing this tragic war to an end and putting America first," Wilson said.

The pause in critical weapons deliveries had come at a difficult moment for Ukraine, which has faced increasing air barrages from Russia during the more than 3-year-old war. Trump acknowledged that in announcing the reversal on Monday night, saying, "They have to be able to defend themselves."

Asked Tuesday who approved the pause, Trump bristled at the question while he was gathered with his Cabinet. "I don't know. Why don't you tell me?"

The president also laid into Russian President Vladimir Putin, suggesting he was unnecessarily prolonging the war that Trump has said he's determined to quickly conclude. Trump has struggled to find a resolution, with talks between the sides stalled.

The Republican leader has sounded increasingly exasperated with Putin in recent days.

"We get a lot of bull—— thrown at us by Putin, if you want to know the truth," Trump said during Tuesday's Cabinet meeting. "He's very nice all the time, but it turns out to be meaningless."

He has threatened, but held off on, imposing new sanctions against Russia's oil industry to try to prod Putin into peace talks.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said last week that Trump has given him the go-ahead to push forward with a bill he's co-sponsoring that calls, in part, for a 500% tariff on goods imported from countries that continue to buy Russian oil. The move would have huge ramifications for China and India, two economic behemoths.



EVAN VUCCI/AP

President Donald Trump, center, speaking during a Cabinet meeting at the White House, Tuesday.

Trump said Tuesday that he's "looking at it very strongly."

The weapons pause announced last week impacted shipments of Patriot missiles, precision-guided GMLRS, Hellfire missiles and Howitzer rounds and more, taking not only Ukrainian officials and other allies by surprise but also U.S. lawmakers and other parts of the Trump administration, including the State Department.

The Pentagon said late Monday that at Trump's direction, it would resume weapons shipments to Ukraine "to ensure the Ukrainians can defend themselves while we work to secure a lasting peace and ensure the killing stops."

Still, spokesman Sean Parnell added that its review for Trump to evaluate military shipments worldwide continues as part of "America First" defense priorities.

It's also unclear which weaponry would now be sent, though Trump said that the U.S. will primarily be assisting Ukraine with defensive weapons.

On Tuesday, each of the services and the combatant commands — the multiservice organizations that spearhead U.S. military operations around the world — were still sending up information on their stockpiles of specific munitions to Pentagon leadership, a U.S. official said.

The information was being presented on a stoplight chart — where munitions were either in a red, yellow or green status, similar to slides that had been created the week before, the official said. That earlier study had concluded that some munitions were OK to keep sending to Ukraine — but others were reaching concerning levels.

Getting a full visibility on the numbers of actual munitions on hand takes time, the official said, because while Patriot missiles, for example, initially belong to the Army, once they are requested and sent to a combatant command the service loses visibility on those numbers in inventory.

The vast majority of the munitions and weapons the U.S. has shipped to Ukraine have been pulled from the Army, which has monitored levels closely in recent years, particularly for high-demand items like 155 mm artillery shells and Patriot missiles.

It's been harder for the Army to ramp up production on those items than had been planned: It was trying to hit a goal of producing 100,000 155 mm shells a month by the end of 2025 but won't meet that goal now until 2026, Army spokesman Steve Warren said.

Ramping up Patriot missile production also has been challenging, Warren said.

Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said Tuesday he was glad Trump is resuming deliveries to Ukraine.

"This time, the President will need to reject calls from the isolationists and restrainers within his Administration to limit these deliveries to defensive weapons," McConnell said. "And he should disregard those at DoD who invoke munitions shortages to block aid while refusing to invest seriously in expanding munitions production."

Russia batters Ukraine

BY ILLIA NOVIKOV
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia fired more than 700 attack and decoy drones at Ukraine overnight, topping previous nightly barrages for the third time in two weeks, part of Moscow's intensifying aerial and ground assault in the three-year war, Ukrainian officials said Wednesday.

Russia has recently sought to overwhelm Ukraine's air defenses by launching major attacks that include increasing numbers of decoy drones. The most recent one appeared aimed at disrupting Ukraine's vital supply of Western weapons.

The city of Lutsk, home to airfields used by the Ukrainian army, was the hardest hit, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Lutsk lies in western Ukraine near the border with Poland, a region that is a crucial hub for receiving foreign military aid.

The attack comes at a time of increased uncertainty over the supply of crucial American weapons and as U.S.-led peace efforts have stalled. Zelenskyy said that the Kremlin was "making a point" with it.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that its forces took aim at Ukrainian air bases and that "all the designated targets have been hit." Meanwhile, Ukraine fired drones into Russia overnight, killing three people, officials said.

The Russian attack, which included 728 drones and 13 missiles, had the largest number of drones fired in a single night in the war. On Friday, Russia fired 550 drones, less than a week after it launched 477, both the largest at the time, officials said.

NATION



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

President Donald Trump, left, speaks with reporters as Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick listens before boarding Air Force One at Morristown Municipal Airport in Morristown, N.J., Sunday.

Trump appointees tied to firms that benefit from privatizing forecasts

BY BRIAN SLODYSKO AND MICHAEL BIESECKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick oversees the U.S. government's vast efforts to monitor and predict the weather.

The billionaire also ran a financial firm, which he recently left in the control of his adult sons, that stands to benefit if President Donald Trump's administration follows through on a decade-long Republican effort to privatize government weather forecasting.

Deadly weekend flooding in central Texas has drawn a spotlight to budget cuts and staff reductions at the National Weather Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, two agencies housed within the Commerce Department that provide the public with free climate and weather data that can be crucial during natural disasters.

What's drawn less attention is how the downsizing appears to be part of an effort to privatize the work of such agencies.

In several instances, the companies poised to step into the void have deep ties to people tapped by Trump to run weather-related agencies.

Privatization would diminish a central role the federal government has played in weather forecasting since the 1800s, which experts say poses a particular harm for those facing financial strain who may not be able to afford commercial weather data.

The effort also reveals the difficulty that uber wealthy members of Trump's Cabinet have in freeing themselves from conflicts, even if they have met the letter of federal ethics law.

"It's the most insidious aspect of this: Are we really talking about making weather products available only to those who can afford it?" said Rick Spinrad, who served as NOAA administrator under President Joe Biden, a Democrat. "Basically turning the weather service into a subscription streaming service? As a taxpayer, I don't want to be in the position of saying, 'I get a better weather forecast because I'm willing to pay for it.'"

The White House referred requests for comment to the Commerce Department, which said in a statement that Lutnick has "fully complied with the terms of his ethics agreement with respect to divesture and recusals and will continue to do so."

Lutnick is not the only one Trump nominated for a key post with close relationships to companies involved in the gathering of vital weather data.

Trump's pick to lead NOAA, Neil Jacobs, was chief atmospheric scientist for Panasonic Weather Solutions and has been a vocal proponent of privatization. The president's nominee for another top NOAA post, Taylor Jordan, is a lobbyist with a roster of weather-related clients.

"If confirmed, Dr. Jacobs and Mr. Jordan will follow the law and rely on the advice of the Department's ethics counsel in addressing matters involving former clients," the Commerce Department said in its statement.

High court OKs Trump's mass federal layoffs

BY DAVID G. SAVAGE
Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON— The Supreme Court cleared the way Tuesday for the Trump administration to lay off tens of thousands of federal employees and downsize their agencies without seeking the approval of Congress.

In an 8-1 vote, the justices lifted an order from a federal judge in San Francisco who blocked mass layoffs at more than 20 departments and agencies.

The court has sided regularly with President Donald Trump and his broad view of executive power on matters involving federal agencies.

In a brief order, the court said "the Government is likely to succeed on its argument that the Executive Order and Memorandum are lawful," referring to the plans to reduce staffing. But it said it was not ruling on specific layoffs.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor concurred with the decision on the grounds that it was narrow and temporary.

Dissenting alone, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said the court should not have intervened.

"Under our Constitution, Congress has the power to establish administrative agencies and detail their functions," she wrote.

Since mid-April, the court has handed down a series of temporary orders that cleared the way for Trump's planned cutbacks in funding and staffing at federal agencies.

Litigation will continue in the lower courts, but the justices are not likely to reverse course and rule next year that they made a mistake in allowing the staffing cutbacks to proceed.

The layoff case posed the question of whether Congress or the president had the authority to downsize agencies.

U.S. District Judge Susan Illston in San Francisco said Congress, not the president, creates federal agencies and decides on their size and their duties.

"Agencies may not conduct large-scale reorganizations and reductions in force in blatant disregard of Congress's mandates, and a president may not initiate large-scale executive branch reorganization without partnering with Congress," she said May 22.

Her order barred more than 20 departments and agencies from carrying out mass layoffs in response to an executive order from Trump.

They included the departments of Commerce, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, State, Treasury, Transportation and Veterans Affairs as well as the Environmental Protection Agency, the General Services Administration and the National Science Foundation.

She said the planned layoffs are large. The Health and Human Services department plans to cut 8,000 to 10,000 employees and the Energy Department 8,500. The Veterans Administration had planned to lay off 83,000 employees but said recently it will reduce that number to about 30,000.

Trump backs Bondi amid uproar over Epstein files flop

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump leaped to the defense of Attorney General Pam Bondi on Tuesday in the face of mounting criticism from far-right influencers and conservative internet personalities over the Justice Department's abrupt refusal to release additional documents from the Jeffrey Epstein sex-trafficking investigation.

When a reporter attempted to ask Bondi about Epstein at a White House Cabinet meeting, Trump headed off the questions and scolded the journalist: "Are you still talking about Jeffrey Epstein? This guy's been talked about for years."

"I can't believe you're asking a question on Epstein at a time like this, where we're having some of the greatest success and also tragedy with what happened in Texas — it just seems like a desecration," he added.

The comments appeared to signal continued job security for Bondi and amounted to a striking rebuke of members of Trump's base who have called for her resignation and mocked her for what they say is her failed commitment to release incriminating files from the Epstein investigation.

A supposed Epstein "client list" that Bondi once intimated was sitting on her desk for review does not exist, the Justice Department acknowledged in a two-page memo Monday that further riled conservative critics who'd been hoping for proof of a government cover-up.

Tech billionaire Elon Musk, the former Trump adviser who has said he is forming a new political party, posted Tuesday on his X platform, "How can people be expected to have faith in Trump if he won't release the Epstein files?"

Bondi has faced pressure after a first document dump she hyped failed to deliver revelations. Far-right influencers were invited to the White House in February and provided with binders marked "The Epstein Files: Phase 1" and "Declassified" that contained documents that had largely already been in the public domain.

After the first release fell flat, Bondi said officials were poring over a "truckload" of previously withheld evidence she said had been handed over by the FBI and raised expectations of forthcoming releases.

But after a monthslong review of evidence in the government's possession, the Justice Department said in Monday's memo that no "further disclosure would be appropriate or warranted." The department noted that much of the material was placed under seal by a court to protect victims and "only a fraction" of it "would have been aired publicly had Epstein gone to trial."

The only evidence disclosed as part of the memo was a video meant to definitively prove that the wealthy financier had taken his own life in jail in 2019. Even that disclosure did little to quiet conspiracy theorists who believe he was killed.

NATION

Searchers comb flood debris for the missing

Officials in Texas seek traveler info

BY NADIA LATHAN AND JOHN SEEWER
Associated Press

HUNT, Texas — Crews used backhoes and their bare hands Wednesday to dig through piles of debris that stretched for miles in the search for more than 160 people believed to be missing in the flash floods that laid waste to state's Hill Country.

Over 100 bodies have been recovered, but the large number of missing suggested that the full extent of the catastrophe was still unclear five days after the disaster.

"We will not stop until every missing person is accounted for," Gov. Greg Abbott told a news conference Tuesday. "Know this also: There very likely could be more added to that list."

Officials have been seeking more information about those who were in the popular tourist destination during the Fourth of July holiday weekend but did not register at a camp or a hotel and may have been in the area without many people knowing, the governor said.

The riverbanks and hills of Kerr County along the Guadalupe River, where most of the flood victims have been recovered so far, are filled with vacation cabins, youth camps and campgrounds, including Camp Mystic, the century-old all-girls Christian summer camp where at least 27 campers and counselors died. Officials said five campers and one counselor have still not been found.



JOSHUA LOTT/The Washington Post

People sort through the belongings of missing campers at Camp Mystic along the Guadalupe River on Monday in Hunt, Texas. Over 100 bodies have been recovered from flooded areas, but the large number of missing suggested that the full extent of the catastrophe was still unclear five days after the disaster.

Crews in air boats and helicopters and on horseback combed the terrain. They also used excavators and their hands, going through the earth layer by layer, with search dogs sniffing for any sign of buried bodies.

They were joined by hundreds of volunteers in one of the largest search operations in Texas history. The search has been slow, made more difficult by ongoing storms and dense layers of tangled trees and rubble.

The flash flood was the deadliest from inland flooding in the U.S. since Colorado's Big Thompson Canyon flood on July 31, 1976, killed 144 people, said Bob Henson, a meteorologist with Yale Climate Connections. That flood surged through a narrow canyon packed with people on a holiday weekend marking Colorado's centennial.

Public officials in charge of locating victims in Texas faced intensifying questions Tuesday about who was in charge of monitoring the weather and warning that floodwaters were barreling toward camps and homes.

Abbott said President Donald Trump has pledged to provide whatever relief Texas needs to recover. Trump plans to visit the state Friday.

Elsewhere, a deluge in New Mexico triggered flash floods that killed three people Tuesday.

Outside the cabins at Camp Mystic where the girls had slept, mud-splattered blankets and pillows were scattered on a grassy hill that slopes toward the river. Also in the debris were pink, purple and blue luggage decorated with stickers.

Among those who died at the camp were a second grader who loved pink sparkles and bows, a 19-year-old counselor who enjoyed mentoring young girls and the camp's 75-year-old director.

The flash floods erupted before daybreak Friday after massive rains sent water speeding down hills into the Guadalupe River, causing it to rise 26 feet in less than an hour. Some campers had to swim out of cabin windows to safety while others held onto a rope as they made their way to higher ground.

Just two days before the flooding, Texas inspectors signed off on the camp's emergency planning. But five years of inspection reports released to The Associated Press did not provide any details about how campers would be evacuated or the specific duties assigned to each staff member and counselor.

Texas flooding tests concept of replacing FEMA

BY GABRIELA AOUN ANGUEIRA
Associated Press

Just weeks ago, President Donald Trump said he wanted to begin "phasing out" the Federal Emergency Management Agency after this hurricane season to "wean off of FEMA" and "bring it down to the state level."

But after months of promises to overhaul or eliminate the federal agency charged with responding to disasters, Trump and his administration are touting a fast and robust federal response to the devastating Texas floods. In doing so, they are aligning more closely with a traditional model of disaster response — and less with the dramatic reform the president has proposed.

The president approved Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's request for a major disaster declaration just one day after it was submitted, activating FEMA resources and unlocking assistance for survivors and local governments. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem told Trump in a presidential Cabinet meeting Tuesday morning that FEMA was deploying funding and resources quickly. "We're cutting through the paperwork of the old FEMA, streamlining it, much like your vision of how FEMA should operate," Noem said.



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

President Donald Trump speaks at the Federal Emergency Management Agency in Washington in September 2019. After months of promises to overhaul or eliminate the agency, Trump is touting a robust federal response to the devastating Texas floods.

Noem said the rapid delivery of funds to Texas resembled the "state block grants" model Trump has promoted. It's an idea that would replace FEMA's current system of reimbursing states for response and recovery expenses at a cost-share of at least 75%.

But ex-FEMA officials say it's unclear how the response differs from FEMA's typical role in disasters, which is to support states through coordination and funding. Instead, they say, the vigorous federal response underscores how difficult it would be for states to take on FEMA's responsibilities if it were dismantled.

"This is a defining event that can help them realize that a Federal Emergency Management Agency is essential," said Michael Coen, FEMA chief of staff in the Obama and Biden administrations. "Imagine if an event like this happened a year from now, after FEMA is eliminated. What would the president or secretary (Noem) offer to the governor of Texas if there is no FEMA?"

The Department of Homeland Security and FEMA did not immediately respond to questions about Noem's remarks, including whether FEMA was doing something different in how it moved money to Texas, or why it resembled a block-grant system.

One of FEMA's primary roles will be to coordinate resources from other federal agencies. If the state needs the Army Corps of Engineers to help with debris removal, Health and Human Services for mortuary support and crisis counseling, or EPA for water quality testing, FEMA arranges that at the state's request and then reimburses those agencies. "FEMA becomes a one-point entry for all federal support," Coen said.

The agency also coordinates first-responder support — like search-and-rescue teams deployed from across the country — and reimburses those costs. It administers the National Flood Insurance Program, which gives homeowners and renters access to flood coverage not typically included in general policies.

Trump has deflected questions about what the Texas response means for FEMA's future. A 12-member review council established by the president and charged with proposing FEMA reforms will meet for the second time Wednesday.

At the first meeting, Abbott called FEMA "slow and clunky" and said reforms should "streamline the effort." He has praised Trump's quick disaster declaration in Texas.

While no large reforms to the agency have been enacted yet, smaller policy changes could impact Texas' recovery.

This spring, the administration did away with FEMA's practice of door-to-door canvassing to help households enroll for assistance, calling it "wasteful and ineffective." Many of the impacted areas in Kerr County and beyond still lack power and accessible roads, which will make it difficult for households to apply immediately for help.

NATION

Fatal flash flooding hits New Mexico

By Morgan Lee and Thomas Peipert
Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. — Three people were killed when monsoon rains triggered flash flooding in a New Mexico village, sending walls of water, mud and debris rushing down mountainsides that have been repeatedly scarred over recent years by wildfires and post-fire flooding.

A man, a 4-year-old girl and 7-year-old boy were swept away Tuesday by floodwaters, the village of Ruidoso said in a statement.

Village officials said no one else has been reported missing as of Wednesday morning.

Mayor Lynn Crawford said the community is devastated by the loss of life, a tragedy that is not unfamiliar for the popular summer retreat. Before the monsoon began, Ruidoso had made much progress in recovering from last year's deluge and the mayor acknowledged that the village will have to start over in some areas.

"As bad as it is, it could have been way worse because people did heed the warning, did get the higher ground," he said during a radio address. "But we do have people that are in greater need today than they were yesterday."

Search and rescue crews were out Wednesday in places that had been hard to reach before dark Tuesday evening.

Emergency crews completed at least 85 swift water rescues in the Ruidoso area, including of people who were trapped in their homes and cars as the water rose Tuesday, said Danielle Silva of the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.



Kaitlyn Carpenter/AP

A house is carried away by flash flooding in Ruidoso, N.M., Tuesday.

Two National Guard rescue teams and local teams already were in the area when the flooding began, Silva said, and more Guard teams were expected.

The water receded by nightfall, leaving cars stranded in the mud and public works scrambling to clear debris from the roadways. Several roads remained closed Wednesday, and the mayor said it would take time to restore utilities in the most damaged neighborhoods.

Officials urged residents to seek higher ground Tuesday afternoon as the waters of the Rio Ruidoso rose nearly 19 feet in a matter of minutes amid heavy rainfall. The National Weather Service issued flood warnings in the area.

A weather service flood gauge and companion video camera showed churning waters of the Rio Ruidoso surge over the river's banks into surrounding forest. Streets and bridges were closed in response.

Kaitlyn Carpenter, an artist in Ruidoso, was riding her motorcycle through town Tuesday afternoon when the storm started to pick up, and she sought shelter at the riverside Downshift Brewing Company with about 50 other people. She started to film debris rushing down the Rio Ruidoso when she spotted a house float by with a familiar turquoise door. It belonged to the family of one of her best friends.

Her friend's family was not in the house and is safe, she said.

"I've been in that house and have memories in that house, so seeing it come down the river was just pretty heartbreaking," Carpenter said.

The area has been especially vulnerable to flooding since the summer of 2024, when the South Fork and Salt fires raced across tinder-dry forest and destroyed an estimated 1,400 homes and structures. Residents were forced to flee a wall of flames, only to grapple with intense flooding later that summer.

"We know that the water levels seemed to be higher than they were last summer," Silva said. "It is a significant amount of water flowing throughout, some of it in new areas that didn't flood last year."

Matt DeMaria, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Albuquerque, said storms formed in the early afternoon over terrain that was scorched last year by wildfire. The burn scar was unable to absorb a lot of the rain, as water quickly ran downhill into the river.

Preliminary measurements show the Rio Ruidoso crested at more than 20 feet — a record high if confirmed — and was receding Tuesday evening.

Cory State, who works at the Downshift Brewing Company, welcomed in dozens of residents as the river surged and hail pelted the windows.

The sight of the home floating down the river brought back painful memories for Carpenter, whose art studio was swept away during a flood last year.

North Carolina faces flooding from remnants of Chantal

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — There were three potential storm-related deaths in North Carolina amid flooding from the remnants of Tropical Storm Chantal, a state official said Tuesday.

The state's Department of Health and Human Services was working on confirmation of the deaths in Chatham, Orange and Alamance counties, North Carolina Emergency Management spokesperson Justin Graney said in an email.

In Chatham County, an 83-year-old Pittsboro woman was killed when her car was swept off a rural road by floodwaters Sunday night, according to the North Carolina State Highway Patrol. On Monday, crews found the body of a Person County woman who went missing while on her way to work in Orange County on Sunday night, according to a social media post by the Orange County Sheriff's Office. In Alamance County, a missing man was found dead Sunday night inside a submerged vehicle found off a road in Mebane, sheriff's office spokesperson Byron Tucker told WTVD-TV.

The storm destroyed homes and impaired businesses and lives were lost, Gov. Josh Stein said during a visit to Mebane in Alamance County on Tuesday. Officials were still assessing the scale of the damage and working on a final number of deaths, he said.

"Storms like this show us what is best about North Carolina," Stein said. He praised emergency workers for their efforts knocking on doors to get people out of their homes or diverting traffic to keep people out of harm's way.

Before his visit to Mebane, Stein told reporters in Raleigh on Tuesday morning that there will be enough money to address damage from both and Chantal and Hurricane Helene, which caused catastrophic flooding in western North Carolina last year, killing more than 100 people.

Crews were working Tuesday to restore power, utilities and road access, officials said. The state's Department of Transportation reopened several major roads, including Interstate 40/85 in Alamance County on Monday, but 65 roads remained closed because of the storm, officials said.



Chris Seward/AP

Dozens of cars were towed from a parking lot at University Place shopping center after they were flooded out during Tropical Storm Chantal, Monday, in Chapel Hill, N.C.

"This historic weather event caused flooding like we haven't seen in several decades in the central part of the state," Transportation Secretary Joey Hopkins said in a statement, noting that crews were working to assess and reopen roads as soon as floodwaters recede and it is safe to do so.

Tropical Storm Chantal was downgraded to a tropical depression Sunday after making landfall in South Carolina. While the winds dropped, a 15- to 30-mile-wide swath of heavy rain followed the storm's core across North Carolina and areas within that swath saw impressive rain amounts, the weather service's Eastern Region headquarters said.

Rainfall totals exceeded 8 inches in some spots in central North Carolina and some areas saw totals of nearly 1 foot, such as in Moncure and Pittsboro in Chatham County, where 11.92 inches and 11.53 inches of rain fell.

Intense rainstorms are becoming more frequent in most of the U.S. — though experts say where they occur and whether they cause catastrophic flooding is largely a matter of chance.

The National Weather Service's office in Raleigh confirmed that four tornadoes, all EF-1s with peak winds ranging from 95 to 105 mph, touched down Sunday in Orange, Alamance, Chatham and Lee counties. No injuries or deaths were reported.

NATION

Rubio impostor using AI voice to call officials

By John Hudson and Hannah Natanson
The Washington Post

An impostor pretending to be Secretary of State Marco Rubio contacted foreign ministers, a U.S. governor and a member of Congress by sending them voice and text messages that mimic Rubio's voice and writing style using artificial intelligence-powered software, according to a senior U.S. official and State Department cable obtained by The Washington Post.

U.S. authorities do not know who is behind the string of impersonation attempts but they believe the culprit was probably attempting to manipulate powerful government officials "with the goal of gaining access to information or accounts," according to a cable sent by Rubio's office to State Department employees.

Using both text messaging and the encrypted messaging app Signal, which the Trump administration uses extensively, the impostor "contacted at least five non-Department individuals, including three foreign ministers, a U.S. governor, and a U.S. member of Congress," said the cable, dated July 3.

The impersonation campaign began in mid-June when the impostor created a Signal account using the display name "Marco.Rubio@state.gov" to contact unsuspecting foreign and domestic diplomats and politicians, said the cable. The display name is not his real email address.

"The actor left voicemails on Signal for at least two targeted individuals and in one instance, sent a text message inviting the individual to communicate on Signal," said the cable. It also noted that other State Department personnel were impersonated using email.


Rubio

When asked about the cable, the State Department responded that it would "carry out a thorough investigation and continue to implement safeguards to prevent this from happening in the future." Officials declined to discuss the contents of the messages or the names of the diplomats and officials who were targeted.

In addition to the effort to impersonate Rubio, several recent impersonation attempts have targeted high-profile U.S. officials. In May, someone breached the phone of White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles and began placing calls and messages to senators, governors and business executives while pretending to be Wiles, the Wall Street Journal reported. The episode spurred a White House and FBI investigation, although President Donald Trump dismissed its significance, saying Wiles is "an amazing woman" who "can handle it."

The FBI declined to comment about the Rubio impostor. Impersonating a federal officer or employee to deceive or obtain something is a crime.

Hany Farid, a professor at the University of California at Berkeley who specializes in digital forensics, said operations of this nature do not require sophisticated actors, but they are often successful because government officials can be careless about data security.

Once malicious actors obtain phone numbers linked to an official's Signal account, the impersonation part is easy, said Farid.

"You just need 15 to 20 seconds of audio of the person, which is easy in Marco Rubio's case. You upload it to any number of services, click a button that says 'I have permission to use this person's voice,' and then you type what you want him to say," said Farid. "Leaving voicemails is particularly effective because it's not interactive."

It is unclear if any of the officials responded to the impersonator.


Chris Granger/AP

Residents watch as law enforcement search for a fugitive that escaped a prison in New Orleans, May 21.

Derrick Groves remains last New Orleans jail escapee on the run

By Jack Brook
AP/Report For America

NEW ORLEANS — Nearly two months after 10 inmates escaped from a New Orleans jail by crawling through a hole behind a toilet, authorities have recaptured all but the man with the most violent rap sheet: Derrick Groves.

Following the May 16 jailbreak, law enforcement tracked down three escapees within 24 hours and most of the others within the next few weeks. While some of the fugitives roamed through nightlife hotspots and another made Instagram posts, Groves has so far kept a low profile.


Groves

The 28-year-old New Orleans native has the most at stake, authorities say.

Last year, a jury convicted Groves of killing two people after he opened fire on a family block party with an assault rifle in what prosecutors said was a feud with rival drug dealers.

Groves faces life imprisonment without parole, but administrative delays have kept him in jail for years rather than a more secure prison facility.

"He's got nothing to lose," said Forrest Ladd, an Orleans Parish assistant district attorney who prosecuted Groves. "That's a dangerous thing from anybody, much less somebody capable of causing mass harm."

More than 90% of people who escape from U.S. correctional facilities are recaptured within a year, said Bryce Peterson, adjunct professor of criminal justice at John Jay College.

"The longer you are out there, the more likely you are to stay out," said Peterson, though he believes Groves will be caught eventually due to the high level of media attention.

Most escapes occur when low-level offenders seize spontaneous opportunities, Peterson said. The New Orleans jailbreak stands out because of its level of "sophistication and pre-planning" and the alleged roles current and former jail employees played in the escape, he added.

Several days after the escape, authorities received information that Groves was hiding in the city's Lower Ninth Ward, the Hurricane Katrina-ravaged neighborhood where he grew up, according to court documents.

PETA sues over standards for French bulldogs, others

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The animal rights group PETA sued Tuesday to try to force the American Kennel Club to abandon the standards it backs for hyper-popular French bulldogs and some other breeds, contending that the influential club is promoting unhealthy physical features.

The lawsuit turns up the heat around one of the biggest flashpoints in dogdom: the attributes that have been honed to define some breeds, including the Frenchie, which the AKC ranks as the United States' most popular breed.

"The AKC's official breed standards for the bulldog, French bulldog, pug, dachshund and Chinese shar-pei provide blueprints for the breeding of deformed, unhealthy dogs," PETA says.

The AKC said it's committed to "the health, heritage and well-being of purebred dogs" and that responsibly bred dogs that conform to the standards are healthy.

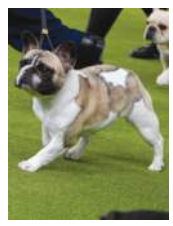
"We categorically reject PETA's mischaracterizations of specific breed standards and their assertion that these standards create unhealthy dogs," the club said in a statement, adding that dog health and welfare is "paramount and at the core of our mission."

Founded in 1884, the New York-based AKC is a nonprofit that acts like a league for many canine competitions and runs the United States' oldest dog registry, where owners may choose to document their dogs' existence and accomplishments. Mixed-breed dogs and rescues can be registered as "canine partners" and compete in some sports, but the club's history is closely tied to fanciers who cultivate and show purebreds.

Each breed has its own club that sets the "standard," or ideal characteristics, for the dogs. The AKC reviews, approves and promulgates them.

PETA, also called People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, describes itself as an animal liberation organization. Its advocacy includes boycotts and litigation. Its supporters are known for staging sometimes disruptive protests in settings including a papal audience, a Starbucks and sporting events such as the Westminster Kennel Club dog show.

The Norfolk, Va.-based nonprofit opposes dog breeding and has clashed for years with the AKC.


Frenchie

Peppered with photos and diagrams, PETA's new lawsuit runs through health problems that can beset short-legged, long-backed dachshunds ("the animal equivalent of a poorly designed bridge," in PETA's view) and shar-peis, which can have spates of fever and inflammation known as "shar-pei autoinflammatory disease." The complaint points to pugs' risk of injuries to their marbly eyes and susceptibility to breathing problems and overheating because of their flat faces.

The suit zeros in on those and other parts of bulldogs and Frenchies, including the big heads that often prompt caesarian births.

The various problems that PETA cites don't afflict all dogs of these breeds, and some do agility, dock diving and other sports. But the conditions can be serious for those that have them.

NATION

Trump sends tariff letters, avoids major partners

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump sent out tariff letters to seven smaller U.S. trading partners on Wednesday with a pledge to announce import taxes on other countries later in the day.

None of the countries targeted in the first batch of letters — the Philippines, Brunei, Moldova, Algeria, Libya, Iraq and Sri Lanka — is a major industrial rival to the United States. It's a sign that a president who has openly expressed his love for the word "tariff" is still infatuated with the idea that taxing trade will create prosperity for America.

Most economic analyses say the tariffs will worsen inflationary pressures and subtract from economic growth, but Trump has used the taxes as a way to assert the diplomatic and financial power of the U.S. on both rivals and allies. His administration is promising that the taxes on imports will lower trade imbalances, offset some of the cost of the tax cuts he signed into law on Friday and cause factory jobs to return to the United States.

Officials for the European Union, a major trade partner and source of Trump's ire on trade, said Tuesday that they are not expecting to receive a letter from Trump listing tariff rates. The Republican president started the process of announcing tariff rates on Monday by hitting two major U.S. trading partners, Japan and South Korea, with taxes of 25%.

According to Trump's letters, imports from Libya, Iraq, Algeria and Sri Lanka would be taxed at 30%, those from Moldova and Brunei at 25% and those from the Philippines at 20%. The tariffs would start Aug. 1.

The Census Bureau reported that last year U.S. ran a trade imbalance on goods of $1.4 billion with Algeria, $5.9 billion with Iraq, $900 million with Libya, $4.9 billion with the Philippines, $2.6 billion with Sri Lanka, $111 million with Brunei and $85 million with Moldova. The imbalance represents the difference between what the U.S. exported to those countries and what it imported.

Taken together, the trade imbalances with those seven countries are essentially a rounding error in a U.S. economy with a gross domestic product of $30 trillion.

The letters were posted on Truth Social after the expiration of a 90-day negotiating period with a baseline levy of 10%. Trump is giving countries more time to negotiate with his Aug. 1 deadline, but he has insisted there will be no extensions for the countries that receive letters.

The tariff letters are worded aggressively in Trump's style of writing. He frames the tariffs as an invitation to "participate in the extraordinary Economy of the United States," adding that the trade imbalances are a "major threat" to America's economy and national security.

Court blocks rule intended to make canceling subscriptions easier

Associated Press

A "click-to-cancel" rule, which would have required businesses to make it easy for consumers to cancel unwanted subscriptions and memberships, has been blocked by a federal appeals court just days before it was set to go into effect.

The Federal Trade Commission's proposed changes, adopted in October, required businesses to obtain a customer's consent before charging for memberships, auto-renewals and programs linked to free trial offers.

The FTC said at the time that businesses must also disclose when free trials or other promotional offers will end and let customers cancel recurring subscriptions as easily as they started them.

The administration of President Joe Biden included the FTC's proposal as part of its "Time is Money" initiative, a government-wide initiative that was announced last year with the aim of cracking down on consumer-related hassles.

The FTC rule was set to go into effect on Monday, but the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit said this week that the FTC made a procedural error by failing to come up with a preliminary regulatory analysis, which is required for rules whose annual impact on the U.S. economy is more than $100 million.

The FTC claimed that it did not have to come up with a preliminary regulatory analysis because it initially determined that the rule's impact on the national economy would be less than $100 million. An administrative law judge decided that the economic impact would be more than the $100 million threshold.

The court decided to vacate the rule.



JENNY KANE/AP

The logos for streaming services are seen on a remote control.

Former Biden doctor refuses to answer in probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden's former White House physician refused on Wednesday to answer questions as part of the House Republican investigation into Biden's health in office.

Dr. Kevin O'Connor invoked doctor-client privilege and his rights under the Fifth Amendment during an appearance Wednesday before the House Oversight Committee, his attorneys said.

Republicans on the Oversight Committee subpoenaed O'Connor last month as part of their sweeping investigation into Biden's health and his mental fitness as president. They claim some policies carried out during Biden's term through the use of the White House autopen may be illegitimate if it's proven the Democrat was mentally incapacitated for some of his term.

Biden has strongly denied that he was not in a right state of mind at any point while in office, calling the claims "ridiculous and false."

David Schertler, one of O'Connor's lawyers, said the doctor had "no choice" but to invoke his Fifth Amendment rights in testimony before the committee. Schertler cited both O'Connor's responsibilities to protect patient privacy as a doctor and the Justice Department's ongoing investigation into Biden's use of the autopen.

Rep. James Comer of Kentucky, the Oversight chair, said O'Connor's refusal to testify made it "clear there was a conspiracy."

"The American people demand transparency, but Dr. O'Connor would rather conceal the truth," Comer said in a statement.

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WORLD

‘You are our dagger in Europe,’ arsonist told

Intel officials worry a sabotage campaign blamed on Russia is growing more dangerous

BY EMMA BURROWS
Associated Press

LONDON — It was almost midnight when a truck driver resting in his cab heard the crackling of flames at a warehouse in east London storing equipment for Ukraine. He grabbed a fire extinguisher and leapt out — but realized the blaze was too big and retreated.

When police arrived, they banged on the doors of a nearby apartment building, shouting at residents to evacuate. Parents grabbed children and ran into the street.

About 30 minutes after the fire started, Dylan Earl, a British man who admitted to organizing the arson, received a message from a man U.K. authorities say was his Russian handler.

“Excellent,” it read in Russian.

On Tuesday, a British court found three men guilty of arson in the March 2024 plot that prosecutors said was masterminded by Russia’s intelligence services — part of a campaign of disruption across Europe that Western officials blame on Moscow and its proxies. Two other men, including Earl, previously pleaded guilty to organizing the arson.

The fire is one of more than 70 incidents linked to Russia that The Associated Press has documented since Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Four European intelligence officials told AP they’re worried the risk of serious injury or even death is rising as untrained saboteurs set fires near homes and businesses, plant explosives or build bombs. AP’s tracking shows 12 incidents of arson or serious sabotage last year compared with two in 2023 and none in 2022.

“When you start a campaign, it creates its own dynamic and gets more and more violent over time,” said one of the officials, who holds a senior position at a European intelligence agency. The official, like two others, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss security matters.



LONDON METROPOLITAN POLICE/AP

A fire that prosecutors said was organized on behalf of Russia’s intelligence service damaged a warehouse in east London that was storing goods for Ukraine.

The Kremlin did not reply to a request for comment on the British case. Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov previously said the Kremlin has never been shown “any proofs” supporting accusations Russia is running a sabotage campaign and said “certainly we definitely reject any allegations.”

Most of the saboteurs accused of working on behalf of Russia are foreign, including Ukrainians. They include young people with no criminal records who are frequently hired for a few thousand dollars, the intelligence officials said.

The senior official said Russia has been forced to rely increasingly on such amateurs since hundreds of Moscow’s spies were expelled from Western countries following an operation to poison former Russian intelligence officer Sergey Skripal in the U.K. in 2018. That led to the death of a British woman — and a major response from the West.

Russia “had to change the modus operandi, from using cadre officers to using proxies, making a more flexible, deniable system,” the official said.

Documents shared during the London warehouse trial offered a rare glimpse into how young men are recruited.

Among those were transcripts of messages between a man prosecutors said was a Russian intelligence operative and his recruit, Earl, who was active on Telegram channels associated with the Wagner Group — a mercenary organization whose operations were taken over by Russia’s Defense Ministry in 2023.

Russian military intelligence — acting through Wagner — was likely behind the plot, said Kevin Riehle, a lecturer in Intelligence and National Security at Brunel University in London.

The recruiter — who used the handle Privet Bot — posted multiple times in a Telegram channel asking for people to join the battle against the West, Riehle told the court.

Once connected, the recruiter and Earl communicated predominantly in Russian with Earl using Google to translate, according to screenshots on his phone. Their messages ranged from the deadly serious to the almost comic.

The recruiter told Earl, 21, that he was “wise and clever despite being young,” and suggested he watch the television show “The Americans” — about Soviet KGB intelligence officers undercover in the U.S.

“It will be your manual,” the recruiter wrote.

In one message, Earl boasted of — unproven — ties to the Irish Republican Army, to “murderers, kidnappers, soldiers, drug dealers, fraudsters, car thieves,” promising to be “the best spy you have ever seen.”

Earl and another man eventually recruited others who went to the warehouse the night of the fire. Earl never met the men, according to messages shared in court, and it’s unclear whether he ever visited the site himself.

Once at the warehouse, one of the men poured out a jerrycan of gasoline before igniting a rag and throwing it on the fuel. Another recorded the arson on his phone. It was also captured on CCTV.

The warehouse was the site of a mail order company that sent supplies to Ukraine, including StarLink devices that provide internet by satellite and are used by the country’s military.

After the fire, the Russian recruiter told Earl he “rushed into burning these warehouses without my approval.”

Because of that, he said, “it will be impossible to pay for this arson.”

Still, the recruiter told Earl he wanted to target more businesses with links to Ukraine.

“You are our dagger in Europe and we will be sharpening you carefully,” the recruiter wrote. “Then we will start using you in serious battles.”

European court finds Russia downed plane in Ukraine in 2014

BY MOLLY QUELL
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Europe’s top human rights court ruled that Russia was responsible for widespread violations of international law in Ukraine, including the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 in 2014, marking the first time an international court has held Moscow accountable for human rights abuses related to the conflict there.

Judges at the European Court of Human Rights on Wednesday delivered decisions on four cases brought by Ukraine and the Netherlands against Russia since the start of the conflict in 2014. The allegations include murder, torture, rape, destroying civilian infrastructure, kidnapping Ukrainian children and shooting down the Malaysian Airlines passenger jet, Flight MH17, by Ukrainian separatists who side with Russia.

Reading the decisions before a packed courtroom in Strasbourg, France, Court President Mattias Guyomar said Russian forces breached international humanitarian law in Ukraine by carrying out attacks that “killed and wounded thousands of civilians and created fear and terror.”

The judges found the human rights abuses went beyond any military objective and Russia used sexual violence as part of a strategy to break Ukrainian morale, the French judge said.

“The use of rape as a weapon of war was an act of extreme atrocity that amounted to torture,” Guyomar said.

The complaints were brought before the court’s governing body expelled Moscow in 2022, following the full-scale invasion.

The decisions are largely symbolic since Moscow says it plans to ignore them.

“We won’t abide by it, we consider it void,” Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said in a call with reporters Wednesday.

Families of the victims of the MH17 disaster see the decision as an important milestone in their 11-year quest for justice.

“It’s a real step in understanding who was really responsible,” Thomas Schansman, who lost his 18-year-old son Quinn in the tragedy, told The Associated Press.

The Boeing 777 flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was shot down on July 17, 2014, using a Russian-made Buk missile fired from territory in eastern Ukraine controlled by separatist rebels. All 298 passengers and crew were killed, including 196 Dutch citizens.

In May, the U.N.’s aviation agency found Russia responsible for the disaster.

The ECHR is an important part of the Council of Europe, which is the Continent’s foremost human rights institution. Russia was expelled from the council over Moscow’s invasion and war in Ukraine. However, the court can still deal with cases against Russia dating from before its expulsion.

In 2023, the judges sided with Ukraine and the Netherlands in a challenge over jurisdiction, finding there was sufficient evidence to show areas in eastern Ukraine controlled by separatist rebels were “under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation,” including providing weapons, and giving political and economic support.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Steps made to open public land for coal sales

CO DENVER — Federal officials on Monday took a first step toward reopening vast areas of public lands in two Western states to new coal sales as part of President Donald Trump's push to expand U.S. fossil fuel production.

The Interior Department proposal comes after the Biden administration, citing climate change, tried to end sales of the fuel from the nation's most productive coal fields — the Powder River Basin in northeastern Wyoming and southeastern Montana.

The Trump administration is instead considering selling leases for coal mining on more than 2,600 square miles of federal lands in that region, according to documents released by officials. That's an area larger than Delaware.

California governor meets with voters in key state

SC FLORENCE — California Gov. Gavin Newsom launched a two-day tour of South Carolina on Tuesday, meeting voters across rural areas — and some GOP strongholds — in the early-voting state, the latest signal that the Democrat is eyeing a 2028 run for president.

Over the course of Tuesday and Wednesday, Newsom is slated to make a total of eight stops across the state, a trip that state Democratic Party officials have said includes coffee shops, small businesses and churches.

Although the 2028 Democratic primary calendar won't be set for many months, potential candidates for the party's upcoming presidential slate have already started visiting South Carolina, with the expectation that the state will continue to play a pivotal role.

10 held in immigration detention center shooting

TX ALVARADO — Ten people have been arrested on attempted murder charges in connection with a shooting outside of a Texas immigration detention center that wounded a police officer, where people in black military-style clothing fired at authorities in a "planned ambush," a U.S. attorney said.

The officer was shot in the neck on Friday, the night of the Fourth of July, after reporting to the Prairieland Detention Center in Alvarado. He was treated at a hospital and released, the Johnson County Sheriff's office said.

Before that, the group dressed in black began shooting fireworks, damaging cars and a guard structure, and writing words such as "traitor" and "ICE pig." All of that "seemed to be designed to draw U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel outside the facility, and it worked," Nancy Larson, acting U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Texas, said at a Monday night news conference.

Two unarmed corrections officers came out of the detention center to speak with the group. At some point, the Alvarado police officer arrived and was shot by someone who was in the woods, Larson said.

The 10 were each charged with three counts of attempted murder of a federal officer and three counts of discharging a firearm in relation to a crime of violence. Another person was charged with obstruction of justice and conspiracy for attempting to conceal and destroy evidence, Larson said.

Sheriff steps down after sexual misconduct charge

NC BRYSON CITY — The longtime sheriff of a western North Carolina county whom some women accused of sexual misconduct has quit before he could be permanently removed.

Curtis Cochran, who was first elected Swain County sheriff in 2006, retired from the post effective July 1, according to a statement from the county Board of Commissioners. The chief deputy is performing the sheriff's duties while the commissioners decide who will serve out the remainder of Cochran's four-year term through late 2026, the statement said.

Cochran, 72, was charged in state courts with felonious restraint and misdemeanor sexual battery, soliciting prostitution and assault on a female, according to June 27 arrest warrants. The same day, Ashley Hornsby Welch, the district attorney for Swain and six other far western counties, filed a petition seeking to remove Cochran from office for "willful misconduct and maladministration in office."

Welch's removal petition included signed affidavits by two women who allege Cochran made separate unwanted sexual advances on them while he drove on land held by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Cochran was released on bond on the state criminal charges and faces an Aug. 5 court hearing.

Ex-'16 and Pregnant' star charged in fatal overdose

GA ROME — A woman who appeared on MTV's "16 and Pregnant" was arrested Monday in Georgia on charges including involuntary manslaughter related to a man's death by fentanyl poisoning earlier this year.

Whitney Purvis, 33, was being held without bond in the Floyd County Jail in Rome, Ga., according to online jail records.

WAGA-TV reported that police records say that officers went to a home in Rome on Feb. 16 and found John Mark Harris dead from an overdose. Officers saw possible drug paraphernalia at the scene.

An arrest warrant accuses Purvis of giving Harris a combination of xylazine and fentanyl known as "Tranq" that led to an overdose, the television station reported.

Court rules against tribes in voting rights case

ND BISMARCK — A federal appeals court won't reconsider its decision in a redistricting case that went against two Native American tribes that challenged North Dakota's legislative redistricting map, and the dispute could be headed for the U.S. Supreme Court.

The case has drawn national interest because of a 2-1 ruling issued in May by a three-judge panel of the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that erased a path through the federal Voting Rights Act for people in seven states to sue under a key provision of the landmark federal civil rights law. The tribes argued that the 2021 map violated the act by diluting their voting strength and ability to elect their own candidates.

The panel said only the U.S. Department of Justice can bring such lawsuits. That followed a 2023 ruling out of Arkansas in the same circuit that also said private individuals can't sue under Section 2 of the law.

Those rulings conflict with decades of rulings by appellate courts in other federal circuits that have affirmed the rights of private individuals to sue under Section 2, creating a split that the Supreme Court may be asked to resolve. However, several of the high court's conservative justices recently have indicated interest in making it harder, if not impossible, to bring redistricting lawsuits under the Voting Rights Act.

Measles spread static in epicenter of outbreak

TX DALLAS — Gaines County, the epicenter of the massive Texas measles outbreak that began in January, no longer has ongoing measles transmission, public health officials said on Tuesday.

The Department of State Health Services released its weekly measles update, which included no new measles cases reported in the outbreak over the past week. The total outbreak case count instead remained steady at 753 confirmed cases.

There have been a total of 98 hospitalizations over the course of the outbreak, according to the Tuesday update. The outbreak has also claimed the lives of two unvaccinated Texas children.

Over half of the total outbreak cases have been reported in Gaines County, which borders New Mexico. The virus tore through that county, spreading rapidly among unvaccinated residents and resulting in 414 reported cases.

From wire reports



PHOTOS BY JEFF GRITCHEN, THE ORANGE COUNTY (CALIF.) REGISTER/AP





Wiener dog racers prep for big run

Above: Dogs get used to the starting gate Monday during practice day for the 28th Wienerschnitzel Wiener Nationals at Los Alamitos Race Course in Cypress, Calif. Far left: Sisi, of Seal Beach, dons a pair of shades. Left: Jazzy, from Redondo Beach, top, and Kinzi, from San Clemente, rest. The dogs are warming up for the main event Saturday, when the dogs run between live horse races.

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Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
Laura Law, Chief Operating Officer
Lt. Col. Daniel "DQ" Quinlan, Europe commander
John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Pacific commander

EDITORIAL

Sean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation
moores.sean@stripes.com
Ann Pinson, Digital Managing Editor
pinson.ann@stripes.com

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast

Erik Slavin, Europe & Mideast Bureau Chief
slavin.erik@stripes.com

+49(0)631.3615.9350; DSN (314)583.9350

Pacific

Aaron Kidd, Pacific Bureau Chief
kidd.aaron@stripes.com

+81.42.552.2511 ext. 88380; DSN (315)227.7380

Washington

Joseph Cacchioli, Washington Bureau Chief
cacchioli.joseph@stripes.com

(+1)(202)886-0033

Brian Bowers, Assistant Managing Editor, News
bowers.brian@stripes.com

CIRCULATION

Mideast

David Schultz, District Manager
schultz.david@stripes.com
xsscirculation@stripes.com
+49(0)152.5672.5036; DSN (314)583-9111

Europe

Carlo Aquino, Circulation Manager
aquino.carlo@stripes.com
memberservices@stripes.com

+49(0)631.3615.9136; DSN (314)583.9136

Pacific

Mari Mori, customerhelp@stripes.com
+81-3 6385.3171; DSN (315)227.7333

CONTACT US

Washington

tel: (+1)202.886.0003

633 3rd St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20001-3050

Reader letters

letters@stripes.com

Additional contacts

stripes.com/contactus

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Jacqueline Smith

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OPINION

Congress is addicted to megabills, despite their risks

BY RONALD BROWNSTEIN
Bloomberg Opinion

Extraordinarily narrow and unstable House and Senate majorities have become routine in modern American politics. The frantic, final maneuvering last week before Congress approved President Donald Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act shows why that's likely to persist for some time. And that means business, local governments, nonprofits and ordinary Americans need to buckle up for more hairpin turns in national policy that make it almost impossible to plan for the long term.

Political parity has become a defining feature of our times. Neither party has won a House majority greater than 10 seats in each of the past three congressional sessions. That hasn't happened since the formation of the modern party system in 1828. Likewise, one or the other party has reached 55 or more Senate seats in only three of the 13 congressional sessions since 2000, compared to 17 of the final 20 sessions of the 20th century.

With narrower margins, partisan control is flipping more frequently. Since 1980, for instance, neither party has controlled the Senate for more than eight consecutive years; never has the Senate changed hands so often over such a long period. No president has gone into a midterm election with unified control of the White House and Congress and successfully defended it since Jimmy Carter in 1978.

As last week's debate on the sprawling GOP budget bill demonstrated, the two parties have refused to downsize their legislative ambitions to these systematically smaller and more ephemeral majorities. "Both political parties are more ideologically homogeneous than they used to be, they have big goals, they want to do a lot of things," said Vanderbilt University political scientist John Sides. "We are not in an era where either political party comes into power and says, 'Let's make a few tweaks.' "

If anything, each new president seems to have internalized the likelihood that he will lose unified control of government after two years and has front-loaded his ambitions in response. Even with very small congressional margins, both Joe Biden and Trump styled themselves as transformative presidents and set out during their first year to pass a massive omnibus statute — Biden's Build Back Better plan and Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill. Both parties have forgotten, or rejected, the advice of Thomas Jefferson, who wrote in 1808 "that great innovations should not be forced on a slender majority."

Republicans attuned to Jefferson's admonition might have drafted a more fiscally and politically balanced bill that exposed their marginal members to less risk. Instead, they assembled a polarizing grab-bag of MAGA priorities that ensured an intense backlash — and pressured their marginal members to accept it anyway by conspicuously threatening primary challenges against those who balked.

In the immediate sense, that strategy worked: Just one Republican representative and two GOP senators in vulnerable seats voted against the bill. (One other in each chamber opposed it from the right.) But one cost of that strong-arm approach quickly became apparent when Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina announced his retirement right after after Trump attacked him for opposing the bill, creating an open seat that will become Democrats' best Senate opportunity in 2026.

Next year's midterm election could bring more consequences. Polling has shown the bill facing enormous public opposition, particularly to its cornerstone feature of cutting federal health care programs for average families by more than $1 trillion to fund tax cuts for the wealthy.

The districts that will get hurt most by the bill are primarily non-urban, culturally conservative places where Democrats don't expect to compete. But opposition to the principle of cutting health care for people who need it to fund tax cuts for people who don't will likely prove a powerful Democratic argument. There are easily enough districts where white-collar suburban voters will be offended by the Medicaid cuts, even if they're not directly affected by them, to cost the GOP the House majority next year.

The legislative contortions over the bill demonstrated how the parties have trapped themselves in a self-perpetuating cycle of instability. Because Republicans have such small House and Senate majorities, they could not give vulnerable members in either chamber a "hall pass" to vote against the measure. But because they could not grant such exemptions, Republicans increased the odds that some of those vulnerable members will lose next year and sink their majority, at least in the House. Passing a highly partisan and deeply unpopular bill with coercive demands for party loyalty isn't a recipe for constructing durable congressional majorities.

The mismatch between the parties' reach and their grasp makes it reasonable to expect that Congress will remain on a rollercoaster of narrow margins and frequent shifts in control. That's not good news for any institution that needs stability from public policy, which is all of them. This bill erases Biden policies that prompted billions in investments from clean energy companies and medical providers. But if Democrats control the White House and Congress in 2029, it's easy to imagine a different set of industries — oil companies, electric utilities, drug makers — facing equally disruptive swerves from Washington.

All American institutions would benefit from federal policies that attract support broad enough to outlast a single presidential term. The Republican choice to muscle through the most sweeping of innovations on the most slender of majorities shows why we're unlikely to see many of those any time soon.

Ronald Brownstein is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering politics and policy. He is also a CNN analyst and previously worked for The Atlantic, The National Journal and the Los Angeles Times. This column reflects the personal views of the author and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

Flooding at Texas camp brings out best and worst of us

A Boston Herald editorial

Tragedies bring out the best in people — at least that's the assumption of a decent society. For some, however, the misfortune of others prompts them to unleash the most vile and abhorrent of screeds.

When torrential rains in central Texas caused the surging Guadalupe River to flood Friday morning, the swift, deadly waters washed away much of Camp Mystic, an all-girls Christian summer camp. The death toll from the flooding has surpassed 100 people, including 27 girls and counselors at the camp.

Jenna Bush Hager, 43, talked about the devastation on "Today."

"My mom was a counselor there, but also so many of my friends were raised at this camp," said Bush Hager.

"Texas camps are institutions, as you just heard, where many family members, generations — this camp was 100 years old — so grandmothers, mothers, kids, have all gone there."

The phrase "a parent's worst nightmare" has been used, but the horror, grief and fear among those still waiting for their daughters to be found or who have learned their children are dead is beyond words.

Prayers for those killed and missing and words of empathy have poured in.

Then there are those who exploit the pain of others for their own agendas. They lack a conscience, but they have social media accounts.

Houston pediatrician Dr. Christina B. Propst posted this under her old Facebook username, Chris Tina, according to Mediaite: "May all visitors, children, non-MAGA voters and pets be safe and dry," Probst wrote. The post went viral after a screenshot was shared by Libs of TikTok.

"Kerr County MAGA voted to gut FEMA. They deny climate change. May they get what they voted for. Bless their hearts."

There was well-deserved backlash, lots of it. Propst deleted the post, but she couldn't delete the consequences. Blue Fish Pediatrics, her employer, announced that "the individual is no longer employed" there.

"As we previously mentioned in our original statement, we strongly condemn the comments that were made in that post. That post does not reflect the values, standards, or mission of Blue Fish Pediatrics," the company said.

Propst wasn't the only one scraping moral bottom. As searchers worked tirelessly, a former Houston mayoral appointee raged that Camp Mystic was "white-only."

"I know I'm going to get canceled for this, but Camp Mystic is a white-only girls' Christian camp. They don't even have a token Asian. They don't have a token Black person. It's an all-white, white-only conservative Christian camp," Sade Perkins said in a video on her private TikTok account.

She was appointed to the city's Food Insecurity Board by former Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner in 2023, the New York Post reported. That term was up in January — and Houston Mayor John Whitmire said Sunday that he has no plans to reappoint her, particularly after her "deeply inappropriate comments."

Part of social media's appeal is the chance it offers for anyone, famous, infamous and unknown, to voice their views on current events, whether they have followers in the millions or dozens. All too often it's a megaphone for the morally bankrupt.

It's also, as Propst and Perkins are to discover, forever. Nothing really goes away on the internet, especially scandals. Their reprehensible posts and videos will always be there, thanks to screenshots, and searchable by, say, potential future employers, neighbors and friends.

We have no sympathy for them.

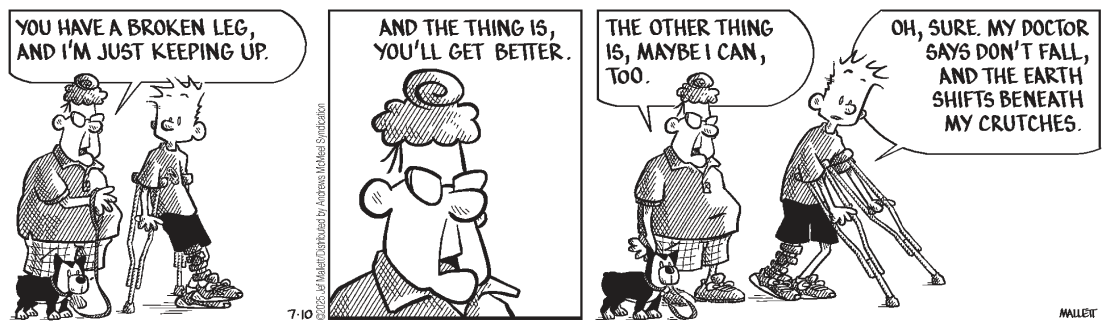
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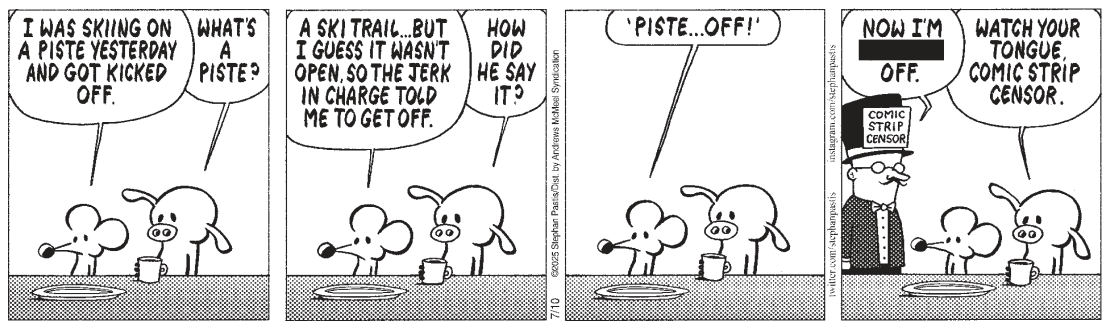
Loose Parts



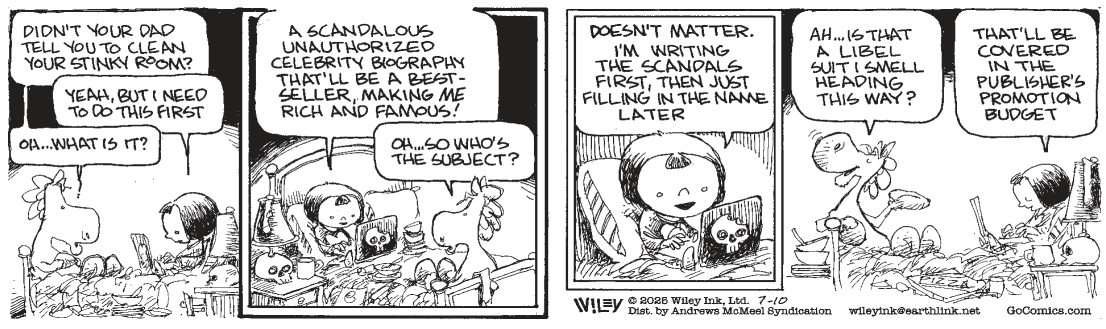
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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

ACROSS

1 Avocado dip, for short
5 Carried out
8 Transcript stats
12 "La — Bonita"
13 Language suffix
14 Coffee vessels
15 Mad king of theater
16 Young lion
17 "If it — broke ..."
18 Italian cheese
20 Off-roaders, for short
22 Aides to captains
26 "Matlock" star Kathy
29 Dispensed candy
30 Chef Garten
31 Love god
32 Misbehaving
33 Actor Garcia
34 Back talk
35 Prefix with athlete
36 Sanctify
37 Eleventh hour
40 Slightly
41 Wave rider
45 Wheeling's river
47 Chit
49 Yarn
50 Shopping complex
51 Camera type
52 Earth sci.
53 Heart of the matter
54 "Yoo-hoo!"
55 Contradict

DOWN

1 Arizona river
2 Exploits
3 Jai —
4 House wine orders
5 Interior design
6 Terre Haute sch.
7 Battled verbally
8 Tropical fruit
9 Immaculate
10 New England cape
11 Retired jet
19 Dogtag wearers (Abbr.)
21 Celeb gossip source
23 Iberian nation
24 Some defensive linemen
25 Declares
26 Church ringer
27 Operatic solo
28 Schooner features
32 Part of BBC
33 Tipped off
35 Texter's "No more!"
36 A/C stat
38 Letter-shaped hardware
39 Loan shark's practice
42 Confront
43 Carolina college
44 Depend (on)
45 Texter's "Wow!"
46 Japanese "yes"
48 Yucatan "Bravo!"

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

7-10

CRYPTOQUIP

XSG DOVN XFRWHL VSHM SFV VGCGK GYMWHNGGV PHRKQ CFLRHOV XSRKQV. F WHX QHGV HK DGSRKP XSG VGFYV.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A PERSON IS THE PRESIDING OFFICER OF AN ORIGAMI COMMITTEE, I'D CALL THEM THE FOLDING CHAIR.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals E

FACES

Director's latest project: de-extinction

Peter Jackson assisting effort to genetically engineer living birds to resemble lost moa

BY CHRISTINA LARSON
Associated Press

Filmmaker Peter Jackson owns one of the largest private collections of bones of an extinct New Zealand bird called the moa. His fascination with the flightless ostrich-like bird has led to an unusual partnership with a biotech company known for its grand and controversial plans to bring back lost species.

On Tuesday, Colossal Biosciences announced an effort to genetically engineer living birds to resemble the extinct South Island giant moa — which once stood 12 feet tall — with $15 million in funding from Jackson and his partner Fran Walsh. The collaboration also includes the New Zealand-based Ngai Tahu Research Centre.

"The movies are my day job, and the moa are my fun thing I do," Jackson said. "Every New Zealand schoolchild has a fascination with the moa."

Outside scientists say the idea of bringing back extinct species into the modern landscape is likely impossible, although it may be feasible to tweak the genes of living animals to have similar physical traits. Scientists have mixed feelings on whether that will be helpful, and some worry that focusing on lost creatures could distract from protecting species that still exist.

The moa had roamed New Zealand for 4,000 years until they became extinct around 600 years ago, mainly because of overhunting. A large skeleton brought to England in the 19th century, now on display at the Yorkshire Museum, prompted international interest in the long-necked bird.



A depiction of the largest species of moa, the South Island giant moa, which stood 12 feet tall.

Unlike Colossal's work with dire wolves, the moa project is in very early stages. It started with a phone call about two years ago after Jackson heard about the company's efforts to "de-extinct" — or create genetically similar animals to — species like the woolly mammoth and the dire wolf.

Jackson put Colossal in touch with experts he'd met through his own moa bone-collecting. At that point, he had amassed between 300 and 400 bones, he said.

In New Zealand, it's legal to buy and sell moa bones found on private lands, but not on public conservation areas — nor to export them.



COLOSSAL BIOSCIENCES/AP photos

Filmmaker Peter Jackson, left, and Colossal CEO Ben Lamm hold up bones from Jackson's collection of extinct moa bones in Wellington, New Zealand, in 2024. "The movies are my day job, and the moa are my fun thing I do," Jackson said. "Every New Zealand schoolchild has a fascination with the moa."

The first stage of the moa project will be to identify well-preserved bones from which it may be possible to extract DNA, Colossal's chief scientist Beth Shapiro said.

Those DNA sequences will be compared to genomes of living bird species, including the ground-dwelling tinamou and emu, "to figure out what it is that made the moa unique compared to other birds," she said.

Colossal used a similar process of comparing ancient DNA of extinct dire wolves to determine the genetic differences with gray wolves. Then scientists took blood cells from a living gray wolf and used CRISPR to genetically modify them in 20 different sites. Pups with long white hair and muscular jaws were born late last year.

Working with birds presents different challenges, Shapiro said.

Unlike mammals, bird embryos develop inside eggs, so the process of transferring an embryo to a surrogate will not look like mammalian in vitro fertilization.

"There's lots of different scientific hurdles that need to be overcome with any species that we pick as a candidate for de-extinction," Shapiro said. "We are in the very early stages."

If the Colossal team succeeds in creating a tall bird with huge feet and thick pointed claws resembling the moa, there's also the pressing question of where to put it, said Duke University ecologist Stuart Pimm, who is not involved in the project.

"Can you put a species back into the wild once you've exterminated it there?" he said. "I think it's exceedingly unlikely that they could do this in any meaningful way."

"This will be an extremely dangerous animal," Pimm added.

Swiss village cashes in as fans of Netflix drama visit

BY JAMEY KEATEN
Associated Press

A Swiss village has cashed in on a pay-for-entry turnstile used by avid tourists who flock each day to a lakeside dock featured in the hit South Korean Netflix series "Crash Landing On You," often to snap souvenir photos.

Local leaders in Iseltwald and tourism officials insist the village's 406 inhabitants aren't getting rich off the influx of visitors, who pay 5 Swiss francs ($6.30) to access the dock. In 2024, entries brought in nearly 245,000 francs ($307,000), while a one-franc public pay toilet collected about 58,000 francs more, said village clerk Gabriela Blatter.

Proceeds have gone mostly to garbage disposal, restroom cleaning, additional work hours and custodial staff hires, she said.

Titia Weiland, manager of the Bönigen-Iseltwald Tourism agency, said the funds go to village upkeep: "It's not correct to read it as 'the community gets rich,'" alluding to some comments along those lines in the media and online.

The village, situated along a small peninsula that juts out into Lake Brienz, features majestic views of Alpine peaks.

An episode in early 2020 of the cross-border Korean love story spotlighted the dock as a romantic getaway. That sparked online hype among fans of the series across Asia and beyond.

The continued influx has exposed growing pains for the Swiss village. Part of the problem is infrastructure: Iseltwald has three hotels and four restaurants, not enough for about 1,000 visitors who arrive by tour bus, public bus and car each day, according to Blatter. The village is revamping a parking lot to help cope with the strain, and the only village store now operates seven days a week. Previously, it was open weekdays.

"There were always tourists in Iseltwald. We are happy with them. The problem is that the tourists don't understand what's private and what's public," Blatter said, adding that some traipse through private yards and gardens. "They go everywhere."



PETER KLAUNZER/AP

Korean visitors visit the pier at Lake Brienz in Iseltwald, Switzerland. An average of 1,000 tourists visit the town of 406 inhabitants daily.

English version of Hamas captivity memoir coming

A memoir by an Israeli man held in captivity for more than a year by Hamas is coming out this fall in the United States.

Eli Sharabi's "Hostage," written in Hebrew and already a bestseller in Israel, is the first published memoir by anyone kidnapped by Hamas during the deadly surprise attack of Oct. 7, 2023. Harper Influence, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, announced Tuesday that the English-language edition will come out this Oct. 7.

Sharabi, 53, was released in early February and has said that he had shrunk to under 100 pounds. More than 1,000 were killed in the attack and more than 200 taken hostage.

According to Harper Influence, Sharabi writes about his experience with his captors in "stark, unflinching prose."

Associated Press

SCOREBOARD/COLLEGE FOOTBALL

DEALS

Tuesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BOSTON RED SOX — Transferred RHP Liam Hendriks from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Selected the contract of RHP Isaiah Campbell from Worcester (IL). Optioned RHP Richard Fitts to Worcester.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Sent 3B Vinny Capra outright to Charlotte (IL). Reinstated CF Luis Robert Jr. from the 10-day IL. Optioned 3B Tristan Gray to Charlotte. Sent LHP Cam Booser to Charlotte on a rehab assignment.

DETROIT TIGERS — Agreed to terms with LHP Devin Smeltzer on a minor league contract.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Transferred LHP Cole Ragans from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Placed LF Mark Canha on the 10-day IL. Selected the contract of SS Cam Devanney from Omaha (IL) and activated him.

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Reinstated 3B Yoán Moncada from the 10-day IL. Optioned RHP Victor Mederos to Salt Lake (PCL). Recalled LHP Sam Aldegheri from Rocket City (SL). Optioned SS Chad Stevens to Salt Lake.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Placed RHP Mark Leiter Jr. on the 15-day IL retroactive to July 7. Recalled RHP Clayton Beeter from Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL).

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Sent LHP Shane McClanahan to FCL Rays on a rehab assignment. Optioned RHP Paul Gervase to Durham (IL). Recalled LHP Ian Seymour from Durham. Agreed to terms with RHP Peter Strzelecki on a minor league contract. Sent RHP Manuel Rodríguez to Durham on a rehab assignment.

TEXAS RANGERS — Agreed to terms with LHP Danny Jimenez on a minor league contract.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Placed RHP Nick Sandlin on the 15-day IL. Recalled LHP Justin Bruihl from Buffalo (IL).

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Sent RHP Kendall Graveman to ACL D-Backs on a rehab assignment.

ATLANTA BRAVES — Agreed to terms with LHP Victor Duarte on a minor league contract.

CINCINNATI REDS — Sent RF Jake Fraley and RHP Carson Spiers to Louisville (IL) on rehab assignments.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Recalled RHP Alexis Diaz from Oklahoma City (PCL).

NEW YORK METS — Reinstated LF Jesse Winker from the 60-day IL. Transferred RHP Tylor Megill from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Placed LF Starling Marte on the 10-day IL, retroactive to July 7. Sent LHP Sean Manaea to Syracuse (IL) on a rehab assignment. Agreed to terms with RHP Junior Fernández on a minor league contract. Designated RHP Zach Pop for assignment. Selected the contract of RHP Alex Carrillo from Syracuse.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Agreed to terms with RHP Nabil Crismatt on a minor league contract.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Sent LHP Ryan Borucki to Bradenton (FSL) on a rehab assignment. Recalled OF Jack Suwinski from Indianapolis (IL). Placed RHP Chase Shugart on the 15-day IL.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Sent RHP Orlando Ribalta to Harrisburg (EL) on a rehab assignment. Transferred RHP Trevor Williams from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Placed C Keibert Ruiz on the 7-day IL retroactive to July 6. Agreed to terms with RHP Luis García. Recalled C Drew Millas from Rochester (IL). Optioned RHP Eduardo Salazar to Rochester.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

ATLANTA HAWKS — Signed G Luke Kennard to a contract.

BROOKLYN NETS — Signed F Drake Powell to a rookie scale contract. Renounced their free-agent exception rights to F Ziaire Williams.

DENVER NUGGETS — Acquired F Cameron Johnson from the Brooklyn Nets in exchange for F Michael Porter Jr. and draft considerations.

HOUSTON ROCKETS — Re-signed G Aaron Holiday to a contract.

INDIANA PACERS — Re-signed G Quenton Jackson to a two-way contract. Signed G Kam Jones to a contract.

LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS — Waived G Jordan Miller.

MILWAUKEE BUCKS — Signed F Taurean Prince to a contract.

PHOENIX SUNS — Signed F Isaiah Livers to a two-way contract.

SACRAMENTO KINGS — Signed G Isaiah Stevens to a two-way contract. Signed F Drew Eubanks to a contract.

Women's National Basketball Association

DALLAS WINGS — Waived F Liatu King.

PHOENIX MERCURY — Waived F Murjanatu Musa. Signed F/G DeWanna Bonner to a rest-of-season contract.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Acquired F Sam O'Reilly from Edmonton in exchange for F Isaac Howard.

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

CF MONTREAL — Signed G Thomas Gillier to a one-year contract by loan from Italian Serie A side Bologna FC that includes a 2026 club option to extend.

FC CINCINNATI — Acquired W Ender Echenique from Caracas FC (Venezuelan Primera Division) via transfer.

MINNESOTA UNITED — Signed G Kayne Rizvanovich to a short-term agreement contract.

SAN JOSE EARTHQUAKES — Loaned MF Hernán Lopez to Argentinos Juniors (Argentina's Primera Division) for the remainder of the season with a purchase option.

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA

Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	13	6	.684	—
Atlanta	12	7	.632	1
Indiana	9	9	.500	3½
Washington	9	10	.474	4
Chicago	5	13	.278	7½
Connecticut	2	16	.111	10½

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	17	2	.895	—
Phoenix	13	6	.684	4
Seattle	12	7	.632	5
Golden State	9	9	.500	7½
Las Vegas	9	10	.474	8
Los Angeles	6	13	.316	11
Dallas	6	14	.300	11½

Tuesday's games

Washington 81, Chicago 79
New York 87, Las Vegas 78

Wednesday's games

Seattle at Connecticut
Golden State at Indiana
Minnesota at Phoenix
Dallas at Chicago

Thursday's games

Minnesota at Los Angeles
Las Vegas at Washington

Friday's games

Atlanta at Indiana
Connecticut at Seattle

PRO SOCCER

MLS

Eastern Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Cincinnati	13	5	3	42	33	27
Nashville	12	4	5	41	37	23
Philadelphia	12	5	4	40	35	21
Columbus	10	3	8	38	34	27
Orlando City	9	5	7	34	39	28
Inter Miami CF	9	3	5	32	40	28
NYC FC	9	7	4	31	27	22
New York	8	7	6	30	33	25
Chicago	8	8	4	28	39	36
Charlotte FC	8	11	2	26	34	36
New England	6	7	6	24	25	23
D.C. United	4	10	7	19	17	39
Atlanta	4	10	6	18	22	37
Toronto FC	4	11	5	17	23	28
CF Montréal	3	13	5	14	18	40

Western Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Diego FC	12	6	3	39	44	29
Vancouver	11	4	5	38	35	22
Minn. United	10	4	7	37	35	24
Portland	9	5	6	33	30	28
Seattle	8	6	6	30	28	26
San Jose	7	7	7	28	41	33
LA FC	7	5	5	26	30	24
Houston	7	9	5	26	29	34
Colorado	7	9	5	26	24	30
Austin FC	7	8	5	26	15	23
Sporting KC	6	10	5	23	33	38
Real Salt Lake	6	10	4	22	22	28
FC Dallas	5	9	6	21	27	37
St Louis City	3	12	6	15	21	34
LA Galaxy	2	13	6	12	22	42

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

Saturday's games

Orlando City 2, Charlotte FC 2, tie
Cincinnati 2, Chicago 1
Atlanta 0, D.C. United 0, tie
Miami 4, CF Montréal 1
Los Angeles FC at Austin FC ppd.
Nashville 1, Philadelphia 0
Real Salt Lake 3, St Louis City 2
Portland 2, New England 1
Houston 4, San Diego FC 3
New York 1, San Jose 1, tie

Sunday's game

Columbus 1, Seattle 1, tie

Wednesday's games

Miami at New England
Colorado at Los Angeles FC

Saturday, July 12

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

Sunday, July 13

Portland at St Louis City



LM OTERO/AP

Commissioner Brett Yormark, speaking during Big 12 media days Tuesday in Frisco, Texas, said he's glad the conference didn't conduct a media poll to predict the order of finish this year.

Big 12 ends predictions after ASU's big rebound

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas — There are no official Big 12 predictions going into this season, so there will be no last-to-first narrative like the one that played out for Arizona State in its league debut.

Going into its 30th football season, the Big 12 didn't conduct a preseason media poll predicting the order of finish for the 16-team conference. The results were way off last year.

"I try to ignore it as best I can," Kansas State coach Chris Klieman said Tuesday at Big 12 media days. "It's one of the reasons we as coaches did not do a coaches poll because I think the narrative has really hurt our league. I know it hurt Arizona State and I know it hurt BYU last year."

The Sun Devils won the Big 12 championship game last season after being picked to finish at the bottom of the standings. ASU was in a four-way tie for first place in the regular-season standings, beat Iowa State in the title game and was the only Big 12 team to make the College Football Playoff.

Sun Devils coach Kenny Dillingham said he couldn't care less about the predictions last year, or what anybody might have guessed this season. They do return quarterback Sam Leavitt, who was picked as the league's preseason offensive player of the year since media still voted on a preseason All-Big 12 team.

"I don't really care where people put us. Vote us first, vote us last, vote us in the middle. If we're so focused on other people's expectations of us, then you're going to limit yourself," Dillingham said Tuesday.

"Who knows? Are we supposed to win six games? Are we supposed to win nine games? Are we supposed to go undefeated? Are we supposed to win zero? ... All I know is when we show up to work, we should be the very best version of ourselves. And if we compete in something, you better compete to win."

BYU was picked to finish 13th in the league last year, and was part of that four-way tie at the end of the regular season with 7-2 conference records. The Cougars finished 11-2 overall, including a 9-0 start in which they had an early win over ACC newcomer SMU, which made the 12-team playoff field even after losing its conference championship game.

Big 12 Commissioner Brett Yormark said there's no value to such preseason football polls, especially with the ever-changing landscape in the game. He felt Arizona State was disadvantaged because of being picked 16th long before even playing its first game.

"With the transfer portal and with roster management and what goes on as you build that roster, no one knows what they really have. They know what they have on paper, but it hasn't played out," Yormark said. "And that was the case with Arizona State last year. So I don't know if it's a trend or not, but certainly it's the right thing for the Big 12 and I'm glad we did it."

The Sun Devils went into the Big 12 title game last December at 15th in the CFP rankings, behind three SEC teams with three losses and Mountain West Conference champion Boise State. ASU was then 12th in the final CFP rankings, but got a first-round bye as one of the top four-ranked conference champions before the format changed for this season to more direct seeding.

A series of tiebreakers had put Arizona State and Iowa State in the Big 12 title game, and eliminated BYU and Colorado from title contention.

Utah, which like the Sun Devils made its Big 12 debut last year, was the preseason favorite to win the league. The Utes won all three of their non-conference games, but went 2-7 otherwise to finish near the bottom of the Big 12 standings.

Oklahoma State was last after going 0-9 in conference play. The Cowboys had been picked third.

MLB

ROUNDUP

Giants walk off on inside-the-park HR

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Patrick Bailey hit a three-run, inside-the-park home run with one out in the ninth inning, lifting the San Francisco Giants to a 4-3 win over the Philadelphia Phillies

Mike Yastrzemski reached base twice and scored to help the Giants to their sixth win in seven games.

Casey Schmitt began the rally with a leadoff double. After Jung Hoo Lee popped out, Wilmer Flores lined a single to center.

Bailey, who grounded into a double play and struck out in two of his previous at-bats, then smashed a 1-0 fastball from Jordan Romano (1-4) into right-center field.

Ryan Walker (2-3) retired one batter, with two on in the top of the ninth, to get the win.

Blue Jays 6, White Sox 1 (7): Chris Bassitt pitched six strong innings, Davis Schneider hit a home run and visiting Toronto beat Chicago in a game that was shortened to seven innings because of rain.

The Blue Jays have won 10 games in a row — their longest win streak since they won 11 straight in 2015 — and 12 of 13.

Schneider hit a leadoff homer off starter Aaron Civale (1-6) to open the scoring before Guerrero and Addison Barger each hit an RBI double in Toronto's five-run third inning.

Bassitt (9-4) gave up four hits and one run on a solo homer by Josh Rojas in the sixth.

Tigers 4, Rays 2: Colt Keith homered and drove in three runs as host Detroit won its fifth straight game, beating Tampa Bay.

The Tigers have outscored their opponents 19-6 in the winning streak, which started with a three-game sweep of the division rival Guardians over the weekend.

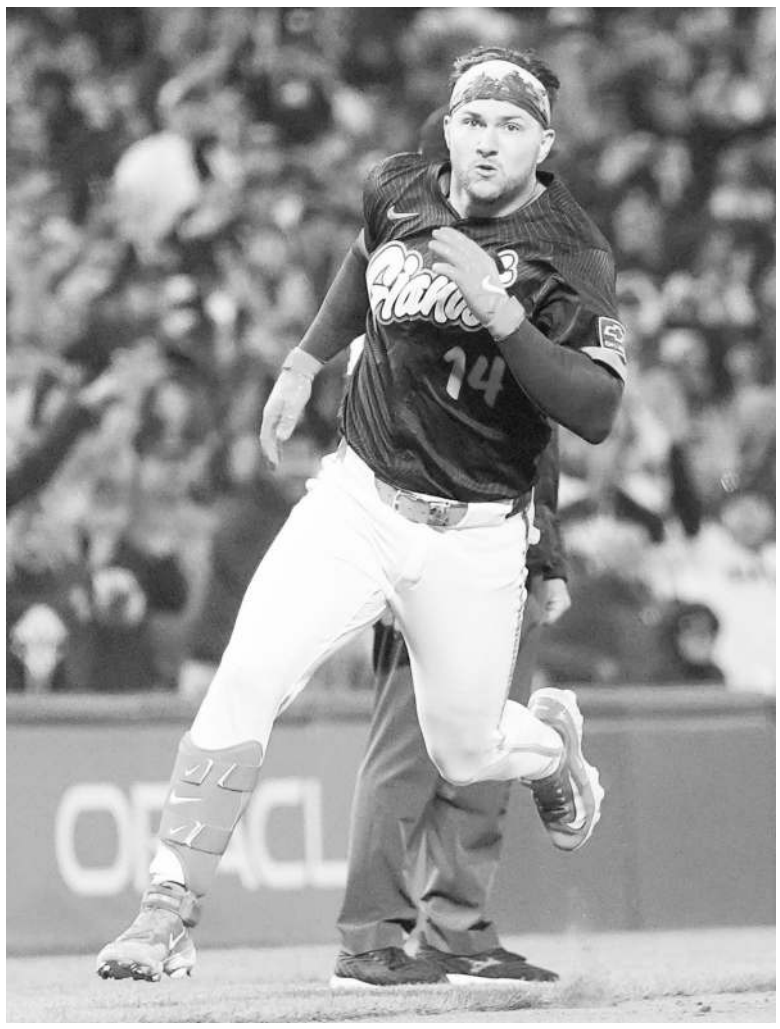
Detroit starter Jack Flaherty allowed two runs in 6⅓ innings, striking out eight. Tommy Kahnle (1-1) picked up the win after replacing Flaherty and Will Vest pitched the ninth for his 15th save.

Marlins 12, Reds 2: Miami extended its franchise-record road winning streak to 11 with a victory over Cincinnati.

It's the longest road winning streak in the major leagues since Philadelphia won 13 straight away from home in 2023.

Eury Pérez (2-2) made his sixth start for the Marlins since returning this season from Tommy John surgery and only two hits including Matt McLain's solo homer, his 10th, in the first inning. Pérez struck out eight and didn't walk a batter.

Royals 4, Pirates 3: Nick Loftin hit a go-ahead two-run homer in the seventh inning, then won it in the ninth with a one-out RBI single as host Kansas City beat Pittsburgh.



JEFF CHIU/AP

The Giants' Patrick Bailey runs home to score the winnig run after hitting a three-run inside-the-park home run during the ninth inning to defeat the Philadelphia Phillies in San Francisco on Tuesday.

Rookie Jac Caglianone homered for the Royals, a 421-foot drive leading off the second inning that was his first extra-base hit in 14 games at Kauffman Stadium. He had been 5 for 46 at home before Tuesday.

The Pirates' Oneil Cruz tied it in the fourth with a 458-foot shot over the fountains in right field on the day he was announced as a participant in next-week's Home Run Derby.

Brewers 3, Dodgers 1: Jacob Misiorowski bounced back after allowing a leadoff homer to Shohei Ohtani by striking out 12 in six innings as host Milwaukee defeated slumping Los Angeles.

The NL West-leading Dodgers have lost five straight.

Ohtani opened the game by connecting on an 0-2 curveball from Misiorowski and delivering a 431-foot shot over the center-field wall. Misiorowski (4-1) responded by striking out LA's next five batters and ended up yielding only four hits and one walk to outduel Clayton Kershaw, making his first start since recording his 3,000th career strikeout last week.

Rangers 13, Angels 1: Nathan Eovaldi allowed one unearned run in six innings, Jake Burger and Wyatt Langford each homered and drove in four runs, and visiting Texas blew out Los Angeles.

Eovaldi (6-3) gave up five hits, struck out six and walked none to lower his ERA to 1.62 in 15 starts, the best among major league pitchers with at least 80 innings.

Infielder Kevin Newman pitched the final three innings for the Angels and infielder Ezequiel Duran threw the ninth for the Rangers.

Athletics 10, Braves 1: Nick Kurtz hit a grand slam, Lawrence Butler homered twice and the host Athletics beat Atlanta.

The Braves have lost five straight and seven of eight.

Butler led off the first inning with an inside-the-park home run, then hit a solo shot in the third to make it 10-0.

Mets 7, Orioles 6 (10): Juan Soto singled in the tiebreaking run in the 10th inning, and visiting New York hit three home runs in a comeback victory over Baltimore.

Soto hit the first pitch from Yennier Cano (1-5) to drive in Lindor in the 10th, and Huascar Brazobán worked the bottom half for his second save.

Yankees 10, Mariners 3: Giancarlo Stanton hit a three-run homer, Austin Wells went deep for the third consecutive game and host New York pounded Seattle in the opener of a three-game series between American League playoff contenders.

Aaron Judge and Cal Raleigh traded late home runs after the outcome was all but decided, with Raleigh's 36th of the season keeping the Mariners catcher two ahead of Judge for the major league lead.

Red Sox 10, Rockies 2: Brayan Bello struck out a season-high 10 in the first nine-inning complete game of his career, Trevor Story hit a three-run homer and host Boston beat Colorado for its fifth straight win.

Bello (5-3), who had seven strikeouts after one trip through the Rockies lineup, gave up five hits and one walk. He threw a rain-shortened, six-inning complete game on Sept. 25, 2022, a 2-0 loss to the Yankees.

Twins 8, Cubs 1: Simeon Woods Richardson outpitched Shota Imanaga with five scoreless innings, and host Minnesota beat Chicago.

Ryan Jeffers had three RBIs and the first of three homers for the Twins in a six-run eighth off Porter Hodge, who was also taken deep by Willi Castro and Harrison Bader and got just one out.

Cardinals 4, Nationals 2: Brendan Donovan homered in a three-run third inning, Lars Nootbaar hit a solo homer in the sixth, and host St. Louis beat Washington in a game that started after a 2-hour, 19-minute rain delay.

Sonny Gray (9-3) allowed two runs on six hits and a walk and struck out six in five innings.

Guardians 10, Astros 6 (10): Angel Martínez hit a grand slam off closer Josh Hader with two outs in the 10th inning to lift visiting Cleveland over Houston.

Out for a second inning after throwing a scoreless ninth and with a runner on starting on second, Hader (5-2) intentionally walked Ramírez before walking Carlos Santana to load the bases. Hader struck out pinch-hitter Johnathan Rodríguez before Martínez sent a sinker 344 feet, into the first row of the seats in left field to put the Guardians on top.

Padres 1, Diamondbacks 0: Luis Arraez homered leading off the seventh inning and Jackson Merrill and All-Star Fernando Tatis Jr. made home run-robbing catches for host San Diego, who beat Arizona.

Arraez, the three-time batting champion, paused for a moment before backing out of the batter's box and beginning his trot as his shot off Merrill Kelly (7-5) settled several rows deep in the home run porch down the right field line. It was his fifth.

Scoreboard

American League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	54	38	.587	—
New York	50	41	.549	3½
Tampa Bay	49	43	.533	5
Boston	48	45	.516	6½
Baltimore	40	50	.444	13

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	59	34	.634	—
Kansas City	45	48	.484	14
Minnesota	44	47	.484	14
Cleveland	42	48	.467	15½
Chicago	30	62	.326	28½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	55	37	.598	—
Seattle	48	43	.527	6½
Texas	45	47	.489	10
Los Angeles	44	47	.484	10½
Athletics	38	55	.409	17½

National League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	53	39	.576	—
Philadelphia	53	39	.576	—
Miami	42	48	.467	10
Atlanta	39	51	.433	13
Washington	37	54	.407	15½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	54	37	.593	—
Milwaukee	52	40	.565	2½
St. Louis	49	43	.533	5½
Cincinnati	46	46	.500	8½
Pittsburgh	38	55	.409	17

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	56	37	.602	—
San Francisco	51	42	.548	5
San Diego	49	42	.538	6
Arizona	45	47	.489	10½
Colorado	21	71	.228	34½

Tuesday's games

San Francisco 4, Philadelphia 3
Toronto 6, Chicago White Sox 1, 7 innings
Detroit 4, Tampa Bay 2
Miami 12, Cincinnati 2
Kansas City 4, Pittsburgh 3
Milwaukee 3, L.A. Dodgers 1
Texas 13, L.A. Angels 1
Athletics 10, Atlanta 1
N.Y. Mets 7, Baltimore 6, 10 innings
N.Y. Yankees 10, Seattle 3
Boston 10, Colorado 2
Minnesota 8, Chicago Cubs 1
St. Louis 4, Washington 2
Cleveland 10, Houston 6, 10 innings
San Diego 1, Arizona 0

Wednesday's games

Toronto at Chicago White Sox
L.A. Dodgers at Milwaukee
Philadelphia at San Francisco
Tampa Bay at Detroit
N.Y. Mets at Baltimore
Seattle at N.Y. Yankees
Colorado at Boston
Miami at Cincinnati
Chicago Cubs at Minnesota
Pittsburgh at Kansas City
Washington at St. Louis
Cleveland at Houston
Texas at L.A. Angels
Arizona at San Diego
Atlanta at Athletics

Thursday's games

N.Y. Mets (TBD) at Baltimore (Morton 5-7)
Chicago Cubs (Rea 6-3) at Minnesota (Paddack 3-7)
Miami (Quantrill 3-7) at Cincinnati (Lodolo 5-6)
Seattle (Woo 8-4) at N.Y. Yankees (Stroman 1-1)
Tampa Bay (Bradley 5-6) at Boston (Buehler 6-6)
Cleveland (Allen 5-7) at Chicago White Sox (Cannon 3-7)
Washington (Soroka 3-6) at St. Louis (Mikolas 4-6)
Atlanta (Strider 3-7) at Athletics (Sears 7-7)
Texas (Corbin 5-7) at L.A. Angels (Kochanowicz 3-8)
Arizona (Rodriguez 3-5) at San Diego (Vásquez 3-4)

Friday's games

Chicago Cubs at N.Y. Yankees
Miami at Baltimore
Colorado at Cincinnati
Seattle at Detroit
Tampa Bay at Boston
Cleveland at Chicago White Sox
N.Y. Mets at Kansas City
Pittsburgh at Minnesota
Texas at Houston
Washington at Milwaukee
Atlanta at St. Louis
Arizona at L.A. Angels
Philadelphia at San Diego
Toronto at Athletics
L.A. Dodgers at San Francisco

WNBA/NBA

Clark picks teammate Boston in All-Star draft

BY DOUG FEINBERG
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Caitlin Clark picked her Indiana teammate Aliyah Boston No. 1 while Napheesa Collier took her Unrivaled business partner Breanna Stewart first in the WNBA All-Star Game draft on Tuesday.

Clark, who had the first overall pick by being No. 1 in the fan vote, had said Monday that there was "a high chance" Boston and Kelsey Mitchell of the Fever would be on her team. Clark's other choices for starters were New York's Sabrina Ionescu, Las Vegas' A'ja Wilson and Phoenix's Satou Sabally, and she picked Mitchell as a reserve.

"I feel good. My team is very well-rounded. Love the team we have to start — the first five, I think we're off to a good start," Clark said.

Mitchell may need to step in quickly, as three-time MVP Wilson left a Tuesday game against the Liberty with a right wrist injury. She underwent an MRI on Wednesday morning to determine the severity of the injury.

Wilson got hurt with 4:13 left in the second quarter when she drove down the lane and landed awkwardly after getting fouled. She was on the floor for a few minutes as her teammates rushed over to her side. Wilson got up and walked to the Aces bench to an ovation from the Barclays Center crowd.

"Big picture, our season is bigger than one game. We want to make sure she's good to go," Las Vegas coach Becky Hammon said.

Collier drafted Atlanta's Allisha Gray, Seattle's Nneka Ogwumike and Dallas rookie Paige Bueckers to complete her starting five.

"We're dynamic, got people that can score at all levels, a point guard," Collier said.

After Collier took Minnesota teammate Courtney Williams first in the reserve portion of the draft, Clark selected Mitchell. Two Storm players went next with Skylar Diggins going to Collier and Gabby Williams to Clark, who passed up on the chance to draft fellow second-year player and longtime rival Angel Reese.



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Indiana Fever star Caitlin Clark, middle, was named a captain for the WNBA All-Star Game and had the first pick by winning the fan vote.

Clark and Reese teamed up during last season's All-Star Game that pitted the WNBA's best against the U.S. Olympic squad. The WNBA All-Stars won.

Collier took Reese with the third pick in the reserve draft.

She rounded out her squad with Phoenix's Alyssa Thomas, Los Angeles' Kelsey Plum and the Dream's Rhyne Howard. Clark also drafted Washington rookies Sonia Citron and Kiki Iriafen, the Aces' Jackie Young and Golden State's Kayla Thornton.

Williams, Citron, Iriafen and Thornton are making their All-Star debuts.

When the draft was over, the captains traded coaches to put Cheryl Reeve of the Lynx back with her players, Collier and Williams. Reeve was coach of the U.S. Olympic team last season that won gold in Paris. Clark didn't make the squad and some people blamed Reeve for that, although the Minnesota coach had nothing to do with the selection of players.

Sandy Brondello of New York will coach Clark's team.

The game will be played July 19 in Indianapolis.

NBA BRIEFS

Source: Jokic will delay signing extension with Nuggets

Associated Press

DENVER — Three-time NBA MVP Nikola Jokic has decided to delay a contract extension with the Denver Nuggets this summer, a person with knowledge of the matter told The Associated Press on Tuesday night.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because neither Jokic nor the Nuggets have addressed the matter publicly. It doesn't affect his status in Denver in the short term: He has at least two years remaining on his deal — $55.2 million this season and $59 million in 2026-27, along with a player option in 2027-28 worth nearly $63 million.

Jokic became eligible Tuesday to sign an extension that could have added three years and around $212 million to his contract. By waiting until next summer to sign, he would be eligible to add four years to his deal at even more money than this summer's extension would have guaranteed.

The Denver Post first reported the decision from Jokic.

Josh Kroenke, the vice chairman of Kroenke Sports and Entertainment, explained earlier this offseason that the team was going to present both options to Jokic — and respect his decision.

"I'm not sure if he's going to accept it or not, because we're also going to explain every financial parameter around him signing now versus signing later," Kroenke said.

Jokic is spending his offseason back in Serbia, where recently he was seen cheering one of his prized racehorses to a victory.



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Despite falling just short of a fourth MVP award this past season, Denver center Nikola Jokic, left, remains one of the top players in the NBA and could sign a four-year extension with the Nuggets next summer.

Celtics' Stevens shuns idea of team rebuild

Even before Jayson Tatum limped off the court with a torn Achilles tendon during the Celtics' Eastern Conference semifinals loss to the New York Knicks, president of basketball operations Brad Stevens knew big changes would be on tap for the franchise this offseason.

Yes, big spending on free agents and contracts had lured in key players like Jrue Holiday and Kristaps Porzingis who, combined with stars Tatum and Jaylen Brown, ultimately helped Boston capture the NBA championship in 2024.

But keeping the core of that roster intact next season with Tatum possibly missing all of it while rehabbing from his injury would have come with a combined payroll and luxury tax bill of more than $500 million.

And as a team exceeding the second apron of the salary cap, it would have also meant additional penalties limiting ways they could sign or trade for players.

"We've known for a long time that hard decisions were coming," Stevens said Tuesday on the decisions to trade Holiday and Porzingis, which both became official this week.

"The second apron is why those trades happened. I think that is pretty obvious. And the basketball penalties associated with those are real. ... So that was part of making the decision to push and put our chips on the table and go for the last two years."

Now under that dreaded second apron, it's also brought about a different way of looking at what's next for the Celtics.

Stevens knows the team's approach will have to change while Tatum is out. But as a former coach, he also said he's never going to put a ceiling on any team's potential.

Olynyk going to Spurs; 3rd time traded in 5 months

Kelly Olynyk is getting traded for the third time in five months, this time going from Washington to San Antonio for two players and a second-round pick, a person with knowledge of the agreement said Tuesday night.

The Wizards will receive Malaki Branham and Blake Wesley, said the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity to The Associated Press because the trade was still pending the customary NBA approval.

Olynyk was traded by Toronto to the Pelicans in February as part of the deal that sent Brandon Ingram to the Raptors, then was moved by New Orleans to Washington last month in the deal that sent Jordan Poole to the Pelicans and CJ McCollum to the Wizards.

Olynyk now moves on to the Spurs, where he'll add more frontline depth to a team built around Victor Wembanyama.

Olynyk has averaged 10.2 points and 5.2 rebounds during his career. He's going into his 13th season, having already played in Boston, Miami, Houston, Detroit, Utah, Toronto and New Orleans.

NHL/AUTO RACING

2026 draft prospect McKenna says he will commit to Penn State

BY JOHN WAWROW
Associated Press

Gavin McKenna said he is committing to Penn State, leaving the Canadian Hockey League for the U.S. college ranks in a long-anticipated decision by one of the sport's most anticipated prospects since Connor McDavid.

McKenna's jump highlights how much the junior developmental hockey landscape has changed in North America since the NCAA's landmark decision in November to lift its ban on CHL player participation. After word of McKenna's destination leaked Monday, he made the announcement on "SportsCenter" on Tuesday. It coincidentally came 15 years to the day after "The Decision" when LeBron James revealed on ESPN he was leaving Cleveland for Miami.

"It was a super tough decision," McKenna said before donning a Penn State hat. "Obviously there was a lot of great options out there, but I think me, my family and everyone that's kind of a part of my circle, we all decided that the best spot for me next year will be Penn State University."

McKenna, who turns 18 in December, is regarded as a generational talent and has for the past two years been projected as the No. 1 pick in the 2026 NHL draft.

"The (Western Hockey League) was a great spot, and I'm very grateful for what it did for me and my family," McKenna said, adding he believes facing bigger, older competition will help make the leap to the NHL easier. "Both options were great, but I just think going to college, being in such a great conference, it'll really challenge me and prepare me."

Leaving the WHL's Medicine Hat Tigers after two-plus seasons, McKenna joining the Nittany Lions makes them an immediate contender to win a Frozen Four title. He had narrowed his choices to Penn State, coming off losing its Frozen Four debut in April, and Michigan State.

"You saw what Penn State did this year making the Frozen Four," McKenna said. "They've come a long ways, and I think next year when I go there, obviously that's the goal is to win a championship with them."

The NCAA rule change coincides with schools being allowed to lure recruits with name, image, likeness (NIL) endorsement money, further tipping the scales toward CHL players making the jump. Previously, CHL players were barred from competing in college because they were deemed professionals for receiving a stipend of up to $600 per month for living expenses.

The lifting of the ban led to college hockey officials envisioning the NCAA replacing the CHL as North America's top producer of NHL draft-ready talent.

From Whitehorse, Yukon, McKenna is coming off his second full season with Medicine Hat in which he finished second in the WHL with 129 points (41 goals, 88 assists), behind 20-year Andrew Cristall's 132. McKenna's point total was third among all CHL players, rounded out by OHL's Michael Misa's 134. Misa is a year older and was selected second by San Jose in this year's draft.

McKenna most notably closed this season with a 45-game point streak in which he combined for 32 goals and 100 points, and finished the playoffs with nine goals and 38 points in 16 games. Including the playoffs, he failed to register a point just four times.

Counting the regular season and playoffs, McKenna combined for 91 goals and 198 assists for 289 points in 158 career games in the WHL.



SEAN KILPATRICK/AP

Though the 2026 NHL draft is still a year away, Gavin McKenna (9) has been projected as that draft's No. 1 overall pick for two years.



DENES ERDOS/AP

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner talks to driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands before the third free practice at the Red Bull Ring racetrack in Spielberg, Austria, on June 28.

Red Bull fires longtime team principal Horner

BY JAMES ELLINGWORTH
Associated Press

MILTON KEYNES, England — Longtime Red Bull team principal Christian Horner was fired abruptly Wednesday after a 20-year stint that included eight Formula 1 drivers' titles and a rise to celebrity status.

Red Bull did not give a reason for the decision in a statement Wednesday, but thanked Horner for his work and said he will "forever remain an important part of our team history."

Laurent Mekies of sister team Racing Bulls will replace Horner in his role as chief executive of the Red Bull team.

Horner had been Red Bull team principal since it entered F1 as a full constructor in 2005. He had performed his team and media duties as normal throughout the British Grand Prix last week.

His wife is Geri Halliwell — Ginger Spice of the Spice Girls — and Horner himself became a celebrity figure through his prominence on Netflix's F1 docuseries "Drive To Survive," where his bitter rivalry with Mercedes' Toto Wolff was a key plot point.

He and F1 champion Max Verstappen were booed at the season launch in London in February.

Horner oversaw eight F1 drivers' titles — four for Sebastian Vettel and four for Verstappen — and six constructors' titles during his time with the team.

But McLaren has dominated this season in F1, while Red Bull's performance has dipped, though defending champion Verstappen remains third in the standings and the team is fourth.

Horner spent much of last week fielding questions over Verstappen's future at the team after the Dutch driver declined to commit to stay with Red Bull for 2026.

Zak Brown, boss of rival McLaren, told The Associated Press last week that it would be a "disaster" for Red Bull if Verstappen were to leave.

Horner is the latest in a series of high-profile executives to leave the team over the last year and a half. Car design great Adrian Newey joined Aston Martin and sporting director Jonathan Wheatley departed for Sauber, which is soon to become the Audi works team.

All of these changes have followed the 2022 death of Dietrich Mateschitz, the billionaire cofounder of Red Bull who created its F1 project.

The team also shuffled drivers, dropping Sergio Perez at the end of last season before a brief failed experiment with Liam Lawson as Verstappen's teammate. He was in turn replaced by Yuki Tsunoda, who hasn't scored a point in five races.

"We would like to thank Christian Horner for his exceptional work over the last 20 years," Oliver Mintzlaff, Red Bull's chief executive for corporate projects and investments said in a statement. "With his tireless commitment, experience, expertise and innovative thinking, he has been instrumental in establishing Red Bull Racing as one of the most successful and attractive teams in Formula 1. Thank you for everything, Christian, and you will forever remain an important part of our team history."

The announcement comes more than a year after Horner was accused of misconduct toward a team employee.

An investigation conducted on behalf of the Red Bull company dismissed the allegation, as did a further investigation conducted after the employee appealed against the initial ruling, Red Bull said at the time.

Horner remained in charge of the F1 team throughout the entire process.

Horner, a former driver whose racing career stalled one level below F1, was the youngest team boss in F1 at 32 when he took charge of Red Bull in 2005 after its parent drinks company bought what had been Jaguar. He's the only leader it's known since.

As team principal and CEO, Horner had unusually broad authority for an F1 boss. He signaled last week that he expected to stay in charge for a long time to come.

"We have a very tight senior management, a very strong structure," Horner said. "We've got strength in depth. We don't feel, and I certainly don't feel, that there's a need to change or tune it."

Horner's departure comes in the middle of the team's efforts to prepare for one of the biggest rule changes in F1 in decades next season. Red Bull will make its own engines in partnership with Ford, a project led by Horner.

At Racing Bulls, whose cars have sometimes outperformed the main Red Bull team this season, Alan Permane will be promoted from racing director to team principal to fill the gap left by Mekies.

"The spirit of the whole (Racing Bulls) team is incredible, and I strongly believe that this is just the beginning," Mekies said in a statement released by Racing Bulls, which did not mention Horner.

WIMBLEDON/GOLF

Swiatek reaches 1st semifinal, will face Bencic next

Sinner beats Shelton to advance

By Howard Fendrich
Associated Press

LONDON — Iga Swiatek reached the Wimbledon semifinals for the first time with a 6-2, 7-5 victory over 19th-seeded Liudmila Samsonova that went from a stroll to a bit of a struggle in the late stages Wednesday.

"Even though I'm in the middle of the tournament, I already got goosebumps after this win," said Swiatek, who will face unseeded Belinda Bencic on Thursday for a spot in the final. "I'm super happy and super proud of myself."

Bencic beat No. 7 Mirra Andreeva 7-6 (3), 7-6 (2) to reach her first Grand Slam semifinal since the 2019 U.S. Open. The other semifinal is No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka against No. 13 Amanda Anisimova; they advanced with wins Tuesday.

"It doesn't end here," Bencic said.

On the men's side, No. 1 Jannik Sinner moved into the semifinals by defeating No. 10 Ben Shelton 7-6 (2), 6-4, 6-4 while showing barely any signs of the right elbow injury he picked up on a fall during his previous match. Sinner's opponent Friday will be either 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic or No. 22 Flavio Cobolli. The other matchup that day is two-time defending champ Carlos Alcaraz vs. No. 5 Taylor Fritz.

Swiatek is a five-time major champion, with four of those titles on the red clay of the French Open, and the other on the hard courts of the U.S. Open. She's also twice been a semifinalist at the hard-court Australian Open.

The grass courts of the All England Club had always given her the most trouble as a pro, even though she did claim a junior championship there in 2018. In her five appearances in the Wimbledon women's bracket before this year, she had made it as far as the quarterfinals just once, exiting in that round in 2023.

But the 24-year-old from Poland is enjoying a career-best run on the slick surface, thanks in part to being more comfortable with the footing required.

"I, for sure, feel like I really worked hard to progress here on this surface," Swiatek said. "So this year, I feel like I can just work with it and work with myself. I'll just keep doing that."

Before the start of Wimbledon, Swiatek was the runner-up in Bad Homburg, Germany, her first final at a tournament played on grass — and her first final at any event in over a year, a drought that resulted in her falling from the No. 1 ranking and being seeded No. 8 at the All England Club.

Swiatek led by a set and 3-0 in the second against Samsonova, who was appearing in her first Grand Slam quarterfinal.

Soon, though, it was 4-all, then 5-all. But Swiatek held for a 6-5 lead, then broke to end it, and a smile spread across her face.

"I'll just recover today, try not to celebrate too much, but already focus on the next one," Swiatek said. "Prepare in the evening, and I'll be ready tomorrow."

Bencic, who at 28 is a decade older than Andreeva, is competing in her second major tournament since returning to the tour after giving birth to a daughter, Bella, in April 2024.

"I'm very proud, actually. All my career, I didn't say it a lot to myself, but after having Bella, I really say it to myself every day," Bencic said. "We are just enjoying life on tour with Bella, traveling. It's been beautiful to create these memories together. And obviously, to play great is so amazing, but for me, it's a bonus. I'm generally just really happy to be able to play again."



KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/AP

Iga Swiatek, of Poland, celebrates winning a women's singles quarterfinal against Liudmilla Samsonova, of Russia, at Wimbledon in London on Wednesday. Swiatek advanced to her first semifinals at Wimbledon.

Wimbledon

Tuesday
At All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club
London
Purse: £19,414,000
Surface: Grass
Seedings in parentheses
Women's Singles
Quarterfinals

Aryna Sabalenka (1), Belarus, def. Laura Siegemund, Germany, 4-6, 6-2, 6-4.
Amanda Anisimova (13), United States, def. Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, Russia, 6-1, 7-6 (9).

Men's Singles
Quarterfinals

Taylor Fritz (5), United States, def. Karen Khachanov (17), Russia, 6-3, 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (4).
Carlos Alcaraz (2), Spain, def. Cameron Norrie, Britain, 6-2, 6-3, 6-3.

Wednesday
Women's Singles
Quarterfinals

Iga Swiatek (8), Poland, def. Liudmila Samsonova (19), Russia, 6-2, 7-5.
Belinda Bencic, Switzerland, def. Mirra Andreeva (7), Russia, 7-6 (3), 7-6 (2).

Men's Singles
Quarterfinals

Jannik Sinner (1), Italy, def. Ben Shelton (10), United States, 7-6 (2), 6-4, 6-4.

Down: Schauffele's diminished year comes after career-best in 2024

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This is not where he expected to be coming into the final stretch of the year.

"The belief is good," Schauffele said. "I don't think I've given myself a lot of reasons to believe that I'm playing OK. It's been a pretty bad year to be completely honest. ... I think the best part of my game has probably been my mental just fortitude, whatever you want to call it, just to try to stay positive and behave as if I am playing really well.

"But coming off a year like last year, getting hurt, coming back, my expectations and playing ability have not cued up very nicely."

The injury is no longer an issue. The game has looked good at times. What Schauffele lacks is a spark, which comes from results, to get him going.

Schauffele has great discipline that gets lost behind that San Diego vibe of his. He chose to not add tournaments to his schedule to make up for lost time, even though he finds himself chasing this late in the year.

He won twice as a rookie, including the Tour Championship. Chasing is not something he does.

The Ryder Cup is not an issue. Winning the PGA Championship and the British Open has allowed Schauffele to stay at No. 2 in the U.S. standings.

But he is at No. 57 in the FedEx Cup — only the top 70 make the postseason — and these two weeks on links golf could go a long way toward making sure he gets there.

"It's been a weird year for me just from coming off the year I had last year into sort of what I did, just kind of disappearing and then playing bad coming out of it," Schauffele said. "So any expectation I had of whatever I thought I was capable of doing from a feel standpoint has been sort of reset, and I am in full chase mode, like a kid."

He hopes links golf will be part of the tonic.

Part of Schauffele wishes he could have come earlier across the Atlantic, where he could play golf that consists of seeing the target and hitting the ball, nothing more complicated than that.

"Something about being here, you start taking your hands off the wheel, and that's how I played my best," he said.

Schauffele was in peak form a year ago. He broke through with his first major at the PGA Championship that asked a lot of him on a soft course at Valhalla, particularly the last hole. He had to stand in a bunker to play a shot from the rough with a 4-iron, the ball well above his feet, water down the right side. From there, he pitched to 6 feet and swirled in the birdie putt for a one-shot victory over Bryson DeChambeau.

Two months later, Schauffele withstood rain and wind at Royal Troon with a 65 in the final round to give him a second major. He was No. 2 in the world. Scottie Scheffler was still miles ahead, but Schauffele was at a point where he felt he could win wherever he played.

Those were happy times. This only feels like the worst of times. There is also something about the chase that takes him back to being a kid, when he wasn't the highly recruited star and was virtually an unknown before he earned his recognition.

This feels like starting over.

"I've been spoiled to play at a pretty high level for quite some time," Schauffele said. "This has been a fun experience to try to get back on the horse."



CAROLYN KASTER/AP

Xander Schauffele tees off on the 13th hole during the first round of the U.S. Open at Oakmont Country Club on June 12 in Oakmont, Pa.

SPORTS



Gone after 20 years

Longtime team principal Horner fired by Red Bull ›› Auto racing, Page 22

ON THE FRINGE

Flushing it down

Schauffele attempting to overcome what feels like his worst season

BY DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

NORTH BERWICK, Scotland — The best thing Xander Schauffele has going for him in the worst season of his career is a good attitude. That much was evident Tuesday when he walked into the media center at the Scottish Open and saw his picture.

It was on a wall beneath a sign that said, "TOILETS."

"That was heartwarming," Schauffele said with a grin that never seems too far away. "Summed up how I feel about what's going on right now. I actually chuckled when I saw that one."

Schauffele is the only American to win the Scottish Open over the last 10 years. He defends his title next week in the British Open, a victory that made him a double major winner in 2024, which allowed him to take his place among the elite in golf.

That can feel like much longer than a year ago.

Schauffele had reason to have big expectations this year. What he didn't see coming was a twinge in his ribs to start the season in Hawaii that turned out to be much worse — an intercostal strain and a cartilage tear.

Schauffele missed two months with the first significant injury of his career. He has not been the same since then, with only one top-10 finish, a tie for eighth in the Masters. His greatest achievement was extending his cut streak on the PGA Tour to 67 consecutive tournaments, the longest such streak in 20 years.

"I probably downplayed it in my own mind — 'Yeah, you'll be fine, you've been playing great golf, you just came off the best year of your career' — and I've backed it up currently with the worst year of my career. It's been a hot one," Schauffele said.

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JESSICA HILL/AP

Xander Schauffele reacts to his tee shot on the first hole during the second round of the Travelers Championship tournament at TPC River Highlands on June 20 in Cromwell, Conn.

Giants' walk-off home run stays inside park ›› MLB, Page 20

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