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STARS AND STRIPES®

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Volume 84 Edition 86 ©SS 2025 | CONTINGENCY EDITION | FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, 2025 | Free to Deployed Areas

Trump OKs European peace force for Ukraine

BY LORNE COOK
Associated Press

BRUSSELS — The greenlight given by President Donald Trump on U.S. backup for a European-led force to police any future peace agreement in Ukraine ahead of his summit with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Friday vastly improves the likelihood it might succeed.

The effectiveness of the operation, drawn up by the so-called coalition of the willing of around 30 countries supporting Ukraine, hinges on U.S. backup with airpower or other military equipment that European armed forces do not have, or only in short supply.

EU leaders regularly have underlined how the United States is "crucial" to the success of the security operation dubbed Multinational Force Ukraine. But the Trump administration has long refused to commit, perhaps keeping its participation on hold as leverage in talks with Russia.

After a meeting Wednesday between Trump and European leaders, European Council President Antonio Costa welcomed "the readiness of the United States to share with Europe the efforts to reinforce security conditions once we obtain a durable and just peace for Ukraine."

French President Emmanuel Macron said Trump had insisted NATO must not be part of these security guarantees, but the U.S. leader agreed "the United States and all the (other) parties involved should take part."

"It's a very important clarification," Macron said.

Trump did not publicly confirm he would allow U.S. backup, and

SEE FORCE ON PAGE 7



ERIC KAYNE/Stars and Stripes

National Guardsmen patrol the National Mall near the U.S. Capitol on Thursday, in Washington.

Agents, troops hit DC streets

Protesters rally at checkpoint as 30-day patrol in capital begins

BY MEAGAN FLYNN, JENNY GATHRIGHT, EMMA UBER AND ERIN COX
The Washington Post

A split screen emerged in the first days of President Donald Trump's deployment of federal law enforcement and the National Guard onto D.C. streets: rhetoric from the president painting the city as a crime-addled wasteland, which D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser, a democrat, condemned, and, on the ground, a surge in federal resources bolstering D.C. police — which she and the police chief welcomed.



JOSE LUIS MAGANA/AP

A protester holds a sign as Department of Homeland Security Investigations agents join D.C. officers as they conduct traffic checks.

The impact of Trump's federal actions came into view Tuesday night, with National Guard troops on the ground and agents from numerous federal agencies roaming D.C. streets from the National Mall to busy corridors in Columbia Heights. At a Wednesday evening checkpoint in Northwest Washington, local and federal officers, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, pulled over drivers for seat belt violations or broken taillights, as

SEE STREETS ON PAGE 8

BUSINESS/WEATHER

NY sues Zelle's parent company over safety

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York's attorney general on Wednesday sued the parent company of the Zelle payment platform, months after the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau abandoned a similar case as the Trump administration was gutting the agency.

Attorney General Letitia James, a Democrat, sued Early Warning Services in New York state court, alleging that the company, which is owned by a group of U.S. banks, had failed to protect users from fraud by not including critical safety features in Zelle's design.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau earlier this year dropped a similar case after President Donald Trump fired the agency's leader and his administration halted nearly all the bureau's work, closed its headquarters and moved to fire many of its workers.

"No one should be left to fend for themselves after falling victim to a scam," James said in a statement. "I look forward to getting justice for the New Yorkers who suffered because of Zelle's security failures."

James' case against Early Warning Services alleged that Zelle, which allows users to send and receive near-instant money transfers, failed to include adequate verification processes. Her office said scammers were able to access peoples' accounts or trick users into sending money to bogus accounts that posed as official businesses.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates

Euro costs (Aug. 15)	0.83
British pound (Aug. 15)	$1.32
Japanese yen (Aug. 15)	144.00
South Korean won (Aug. 15)	1,346.00

Commercial rates

Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3744
Britain (Pound)	1.3536
Canada (Dollar)	1.3809
China (Yuan)	7.1743
Denmark (Krone)	6.4048
Egypt (Pound)	48.3041
Euro	0.8581
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8358
Hungary (Forint)	339.35
Israel (Shekel)	3.3819
Japan (Yen)	147.39
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3051
Norway (Krone)	10.2271
Philippines (Peso)	56.93
Poland (Zloty)	3.65
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7479
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2839
South Korea (Won)	1389.83
Switzerland (Franc)	0.8075
Thailand (Baht)	32.46
Turkey (NewLira)	40.7736

(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	4.33
Federal funds market rate	4.38
3-month bill	4.21
30-year bond	4.83

WEATHER OUTLOOK

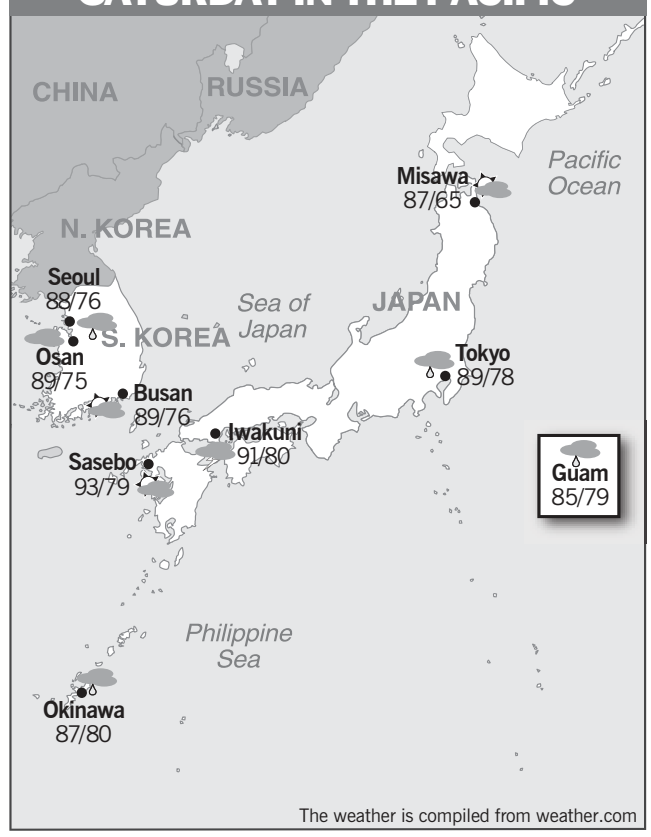
FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is compiled from weather.com

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MILITARY

US denies China's claim about shoal incident

By Alex Wilson
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The U.S. 7th Fleet rejected as "false" a claim by China this week that its forces drove a U.S. destroyer away from a contested atoll in the South China Sea.

China's Southern Theater Command on Wednesday said it ordered its forces to "track, monitor, warn and expel" the guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins from waters near Scarborough Shoal, a feature claimed by China, Taiwan and the Philippines.

"The US military's actions seriously violated China's sovereignty and security, seriously undermined peace and stability in the South China Sea and violated international law and basic norms governing international relations," wrote spokesman Senior Capt. He Tiecheng on the command's Weibo social media page.

The 7th Fleet, based at Yokosuka Naval Base, said the Higgins conducted a freedom of navigation operation near the shoal and left the area on its own accord.

Fleet spokeswoman Lt. Sarah Merrill called Beijing's claim "false" and said that the Higgins operated within international legal standards, she told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday.

"The United States is defending its right to fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows, as USS Higgins did here," Merrill wrote. "Nothing China says otherwise will deter us."



KIRA DUCATO/U.S. Marine Corps

The guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins, seen here in the Philippine Sea on April 24, conducted a freedom-of-navigation operation near the contested Scarborough Shoal on Aug. 14.

The Higgins went within 13 miles of the shoal, close to the edge of territorial waters, she said.

Scarborough Shoal, known in China as Huangyan Island, is claimed by China, Taiwan and the Philippines.

Monday, a Chinese warship collided with a Chinese coast guard vessel in pursuit of Philippine coast guard and fishing vessels in the same area, The Associated Press reported Tuesday.

The littoral combat ship USS Cincinnati and the Higgins were briefly deployed Wednesday to Scarborough Shoal, according to a post that day on social media platform X by Philippine coast guard Commodore Jay Tarriela.

Tarriela cited U.S. officials and a Philippine surveillance flight.

Four Chinese coast guard ships and six Chinese maritime militia boats were also spotted near the shoal, according to Tarriela. Another Chinese vessel, a navy frigate, shadowed the Higgins and Cincinnati during the operation, he said.

The U.S. regularly conducts freedom of navigation patrols in the South China Sea, where several countries ringing the sea have overlapping claims to maritime features.

The patrols are typically a challenge to what the U.S. Navy describes as "unlawful restrictions" on innocent passage.

"China and Taiwan each purport to require, in violation of international law, either permission or advance notification before a military vessel or warship engages in 'innocent passage' through their territorial sea," Merrill wrote.

Under the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, any ship is allowed to pass through territorial waters if its actions are not "prejudicial to the peace, good order or security" of the country in question.

The U.S. often cites the convention as the legal basis for its actions in the South China Sea, but it is one of the few U.N. member states that has not ratified it.

Chinese vessels set new record for presence near Senkakus

By Brian McElhiney and Keishi Koja
Stars and Stripes

ABOARD THE PS MIZUKI, Okinawa — China and Japan remain locked in a game of cat-and-mouse near the Senkaku Islands, with China this year setting another record for the number of consecutive days its vessels have sailed near the disputed islets in the East China Sea.

As of Thursday, Chinese vessels have been spotted on 269 consecutive days within the Senkakus' contiguous zone, a 24-mile-wide band beyond the 12-mile territorial limit, a coast guard spokesman said by phone that day.

The previous record was 215 days between Dec. 22, 2023, and July 23, 2024.

The chain of five islets and three rocky protrusions are administered by Japan but also claimed by China and Taiwan. They are a flashpoint between Japan and China.

Chinese vessels have entered the territorial limit 20 times since Jan. 1, prompting Japan's coast guard to send its own vessels to meet them, the spokesman said.

China's vessels have started to become more aggressive, but Japan's coast guard has not escalated its approach to deterring vessels that enter its territorial waters, Naha Coast Guard Office director Momotoshi Saisho said.

During an Aug. 8 media tour aboard the PS Mizuki at Naha New Port, Saisho touched on the coast guard response to those incursions.

The longest stay inside territorial waters around the Senkakus occurred in March when a Chinese coast guard vessel lingered for 92 hours and eight minutes, according to a news release at the time.

On May 3, the Japan Air Self-Defense Force scrambled fighters in response to a helicopter launched from a Chinese coast guard vessel inside the Senkakus' territorial limit, according to a Ministry of Defense news release at the time. The helicopter flight lasted about 15 minutes.

Since 2015, some Chinese coast guard ships approaching the Senkakus are armed with deck-mounted machine guns, according to the Ministry of Defense 2025 white paper.

The Mizuki is armed with a 20 mm machine gun, Saisho said. However, the coast guard does not fire at intruding vessels, the spokesman said Thursday.



KEISHI KOJA/Stars and Stripe

An electronic signboard used to flash warning messages at vessels sailing near Japan's territory hang from the starboard side of the coast guard vessel PS Mizuki, at Naha New Port, Okinawa, Japan, Aug. 8.

The Mizuki, about 150 feet long and weighing 195 tons, was one of two coast guard patrol vessels rammed by a Chinese fishing boat in the Senkaku territorial waters in September 2010.

Japan accused the fishermen of intentionally causing the collision.

The Mizuki is usually dispatched to meet Chinese fishing vessels, Saisho said.

The coast guard will always dispatch a "larger number" of ships than the intruding force.

"The vessels that are dispatched to the Senkakus and other intrusion cases might be selected depending on the size and number of the ships of the opponent," he said.

Japan's coast guard vessels will flash messages in Chinese, English, Korean, Russian or other languages on a large electronic signboards, which hang on both sides of the Mizuki.

"In Hokkaido you might need Russian; around Kyushu it might be Korean," Saisho said. "In Okinawa, we usually first warn in English and then in Chinese, depending on the boat that is intruding."

Messages may begin with, "Immediately leave Japan's territorial waters," and progress in urgency to, "We will sail alongside you and board your vessel," or, "We will start firing water cannons," according to information posted in the ship's control room.

However, the coast guard has "never fired warning shots or shot water cannons at Chinese vessels around the Senkakus," the spokesman said Thursday.

Some Japanese government officials may speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

PACIFIC

N. Korea denies loudspeaker removal claim

By David Choi and Yoojin Lee
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The influential sister of North Korea's leader on Thursday denied as a "red herring" a claim that her country had dismantled some of the propaganda loudspeakers along its border with South Korea, according to state media.

Kim Yo Jong labeled as "unfounded unilateral supposition" the recent report by South Korea's military that North Korea removed some of its loudspeakers along the Demilitarized Zone, according to the Korean Central News Agency.

Kim is North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister and a member of North Korea's ruling council, the State Affairs Commission.

South Korea is "misleading the public … by saying that we have removed the loudspeakers," she said, according to KCNA. "We have never removed loudspeakers installed on the border area and are not willing to remove them."

South Korea's military reported Aug. 9 that it detected North Korean forces dismantling their loudspeakers along the 160-mile DMZ. Five days earlier, the South's military had begun removing loudspeakers on its side of the border in hopes of de-escalating tensions between their countries.

South Korea silenced its loudspeakers on June 11; the North also ceased broadcasting later that day.

South Korean army Col. Lee Sung Joon, the Joint Chiefs of Staff spokesman, declined to go into detail at a news conference Thursday but said "the military has explained the facts of what we observed."

"It is difficult to explain their intentions here," he said of Kim Yo Jong's latest statement. "North Korea has repeatedly made false claims."

South Korean President Lee Jae-myung at a Cabinet meeting Tuesday reiterated the North was dismantling some of its loudspeakers and said he hoped it was the first step to "reopen dialogue and communication between the two Koreas."

Since the 1950-53 Korean War, North and South Korea have aimed propaganda loudspeakers at each other to demoralize opposing forces stationed at the DMZ.

North Korea's loudspeakers typically broadcasted political monologues criticizing the South and the United States; the South's broadcasts include pop music, weather reports and recent news.

The lack of direct communication between Pyongyang and Seoul could be contributing to the opposing claims, said Lim Jae-Cheon, a Korea University diplomacy studies professor, by phone Thursday.

"It seems that South Korea may be over-interpreting even small movements by the North," he said. "On the other hand, North Korea appears to make decisions based on its own judgment, such as halting loudspeaker broadcasts."

Homeschoolers at base in South Korea prep for a new year

By Eric Mendiola
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — With a new school year only days away, about 30 homeschooled children took over a corner of the massive Collier Community Fitness Center here recently for their own back-to-school event.

They wielded water toys, stood still for face painting and drew in chalk while their parents chatted and dined on a potluck lunch at the Aug. 9 get-together.

"I feel like homeschoolers and their families and the work that the kids do and the moms do, they deserve to be celebrated just as much as public-school kids," said Serena Hanlon, a homeschooling mother of three.

Hanlon said she organized the event for the Camp Humphreys Christian Homeschool Co-op, which sponsored the event for all homeschool families at Humphreys.

Homeschooling is a well-established practice in the U.S. military, even though the Defense Department schools for military families were rated higher than average last year on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

About 12% of U.S. military families homeschool their children, twice the 6% rate among the U.S. civilian population, according to a 2023-24 study by the Johns Hopkins University School of Education.

Why military families choose to homeschool their children is not well understood, according to the Johns Hopkins survey, but parents at the Humphreys event voiced a few reasons of their own.

"The main reason I homeschool is just for more time with the kids," said Nesha Havili at the event.

Havili homeschools her four children.

Neither she nor Hanlon are members of the Christian Homeschool Co-op, they said.

The opportunity to maintain their own academic records is a plus for military families that change duty stations frequently, along with setting their own schedules, spending more time with their children and, for some, including religious instruction in their curriculum, according to Hanlon.



Trevares Johnson/Stars and Stripes

Nesha Havili and her son Liam at the photo booth during a homeschool back-to-school event at Camp Humphreys, South Korea,on Aug 9.

In May, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered a review across all services of the support provided by the DOD to homeschooling families, "as well as best practices, including the feasibility of providing facilities or access to other resources for those students," according to the order.

"Homeschooling offers an individualized approach for students and highlights the significant role parents play in the educational process," the order states.

Hegseth's order did not set a deadline for the review.

Hanlon also runs several Facebook groups in support of homeschooling families, including Wild and Blooming Camp Humphreys Co-Op, which meets biweekly for nature lessons outside Humphreys and other events, and Where the Wild Readers Are, a children's book club.

Hanlon said she and her husband, Capt. Hunter Hanlon of the 2nd Infantry Division, would like to organize a group to advocate for homeschooling military families once they return to the U.S.

"I want to make it bigger than what it is, and just more official and follow what stateside guidelines are," she said. "I love doing this so much and it's giving me practice for when I want to do something bigger."

US, Philippines discuss more missile system deployments

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The United States is discussing the possible deployment of more missile launchers to the Philippines to strengthen deterrence against aggression in the disputed South China Sea and other Asian security hotspots, but no final decision has been reached by both sides, Manila's ambassador to Washington said Thursday.

The U.S. military delivered a mid-range missile system called the Typhon, a land-based weapon that can fire the Standard Missile-6 and the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile, to the northern Philippines as part of joint combat exercises in April last year.

That was followed by the transport by the U.S. military of an anti-ship missile launcher in April this year to the northernmost Philippine province of Batanes, just a sea border away from Taiwan.

Beijing strongly protested the installation of the U.S. missile systems, saying they were aimed at containing China's rise and warning that these would threaten regional stability.

China has asked the Philippines to withdraw the missile launchers from its territory, but officials led by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. had rejected the demand.

Ambassador Jose Manuel Romualdez said without elaborating that the possible deployment by the U.S. of more Navy Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System or NMESIS missile launchers "was being discussed for consideration by both sides."

The anti-ship missile systems could be installed along Philippine coastal regions facing the South China Sea and outlying regions to beef up deterrence against aggression, he said.

"This is part of the strong U.S. and Philippines defense partnership," Romualdez said.

VETERANS

1M medical records breached in DaVita hack

By Linda F. Hersey
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A national dialysis center that contracts with the Department of Veterans Affairs was the target of a ransomware attack breaching veterans medical records containing Social Security numbers, test results and health insurance information.

DaVita — a major provider of care for patients with kidney disease — disclosed approximately 1 million medical records were exposed in the cyberattack, including the health information of veterans receiving VA-covered dialysis and lab services in their communities.

DaVita provided details about patient information potentially compromised in notifications to attorneys general in several states, according to HIPAA Journal, which posts regulatory updates on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

For the first quarter of 2025, the VA paid $206 million to DaVita to provide dialysis and lab testing services, according to USASpending.gov, a government website on federal spending, including contracts, grants and loans.

The cyberattack hit DaVita's own internal computer systems exposing some sensitive information from VA patient records, the VA said.

Patient names, images of checks and tax identification numbers might have been exposed in some of the patient files, DaVita said in an announcement.

"Throughout our response to this matter, patient care delivery has continued. At this time, all major network servers and systems that were impacted have been restored in a secure manner," the company said.

Neither the VA nor DaVita would discuss the scope of the cyberattack or the number of veterans' records accessed.

"Currently, forensic investigators and the FBI continue their work to determine the extent of the breach," the VA said in a written statement.

DaVita provides dialysis and lab services for patients with kidney failure who typically require up to three treatments a week, according to the company.

The majority of VA patients with end-stage renal disease — or kidney failure — receive their dialysis and lab tests from community providers, the VA said. Approximately 80% of VA patients received their treatment from community health care providers in fiscal 2021 and 2022, the VA said.

End-stage renal disease is more common in veterans than in the general population and requires dialysis or a kidney transplant. About 13,000 new cases are diagnosed each year, the VA said.

DaVita Inc. is one of the nation's largest providers of outpatient dialysis treatments and lab testing services, according to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

It processes more than 21 million lab specimens yearly for kidney dialysis patients. DaVita operates more than 2,675 outpatient dialysis centers in 43 states.

The data breach affects records of veterans who receive their dialysis and related lab services through the VA Veteran Community Care Program, according to VA.

Overall, the VA cares for about 600,000 veterans with chronic kidney disease, which develops when the kidneys are damaged and unable to properly filter waste and fluids from the blood.

Dialysis filters toxins from the body when the kidneys no longer function properly.

Demand for kidney dialysis and testing services is growing, and the agency has limited capacity, according to the VA. One in seven Americans is affected by kidney disease, but it impacts approximately one in six veterans, according to the American Kidney Fund.

Veterans impacted by the data breach will be notified and offered up to 12 months of free online monitoring for protection against identity theft through Experian, a national credit rating service, the VA said.

The VA Veteran Community Care Program is a network of private health care providers that serve veterans when the VA cannot provide the health services close to home and in a timely manner.

DaVita first announced the incident this spring in an SEC filing. DaVita said it was targeted in a ransomware attack that had encrypted parts of its network.

VA's own internal computer systems were not affected in the computer hack, the VA said.

DOJ: Woman stole $148K from vets

By Lara Korte
Stars and Stripes

A Cincinnati woman has been arrested on allegations of stealing money that she managed for U.S. military veterans, the Justice Department said.

Ishwanzya Rivers, 46, is accused of stealing $148,000 from four elderly or ill veterans, federal officials said in a statement Wednesday. She used the funds to subsidize shopping, restaurant visits and trips to Montego Bay, London and the Maldives, among other locations, the statement said.

Rivers stole at least $133,000 from one elderly, terminally ill veteran who lived at the VA hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio, the DOJ said, spending the victim's money at least 45 times from June 2021 through November 2022.

She stole smaller sums from three other elderly or sick veterans, the Justice Department alleged. Rivers has been charged with misappropriating funds as a fiduciary and making false statements. Both are federal crimes that can be punished by up to five years in prison.



MILITARY

Study recommends reduction of duty codes

Confusion among Guard troops, reservists cited

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

The dozens of Pentagon duty codes for National Guard members and reservists cause confusion and should be slashed to just four, according to a new Defense Department-commissioned report.

The change would make pay and benefits more predictable for reserve component service members, improve budgetary planning and encourage volunteerism, according to the Rand Corp. report released Tuesday.

"The system's complexity and inflexibility prevent National Guard and Reserve members from being used in an optimal way," researchers said.

As Guard members and reservists move to different types of duty assignments, pay and benefits often change and may be delayed, according to the report.

There are currently 29 involuntary and voluntary status distinctions under 27 different sections of federal law, covering mobilization orders, training drills, funeral honors, sexual assault response and other duties.

Rand recommended reducing these to four categories: contingency duty, training and support, reserve component duty and remote assignments.

Having a wide array of duties under broad categories would make it easier to bounce between jobs, making volunteerism more likely, the report said.

Efforts to reform the duty status system stretch back to 2002 but gained momentum after a 2015 helicopter crash in the the Gulf of Mexico that killed four guardsmen and seven Marines.

The Guardsmen's families received "considerably less" in survivor payments because the soldiers were designated for inactive duty training that day.

The issue was fixed in a later defense bill, but broader inconsistencies remain, the report said.

Congress instructed DOD in the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act to study the issue., and Rand was brought in to assist a DOD working group.

Besides consolidating duty categories, the report recommended aligning order-writing, accounting and compensation systems across the military services. DOD must then ensure complete adoption across the services and overcome resistance to reverting to the old system, it said.

Adopting the recommendations would save an estimated $68.8 million in fiscal 2018 dollars annually and $344.1 million over five years under the Future Years Defense Program, the report said.



TIMOTHY LEDDICK/U.S. Air Force

Air Force reservists of the 911th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron take a group photo after an exercise at Leuchars Station, Scotland, in June 2024. A Rand Corp. report released Tuesday says the Pentagon should overhaul its duty status system for Guard members and reservists to reduce confusion and better standardize pay and benefits.

Marines investigate after recruit shot in training-related incident at Parris Island

BY KARL PUCKETT
The Island Packet

A Marine recruit at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island was injured after being shot in the leg during a marksmanship training exercise on the firing range.

The recruit, assigned to a Recruit Training Regiment, was airlifted from the base's location in Port Royal to a Savannah hospital.

Beyond those details, little else is known about this incident including specifics of how the shooting occurred, his or her medical status, the name or age of the victim or the hometown. It is standard operating procedure for the Marines to delay the release of any information until hours after the family has been notified.

Immediate medical attention was provided on site and the recruit was stabilized and then airlifted to Memorial Health University Medical Center in Savannah for further treatment.

"It is under investigation and would be premature to speculate on any details," said Chief Warrant Officer Bobby Yarbrough, a Recruit Depot spokesman. The Marines said they "are committed to a thorough and transparent review of the incident."

About 16,000 enlisted recruits a year train to be Marines at the 8,000-acre island base in Port Royal, one of two bases in the country where recruits train to become Marines. The other is at Marine Corps Base Pendleton near San Diego.

In phase two of recruit training, recruits receive formal instruction and develop skills necessary to maintain and accurately fire the M16-A4 on four live-fire rifle ranges, according to the Marines.

Navy relieves commanding officer of reserve readiness center in San Diego

Stars and Stripes

The commanding officer of Naval Information Force Reserve Readiness Center San Diego was relieved of duty on Tuesday.

A Navy news release cited a loss of confidence in Capt. Russell A. Herrell's ability to command. The term "loss of confidence" is frequently used by the military when specific reasons are not disclosed for the removal of a commander. The Navy did not give specifics for Herrell's removal.

The readiness center provides administrative support to attached units, according to the release. It is a subordinate command of Naval Information Force Reserve, which is based in Fort Worth, Texas.

The command's chief of staff, Capt. Mark Meade, has been temporarily assigned as REDCEN San Diego's commanding officer, per the release.

US approves potential $346M weapons sale to boost Nigerian security

Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria — The U.S. State Department approved a possible $346 million weapons sale to Nigeria to help improve security in the sub-Saharan country, the Pentagon said Wednesday.

Congress was notified and would need to approve the sale, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a statement. The agency is a division of the Department of Defense body that provides technical assistance and oversees transfers of defense equipment.

The weapons requested by Nigeria include munitions, bombs and rockets.

A resurgence of attacks by Boko Haram, Nigeria's homegrown jihadist group, has shaken Nigeria's northeast. The group took up arms in 2009 to fight Western education and impose its radical version of Islamic law. In recent months, Islamic extremists have repeatedly overrun military outposts, mined roads with bombs and raided civilian communities, raising fears of a possible return to the peak insecurity of the Boko Haram era despite the military's claims of success against them.

The conflict, which has spread into Nigeria's northern neighbors, has claimed about 35,000 civilian lives and displaced more than 2 million people in the country's northeastern region, according to the U.N.

Apart from the insurgency in the northeast, Africa's most populous country also faces serious security challenges in the north-central and northwest regions, where hundreds have been killed and injured in recent months.

"The proposed sale will improve Nigeria's capability to meet current and future threats through operations against terrorist organizations and to counter illicit trafficking in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea," the Pentagon said Wednesday. "There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale."

WAR IN UKRAINE

Zelenskyy, UK leader meet ahead of summit

European powers say discussions eased concerns that Trump, Putin will ignore them

By Pan Pylas
Associated Press

LONDON — U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer welcomed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to London on Thursday in a show of British support for Ukraine a day before a critical U.S.-Russia summit is set to take place in Alaska.

The two embraced warmly outside Starmer's offices at 10 Downing Street without making any comments. Around an hour later, Starmer walked Zelenskyy back to his waiting car, and the two leaders shared another embrace as the Ukrainian president departed.

Zelenskyy's trip to the British capital came a day after he took part in virtual meetings from Berlin with U.S. President Donald Trump and the leaders of several European countries.

Those leaders said that Trump had assured them that he would make a priority of trying to achieve a ceasefire in Ukraine when he meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday in Anchorage.

Both Zelenskyy and the Europeans have worried that the bilateral U.S.-Russia summit would leave them and their interests sidelined, and that any conclusions reached could favor Moscow and leave Ukraine and Europe's future security in jeopardy.

Yet some of those leaders, like German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and French President Emmanuel Macron, praised Wednesday's video conference with Trump as constructive. Speaking after the meetings to reporters, Trump warned of "very severe consequences" for Russia, if Putin doesn't agree to stop the war against Ukraine after Friday's meeting.

The Kremlin on Thursday said that the meeting between Trump and Putin in Alaska will start at 11:30 a.m. local time. Putin's foreign policy adviser, Yuri Ushakov, told reporters that Trump and Putin will first sit down for a one-on-one meeting followed by a meeting between the two delegations, and then talks will continue over "a working breakfast."



ANDRII MARIENKO/AP

A soldier with Ukraine's 30th Mechanized Brigade prepares to fire a howitzer toward Russian positions on the front line near near Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Wednesday.

Putin on Thursday held a meeting with top government officials on the upcoming summit. In a video released by the Kremlin, he said that the Trump administration was making "quite energetic and sincere efforts to stop the hostilities" and to "reach agreements that are of interest to all parties involved in this conflict."

Putin also suggested that agreements could be reached with the U.S. on nuclear arms control.

Starmer said on Wednesday that the Alaska summit could be a path to a ceasefire in Ukraine, but also alluded to European concerns that Trump may strike a deal that forces Ukraine to cede territory to Russia. He warned that Western allies must be prepared to step up pressure on Russia if necessary.

During a call on Wednesday among leaders of countries involved in the "coalition of the willing" — those that are prepared to help police any future peace agreement between Moscow and Kyiv — Starmer stressed that any ceasefire deal must protect the "territorial integrity" of Ukraine.

"International borders cannot be, and must not be changed by force," he said.

Kyiv has long insisted that safeguards against future Russian attacks provided by its Western allies would be a precondition for achieving a durable end to the fighting in Ukraine. Yet many Western governments have been hesitant to commit to engaging their military personnel.

Countries in the "coalition of the willing," which include France and the U.K., have been trying for months to secure U.S. security backing should it be required. Following Wednesday's virtual meetings, Macron said that Trump told the assembled leaders that while NATO mustn't be part of future security guarantees, "the United States and all the parties involved should take part."

"It's a very important clarification that we have received," Macron said.

Trump didn't reference any U.S. commitments to providing security guarantees during his comments to reporters on Wednesday.

With another high-level meeting on their country's future on the horizon, some Ukrainians expressed skepticism that any breakthroughs would be achieved during Friday's U.S.-Russia summit.

Oleksandra Kozlova, 39, who works at a digital agency in Kyiv, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that she believes Ukrainians "have already lost hope" that meaningful progress can be made on ending the nearly 3½-year-old war.

"I don't think this round will be decisive," she said. "There have already been enough meetings and negotiations promising us, ordinary people, that something will be resolved, that things will get better, that the war will end. Unfortunately, this has not happened, so personally I don't see any changes coming."

Anton Vyshniak, a car salesman in Kyiv, said that Ukraine's priority now should be saving the lives of its military service members, even at the expense of making territorial concessions.

"At the moment, the most important thing is to preserve the lives of male and female military personnel. After all, there are not many human resources left," he said. "Borders are borders, but human lives are priceless. Therefore, some principles can be disregarded here."

Zelenskyy said on Thursday that Ukraine had secured the release of 84 people from Russian captivity, including both soldiers and civilians.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said Thursday that it too had received 84 soldiers as part of a prisoner of war exchange.

Force: Details of what the US might contribute are unknown

FROM PAGE 1

no details of possible U.S. support were made public, but U.S. Vice President JD Vance sat in on the coalition meeting for the first time.

More than 200 military planners have worked for months on ways to ensure a future peace should the war, now in its fourth year, finally halt. Ukraine's armed forces also have been involved, and British personnel have led reconnaissance work inside Ukraine.

The exact size of the force has not been made public, although Britain has said it could number 10,000 to 30,000 troops. It must be enough to deter Russian forces, but also of a realistic size for nations that shrank their militaries after the Cold War and are now rearming.

The "reassurance" force's mission "will be to strengthen Ukraine's defenses on the land, at sea, and in the air because the Ukrainian Armed Forces are the best deterrent against future Russian aggression," U.K. Defence Secretary John Healey told lawmakers last month.

"It will secure Ukraine's skies by using aircraft," Healey said, "and it will support safer seas by bolstering the Black Sea Task Force with additional specialist teams."

Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey launched that naval force a year ago to deal with mines in Black Sea waters.

The force initially will have its headquarters in Paris before moving to London next year. A coordination headquarters in Kyiv will be involved once hostilities cease and it deploys.

European efforts to set up the force have been seen as a first test of the Continent's willingness to defend itself and its interests, given Trump administration warnings that Europe must take care of its own security and that of Ukraine in future.

Still, U.S. forces clearly provide a deterrent that the Europeans cannot muster.

Details of what the U.S. might contribute were unknown, and Trump has changed his mind in the past, so it remains to be seen whether this signal will be enough to persuade more countries within the coalition to provide troops.

Greece has publicly rejected doing so. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said last month that those discussions were "somewhat divisive" and distracted from the goal of ending the war as soon as possible.

Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has said Rome won't contribute troops, but she previously has underlined the importance of working with the U.S. on ending the conflict and called for the participation of an American delegation in force coordination meetings.

NATO membership would be Ukraine's best security guarantee, but the Trump administration took that possibility off the table in February.

Putin is deeply opposed to Ukraine joining the world's biggest military alliance, and some allies fear it might drag NATO into a broader war with nuclear armed Russia.

NATION

Streets: DC officials, residents respond to federal takeover

FROM PAGE 1

protesters shouted at them.

The White House said the overnight operation would soon become a 24/7 affair, with a significantly greater National Guard presence — and Trump said he intended to ask Congress to extend the emergency allowing him to federalize D.C. police beyond 30 days.

"We're going to be asking for extensions on that — long-term extensions, because you can't have 30 days," Trump said Wednesday, adding that his administration would be pushing a crime bill to use the city as "a very positive example."

Spokespeople for Bowser and Attorney General Brian Schwalb, a Democrat, declined to comment.

Trump's executive action represents the most extraordinary federal intervention into the city's home rule in decades, coming as violent crime is at 30-year lows following a historic spike in 2023, according to D.C. police data.

So far, top D.C. officials said, the order was playing out as more of a collaborative partnership, even as they feared that Trump's repeated denigrations of the nation's capital as a dirty city unsafe for residents and visitors could do permanent damage to its image on the national stage.

Bowser encapsulated the parallel reactions as she deployed dual messaging in two public appearances over the course of 15 hours between Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning.

Speaking to community leaders on Zoom on Tuesday night, Bowser called Trump's actions an "authoritarian push" in her firmest condemnation yet, as she began to more forcefully dispute the disparaging characterization of the District that Trump has repeatedly painted.

"We don't live in a dirty city. We are not 700,000 scumbags and punks. We don't have neighborhoods that should be bulldozed. We have to be clear about our story," Bowser said.

She said "we need to do what we can in our space, in our lane, to protect our city and protect our autonomy" to "get to the other side of this guy."

But appearing on FOX5 on Wednesday morning, a more tempered Bowser, along with D.C. Police Chief Pamela A. Smith, said a boost in law enforcement efforts from federal partners could help the city further drive down crime and get more guns off the street — mirroring the kind of pragmatic approach the mayor presiding over the deep-blue city has taken for months in the second Trump administration.

"What we want to do is make sure this federal surge is useful for us, and that's what the chief has been very, very good in working to accomplish," Bowser said.



MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP

A child watches as officers with the Drug Enforcement Administration patrol along the National Mall Wednesday in Washington.



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Items belonging to the homeless are removed from a tent encampment, Thursday, where people who are homeless had been living in Washington.

"You're talking about 500 additional personnel in the District of Columbia," Smith said. "We're down in numbers with our D.C. police officers. So this enhanced presence is going to impact us in a positive way."

D.C. Council Chairman Phil Mendelson, Democrat, said in an interview Wednesday that there were "two realities" at play: one asserted from the White House lectern, where Trump said the federal takeover of D.C. police would rescue the city from "crime, bloodshed, bedlam and squalor" — and the other being "what's actually happening."

By all indications, he said, federal agencies were not "trying to boss MPD" around and, in fact, were soliciting ideas about how they could be helpful — the type of collaboration Mendelson said he agreed with Bowser is welcome. Smith said Tuesday that she provided a strategic plan to Drug Enforcement Administration head Terry Cole, whom Trump tapped to oversee D.C. police.

"I think collaborating with MPD and providing additional resources can only be for the good," Mendelson said. "But the president has a national platform, and he's painted the city as a cesspool of crime. We know that's not true, but that is damaging to the city."

Trump continued targeting D.C. on Wednesday as he touted his mission to make the city "safe and beautiful" during an unrelated event at the Kennedy Center. He said he expected Republicans to "unanimously" approve an extension of the emergency in D.C. through a joint resolution — although resolutions are typically subject to the Senate filibuster and would require support of Democrats. But, he added, "I don't want to call a national emergency — if I have to I will," suggesting he could consider an alternative route to go around Congress.

Trump said that his administration was working with D.C. police and Bowser — "a very nice woman" — but that "we got to do the job."

The strategy guiding the federal law enforcement surge seemed to be in flux Wednesday. The surge has surpassed 100 arrests since the operation began last Thursday, according to a White House official. The tally from the White House includes serving 10 warrants and 23 immigration enforcement actions.

A White House official said Wednesday that there was no estimate of how many National Guard troops were expected to be in D.C. on Wednesday night, although they had originally said more than 400. "Operational details are constantly subject to change," they said.

When it comes to measuring the federal operation's success, Bowser said on FOX5 that in her meeting with Attorney General Pam Bondi and other federal partners Wednesday, no clear metric for success was offered.

She said it could include sweeping more illegal guns off the street.

"We certainly want to know what we're being measured against, and they regard it as a success to have more presence and to take more guns off the street, and we do too. That's what MPD works on every single day, is taking more guns off the street."

Agents and officers detailed to the surge have received assignments on a day-to-day basis, according to multiple people familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss operational details. In most cases, federal agents less familiar with policing the city have been paired with D.C. police officers or officers with the U.S. Secret Service Uniformed Division, the people said. About 130 FBI agents have been detailed to the effort, including agents dispatched on temporary assignments from the bureau's Philadelphia and Baltimore field offices, two people said.

On the first two nights of the operation, they conducted joint patrols with D.C. police officers or assisted in arrests tied to open warrants. FBI Director Kash Patel said on X that agents have been involved with local partners in making at least 18 arrests since Monday evening, including apprehending one suspect wanted for murder as well others wanted for DUI, theft, assault and violating a restraining order. Agents also detained several people for illegal gun possession, he said.

Roughly half of the 800 National Guard troops who were mobilized have processed in, and some of those troops are already on D.C. streets, said an Army official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide additional details that had not yet been made public. Those troops began working Tuesday night near the U.S. Park Police station in Anacostia Park and on patrols near high-visibility areas including the national monuments. The troops were not carrying guns but had weapons available if needed, the official said.

The use of the National Guard brings to bear the threats that Trump has lobbed at the city's autonomy for months and, critics fear, exposes residents to potentially unpredictable encounters with a domestically deployed military force.

While the National Guard was preparing to activate, Bowser spent an hour Tuesday night answering residents' questions in a video chat live-streamed on social media. She acknowledged that she did not know exactly how the federal resources would be deployed, but she said her expectation was that the National Guard troops would be deployed to federal parks, monuments and federal buildings, while federal law enforcement would be deployed to higher-crime areas of the city.

NATION

Smithsonian to review exhibits, policies

By Annie Ma
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House is ordering a wide-ranging review of the Smithsonian museums and exhibitions ahead of the country's 250th birthday with a goal of aligning the institution's content with President Donald Trump's interpretation of American history.

In a letter sent Tuesday to Smithsonian Institution Secretary Lonnie Bunch III, the White House laid out in detail the steps it expects the organization to take as part of the announced review. The examination will look at all public-facing content, such as social media, exhibition text and educational materials, to "assess tone, historical framing, and alignment with American ideals," according to the letter.

"This initiative aims to ensure alignment with the President's directive to celebrate American exceptionalism, remove divisive or partisan narratives, and restore confidence in our shared cultural institutions," the letter said.

The Smithsonian said it remained committed to "scholarly excellence, rigorous research, and the accurate, factual presentation of history."

"We are reviewing the letter with this commitment in mind and will continue to collaborate constructively with the White House, Congress, and our governing Board of Regents," it said in a statement.



Maansi Srivastava/For the Washington Post

An exhibition at the National Museum of American History in March explores social movements that shaped the United States.

The review, first reported by The Wall Street Journal, is the latest attempt by the president to bring the country's cultural institutions in line with his vision. In March, Trump signed an executive order titled "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History," which accused the Smithsonian of coming under the influence of a "divisive, race-centered ideology" and called upon it to "remove improper ideology" from the institution's museums.

In February, Trump removed the Kennedy Center's Board of Trustees, replaced them with his supporters and named himself chairman. He vowed to end events featuring performers in drag, indicating he would take on a larger role in dictating the institution's programming schedule.

The review of the Smithsonian will initially focus on eight museums — the National Museum of American History, the National Museum of Natural History, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the National Museum of the American Indian, the National Air and Space Museum, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the National Portrait Gallery and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.

The letter said additional museums would be reviewed in subsequent phases.

Civil rights leaders have criticized the administration's particular focus on the National Museum of African American History and Culture as efforts to minimize Black Americans' contributions to the country and to recast the obstacles they faced throughout history.

The Smithsonian has repeatedly denied allegations that it has changed or removed exhibit details in response to pressure from the administration. Recently, the institution removed references to Trump's two impeachments from an exhibit on the American presidency.

A spokesman for the museum said the references, which were added in 2021, were intended to be a temporary measure and said a future exhibit would include details on all presidential impeachments.

Texas students injured in bus rollover on first day of school

Associated Press

LEANDER, Texas — A Texas school bus carrying more than 40 students on Wednesday rolled over after veering off a rural road on the first day of class, injuring multiple students, authorities said.

At least one person has life-threatening injuries, while two others have "potentially life-threatening injuries," Assistant Chief Kevin Parker, with Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services, said during a news conference.

The bus was traveling on a rural stretch of two-lane road when it veered off the right side "for an unknown reason" and rolled over, said Department of Public Safety Sgt. Billy Ray.

He later said in a Wednesday night statement that it was raining when the crash happened and "it is unclear if weather had a factor." The crash is being investigated.

School and emergency officials said the bus had 42 children, and the driver along with 15 students were transported to hospitals. Officials did not say if the person with life-threatening injuries was a student or the driver.



Jay Janner, Austin American-Statesman/AP

State troopers work at the scene after a bus carrying students rolled over in Leander, Texas, on Wednesday.

The bus for Leander Independent School District was carrying primarily elementary school students, Superintendent Bruce Gearing said. The crash happened shortly after school let out, and no students had been dropped off yet.

The bus is a 2024 model and is equipped with state-mandated seat belts that the children are required to wear, Gearing said.

"We want each of those students and their families to know that our prayers are with them, our thoughts are with them and we will do everything that we can in our power to support them," he said.

Melania demands Hunter Biden retract his Epstein comments

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — First lady Melania Trump demanded that Hunter Biden retract comments linking her to sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein and threatened to sue if he does not.

Trump takes issue with two comments Biden, son of former President Joe Biden, made in an interview this month with British journalist Andrew Callaghan. He alleged that Epstein introduced the first lady to now-President Donald Trump.

The statements are false, defamatory and "extremely salacious," Melania Trump's lawyer, Alejandro Brito, wrote in a letter to Biden. Biden's remarks were widely disseminated on social media and reported by media outlets around the world, causing the first lady "to suffer overwhelming financial and reputational harm," he wrote.

Biden made the Epstein comments during a sprawling interview in which he lashed out at "elites" and others in the Democratic Party he says undermined his father before he dropped out of last year's presidential campaign.



Biden

"Epstein introduced Melania to Trump. The connections are, like, so wide and deep," Biden said in one of the comments Trump disputes. Biden attributed the claim to author Michael Wolff, whom Donald Trump disparaged in June as a "Third Rate Reporter." He has accused Wolff of making up stories to sell books.

The first lady's threats echo a favored strategy of her husband, who has aggressively used litigation to go after critics. Public figures like the Trumps face a high bar to succeed in a defamation lawsuit. The president and first lady have long said they were introduced by Paolo Zampolli, a modeling agent, at a New York Fashion Week party in 1998.

NATION



THE (COLUMBIA, S.C.) STATE/TNS

Officials at the Savannah River Site, near Aiken, S.C., recently shared that four different wasp nests were found near a highly contaminated area of the property. They say there is no threat to the public.

Radioactive wasp nests spark questions

BY SAMMY FRETWELL
The (Columbia, S.C.) State

COLUMBIA, S.C. — As word spreads about the discovery of radioactive wasp nests at a South Carolina nuclear weapons complex, some researchers and environmental activists are urging the government to provide more details about the finding.

So far, officials with the Savannah River Site have issued a basic statement saying that four different wasp nests were found on a post near a highly contaminated section of the property last month. But they have said there is no threat to the public.

They've said wasps were lightly contaminated and were unlikely to spread toxins off the 310-square mile site.

Still, plenty of questions remain, including the types of radioactive material found in the nests, University of South Carolina biologist Tim Mousseau said.

"There's insufficient information to really kind of determine the risks and the hazards," said Mousseau, who has extensive experience studying the effects of radioactivity on plants and animals around the world.

Based on the SRS answers, for instance, it's not clear whether the wasp nests were contaminated by a new leak at the weapons complex, he said.

A new leak could indicate emerging contamination threats that need to be addressed. The nests were found in an area where large tanks store toxic nuclear material.

"If this reflects new leakage or new releases of pollutants that haven't been documented, then this is a sentinel of potential issues related to the long-term storage of this nuclear waste, which is an ongoing issue at all … sites that were involved in and continue to be involved in the processing of materials mostly for national security purposes." Mousseau said.

Man accused of faking death to avoid charges found guilty

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — A Rhode Island man accused of faking his death and fleeing the United States to evade rape charges was found guilty Wednesday of sexually assaulting a former girlfriend in his first of two Utah trials.

A jury in Salt Lake County found Nicholas Rossi guilty of a 2008 rape after a three-day trial in which his accuser and her parents took the stand. The verdict came hours after Rossi, 38, declined to testify on his own behalf. He will be sentenced in the case on Oct. 20 and is set to stand trial in September for another rape charge in Utah County.



Rossi

First-degree felony rape carries a punishment in Utah of five years to life in prison, said Salt Lake County District Attorney Sim Gill.

"We are grateful to the survivor in this case for her willingness to come forward, years after this attack took place," Gill said in a statement Wednesday night. "We appreciate her patience as we worked to bring the defendant back to Salt Lake County so that this trial could take place and she could get justice. It took courage and bravery to take the stand and confront her attacker to hold him accountable."

Utah authorities began searching for Rossi, whose legal name is Nicholas Alahverdian, when he was identified through a decade-old DNA rape kit in 2018.

He was among thousands of rape suspects identified and later charged when the state made a push to clear its rape kit backlog.

Months after he was charged in Utah County, an online obituary claimed Rossi had died on Feb. 29, 2020, of late-stage non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

But police in his home state of Rhode Island, along with his former lawyer and a former foster family, cast doubt on whether he was dead. He was arrested in Scotland the following year while receiving treatment for COVID-19 after hospital staff in Glasgow recognized his distinctive tattoos from an Interpol notice.

Rossi was extradited to Utah in January 2024 while insisting he was an Irish orphan named Arthur Knight who was being framed. Investigators say they identified at least a dozen aliases Rossi used over the years to evade capture.

He appeared in court this week in a wheelchair, wearing a suit and tie and using an oxygen tank.

Throughout the trial, prosecutors painted a picture of an intelligent man who used his charm to take advantage of a vulnerable young woman. She was living with her parents and recovering from a traumatic brain injury when she responded to a personal ad Rossi posted on Craigslist. They began dating and were engaged within about two weeks.

On Monday, the woman described being asked to pay for their dates, cover Rossi's car repairs, lend him $1,000 so he wouldn't be evicted from his apartment and take on debt to buy their engagement rings.

He grew hostile soon after their engagement and raped her in his bedroom one night after she drove him home, she testified.

The woman said dismissive comments from her parents convinced her not to go to the police at the time. She came forward a decade later after she saw him in the news and learned he was accused of another rape from the same year.

Rossi's lawyers sought to convince the jury that his accuser built up years of resentment after he made her foot the bill for everything in their monthlong relationship. They argued she accused him of rape to get back at him years later when he was getting media attention.

Rossi's accuser in the Utah County case did, however, go to the police at the time. She took the stand Tuesday to testify about her own experiences with Rossi — though he will not stand trial for that rape charge until next month.

Rossi is accused of attacking the second woman, another former girlfriend, at his apartment in Orem in September 2008 after she came over to collect money she said he stole from her to buy a computer.

When police initially interviewed Rossi, he claimed she had raped him and threatened to have him killed.

Rossi grew up in foster homes in Rhode Island and had returned there before allegedly faking his death. He was previously wanted in the state for failing to register as a sex offender.

The FBI has said he also faces fraud charges in Ohio, where he was convicted of sex-related charges in 2008.

'Frankenstein bunnies' with 'horns' spotted in Colorado

Associated Press

DENVER — A group of rabbits in Colorado with grotesque, horn-like growths may seem straight out of a low-budget horror film, but scientists say there's no reason to be spooked — the furry creatures merely have a relatively common virus.

The cottontails recently spotted in Fort Collins are infected with the mostly harmless Shope papillomavirus, which causes wart-like growths that protrude from their faces like metastasizing horns.

Viral photos have inspired a flurry of unflattering nicknames, including "Frankenstein bunnies," "demon rabbits" and "zombie rabbits." But their affliction is nothing new, with the virus inspiring ancient folklore and fueling scientific research nearly 100 years ago.

The virus likely influenced the centuries-old jackalope myth in North America, which told of a rabbit with antlers or horns, among other animal variations. The disease in rabbits also contributed to scientists' knowledge about the connection between viruses and cancer, such as the human papillomavirus that causes cervical cancer.

The virus in rabbits was named after Dr. Richard E. Shope, a professor at The Rockefeller University who discovered the disease in cottontails in the 1930s.

News about the rabbit sightings in Fort Collins, 65 miles north of Denver, started getting attention after residents started spotting them around town and posting pictures.

Kara Van Hoose, a spokesperson for Colorado Parks and Wildlife, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that the agency has been getting calls about the rabbits seen in Fort Collins.

But she said that it's not uncommon to see infected rabbits, especially in the summer, when the fleas and ticks that spread the virus are most active. The virus can spread from rabbit to rabbit but not to other species, including humans and pets, she said.

The growths resemble warts but can look like horns if they grow longer, Van Hoose said. The growths don't harm rabbits unless they grow on their eyes or mouths and interfere with eating. Rabbits' immune systems are able to fight the virus and, once they do, the growths will disappear, she said.



DR. RACHEL RUDEN/AP

This photo provided by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources shows a deceased Eastern cottontail rabbit infected with Shope papillomavirus in October 2021.

NATION

Appeals court rules foreign aid can be terminated or suspended

By Michael Kunzelman
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A divided panel of appeals court judges ruled Wednesday that the Trump administration can suspend or terminate billions of dollars of congressionally appropriated funding for foreign aid.

Two of three judges from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit concluded that grant recipients challenging the freeze did not meet the requirements for a preliminary injunction restoring the flow of money.

In January, on the first day of his second term in the White House, Republican President Donald Trump issued an executive order directing the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development to freeze spending on foreign aid.

After groups of grant recipients sued to challenge that order, U.S. District Judge Amir Ali ordered the administration to release the full amount of foreign assistance that Congress had appropriated for the 2024 budget year.

The appeal court's majority partially vacated Ali's order.

Judges Karen LeCraft Henderson and Gregory Katsas concluded that the plaintiffs did not have a valid legal basis for the court to hear their claims. The ruling was not on the merits of whether the government unconstitutionally infringed on Congress' spending powers.

"The parties also dispute the scope of the district court's remedy but we need not resolve it ... because the grantees have failed to satisfy the requirements for a preliminary injunction in any event," Henderson wrote.

Judge Florence Pan, who dissented, said the Supreme Court has held "in no uncertain terms" that the president does not have the authority to disobey laws for policy reasons.

"Yet that is what the majority enables today," Pan wrote. "The majority opinion thus misconstrues the separation-of-powers claim brought by the grantees, misapplies precedent, and allows Executive Branch officials to evade judicial review of constitutionally impermissible actions."

The money at issue includes nearly $4 billion for USAID to spend on global health programs and more than $6 billion for HIV and AIDS programs.

Trump has portrayed the foreign aid as wasteful spending that does not align with his foreign policy goals.

Henderson was nominated to the court by Republican President George H.W. Bush. Katsas was nominated by Trump. Pan was nominated by Democratic President Joe Biden.

US producer prices surge in July amid Trump tariffs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. wholesale inflation surged unexpectedly last month, signaling that President Donald Trump's sweeping taxes on imports are pushing costs up and that higher prices for consumers may be on the way.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that its producer price index — which measures inflation before it hits consumers— rose 0.9% last month from June, biggest jump in more than three years.

Compared with a year earlier, wholesale prices rose 3.3%.

The numbers were much higher than economists had expected.

Prices rose faster for producers than consumers last month, suggesting that U.S. importers may, for now, be eating the cost of Trump's tariffs rather than passing them on to customers.

That may not last.

"It will only be a matter of time before producers pass their higher tariff-related costs onto the backs of inflation-weary consumers," wrote Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at fwdbonds, a financial markets research firm.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core producer prices rose 0.9% from June, biggest month-over-month jump since March 2022.

Compared with a year ago, core wholesale prices rose 3.7% after posting a 2.6% year-over-year jump in June.

Firefighters in California battle a fast-moving blaze

Associated Press

GORMAN, Calif. — Firefighters scrambled to control a fast-moving wildfire that erupted Thursday morning in hills along Interstate 5 in northwestern Los Angeles County, officials said.

The King Fire has swiftly charred about 400 acres of tinder-dry brush in a lightly populated area about 60 miles north of downtown LA.

An RV park was ordered to shelter in place and residents of remote homes were under evacuation warnings. The fire was 5% contained as of 6 a.m., according to the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

The California Highway Patrol closed some highway lanes as crews battled the flames. Off- and on-ramps were closed at Smokey Bear Road, along with several surrounding roads just north of Pyramid Lake in a mountainous area known for hiking and boating.

The blaze is burning a few miles north of the Canyon Fire, which prompted evacuations, destroyed seven structures and injured three firefighters after breaking out Aug. 7. That fire was 97% contained Wednesday after charring about 8 square miles of LA and Ventura counties.

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WORLD

Israel announces new settlement in West Bank area

Associated Press

MAALE ADUMIM, West Bank — Israel's far-right finance minister announced approval of contentious new settlement construction in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Thursday, which Palestinians and rights groups worry will scuttle plans for a future Palestinian state by effectively cutting the West Bank into two separate parts.

The announcement comes as many countries, including Australia, Britain, France, and Canada said they would recognize a Palestinian state in September.

"This reality finally buries the idea of a Palestinian state, because there is nothing to recognize and no one to recognize," said Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich during a ceremony on Thursday. "Anyone in the world who tries today to recognize a Palestinian state — will receive an answer from us on the ground," he said. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not publicly comment on the plan on Thursday, but he has touted it in the past.

Development in E1, an open tract of land east of Jerusalem, has been under consideration for more than two decades, but was frozen due to U.S. pressure during previous administrations. On Thursday, Smotrich praised President Donald Trump and U.S. ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee as "true friends of Israel as we have never had before."

The E1 plan is expected to receive final approval Aug. 20, capping off 20 years of bureaucratic wrangling. The planning committee on Aug. 6 rejected all of the petitions to stop the construction filed by rights groups and activists.

While some bureaucratic steps remain, if the process moves quickly, infrastructure work could begin in the next few months and construction of homes could start in around a year.

The approval is a "colonial, expansionist, and racist move," Ahmed al Deek, the political adviser to the minister of Palestinian Foreign Affairs, told The Associated Press on Thursday.

"It falls within the framework of the extremist Israeli government's plans to undermine any possibility of establishing a Palestinian state on the ground, to fragment the West Bank, and to separate its southern part from the center and the north," al Deek said.

Rights groups also swiftly condemned the plan. Peace Now called it "deadly for the future of Israel and for any chance of achieving a peaceful two-state solution" which is "guaranteeing many more years of bloodshed."

S. Korean court rejects US composer's copyright claim over 'Baby Shark' tune

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's Supreme Court rejected a $21,600 damage claim Thursday by an American composer who accused a South Korean kids content company of plagiarizing his version of "Baby Shark," ending a six-year legal battle over the globally popular tune known for its catchy "doo doo doo doo doo doo" hook.

The top court upheld lower court rulings dating back to 2021 and 2023 that found no sufficient grounds to conclude the company, Pinkfong, infringed on Jonathan Wright's copyright.

Wright, also known as Johnny Only, released his version in 2011, four years before Pinkfong's, but both were based on a traditional melody popular for years at children's summer camps in the United States.

The courts ruled Wright's version did not differ enough from the original melody to qualify as an original creative work eligible for copyright protection, and that Pinkfong's song had clear differences from Wright's.

The Supreme Court said its ruling reaffirms the established legal principle on existing folk tunes as derivative work.

"The Supreme Court accepts the lower court's finding that the plaintiff's song did not involve substantial modifications to the folk tune related to the case to the extent that it could be regarded, by common social standards, as a separate work," it said in a statement.



AHN YOUNG-JOON/AP

People walk near Pinkfong characters, from the South Korean kids' content company, during a coronavirus prevention campaign at City Hall Plaza in Seoul, in 2020. The writing on the character's mask reads, "Thank you so much."

Pinkfong said in a statement to The Associated Press that the ruling confirmed its version of "Baby Shark" was based on a "traditional singalong chant" that was in the public domain.

The company said it gave the tune a fresh twist by adding "an upbeat rhythm and catchy melody, turning it into the pop culture icon it is today."

Chong Kyong-sok, Wright's South Korean attorney, said he hadn't received the full version of the court's ruling yet, but called the outcome "a little disappointing."

"Anyway, the matter is now settled," he said. "It's our work that came out first, so we can handle the licensing on our side and I guess we then each go our separate ways."

Pinkfong's Baby Shark became a global phenomenon after it was released on YouTube in 2015, with the original "Baby Shark Dance" video now exceeding 16 billion views and peaking at No. 32 on the Billboard Hot 100.

Pro-Russia hackers blamed in Norwegian dam sabotage

Associated Press

Russian hackers are likely behind suspected sabotage at a dam in Norway in April that affected water flows, police officials told Norwegian media on Wednesday.

The director of the Norwegian Police Security Service, Beate Gangås, said cyberattacks are increasingly being carried out against Western nations to stoke fear and unrest.

The Associated Press has plotted over 70 incidents on a map tracking a campaign of disruption across Europe blamed on Russia, which Western officials have described as "reckless." Since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Western officials have accused Russia and its proxies of staging dozens of attacks and other incidents, ranging from vandalism to arson and attempted assassination.

Intelligence officials told the AP that the campaign is becoming more violent.

During the April incident, hackers gained access to a digital system which remotely controls one of the dam's valves and opened it to increase the water flow, NRK said. The valve was open for around four hours but did not pose a danger to the surrounding area.

A three-minute long video showing the dam's control panel and a mark identifying a pro-Russian cybercriminal group was published on Telegram in April, police attorney Terje Nedrebø Michelsen told NRK.

Similar videos have circulated on social media, but the announcement by Norwegian police marked the first time since 2022 that officials have publicly suggested pro-Russian hackers may have successfully targeted critical water infrastructure in Europe.

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TRAVEL



PHOTOS BY NATACHA PISARENKO/AP

Workers in Pilar, Argentina, build a miniature version of Mairinque, Brazil, on June 25 as part of Miniatur Wunderland, a museum in Hamburg, Germany, that houses the largest model train set in the world.

It's a small, but realistic, world after all

Miniatur Wunderland in Hamburg developing new exhibits but making sure to include social, political ills

BY MELINA WALLING
Associated Press

Watching his dad make a brand-new miniature train car look old, placing the wooden parts to weather in the sun and rain, pulled Peter Martínez into the world of miniatures. He recalls his father, who made model trains mostly for collectors or hobbyists, wondering why anyone would pay him to do what he thought was the most fun part of the hobby.

"But luckily they did, and we were able to build an industry around it," Martínez said.

The Argentine family business, United Scale Arts, is now partnering with Germany's Miniatur Wunderland, a museum that houses the largest model train set in the world, to develop new exhibits depicting parts of South America, including the Amazon rainforest and Atacama Desert. But with miniature power comes great responsibility — and both Martínez's company and the museum are determined that the miniature world reflect both the good and bad of the real thing.

So alongside the perfectly shaded rocks and trees, they depict poverty, crime and environmental degradation. In the exhibits already running in Hamburg, built by a team that has grown over the years to hundreds of people, it means that tiny trains pull tiny coal cars into a mining town, but also, on a city bridge, a tiny semitruck hauls the tiny giant blade of a wind turbine.

And the builders say it means the new models won't shy away from illustrating real life in the Amazon: they will include scenes of illegal mining, deforestation and forest fires.

"These are social problems that exist in the real world, and we need to show them also in the models, because I think it's important not to make this kind of idealistic view of the world, but also to show reality and to use these tools as a learning experience for everyone that visits the Wunderland," Martínez said.

Visitors have a lot to see in the multistory warehouse that is Wunderland. From Las Vegas to Miami Beach, from Rio de Janeiro to Monaco, cars zoom past tiny replicas of buildings as throngs of people, with heads smaller than your fingernail, mill about famous landmarks.





Above, miniature mines and below, miniature graffiti.

Cargo ships dominate the glasslike surface of a tiny bay as they chug in with their deliveries. Planes taxi down the runway of an airport. And of course, plenty of trains roll through every landscape to the delight of kids and adults alike.

Twin brothers Gerrit and Frederik Braun joined with business partner Stephan Hertz and took out a loan to create Miniatur Wunderland after they left the nightclub business.

Frederik had visited a model railroad shop in Zurich, called his brother and suggested they create their own — but a whole lot bigger.

Gerrit laughed at first. Unlike his brother, he loved the nightclub. But he eventually agreed and now can't imagine doing anything else.

"It's a dream come true that we sit here 25 years later, and playing all day," he said, chuckling.

But he takes the work seriously. The brothers came up with most of the initial plans for the museum within two weeks, Gerrit said. It's grown in scope and ambition since then.

"Ten years ago, we were looking to the old section and saw the real world has changed in this time," Gerrit said. They realized they needed to update the exhibits to include technologies like electric cars, wind turbines, nuclear power and more. "I have children, and I believe in global warming and I'm sure that we have done it ... So if you believe in this, and you have the possibility to show the images, why not?"

There's no one process by which the designers and model builders decide what to include in their models, but as they have added to the collection, they haven't shied away from depicting technology or from political or contentious topics.

In 2017, during Donald Trump's first term as U.S. president, the Wunderland put up a model concrete wall with barbed wire around the section with the American landscapes.

In 2019, Wunderland launched a scathing exhibit on the treatment of animals in large-scale farming that sparked deep criticism from the agriculture industry.

Next came weeks of conversation, farm visits and the eventual launch of a special exhibit aimed at depicting the current reality of pig farming, featuring industrial production and organic farms.

They're usually striving to depict the world exactly as it is. But building models also reminds Gerrit that "you can build the world a little bit like you want," he said.

It's an art form that can have practical purposes but also can capture longing, nostalgia or other feelings about a particular time or place, said Kit Maxwell, a curator with The Art Institute of Chicago, which houses the popular Thorne Miniature Rooms.

"One of the most compelling things about these rooms is that you imagine yourself in them," he said.

Aware of that power of imagination, Martínez also said builders have to be careful not to unfairly cast countries in a bad light as they seek to include imperfections.

"You need to kind of balance, when you show the bad things in contrast with the good things, that they are not overdone or they are not too much," he said. "You want also that the people that go there have a good time and not get really sad after seeing this model."

What is your place in the universe?

Why the search for meaning can cause 'purpose anxiety' and what to do about it



ILLUSTRATION BY PETER HAMLIN/AP

Todd Kashdan, the founder of George Mason University's Well-Being Laboratory, says to think of purpose not as something that governs behavior but as a compass you can choose to follow, helping direct your energies toward a central life aim.

BY ALINA TUGEND
Associated Press

It has become such common advice that few question it: "Find your purpose." But rather than inspirational, it can feel like a burden.

How do I go about finding this, and what if I never do? This is "purpose anxiety" — the gnawing sense that one's life should have an overarching purpose, but it's unclear how to discover it.

"There's a lot of commands to find purpose, but not a lot of support to find purpose," said Michael Steger, a professor at Colorado State University and director of its Center for Meaning and Purpose.

How do you define 'purpose'?

The definition of purpose can be elastic. Can you have only one purpose, or can you have many? Does it have to involve service to others, or can it be something that consistently gives only you great pleasure and meaning?

Think of purpose not as something that governs behavior, but as a compass you can choose to follow, helping direct your energies toward a central life aim, says Todd Kashdan, a professor at George Mason University and founder of its Well-Being Laboratory. A sense of purpose can help "close that gap between who you are and what you ideally want to become," he said.

People can lead content, meaningful lives without ever articulating a sense of purpose, he emphasized.

There are many legitimate reasons for the advice given by parents, teachers, mentors and an array of online gurus that finding purpose is key to a good life. Research has shown that people who more strongly feel a sense of purpose tend to be physically and mentally healthier.

But the word has become so weighty that finding a purpose has, for many, become a source of angst.

The term "purpose anxiety" appears to have been coined in 2014 by a University of Pennsylvania graduate student, Larissa Rainey, and caught on. Author Elizabeth Gilbert, for example, best known for her memoir "Eat, Pray, Love," has spoken frequently about an unhealthy obsession over a "purposeful life." It is, she said in one interview, "the formula we've all been fed."

Some of the old guideposts are gone

People have always searched for life's meaning and purpose.

"Part of what it is to have a human consciousness is to think about our place in the universe," said Jody Day, a psychotherapist and author of "Living the Life Unexpected: How to Find Hope, Meaning and a Fulfilling Future without Children." "But a lot of the places that we've naturally found meaning in our culture in, say, the last hundred years are falling away."

Religion, for instance, often offered purpose and meaning to believers. But those who identify as religious has dropped significantly over the years (although that appears to be leveling off recently according to a 2025 survey by the Pew Research Center).

Other people traditionally found purpose in ensuring that their children had a better life than they did. Many don't have confidence that will be the case anymore, Day said.

As Steger said, "now we're stuck trying to do the harder thing, which is, one by one, figure out everything in the universe and how we fit."

Advice for alleviating the anxiety

You might begin, Steger said, by realizing that you don't have to pin down a purpose immediately; searching for purpose in itself helps generate meaning in life.

It entails "understanding who you are and what you have to work with, understanding what you care about, what you'd like to see be better, either in yourself or in the world" and then figuring out if you can make an impact, he added.

"In our culture, we are so outcome-focused and process-adverse," he said. "Probably my best advice is to take your time and be all right not always knowing."

Look to hobbies, jobs and community involvement

For Jordan Grumet, author of "The Purpose Code," there is big "P" Purpose and little "p" purpose, and too many people stress about finding the first and ignore the second.

"Big 'P' Purpose is goal-oriented — it's usually big and audacious, and often unattainable," he said. Social media, he said, "is full of people trying to voice that version of purpose on you so that they can make money."

Better, he said, to focus on little "p" purpose and pursuits that some might simply call hobbies — gardening, singing, collecting baseball cards. Or it can be found in a job, or volunteering.

"What could I do that would light me up and fill me up and be a good use of my time?" Grumet said.

It's not just for self-improvement, he said. When people do something they love, they attract people to them, which can help create communities.

Not all agree that hobbies and passions are the same as purpose. Reading books, Kashdan said, isn't a purpose in itself but can be a tool to discovering it: "They're just like fledgling seeds of, hey, something might be there that you might want to pursue with more depth and more gravity in your life."

When life throws you a curveball

Sometimes a traumatic event can change or create one's purpose in life. For example, Day assumed that her purpose would be to raise a family, but by her early 40s she knew she would not be able to have children.

"I felt so pointless as a human being because I wasn't a mother," she said, recalling the grief she felt.

But she ended up creating an online community for childless women called Gateway-Women.com. In rural Ireland, where she lives, she is also helping build an in-person group that brings people without children together as they age.

"I feel that to be alive in this time, and to have a platform and to be awake is an incredible privilege, and that is my purpose," she said.

ENTERTAINMENT

Clairvoyants in the know

‘America’s Got Talent’ duo brings mentalism to global stage

By Cate Burtner
Los Angeles Times

It all started with a cup of coffee ... and a blindfolded clairvoyant. As he sat beside me in a café booth, mentalist Thommy Ten asked me to take out some items from my bag at random. Rummaging through pens and chargers, I wanted to find something that Amélie van Tass, his stage partner and wife, might struggle to predict as she faced away from us. I handed Ten my passport, my wallet and a bag of almonds.

Talking toward the wall, Van Tass said, “It’s an ID ... is that a passport?” She was right. “And it expires April 2033?” I didn’t even know that — I checked and apparently, it does.

Van Tass quickly guessed the bag of nuts. It was when she started accurately rattling off my license and Visa card numbers that the phrase “sixth sense” came to my mind.

The Clairvoyants perform mentalism, the branch of magic that encapsulates all things mind-reading, precognition and extrasensory perception. The duo’s performances are theatrical and often break the fourth wall. They choose audience members at random and can guess their birthdays, their hotel room numbers and how much they won after a night in Las Vegas. Many shows incorporate their dog, crowd favorite Mr. Koni Hundini. Of the trio, he messes up the most, but the people “still love him,” Ten said.

Ten and Van Tass are best known for coming in second place on Season 11 of NBC’s “America’s Got Talent” in 2016. They also appeared on two “AGT” spinoffs. Since then, they’ve headlined tours and Vegas residencies, drawing international recognition in the magic world.

The couple took a brief break from performing in late 2024 to expand their family.

“It was always clear; we don’t want to give up our job,” Van Tass said. “They’re just part of the whole circus. We love to call it a circus because now we have two dogs and one baby.”

Ten and Van Tass’ 8-month-old baby boy joins the Clairvoyants in their travels but not on stage.

“We try to be as normal as possible when we’re at home. We’re just Mom and Dad and not the Clairvoyants,” Van Tass said. Ten added, “Of course, we try to keep it comfortable for him, for the dogs and for us. We don’t go crazy with seven shows in seven states a week. We limit it to weekends now.”

It’s only fitting that the “circus” headed to Vegas for the Clairvoyants’ U.S. comeback. The duo recently joined “AGT” champion magician Shin Lim in his Vegas residency with an act that merged its mental magic with Lim’s sleight of hand. The Clairvoyants will hit the road once again in late October.

Beyond their innovative psychic acts, the Clairvoyants have always challenged stereotypes about magic shows.

“There’s always this picture of a magician and the assistant bringing tables in and out,” Ten said. “That’s the basic understanding of a magician. Our thing was always that we wanted to be equal on stage.”

Ten and Van Tass, both 38, bring different talents to the act.

“You do more of the magic, magic stuff,” Van Tass said to Ten. “And I’m more the mind reading and feeling and sensing things, which I think is a female thing too.”

The couple first crossed paths on a set in 2011 — they started brainstorming a two-person magic act the next day. Less than a year later, they performed their first show, “Second Sight.” It was the first step in carving out their niche, the modern, theatrical mentalism that has since become their signature act.

The Clairvoyants soon began touring Europe, expanding their routine into a full-length show within the year. In 2014, they brought the tour to America, where they joined “The Illusionists,” the world’s largest traveling magic show. Two years later, they went even bigger: “America’s Got Talent.”

Over four months on “AGT,” the Clairvoyants performed eight times and beat out more than 100,000 other contestants. The duo came in second, behind singer Grace VanderWaal. Every episode of their season of “AGT” ranked No. 1 in its NBC time slot.

“Suddenly, our season was watched by 16, 17 million viewers,” Ten said. With so many people tuning in and voting from home, the Clairvoyants became a household name.

They also returned in 2019 for the spinoff “America’s Got Talent: The Champions” and in 2024 for “America’s Got Talent: Fantasy League.” They were eliminated in the preliminary round on both shows.

“In our genre, mentalism, mind reading, it’s normally very small. Like in a parlor setting or a face-to-face thing,” Ten said. “Our dream was always to make it big so we can perform in front of thousands of people. It should still feel like everybody’s part of it; everyone can be involved.”

Their upcoming U.S. tour will take them cross-country over the holidays.

The fan base they built from “AGT” added a layer of both excitement and pressure, but it isn’t necessarily what keeps the Clairvoyants moving.

“We have performed in front of 20 people and were as excited as we would have been in front of 20,000 people,” Van Tass said. “I’m most excited when I know that there are good friends and family in the audience.”



GETTY IMAGES/TNS

Thommy Ten, left, and Amélie van Tass, of the Clairvoyants, shown in August 2021, came in second on Season 11 of “America’s Got Talent,” appeared on two spinoffs and have headlined tours in the U.S. and Europe as well as Las Vegas residencies.



MUSIC



Red Light Management

Rainbow Kitten Surprise, from left: Jess Haney, Ethan Goodpaster, Ela Melo and Darrick Keller. The band is set to release its next album Sept. 26 on Atlantic Records.

Stripped-back sound

Why Rainbow Kitten Surprise's forthcoming album, 'Bones,' is a 'spill-your-guts-out record'

BY MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

Last year, the British dance musician known as Fred Again.. put out a feeler to the Nashville-based alt-rock band Rainbow Kitten Surprise about a possible collaboration. Ela Melo, who's fronted RKS since she and guitarist Darrick Keller formed the group over a decade ago as students at North Carolina's Appalachian State University, was intrigued by the invitation. "It's brilliant music," she says of Fred Again..'s soulful electronica.

So the singer and songwriter began sending ideas to the artist's team. "They'd be like, 'That's not it, but keep sending stuff,'" Melo recalls. Before long, she and her bandmates had written nine songs, then 32, then 48. "Eventually, we ended up with close to 160 songs because it just felt so good to write."

What happened with the Fred Again.. feature? "I don't know," Melo says with a laugh. "If he's still interested, we're still here."

One thing that happened was a new Rainbow Kitten Surprise album: "Bones," which the band has said will come out Sept. 26 from Atlantic Records. A 10-track collection produced by Jay Joyce, it's a quick and dirty follow-up to last year's "Love Hate Music Box," which ran for 22 tracks — including "Overtime," with Kacey Musgraves — and which took the band six years to complete. "This one kind of just came pouring out," Melo says from upstate New York on a recent afternoon between tour dates. The sound is raw yet tuneful, with scratchy electric guitars and whomping live drums in place of the synth-ier, more intricately layered productions of "Love Hate Music Box."

"It was the idea that we gotta be able to play this stuff — not build it and play it later, but play it right out of the gate."

Ela Melo
Rainbow Kitten Surprise frontwoman, on the approach to recording a new album

Rounded out by guitarist Ethan Goodpaster and drummer Jess Haney, RKS had its rowdy live show in mind as it worked on "Bones," according to Melo. "It was the idea that we gotta be able to play this stuff — not build it and play it later, but play it right out of the gate," the singer says. (Next month, the band will log its fourth sold-out show at Colorado's Red Rocks Amphitheatre and perform at the annual Ohana festival in Dana Point.) Melo wrote many of the LP's songs on guitar, she says, which provided "a different energy" compared to writing on keyboards as she did for "Love Hate Music Box" and 2018's "How To: Friend, Love, Freefall."

The straightforward sound is matched by lyrics Melo describes as "way more direct" than RKS' earlier stuff. "It's a spill-your-guts-out record," she says, adding that for every song, she'd write a first verse, then ad lib the rest in the studio. In

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MUSIC REVIEWS



Larry Niehues

Dan Auerbach, left, and Patrick Carney, of the Black Keys, recently released their 13th full-length LP.

Black Keys put a feel-good spin on their turbulent year

BY JAMES POLLARD
Associated Press

The Ohio alt-rock band the Black Keys are finding their way home on their 13th full-length LP, "No Rain, No Flowers."

The journey hasn't been easy. Last year, the Grammy-winning duo underwent a fiery, public split with their management after their arena tour was unceremoniously canceled. But on "No Rain, No Flowers," guitarist and vocalist Dan Auerbach and drummer Patrick Carney put a feel-good spin on their recent career turbulence. The album pulls the raw blues, psychedelia, garage rock and roots music of their 23-year discography into a single package.

Discerning fans won't have to look hard for nods to their rough 2024. The opening track begins with a synthesizer-infused postpunk riff that leaves a sense of both inner peace and simmering resentment. After warning "There's evil people in this world / Live long enough and you will be burned," Auerbach's easygoing voice assures that "Baby, the damage is done / It won't be long 'til we're back in the sun."



The Black Keys
No Rain, No Flowers
(Warner Music)

Their fourth album in five years marks a return to the prolific pace they maintained early on in their career. Underdogs no more, the critically acclaimed duo's tenure shows itself on this album, in a mix of trusted creative partners and long-admired new collaborators.

And perhaps truer to their name, this iteration of the Black Keys includes a lot more piano. Auerbach and Carney say they've never worked with someone who writes on the piano like Rick Nowels, who appeared on Lana Del Rey 's Auerbach-produced album "Ultraviolence."

Hip-hop producer Scott Storch plays keyboard on the groovy "Babygirl," which is part-power pop, part-Rolling Stones with its sharp rhythmic piano and lyrical self-assertiveness. He's also on "Make You Mine," where Auerbach's upper register and a string section push the band as close to Bee Gees' disco as it will get.

But they're at their best with moody, trance-inducing tracks like "Down to Nothing," where Auerbach's guitar elicits the feeling of yearning that's remained a constant throughout their catalog.

The album leaves listeners with the twangy tones and folksier sounds of Nashville — where many of its contributors work and where Auerbach launched his Easy Eye Sound record label eight years ago. Music City songwriter Pat McLaughlin brings the same Americana sound of Auerbach's 2017 solo album to the penultimate track "A Little Too High," an upbeat stomper that evokes The Eagles.

Electronic backing vocals imbue the closer, "Neon Moon," with the same supernatural undercurrent as Kacey Musgraves' 2018 "Golden Hour" — both of which credit songwriter Daniel Tashian. Its natural imagery, however, is less complex. "You can find it in the southern sky," Auerbach sings, "By the light of the neon moon."

"Take me home / Back to you," the chorus repeats. "Take me home / Neon moon."

The Black Keys aren't quite home with this one. But they're certainly following the light.

Ethel Cain



Willoughby Tucker, I'll Always Love You (Amigo)

There's a video on YouTube of Angelo Badalamenti explaining how he wrote one of the iconic themes for the TV show "Twin Peaks." In the clip, the composer plays a keyboard and recounts the direction he received from the show's co-creator David Lynch, who imagined a dark woods with soft wind blowing through sycamores, animal sounds and a lonely girl emerging from behind the trees. "Just get me into that beautiful darkness," Badalamenti recalls Lynch saying.

The result was "Laura's Theme," the melody that establishes the morbid milieu and the innocence lost at the center of "Twin Peaks." When Lynch heard the theme for the first time, Badalamenti remembers him passionately crying out, "Oh, that's so beautiful … that's tearing my heart, I love that."

Ethel Cain loved it, too. The improbably popular experimental pop artist saw that video late last year and tracked down the same kind of synthesizers Badalamenti used on "Twin Peaks" for her new album, "Willoughby Tucker, I'll Always Love You."

Badalamenti and Lynch are gone now, but the beautiful darkness and heartrending love that the pair conjured for decades lives on in "Willoughby Tucker," and not just because of the shared gear. Cain is the true heir to Lynch as the musical artist most capable of capturing the beauty of all-consuming love, the terror of man's capacity for evil and the traumatic toll taken by both.

Cain is the alter ego of Hayden Anhedönia, the 27-year-old Florida-born artist who started releasing music under the alias in her early 20s. Her 2022 debut, "Preacher's Daughter," a Southern Gothic concept album on which Cain considered Christ, carnality and cannibalism, put her on the map. "Willoughby Tucker" serves as a thematic prequel, a deeper embrace of her musical fascinations and a defiant rejection of the expectations sparked by her rapid ascent.

On her debut, Cain blasted Americana through a haze of ambient music, worshiping in the echo of thundering drums and washes of distorted guitar. There's some of that on "Willoughby" but also songs simply strummed and wet with reverb, accompanied by fiddle from the fog and banjo from the bayou. Cain revels in long songs that defy the bite-sized, contextless consumption of internet-age listening.

Cain writes diaristic poetry and captures other-side-of-the-tracks imagery with devastating ease. "Willoughby" drips with the yearning of young love and the pain of your first real heartbreak. These are songs of childhood dreams dashed by industrial disaster; teenage death pacts; hospital room fantasias that race against the morning light; cries for help at the end of a downward spiral; paranoid thoughts that knock-knock-knock on Satan's door.

In Season 2 of "Twin Peaks," a man asks another what he fears most in the world, and he answers, "The possibility that love is not enough." For Cain, that's a grim certainty. On "Waco, Texas"— whose title evokes its own American doom — she sings, "Love is not enough in this world … I'd rather die than be anything but your girl."

— Chris Kelly
The Washington Post

Stripped: RKS' new album arriving amid rock resurgence

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more than a few tunes, she sings about how relationships are affected by drinking and drugs. "It's interesting what comes out on the mic," says the frontwoman, who says she's been sober for about 10 months. "I feel like it's channeling some energy that I don't take part in anymore, though I do have fond memories of getting stoned on the Parkway in Boone, North Carolina."

What inspired her life change? "I noticed that when I drank, I could be a little meaner — just say things I wouldn't normally say," she replies. "I realized I want control of that, and anything that removes some of that control is a no-go. It applies to music, as well. Being as regulated as you can possibly be opens you up to — this gets a little heady — but to other frequencies. Then you have the largest bandwidth to communicate your truth — maybe the truth — into a microphone."

With its fuzzy textures and unruly tempos, "Bones" arrives as rock seems to be resurging after years of domination by rappers and pop stars. Melo has no grand theories as to why, but she knows exactly when she started to believe that rock is back. "It was the opening track of 'Guts' by Olivia Rodrigo," she says of the former Disney kid's "All-American Bitch." "That kick drum hit me, and I was like, 'Ah man, I don't need an 808 and all the bells and whistles — I just need old-school guitars, bass and drums.' That s— hits."

VIDEO GAMES



Sega

Inspired by Japanese black-ink brushstroke paintings, Shinobi: Art of Vengeance breathes new life into the action arcade series. The game is part of Sega's attempt to revive classic franchises from the 1990s by contracting passionate studios, like Paris-based LizardCube.

New Shinobi embraces hand-drawn gaming

Art of Vengeance revives franchise, returns to the Sega classic's 2D roots with stylish art and aggressive gameplay

BY GENE PARK
The Washington Post

There's a myth that true immersion into video games requires three dimensions: Sidescrollers are good for nostalgia, but the future belongs to photorealistic 3D worlds.

But a range of recent games like indie darling Hollow Knight are proving millennia-old, 2D hand-drawn art will endure in video games. Ben Fiquet, a Parisian artist who founded game studio Lizardcube, now contracted by Sega in the Japanese firm's efforts to revive languishing intellectual property from its troves, remains dedicated to the craft. Fiquet is creative director for Sega's new title Shinobi: Art of Vengeance, scheduled for release Aug. 29.

Fiquet says he created Lizardcube to be a beacon of light for 2D animation in gaming, inspired by award-winning '90s game developer Dave Perry, who created that era's visually stunning Earthworm Jim. The studio's effort is backed up by several critically acclaimed 2D games with Sega's Streets of Rage 4 and the Wonder Boy series.

"The inherent power of 2D lies in its straightforward simplicity: the artist's vision brought directly to life," Fiquet tells The Post. "There are no tricks or deceptions, just pure craft. While it can be challenging to elicit player emotion, I believe 2D can resonate more deeply, strongly and lastingly."

Sega of America visited The Washington Post newsroom with a PlayStation 5 console and an early copy of Shinobi: Art of Vengeance. The publishers believe the game speaks for itself once in the player's hands, and they're correct. The feel of the game requires the mental agility and focus of a fighting game, with a free-flowing combat system that includes juggling combination attacks in the air, counters and follow-up techniques like rolls and dive kicks.

Sega knew Lizardcube was perfect thanks to the studio's success in translating the arcade brawler Streets of Rage 4 for the 21st century while retaining its crunchy spirit. Kagasei Shimomura, director of Sega's content production department, has been a producer since the company's golden era of the 1990s. As part of the now defunct Sega Ages project, which brought classic titles to modern platforms, he's been a key figure in keeping Sega franchises alive after the turn of the century, when Sega famously exited the video game console business in 2001 to become a publisher and developer for other platforms.

The company is most famous for creating Sonic the Hedgehog, but in recent years, its found success in role-playing games focused on Japanese culture with the Like a Dragon series, focused on yakuza life and the multimillion selling Persona series,which features young adult fantasy adventures. This success gave Sega newfound confidence in reviving classic franchises from its golden era.

"When launching the Ages project, our first task was to select a series to bring back, and the one that always came to mind was Shinobi," Shimomura said. In 2023, Sega announced a full-court press of franchise revivals across the company, and Shimomura once again made reviving Shinobi his priority.

"And when it came to bringing that title to life, only one name came to mind: Lizardcube," he continued. "I contacted them right away and was surprised to learn that they were also very passionate about the Shinobi series and had hoped to work on a game someday. That settled it for me. Lizardcube was a must-have developer for the new Shinobi title."

The company has tried a dozen times to revive the Shinobi series, including an ambitious dalliance into 3D gaming with a 2003 PlayStation 2 title that was well received but saw limited success. Lizardcube's entry will be the first Shinobi game in 14 years, and its return to the two-dimensional plane is deliberate.

"Sega's revival project is guided by the principle of lore meeting innovation," Shimomura said. "This means we don't simply enhance the visuals of past titles, instead we break down the original works to their very core, redefine their inherent appeal and combine them with new elements that will excite today's players."

One of the consistent features passed down from Shinobi's arcade lineage is punishing difficulty. But in a welcome move for anyone hoping for a more relaxing time, Lizardcube's game provides multiple options to make the experience easier, including giving the player's iconic white-clad ninja protagonist Joe Musashi the ability to hit harder while taking more damage.

The game features stunning layered backgrounds depicting futuristic mashups of Japanese traditional and urban environments, including busy cityscapes dotted with digital and street artwork. A robust skill tree can be filled out with many collectibles found through battles and exploration within a surprisingly nonlinear level design that pushes players against every axis of the map. It also includes arcade-like challenges for a more focused experience on platforming and action without any narrative beats.

The animation is exceptionally fluid, highlighted by lovely black-ink brushstrokes of traditional Japanese paintings. Creating evocative and immersive images with 2D hand-drawn art is a different kind of challenge from making 3D games, Fiquet said.

"While not overly complex, it demands skilled artists and a pipeline capable of handling it," he said. "Most modern hardware is optimized for rendering intricate 3D assets, but managing thousands of stacked images presents a different challenge." In many ways 2D renderings are less flexible, he said, "requiring all decisions to be made well in advance."

Shinobi: Art of Vengeance is shaping up to be a vanguard title for Sega's efforts to galvanize its arcade roots. More broadly, and considering Lizardcube's pedigree and passion, it'll be another brushstroke in 2D art's durability even in the fast-evolving medium of video games.

Platforms: PC, Nintendo Switch, Playstation 4/5, Xbox One, Xbox X/S

Online: asia.sega.com/shinobi-art-of-vengeance/en

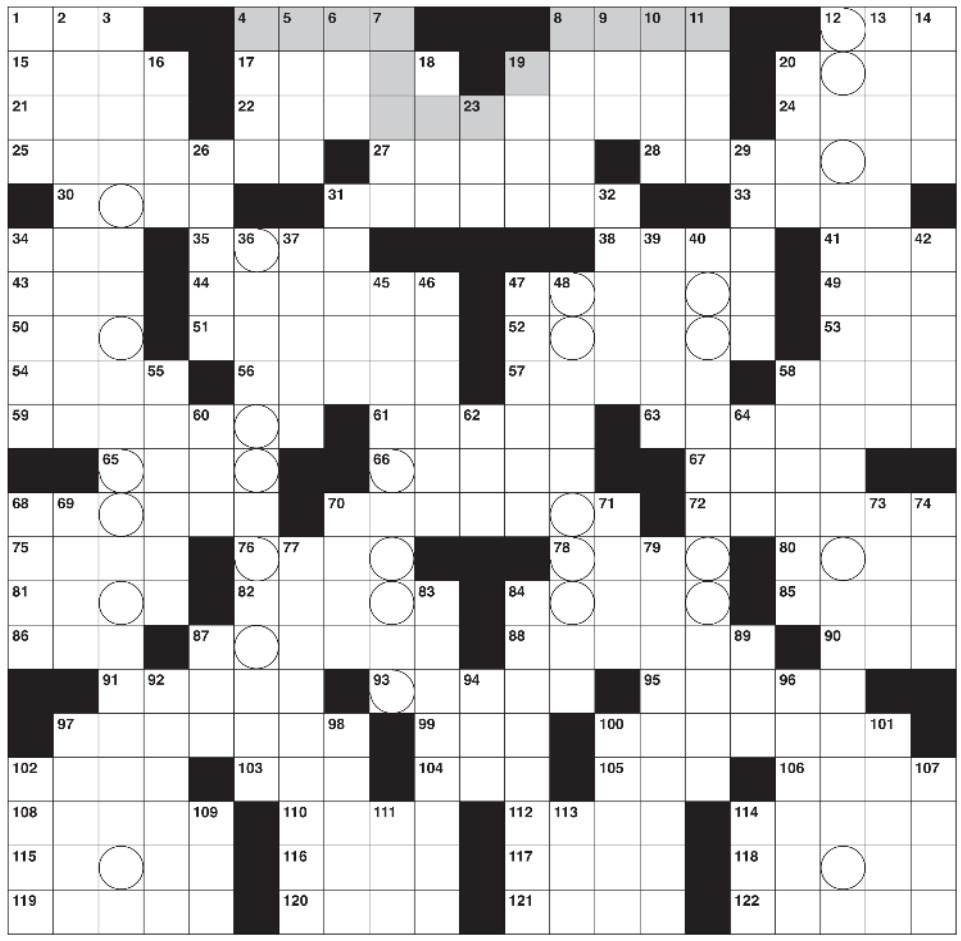
CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

HEAVENLY VOICES

BY JEREMY NEWTON / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Jeremy Newton, of Austin, Texas, is an engineering manager for a mobile-games company. This is his 30th crossword for The Times since 2008. He calls it ''100 percent a love letter'' for the puzzle's subject, which unfolds beautifully in multiple ways. Jeremy thanks ''the crossword gods'' that 22-Across, the figure that ties the whole thing together, could run through the heart of the shaded squares. — W.S.



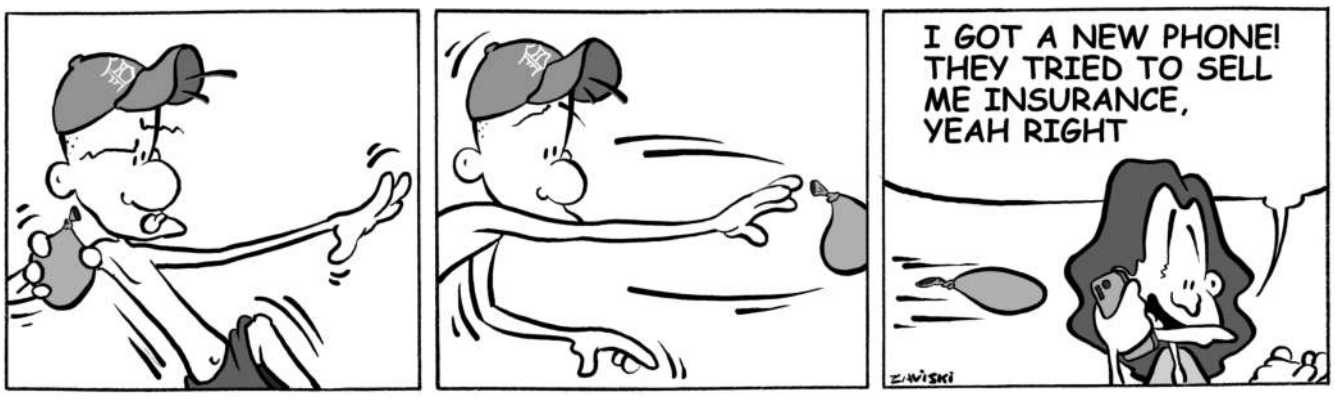
ACROSS

1 Final act of a play?
4 Iconic sci-fi setting spelled out in this puzzle's shaded squares
8 Skyrocket
12 ''Reckon so!''
15 Working without ____
17 Seemingly forever
19 Some spa jobs, in brief
20 Manner of speaking
21 Like used BBQ pits
22 Member of this puzzle's shaded squares who might say ''I cannot change the laws of physics, Captain!''
24 Like being late or cutting in line
25 Something clicked to add an attachment
27 Take up space
28 Kind of protagonist in ''Lethal Weapon'' or ''Die Hard''
30 Swear
31 Digital investment choices, informally
33 Not much, as of wasabi
34 Narrowly get (by)
35 ''Now that we're all here, please proceed''
38 Lab reports?
41 Overzealous sort
43 Got acquainted
44 D.M.V.-issued card authenticated by airport security
47 Build a stockpile
49 Didn't go fast?
50 Employee's status meaning ''I'm currently away''
51 Take down a notch
52 Purveyors of provocative posts
53 8.5'' x 11'': Abbr.
54 Kris Kross No. 1 hit with the lyric ''How high? Real high, 'cause I'm just so fly''
56 El presidente ousted in a 1955 coup
57 Danger
58 Cry from a victor
59 Type that tends to be right-leaning
61 Like quality vocals
63 Looks inside?
65 Drug-busting unit
66 City whose Fushimi Inari shrine features 10,000-plus red torii gates
67 Brother of Disney's Louie and Dewey Duck
68 Something hit to get fit
70 Hands-on professional?
72 Baseball team whose mascot is Wally the Green Monster
75 Seeing romantically
76 Humble hold 'em holding
78 ''The Bear'' streamer
80 Cold War weapon inits.
81 Beethoven's No. 8?
82 Line of luxury hotels
84 Takes to school, in a way
85 Cosmic explosion
86 It goes on the run
87 Be a wingman, e.g.
88 False
90 Inits. for this puzzle's shaded squares
91 Move like a supermodel
93 Unit of purity
95 Lower oneself
97 They study how knights move
99 Canyon's edge
100 On the ____ (raging)
102 Gone skinny-dipping, e.g.
103 Significant stretch
104 Mr. Turkey
105 Some window installations, informally
106 Warp-driven device
108 Major exporter of mangoes
110 One giving the highlights?
112 By dawn's early light?
114 Intending to, casually
115 Bring upon oneself
116 Wordlessly indicate ''Please give me a hand''
117 ''____ a broken heart'' (Emily Dickinson poem)
118 Iron Man's suit, e.g.
119 ''Fire away!''
120 False
121 Docking station
122 Some draft picks

DOWN

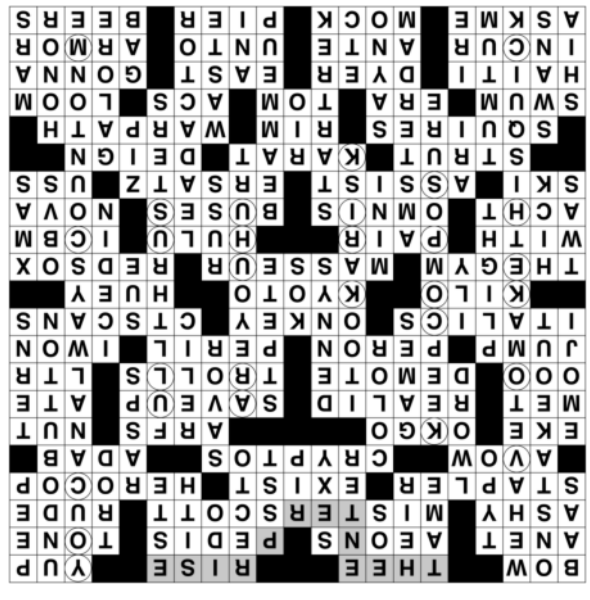
1 Some farm sounds
2 Camped nearby and surveilling, in police jargon
3 ''Our window is closing for escape w-elocity!'' as [circled letters] might say
4 Hardly spicy
5 Next in line
6 Goddess of daybreak
7 Fill in
8 Direct opposite of verso (found hidden in this clue!)
9 It's a promise
10 Enemy of the Jedi
11 By Juan's early light?
12 ''Any time! I'm a doctor, not a do-nothing!'' as [circled letters] might say
13 Way back?
14 Slight gripe, so to speak
16 Slip of the pen
18 Tantalizing
19 A low ''Yo!''
20 Trampled (on)
23 Sound of a wardrobe malfunction
26 Euphemistic expression of commitment
29 Speaks roughly
31 Cherry or lime
32 Bask in
34 Reaction to a social media post, maybe
36 ''Logic dictates that you control your emotions,'' as [circled letters] might say
37 Sneakily exploits
39 Thing of the past
40 ''Stepping on the gas, Captain!'' as [circled letters] might say
42 Seaside flock
45 ''To protect my crew, the gamble was necessary,'' as [circled letters] might say
46 IHOP rival
47 Florida beach town, in brief
48 ''We received a distress signal. Any injuries?'' as [circled letters] might say
55 Tough spot
58 Stranded during a winter storm, say
60 Texter's sweet sentiment
62 Big hits, in brief
64 Make a case against?
68 Old-fashioned contraction
69 Backwoods bumpkin
70 Bite-size
71 Former Wisconsin senator Feingold
73 ''Clearly!'' in textspeak
74 Major e-tailing season
77 World capital with 400 kilometers of bike lanes
79 He might be carrying a big picture
83 This puzzle's theme
84 ''I want to come back to the ship,'' as everyone circled in this puzzle seems to have said to 22-Across
87 NPR journalist Shapiro
89 Punch
92 Belly, in kidspeak
94 Carnival-themed Vegas hotel
96 In spades
97 Symbols of grace
98 Object
100 Garbage
101 ''____ is more important than life'' (Klingon proverb)
102 ''Transformers'' actor ____ LaBeouf
107 2004 landing site for Spirit
109 Land west of Eng.
111 ''You get the gist'': Abbr.
113 Alt-rocker DiFranco
114 Chinwag

GUNSTON STREET



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

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

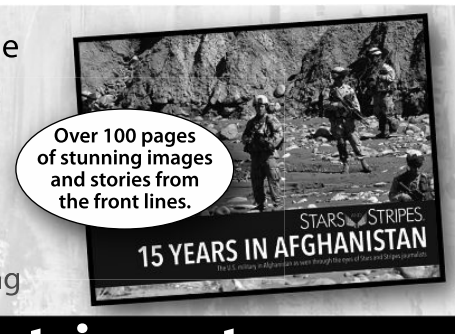


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SCIENCE

Barriers blunt Alaska glacial outburst damage



MARC LESTER, ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS/AP

People view Mendenhall Glacier from the visitors center area Aug. 3 in Juneau, Alaska.



CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU/AP

Juneau city officials credit Hesco barriers erected along the river for blunting the impact of water and snowmelt from Mendenhall Glacier.

BY CEDAR ATTANASIO AND GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press

New sandbag-style barriers installed along a river in Alaska's capital city held back record levels of flooding and prevented widespread damage after an ice dam at the nearby Mendenhall Glacier released a massive amount of rainwater and snowmelt downstream, officials said Wednesday.

Water pooled on several streets, in some yards and in some homes in Juneau after the Mendenhall River crested earlier in the day. But the water receded and by late afternoon officials had reopened affected areas to residents, many of whom evacuated ahead of peak water levels. There were no damage reports similar to the last two years, when flooding was rampant and some homes washed away.

The barriers have been a point of contention, with some homeowners in the flood zone objecting to their cost and suggesting officials should pursue a longer-term fix. But they "really have protected our community," Juneau City Manager Katie Koester told a news conference.

"If it weren't for them, we would have hundreds and hundreds of flooded homes," she said.

The Mendenhall Glacier is about 12 miles from Juneau, home to 30,000 people in southeast Alaska, and is a popular tourist attraction due to its proximity and easy access on walking trails. Homes on the city's outskirts are within miles of Mendenhall Lake, which sits below the glacier, and many front the Mendenhall River, into which the glacial outburst flowed.

Juneau, which is accessible only by boat and plane, is 570 miles southeast of Anchorage, Alaska's largest city. The flooding won't impact Friday's summit in Anchorage between President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Flooding from the basin has become an annual concern since 2011 and has gotten worse in recent years. It happens because a smaller glacier near Mendenhall Glacier retreated — a casualty of the warming climate — and left a basin that fills with rainwater and snowmelt each spring and summer, dammed by the glacier.

When the water builds up enough pressure, it forces its way under or around the ice dam, enters Mendenhall Lake, and flows down the Mendenhall River.

The city saw successive years of record flooding in 2023 and 2024, with flooding extending farther into the Mendenhall Valley.

Last year, nearly 300 residences were damaged.

A large outburst can release some 15 billion gallons of water, according to the University of Alaska Southeast and Alaska Climate Adaptation Science Center. That's the equivalent of nearly 23,000 Olympic-size swimming pools. During last year's flood, the flow rate in the Mendenhall River was about half that of Niagara Falls, the researchers say.

City officials responded to concerns from property owners this year by working with state, federal and tribal entities to install a temporary levee along roughly 2.5 miles of riverbank in an attempt to guard against widespread flooding. The 10,000 "Hesco" barriers are essentially giant, reinforced sandbags intended to protect more than 460 properties, said emergency manager Ryan O'Shaughnessy.

The Juneau Assembly required homeowners in the flood zone to cover 40% of the cost — about $6,300 each over 10 years. Additionally, a handful of homeowners were asked to chip in $50,000 toward reinforcing the river bank. About one-quarter of the residents formally objected, not enough to torpedo the project.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, some water seeped into yards through drains that had been installed under the barriers. In other spots, trees floating down the river struck and damaged the barriers, officials said.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is at the start of what's expected to be a yearslong process of studying conditions in the region and examining options for a more permanent solution, such as a levee.

Rising seas could put Easter Island's staties at risk by 2080



ESTEBAN FELIX/AP

Moai statues stand on Ahu Tongariki, Rapa Nui, or Easter Island, Chile, in 2022. A recent study determined that rising sea levels could reach the statues by 2080.

BY ANNIKA HAMMERSCHLAG
Associated Press

By the end of the century, rising sea levels could push powerful seasonal waves into Easter Island's 15 iconic moai statues, according to a new study published in the Journal of Cultural Heritage. About 50 other cultural sites in the area are also at risk from flooding.

"Sea level rise is real," said Noah Paoa, lead author of the study and a doctoral student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa's School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology. "It's not a distant threat."

Paoa, who is from Easter Island — known to its Indigenous people as Rapa Nui — and his colleagues built a high-resolution "digital twin" of the island's eastern coastline and ran computer models to simulate future wave impacts under various sea level rise scenarios. They then overlaid the results with maps of cultural sites to pinpoint which places could be inundated in the coming decades.

The findings show waves could reach Ahu Tongariki, the largest ceremonial platform on the island, as early as 2080. The site, home to the 15 towering moai, draws tens of thousands of visitors each year and is a cornerstone of the island's tourism economy.

Beyond its economic value, the ahu is deeply woven into Rapa Nui's cultural identity. It lies within Rapa Nui National Park, which encompasses much of the island and is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The roughly 900 moai statues across the island were built by the Rapa Nui people between the 10th and 16th centuries to honor important ancestors and chiefs.

The threat isn't unprecedented. In 1960, the largest earthquake ever recorded — a magnitude 9.5 off the coast of Chile — sent a tsunami surging across the Pacific.

It struck Rapa Nui and swept the already-toppled moai further inland, which damaged some of their features. The monument was restored in the 1990s.

While the study focuses on Rapa Nui, its conclusions echo a wider reality: cultural heritage sites worldwide are increasingly endangered by rising seas. A UNESCO report published last month found that about 50 World Heritage sites are highly exposed to coastal flooding.

In an email to The Associated Press, a UNESCO spokesperson said climate change is the biggest threat to UNESCO's World Heritage marine sites.

"In the Mediterranean and Africa, nearly three-quarters of coastal low-lying sites are now exposed to erosion and flooding due to accelerated sea level rise."

Possible defenses for Ahu Tongariki range from armoring the coastline and building breakwaters to relocating the monuments.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Rapper takes 10-hour Uber ride to concert

MD BALTIMORE — Atlanta-based rapper Jeezy would have missed his Baltimore concert at The Lyric if not for an Uber driver willing to drive him 10 hours to Charm City.

According to an Instagram post, Jeezy woke up before his Baltimore show on Aug. 1 to find that all flights to Baltimore and D.C. had been canceled due to weather.

His team arranged for a driver, but two hours into the trip, the driver hit an object on the highway in South Carolina, causing his gas tank to leak and forcing him to pull over at a nearby gas station.

Running out of options, Jeezy said he tried to arrange a jet from South Carolina, but the cancellations were still in effect.

An Uber driver, 28-year-old Tanner Donahoo, picked him up from the gas station to take him to the airport. Jeezy asked how much he would charge to drive him to Baltimore.

"Like [a] real one, he didn't hesitate and just kept driving," wrote Jeezy.

Donahoo told The Baltimore Sun that the 10-hour drive to Baltimore was the first ride he accepted on his shift that day.

He wouldn't disclose how much Jeezy paid him for the ride, but he did receive a backstage pass to the show, free merchandise and a paid-for stay at a hotel with the rest of his touring crew.

Jeezy even shared the story with the crowd at The Lyric, bringing Donahoo onstage, where he was met with cheers from the crowd.

Police find $30K worth of stolen Labubu dolls

CA CHINO — A police department in Southern California recovered about $30,000 worth of Labubu dolls that were stolen from a warehouse, the agency announced.

The collectible items have recently surged in popularity. The Labubus were stolen in a series of trips that spanned multiple days, the Chino Police Department said in a social media post. Two suspects, both minors, were later identified as workers at the warehouse, the department said.

Law enforcement found the items at a home in Upland, a city in the state's Inland Empire.

The announcement comes as authorities in Los Angeles County investigate a separate incident in which thieves stole about $7,000 worth of the toothy little monsters from a store in La Puente.

Spirit Airlines struggles to stay in business

NY NEW YORK — Just five months after emerging from Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, Spirit Airlines is warning about its future ability to stay in business.

Spirit Aviation Holdings, the budget carrier's parent company, says it has "substantial doubt" about its ability to continue as a going concern over the next year — which is accounting-speak for running out of money. In a quarterly report issued Monday, Spirit pointed to "adverse market conditions" that it's continued to face after a recent restructuring and other efforts to revive its business.

Despite cost-cutting efforts, Spirit on Monday stressed that it needs more cash. As a result, the company said it may also sell certain aircraft and real estate.



LM OTERO/AP

A little rain never hurt anyone

A grocery shopper endures a downpour in a parking lot Tuesday in Richardson, Texas, an inner suburb of Dallas.

Manatee sighted in cold New England waters

MA BOSTON — A manatee was recently spotted off the coast of Massachusetts for the first time in almost a decade and scientists want to monitor its condition to see if a rescue is necessary before it succumbs to the cold water or lack of food, they said Friday.

The threatened species, which makes its habitat in warmer southern Gulf waters in places like Florida, was first seen July 26 off the southwestern coast of Cape Cod in the area of Nantucket Sound.

A few days later, the animal was seen stranded on the tidal flats in Mattapoisett. Bystanders who found the manatee beached on the flats around sunrise pushed it back into the water, said Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries Protected Species Program Manager Erin Burke.

It hasn't been spotted since, Burke said, but a team with the International Fund for Animal Welfare is standing by to rescue the animal if it becomes necessary.

State senator tapped for lieutenant governor post

FL TALLAHASSEE — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has tapped Republican state Sen. Jay Collins to be his next lieutenant governor. It's a closely watched appointment by the two-term governor, who can't run for reelection in 2026 and has been working to cement his legacy as his time leading the state winds down.

If Collins, an Army combat veteran and nonprofit executive, decides to launch a bid to succeed DeSantis, the move could tee up another proxy fight between the popular GOP governor and President Donald Trump, who has already endorsed Republican U.S. Rep. Byron Donalds for the job.

In Florida, the lieutenant governor position is largely ceremonial with few official responsibilities, apart from taking over if the governor cannot serve.

Collins was first elected to Florida's Republican-dominated state Senate in 2022 and has been seen as one of DeSantis' key allies in the Legislature.

Born in Montana, Collins has talked openly about personal challenges he has overcome, including experiencing homelessness while in high school. He went on to join the Army Special Forces and ultimately lost a leg, but continued to serve five more years as a Green Beret post-amputation, according to a campaign biography.

3 firefighters hurt as century-old buildings burn

UT SALT LAKE CITY — A blaze that started in a restaurant kitchen injured three firefighters and scorched century-old buildings in Salt Lake City's nightlife hub, officials said Tuesday.

Firefighters were dispatched to a cooking fire at the London Belle Supper Club on Monday night and found smoke and flames in the kitchen area, Salt Lake City Fire Chief Karl Lieb said at a news conference. The intense heat created a challenging environment, and because it was unsafe to keep firefighters inside or on the roof, where they normally start their attack, he said they fought the fire with aerial devices.

One of the injured firefighters had a broken ankle; another was suffering from smoke inhalation, dehydration and nausea; and the third was injured by falling debris, Lieb said. All were doing OK Tuesday morning.

Officials estimate about $5 million in losses through the five affected buildings, Lieb said. The investigation of the fire could take weeks.

35 Union Pacific train cars derail, no injuries

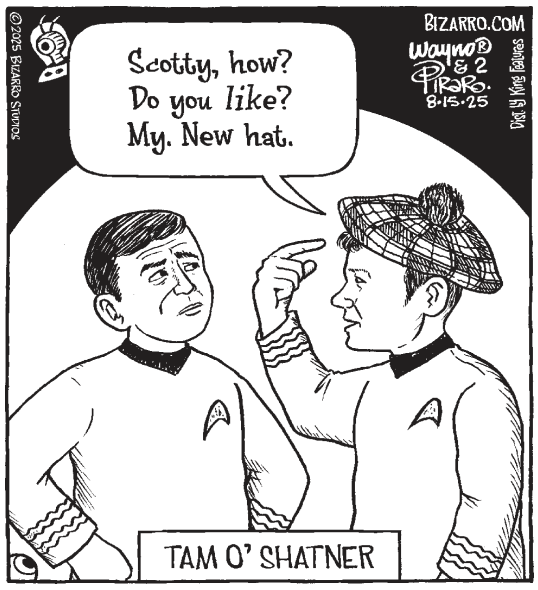
TX GORDON — Thirty-five cars of a Union Pacific train derailed Tuesday afternoon near a small Texas town, officials said.

No injuries were reported and no evacuations have been ordered following the afternoon derailment, Union Pacific spokeswoman Robynn Tysver said.

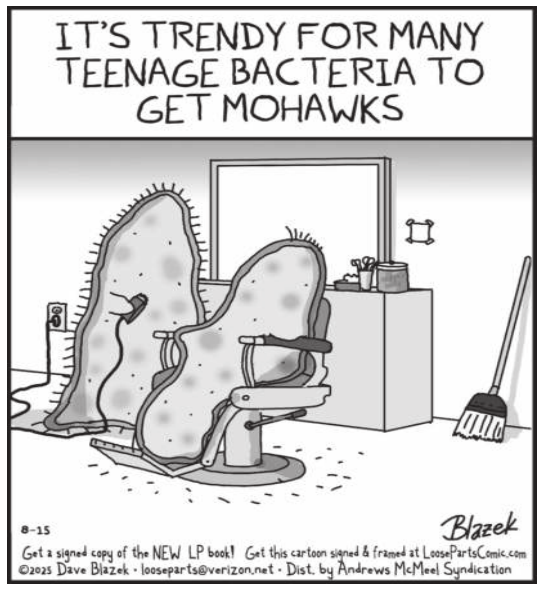
The emergency services district said the derailment was being treated as a hazardous material situation. But it was not immediately known what the derailed train cars were carrying.

From wire reports

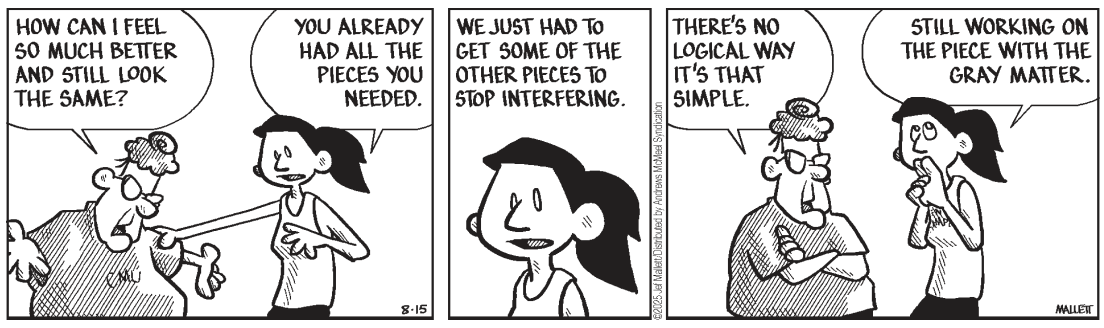
Bizarro



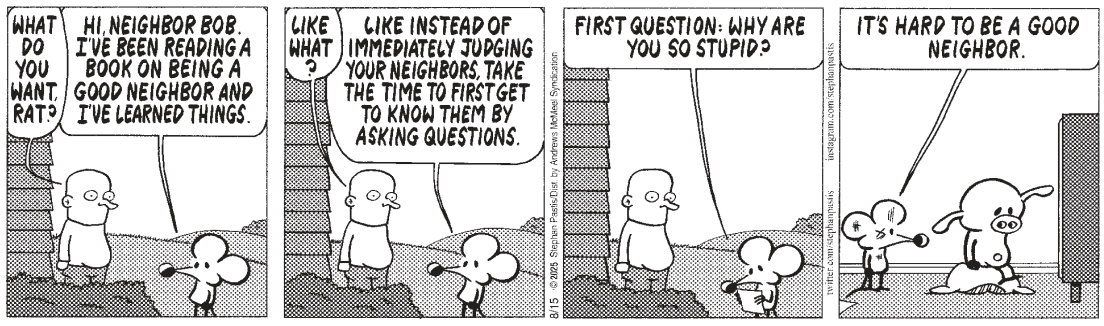
Loose Parts



Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



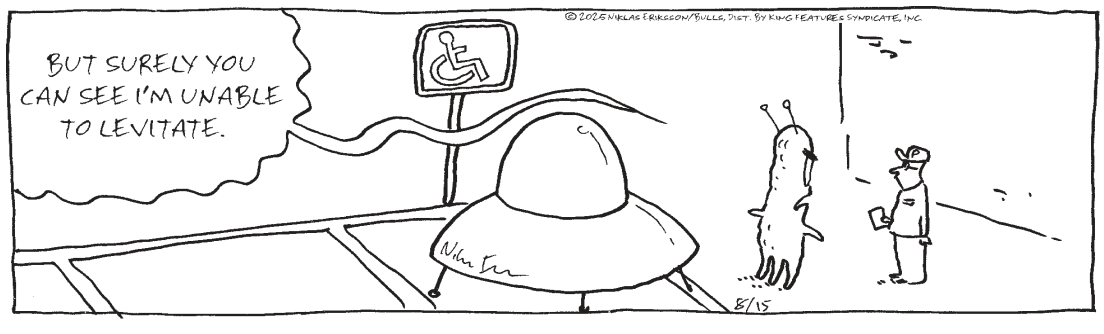
Non Sequitur



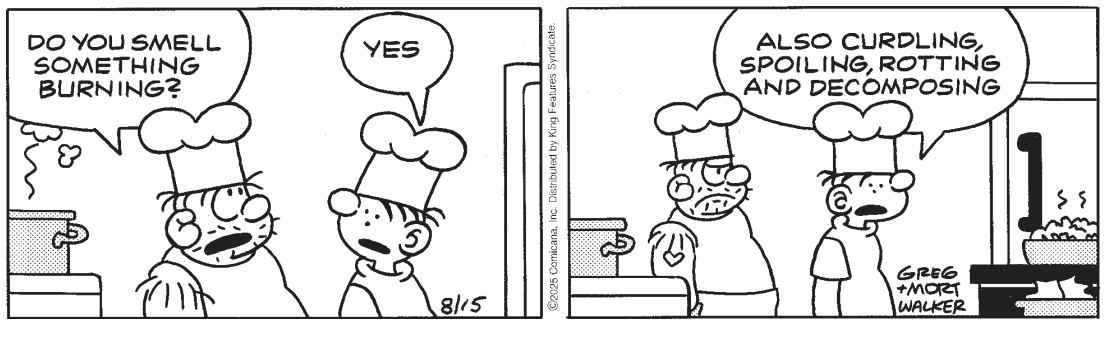
Wumo



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		
56					■	57			■	58		

ACROSS

1 Big-screen buys
4 Past
7 Flat floaters
12 Perfume label word
13 Soak (up)
14 Maestro Seiji —
15 Spinning abbr.
16 Tucked-in blouse part
18 Religious sch.
19 Bar mixer
20 Dutch export
22 Convened
23 Ache
27 Before
29 Marsh birds
31 Energizer mascot
34 Major artery
35 Obliterates
37 Sit-up targets
38 Writer Quindlen
39 Luau dish
41 Squeezes (out)
45 More mature
47 Low digit
48 Grimm story
52 Nabokov novel
53 Big foil maker
54 Business letters
55 Allow
56 Synthetic fabric
57 Lawn material
58 Billboards

DOWN

1 To the point
2 Smoked an e-cig
3 — cum laude
4 Admin. aide
5 "You Can't — Again"
6 Express a view
7 Campus mil. group
8 HIV-treating drug
9 JFK regulator
10 Prefix with night
11 Erie Canal mule
17 Ceremony
21 High-IQ group
23 Plain writing
24 — Lingus
25 Hairy Addams cousin
26 Intelligence org.
28 Bagel variety
30 Prattle
31 Actress Arthur
32 Coffee vessel
33 A Bobbsey twin
36 Skewer
37 Danny of "Moonstruck"
40 October birthstones
42 Eucalyptus eater
43 Finished
44 Plane assignments
45 Pitcher Nolan
46 Shipping dept. stamp
48 Distant
49 Carte lead-in
50 Glacial
51 Kanga's kid

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

8-15

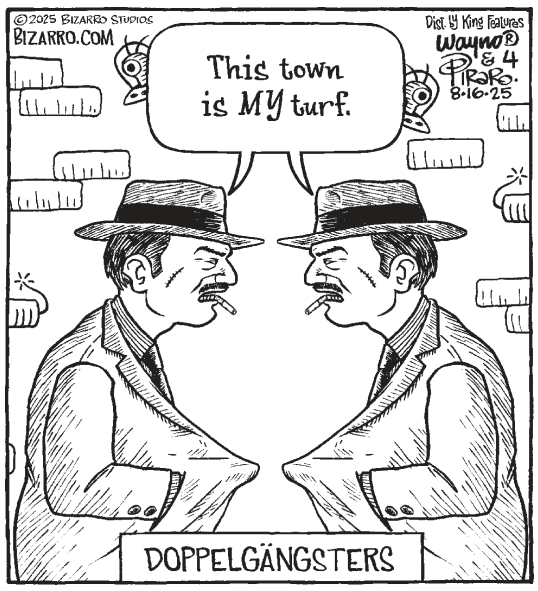
CRYPTOQUIP

AKHNOGK EB NZK YAKNPYKETX HKAOEV NZPN MPX IWEMW BEA ONX AKPGGQ BETG EVEA: NQAPWWEXPTATX AKKIX.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WOULD YOU ASSUME THAT COWS, SHEEP AND PIGS GET THEIR PRESCRIPTIONS FILLED AT THE FARMACY?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals O

Bizarro



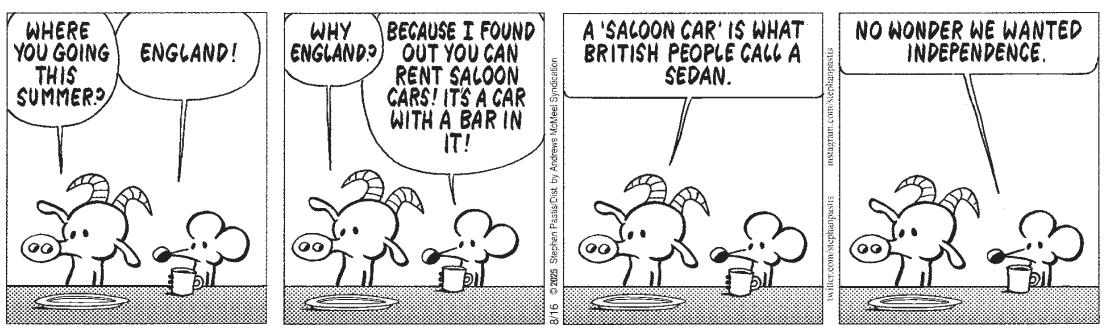
Loose Parts



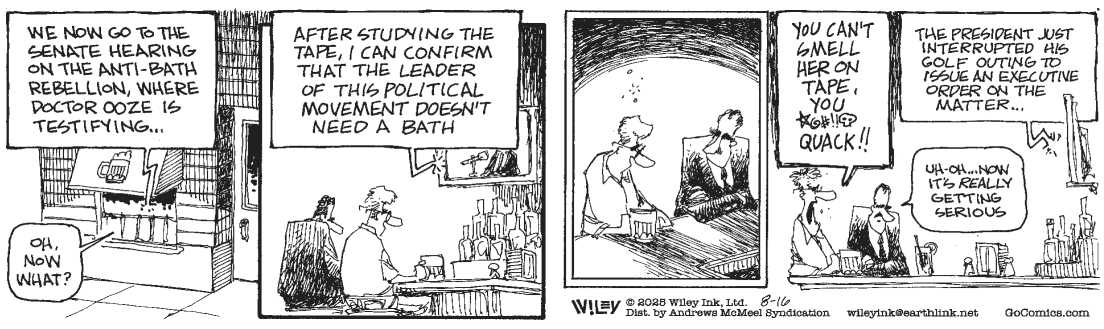
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



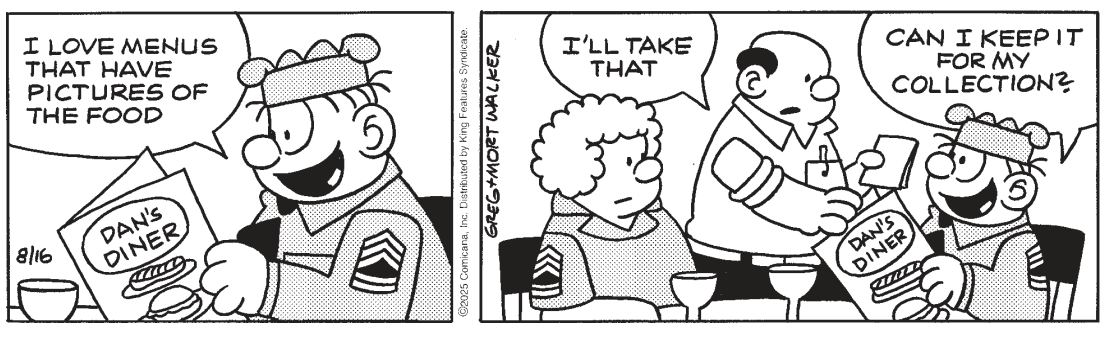
Wumo



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		

ACROSS

1 Nonclerical
4 Dance move
8 Jubilation
12 Before
13 Tree with cones
14 "Listen!"
15 Carte lead-in
16 Hideaway
17 Theater award
18 Quarterback's throws
21 Red — beet
22 Tipsy
23 Draconian
26 Marry
27 Watch chain
30 "Oops!"
31 Cowboy moniker
32 "Suits" actress Torres
33 Apprehend
34 Nondairy milk variety
35 Hive head
36 Candy-heart word
37 Bit of wit
38 Dojo offerings
45 Showy flower
46 Castle
47 Verse by Pablo Neruda
48 Half quart
49 Zilch
50 Dugout item
51 Fifth Avenue store
52 Requests
53 Early hrs.

DOWN

1 Piece of lettuce
2 Guthrie of folk
3 Twelve months
4 Bellyflop aftermath
5 Royal crown
6 Author Bagnold
7 Puzzle
8 Specter
9 Chemists' rooms
10 Buffalo's lake
11 Squeezes (out)
19 Cleanse
20 Succor
23 Attila, notably
24 "Caught ya!"
25 Filch
26 Drenched
27 "A pox upon thee!"
28 "A Chorus Line" song
29 Prohibit
31 Small Greek restaurant
32 Weaponry
34 Ump's yell
35 Seismic events
36 Endures
37 Drop heavily
38 — Bay (Manhattan area)
39 La Scala solo
40 Hockey venue
41 Dove calls
42 Japanese noodles
43 Wax-coated cheese
44 Gels

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

8-16

CRYPTOQUIP

WQ VAZGHCJWI VQ E LRWTI AGHG IECCGM MVAZ QHVT QEYJGH YV CVZ, AVSRM YJEY LG EWHCJWI JGWHCJWI?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: REPTILE OF THE CRETACEOUS PERIOD THAT WAS KNOWN FOR ITS REALLY FOUL ODOR: TYRANNOSAURUS REEKS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals H

STARS AND STRIPES

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. Lucas Crouch, Pacific commander
John Albaugh, Pacific chief of staff

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

The CDC shooting and the dangers of misinformation

By Lisa Jarvis
Bloomberg Opinion

The horrifying attack on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Atlanta headquarters felt like the grimly predictable result of years of pandemic-related misinformation and disinformation — much of it propagated by the very people now leading U.S. health agencies.

It's no surprise, then, that instead of offering a concrete plan to protect staff and rebuild public trust, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. seized the tragedy as another opportunity to double down on his dangerous rhetoric.

On Aug. 8, CDC workers huddled together in offices as a gunman — struggling with his mental health and angry about COVID vaccines — fired nearly 500 rounds, with about 200 striking buildings on the agency's campus, police said Tuesday. DeKalb County police officer David Rose was killed while responding to the attack, and the shooter took his own life.

Over the weekend, Kennedy offered condolences for the slain officer, and in an email to CDC staff obtained by The Washington Post, he praised the importance of their work: "From public health labs to data systems to community programs, your efforts matter," he wrote. By Monday, however, he was on television using the platform to denigrate yet again and undermine those efforts.

President Donald Trump, meanwhile, has said nothing publicly about this assault on a major federal institution.

According to neighbors, the gunman believed the COVID vaccine was responsible for his health problems. And police confirmed on Tuesday that he left behind writing that "expressed the shooter's discontent" with the shots. But when a reporter from Scripps News asked Kennedy about HHS' plans — in light of the shooting — to counter vaccine misinformation, he turned the spotlight back on health agencies themselves. He accused the government of overreach and lying during the pandemic, claiming that this, not conspiracy theories or falsehoods, was the actual reason people had lost faith in the mRNA vaccines and health leadership.

"We have to ask, 'Why are people not believing the public health agencies?' And the answer I think is pretty elementary: that the public health agencies have not been honest," he said.

In the same interview, Kennedy defended his recent decision to abandon investment in mRNA vaccines — a move decried by scientists and doctors as leaving the U.S. dangerously vulnerable to current and future threats — with what amounted to another swipe at the CDC. "We were told during COVID, 'Trust the experts,' but 'trust the experts' is not a feature of either science or democracy. It's a feature of totalitarianism and of religion."

It's true that in the early stages of the pandemic, public health leaders kept their message simple: get vaccinated for yourself and for the greater good. Over time, that lack of nuance created, for some, a troubling disconnect when their lived experience didn't align with the threat level they were told justified sweeping pandemic-era policies. Yet the danger was real — the U.S. experienced daunting waves of deaths and hospitalizations — as was the efficacy of the vaccine, which saved millions of lives.

But that's a communication problem, not an expertise problem. Kennedy, meanwhile, conveniently neglects to mention that he and nearly everyone he chose for leadership roles at HHS were responsible for the erosion of trust. The current hostility toward the CDC is a direct result of his constant drumbeat of falsehoods about the COVID shot, which he has called the "most dangerous vaccine ever made," and the agency itself, which he once likened to a Nazi death camp.

He continues to spread misinformation about the safety of the vaccine and the body of data to support it. Now, he's using his position and the mistrust he fueled among some Americans to justify the dismantling of our public health protections — whether through abandoning mRNA research, dismissing the CDC's expert vaccine panel, or unilaterally changing recommendations on shots.

Even before the shooting, the CDC was under siege from Kennedy's program and staffing cuts, and challenges to its expertise. Now, many employees feel abandoned by this administration — traumatized, even.

In her first all-staff meeting on Tuesday, newly confirmed CDC Director Susan Monarez offered little beyond platitudes. "We know that misinformation can be dangerous not only to health, but to those that trust us and those we want to trust, and we need to rebuild that trust together," Monarez said, according to Bloomberg News. "That trust is what binds us in moments like this."

But it's hard to know where to go from here — at least with Kennedy leading HHS. CDC scientists have stood on the front lines against public health threats; now they increasingly find themselves targets. Unfortunately, no one in this administration seems willing — or able — to defend them, and that puts us at risk.

Lisa Jarvis is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering biotech, health care and the pharmaceutical industry. Previously, she was executive editor of Chemical & Engineering News. 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.

Big Pharma's ads won't make America healthy again

By Alex Ward
InsideSources.com

As a dad, I'm used to interruptions — from kids bursting in during a quiet moment or to those "battery is low" smoke alarm warnings. Nothing grates quite like those slick pharmaceutical ads blaring across the TV, promising quick fixes while whispering side effects in fine print.

That's why I'm excited by recent proposals from Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and the Department of Health and Human Services to fight misleading ads by forcing more side-effects transparency and ending tax breaks for pharmaceutical advertising.

A recent Washington Post editorial suggests that advertisements nudge American patients to spot undiagnosed issues and consult their doctor. Does the pharmaceutical industry think the American people are so clueless that we need a commercial to know when we're feeling off?

Ads don't encourage thoughtful conversations with primary care physicians — they push viewers toward medication-only solutions and prod us to demand specific drugs, skewing conversations away from lifestyle choices toward pharmaceutical fixes.

It's more troubling when kids catch these ads, absorbing the idea that every problem has a pill. The United States and New Zealand are the only countries that allow this direct-to-consumer advertising, and that should raise red flags. Why has the entire world caught on to the dangers of this advertising, but the land of the free refuses to nip it in the bud? These ads are not about empowerment; they're meant to condition us, especially young minds, to see medication as the default.

Worse, these ads aren't about transparency; they're about sales. Companies push brand-name blockbuster drugs to increase profits and then write off their advertising costs, sometimes to the tune of $1.5 billion. And let's not pretend the ads are informative. If they were, why would Big Pharma quickly rattle off the most dangerous side effects at the end of the ad (and in small fine print)? After all, side effects often cause more misery than the ailments they treat, trapping people in a cycle of new prescriptions to fix problems the first ones created.

Kennedy and his HHS team deserve applause for putting patients over profits, fighting for greater transparency related to side effects, and ending advertising tax breaks for pharmaceutical companies. Regardless of who's leading these efforts, the MAHA movement has exposed Big Pharma's reluctance to be fully transparent and revealed its priority: keeping us hooked, not healthy.

Real health doesn't come from a pill bottle but rather from how we live. The Post's claim that ads keep us healthier ignores the power of natural choices. While science, including the National Institutes of Health, agrees that lifestyle choices are the deciding factor for one's health, it doesn't take a peer-reviewed journal to realize the benefits of healthy living.

Recently, my wife and I went kayaking for 90 minutes on a lake. For a $20 rental, we enjoyed the benefits of exercise, fresh air, vitamin D, and a mental reset that lasted days. At home, our kids love our budget-friendly steam sauna and cold plunge setup — especially after a day at summer camp. Unlike the false scenes of euphoria and joy depicted in predatory pharma ads, my kids come out laughing, with spirits lifted and zero side effects.

I'm not saying prescriptions are never needed. Diabetics need insulin, and someone in crisis might benefit from temporary anxiety medication. That's not the reality we live in. Instead, prescription drug use is as much an epidemic as chronic illness. Twenty percent of children are on one or more prescription drugs. The typical American citizen is on at least four prescription drugs. An American male born in 2019 will spend 48% of his life taking prescription drugs, while a female will spend 60% of her time doing the same.

As a parent, these statistics terrify me. They should worry you, too. The goal should be long-term wellness through lifestyle, not lifelong dependency on drugs.

We deserve better than manipulative ads that drown out our instincts. Proposals to limit these ads are a step toward protecting us, especially the kids, from Big Pharma's grip. Let's focus on the most effective prescription for a healthier America: moving our bodies, eating well and connecting as families.

Alex Ward is a high school economics teacher and a father.

SCOREBOARD/LITTLE LEAGUE WORLD SERIES

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Sent RHP Houston Roth outright to Norfolk (IL).
BOSTON RED SOX — Sent RHP Nick Burdi outright to Worcester (IL).
CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Reinstated LHP Martin Perez from the 60-day IL. Optioned LHP Cam Booser to Charlotte (IL). Designated LHP Jared Shuster for assignment.
DETROIT TIGERS — Optioned RHP Codi Heuer to Toledo (IL). Reinstated RHP Sawyer Gipson-Long from the 15-day IL.
HOUSTON ASTROS — Selected the contract of RHP Jordan Weems from Sugar Land (PCL). Optioned LHP Colton Gordon to Sugar Land.
LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Sent 2B Scott Kingery outright to Salt Lake (PCL).
TEXAS RANGERS — Reinstated CF Evan Carter from the 10-day IL. Placed RF Adolis Garcia on the 10-day IL.
TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Sent RHP Alek Manoah to Buffalo (IL) on a rehab assignment to Buffalo (IL).

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Recalled RHP Casey Kelly from Reno (PCL). Placed RHP Anthony DeScalfani on the 15-day IL. Released RHP Kendall Graveman.
ATLANTA BRAVES — Agreed to terms with RHP Anderson Pilar on a minor league contract.
CHICAGO CUBS — Released 3B Jon Berti.
CINCINNATI REDS — Reinstated RHP Hunter Greene from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Sam Benschoter to Louisville (IL).
COLORADO ROCKIES — Sent C Austin Nola outright to Albuquerque (PCL).
NEW YORK METS — Reinstated RHP Paul Blackburn from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Justin Hagenman to Syracuse (IL).
PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Placed OF Oneil Cruz on the 7-day concussion IL. Recalled OF Ronny Simon from Indianapolis (IL).
SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Signed free agent RHP JT Brubaker to a minor league contract.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

BALTIMORE RAVENS — Waived RB Marcus Major.
BUFFALO BILLS — Signed RB James Cook to a four-year contract extension.
CHICAGO BEARS — Placed DB Major Burns on injured reserve.
CLEVELAND BROWNS — Released WR Luke Floriea from injured reserve.
GREEN BAY PACKERS — Claimed WR Kawaan Baker off waivers from Las Vegas. Placed DB Isaiah Dunn and RB Jalen White on injured reserve.
HOUSTON TEXANS — Signed TE Tre' McKitty to a contract. Placed TE Dalton Keene on injured reserve.
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Placed DB Zech McPhearson on injured reserve. Released DB Levi Wallace from injured reserve. Signed DB Keni-H Lovely to a contract.
MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Signed OLB Cam Gill and LB Max Tooley to contracts. Placed C Zeke Correll on injured reserve.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Placed RB Deneric Prince on injured reserve.
NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Placed WR Bub Means on injured reserve. Signed G Mike Panasiuk to a contract. Placed TE Mason Pline on injured reserve.
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Placed DR Bradlee Anae on injured reserve. Signed WR Malik Turner.
TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Placed QB Michael Pratt on the physically unable to perform list.
TENNESSEE TITANS — Claimed LB Brian Asamoah II off waivers from Minnesota. Waived LB Otis Reese IV.

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

COLORADO RAPIDS — Sign D Lucas Herrington to a four-year contract.
PORTLAND TIMBERS — Signed F Kristoffer Velde to a contract.

National Women's Soccer League

DENVER SUMMIT FC — Signed F Ally Watt to a contract.

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL preseason

Friday's games

Tennessee at Atlanta, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Saturday CET, 8 a.m. Saturday JKT**
Kansas City at Seattle, **AFN-Sports, 4 a.m. Saturday CET, 11 a.m. Saturday JKT**

Saturday's games

Carolina at Houston
Cleveland at Philadelphia, **AFN-Sports, 7 p.m. Saturday CET, 2 a.m. Sunday JKT**
Green Bay at Indianapolis
Miami at Detroit
New England at Minnesota
San Francisco at Las Vegas, **AFN-Sports, 10 p.m. Saturday CET, 5 a.m. Sunday JKT**
Baltimore at Dallas
L.A. Chargers at L.A. Rams
N.Y. Jets at N.Y. Giants
Tampa Bay at Pittsburgh
Arizona at Denver

Sunday's games

Jacksonville at New Orleans, **AFN-Atlantic, 2 a.m. Monday CET, 9 a.m. Monday JKT**
Buffalo at Chicago

Monday's game

Cincinnati at Washington

TENNIS

Cincinnati Open

Wednesday
At Lindner Family Tennis Center
Cincinnati
Purse: $9,193,540
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Seedings in parentheses
Men's Singles
Round of 32

Ben Shelton (5), United States, def. Roberto Bautista Agut, Spain, 7-6 (3), 6-3

Men's Singles
Round of 16

Holger Rune (7), Denmark, def. Frances Tiafoe (10), United States, 6-4, 3-1, ret.
Jannik Sinner (1), Italy, def. Adrian Mannarino, France, 6-4, 7-6 (4)
Felix Auger-Aliassime (23), Canada, def. Benjamin Bonzi, France, 6-4, 6-3
Terence Atmane, France, def. Taylor Fritz (4), United States, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3
Carlos Alcaraz (2), Spain, def. Luca Nardi, Italy, 6-1, 6-4
Andrey Rublev (9), Russia, def. Francisco Comesana, Argentina, 6-2, 6-3
Alexander Zverev (3), Germany, def. Karen Khachanov (14), Russia, 7-5, 3-0, ret.

Women's Singles
Round of 32

Veronika Kudermetova, Russia, def. Clara Tauson (16), Denmark, 3-6, 7-6 (4), 6-4

Women's Singles
Round of 16

Iga Swiatek (3), Poland, def. Sorana Cirstea, Romania, 6-4, 6-3
Aryna Sabalenka (1), Belarus, def. Jessica Bouzas Maneiro, Spain, 6-1, 7-5
Elena Rybakina (9), Kazakhstan, def. Madison Keys (6), United States, 6-7 (3), 6-4, 6-2
Anna Kalinskaya (28), Russia, def. Ekaterina Alexandrova (12), Russia, 3-6, 7-6 (5), 6-1

Men's Doubles
Round of 16

Rajeev Ram, United States, and Nikola Mektic, Croatia, def. Kevin Krawietz and Tim Putz (4), Germany, 7-6 (3), 7-5
Lloyd Glasspool and Julian Cash (2), Britain, def. Matthew Ebden and Jordan Thompson, Australia, 7-5, 5-7, 10-8
Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori (6), Italy, def. Robert Cash and James Tracy, United States, 6-3, 7-6 (8)
Evan King and Christian Harrison (7), United States, def. Romain Arneodo, Monaco, and Robert Galloway, United States, 7-6 (3), 3-6, 10-7

Women's Doubles
Round of 16

Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini (1), Italy, def. Magda Linette, Poland, and Clara Tauson, Denmark, walkover
Lyudmyla Kichenok, Ukraine, and Ellen Perez (6), Australia, def. Jessica Pegula and Hailey Baptiste, United States, 6-4, 7-5
Barbora Krejcikova, Czechia, and Jelena Ostapenko, Latvia, def. Veronika Kudermetova, Russia, and Elise Mertens (4), Belgium, 6-3, 1-6, 10-5

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA

Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	21	11	.656	—
New York	21	12	.636	½
Indiana	18	15	.545	3½
Washington	14	18	.438	7
Chicago	8	24	.250	13
Connecticut	6	26	.188	15

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Minnesota	27	5	.844	—
Phoenix	19	12	.613	7½
Las Vegas	19	14	.576	8½
Golden State	17	15	.531	10
Seattle	16	17	.485	11½
Los Angeles	15	17	.469	12
Dallas	9	24	.273	18½

x-clinched playoff spot

Tuesday's games

Dallas 81, Indiana 80
New York 105, Los Angeles 97

Wednesday's games

Connecticut 71, Chicago 62
Golden State 88, Washington 83
Las Vegas 83, New York 77
Atlanta 85, Seattle 75

Thursday's games

No games scheduled.

Friday's games

Golden State at Chicago
Los Angeles at Dallas
Washington at Indiana
Las Vegas at Phoenix
Seattle at Atlanta

Saturday's game

New York at Minnesota

Sunday's games

Indiana at Connecticut
Los Angeles at Washington
Dallas at Las Vegas
Phoenix at Seattle
Atlanta at Golden State

PRO SOCCER

MLS

Western Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Diego FC	15	7	4	49	50	32
Vancouver	13	6	6	45	43	28
Minn. United	12	6	8	44	43	30
Seattle	11	6	8	41	43	35
LAFC	10	6	7	37	41	30
Portland	10	8	7	37	33	34
Austin FC	9	8	7	34	23	28
Colorado	9	11	6	33	33	40
San Jose	8	10	8	32	49	45
Real Salt Lake	9	12	4	31	27	32
FC Dallas	7	11	7	28	37	45
Houston	7	11	7	28	32	41
Sporting KC	6	13	6	24	36	47
St Louis City	5	14	6	21	27	41
LA Galaxy	3	15	7	16	28	52

Eastern Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Philadelphia	15	5	6	51	44	25
Cincinnati	15	7	4	49	39	32
Nashville	14	7	5	47	43	29
Orlando City	12	6	8	44	50	34
Columbus	12	5	8	44	41	36
Inter Miami CF	12	5	6	42	50	38
Charlotte FC	13	11	2	41	44	39
NYC FC	11	8	5	38	34	29
Chicago	10	9	6	36	47	42
New York	10	10	6	36	41	37
New England	7	11	7	28	33	35
Toronto FC	5	13	7	22	26	33
Atlanta	4	11	10	22	30	46
CF Montréal	4	15	7	19	24	47
D.C. United	4	15	7	19	22	51

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

Saturday's games

Real Salt Lake at Charlotte FC
LA Galaxy at Miami
D.C. United at CF Montréal
Los Angeles FC at New England
Philadelphia at New York
Sporting Kansas City at Orlando City
Columbus at Toronto FC
FC Dallas at Austin FC
St Louis City at Chicago
Seattle at Minnesota
Atlanta at Colorado
Cincinnati at Portland

Sunday's games

Nashville at New York City FC
San Diego FC at San Jose
Houston at Vancouver

Saturday, Aug. 23

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

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Kansas City	13	2	0	39	32	10
Orlando	8	4	3	27	22	12
Washington	8	4	3	27	23	20
San Diego	7	3	5	26	26	17
Portland	7	4	4	25	24	16
Seattle	7	5	3	24	21	17
Louisville	6	6	3	21	20	25
Gotham FC	5	5	5	20	19	14
North Carolina	5	6	4	19	19	22
Bay FC	4	6	5	17	17	20
Angel City	4	7	4	16	21	27
Houston	4	8	3	15	17	25
Chicago	1	9	5	8	12	29
Utah Royals FC	1	11	3	6	12	31

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

Friday's games

Louisville at Washington
Angel City at Utah Royals FC

Saturday's games

Orlando at Kansas City
Portland at North Carolina
San Diego at Bay FC

Sunday's game

Houston at Gotham FC

Monday's game

Chicago at Seattle

Thursday, August 21

Orlando at Angel City

Friday, August 22

North Carolina at Chicago

Saturday, August 23

Washington at Bay FC
Utah Royals FC at Gotham FC
Kansas City at Portland



CALEB CRAIG/AP

Venezuela's team participates in the opening ceremony at the Little League World Series on Wednesday in South Williamsport, Pa.

Venezuela at home once it gets on field

BY AMANDA VOGT
Associated Press

SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. — Hitting with the bases loaded at the Little League World Series, Samuel Castillo found the gap between left and center field. Two runs scored and Venezuela's lead over Puerto Rico grew to 3-0.

Above the team dugout, spectators in a fan section that barely filled three rows raised one of the few Venezuelan flags in Volunteer Stadium.

It took a lot for Venezuela to get here, but on Wednesday, its team made the playing baseball part of the journey look easy. Cardenales Little League from Barquisimeto went on to shut out Puerto Rico 5-0.

Cardenales won all five of its regional tournament games, outscoring opponents 46-6 to become the Latin America representative to the LLWS. But in the wake of President Donald Trump's travel bans and restrictions affecting 19 countries, the team needed a special exemption from the U.S. State Department and a sign-off from Secretary of State Marco Rubio after visas were initially denied.

Venezuela's senior team, with players who are up to 16 years old, was supposed to compete in Easley, S.C., last month but was unable to get the exemption and was denied entry to the United States.

"They were working their way through applying for the exemption," Little League President and CEO Patrick Wilson said in a news conference before Wednesday's game. "We ran out of time, just candidly."

Wilson said there were close to 10 days for Venezuela's Williamsport team to get approved, which was "more lead time" than the senior team. They were notified of the approval last Thursday.

This isn't the first time visa snarls have been an issue at the tournament. In 2011, Uganda's visa applications were denied and Saudi Arabia, the regional runner-up, played instead.

"We'll do our best to have conversations with the great folks at the State Department that help us out in an effort to, whether we have to adjust lead times or whatever we can do, to ensure that all teams can participate and enjoy the Little League experience, whether that's at the Little League level, junior, senior, softball, whatever it takes," Wilson said.

Venezuelan players traveled to the U.S. without their families — parents couldn't get visas — but the coaches of last year's team that made it to the international final were among the few fans from back home sitting proudly in the stands above the dugout. Euclides and Ender Rivero only had to renew their visas which, they explained through an interpreter, was a much easier process.

Maria Lewis sat just a few seats away from the Riveros holding one of the country's flags and wearing the Latin America team shirt. She's Venezuelan and lives only an hour away from Williamsport.

"I've been praying for them to come," Lewis said. "I'm very pleased that (their visas were) granted, because these are 12-year-olds that deserve to play their game."

She comes to Volunteer Stadium every year when a team from Venezuela plays.

"I'm just here like a team mom, honorary team mom, so that they can feel supported, that they have people behind them," Lewis said.

Manager Luis Bermudez said the team has been keeping in touch with those 2,204 miles away in Barquisimeto through their smartphones, and he's grateful to the fans Venezuela did have in the stands.

On Friday, Venezuela will play Canada.

MLB

Ohtani can't keep Angels from sweep

2-way star shines, but Dodgers' skid at 4

BY GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Shohei Ohtani racked up seven strikeouts and pitched into the fifth inning. He tripled, scored and reached base twice at the plate.

The two-way superstar still couldn't stop his team from falling deeper into a losing streak in Anaheim. Sound familiar?

Angels fans know this melancholy story all too well — and now Dodgers fans have experienced it, too.

Ohtani stepped back in time in more ways than one when he returned to the Angel Stadium mound Wednesday night for the first time since he switched teams in Los Angeles' crosstown rivalry.

For six seasons, the three-time MVP couldn't make the Angels into winners with his unprecedented talents. This summer, his defending champion Dodgers are in an increasingly ugly slump — and Ohtani couldn't save them Wednesday, neither on the hill nor at the plate.

Ohtani tripled and scored the Dodgers' first run, and he eventually left his longest start of the season with a 5-4 lead. The Angels still rallied for a 6-5 victory, sweeping the six-game Freeway Series and sending the Dodgers to their fourth consecutive loss overall.

The Dodgers also fell a game behind the Padres in the NL West standings with streaking San Diego on Friday night. The Dodgers led the division by nine games on July 3, and they've gone 12-21 since.

"Obviously, it doesn't feel good to fall into second place and to lose a lot of these games," Ohtani said through his interpreter. "We're doing everything in our power, having meetings, doing everything that we can to try to right the ship. We just have to do a better job."

Ohtani pitched 4⅓ innings of five-hit, four-run ball against the Angels. He gave up up a homer to Taylor Ward and a two-run double to Zach Neto, but he also fanned Mike Trout twice, getting his friend and fellow MVP the second time with his fastest pitch of the night — a 101 mph fastball in the fourth. But the Angels got three straight hits to chase him, capped by Neto's double.

"I just couldn't finish off hitters in the fifth," Ohtani said. "They did a good job putting balls in play, and that's what happens. Next time I've got to do a better job."

The Dodgers' beleaguered bullpen again failed while missing five high-leverage arms on the injured list, but their expensive lineup also didn't score after the fourth inning.



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Dodgers starting pitcher Shohei Ohtani wipes his face after the third inning against the Angels on Wednesday in Anaheim, Calif. Ohtani tripled and scored and struck out seven in the loss.

Logan O'Hoppe delivered a bases-loaded, two-run single in the eighth, and longtime Dodgers closer Kenley Jansen coolly pitched the ninth. Ohtani struck out in his final two at-bats.

"Doesn't feel good to lose close games," Ohtani said. "It's tough mentally, but we have an off day tomorrow, so the plan is to regroup, refresh and get ready for the weekend."

Ohtani is still beloved in Anaheim by fans who mostly couldn't blame him for leaving a team that could never assemble a winning lineup around him and Trout during six consecutive losing seasons.

All fans were locked in on the main event in this showdown.

After Trout and Ohtani acknowledged each other with slight nods and smirks, Ohtani finished his 1-2-3 first inning by throwing five straight fastballs to Trout before striking him out looking with a sweeper. Ohtani was even meaner to Trout in their second meeting, starting him out with a 73 mph curve before eventually fanning him with that blazing fastball in the low outside corner.

Outside of Trout, Ohtani saw plenty of familiar faces Wednesday: Seven of the nine hitters in the Angels' starting lineup played with him in Anaheim.

Ward blasted a 97-mph fastball from Ohtani to right for his 29th homer, just the second allowed by Ohtani this season.

Padres take NL West lead ahead of series in LA

BY STEVE KRONER
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — At the outset of play on July 4, the San Diego Padres were coming off a 2-4 trip through Cincinnati and Philadelphia and trailed the Los Angeles Dodgers by nine games in the National League West.

On Friday night, the Padres open a three-game series at Los Angeles with San Diego atop the division.

The Padres completed a three-game sweep of the host San Francisco Giants on Wednesday with an 11-1 romp that extended their winning streak to five games. The Padres (69-52) also have won five straight series and are 23-12.

"We've played a lot of really good baseball," Padres manager Mike Shildt said. "Pitching's been good, defense, baserunning. I've been really pleased the last week or so about the offense dictating the game."

San Diego took control Wednesday with a seven-run second inning. Fernando Tatis Jr. contributed a two-run single.

"We're going out there confident every single day, playing good baseball, clean baseball — and that's what we're capable of doing," said Tatis, who had two hits, two walks and drove in three runs.



GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ/AP

The San Diego Padres' Ramón Laureano, right, celebrates with Ryan O'Hearn after hitting a two-run homer during the fifth inning against the Giants on Wednesday in San Francisco.

The Padres and Dodgers have met in the NL Division Series three times in the past five seasons. Considering that history, Tatis said it's hard to overstate the importance of this weekend's series, even if it is only mid-August.

"It's huge. That's what we're playing for," Tatis said. "It's in our hands, how much we want it."

Barely more than a month ago, the Padres weren't particularly concerned with the division race.

"We played some bad baseball around that time, so we weren't really looking up at that point," third baseman Manny Machado said. "We were just trying to get back in the win column."

The Padres revamped their roster at the trade deadline, adding — most notably — outfielder Ramón Laureano and All-Star designated hitter Ryan O'Hearn from the Orioles, catcher Freddy Fermin from the Royals, left-hander Nestor Cortes from the Brewers and reliever Mason Miller from the Athletics.

"Every player that has come in has contributed in a really big (way). They're a really big part of this team," Tatis said.

Laureano went 3 for 4 with a two-run homer Wednesday. He has gone 15 for 45 (.333) with San Diego. Fermin is 11 for 31 (.355) with the Padres. And this weekend, the Padres take on their Southern California rivals with first place in the NL West at stake.

"Clearly, it's a series people are going to be paying attention to," Shildt said, "and we're just going to play good, clean, fundamental Padre baseball."

Scoreboard

American League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	70	51	.579	—
Boston	66	56	.541	4½
New York	64	57	.529	6
Tampa Bay	59	63	.484	11½
Baltimore	54	66	.450	15½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	70	52	.574	—
Cleveland	62	57	.521	6½
Kansas City	60	61	.496	9½
Minnesota	57	63	.475	12
Chicago	44	77	.364	25½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	68	53	.562	—
Seattle	67	54	.554	1
Texas	61	61	.500	7½
Los Angeles	59	62	.488	9
Athletics	54	69	.439	15

National League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	69	51	.575	—
New York	64	56	.533	5
Miami	58	62	.483	11
Atlanta	52	68	.433	17
Washington	48	72	.400	21

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	76	44	.633	—
Chicago	68	51	.571	7½
Cincinnati	64	58	.525	13
St. Louis	61	61	.500	16
Pittsburgh	51	71	.418	26

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
San Diego	69	52	.570	—
Los Angeles	68	53	.562	1
Arizona	59	62	.488	10
San Francisco	59	62	.488	10
Colorado	32	88	.267	36½

Wednesday's games

Detroit 1, Chicago White Sox 0
Washington 8, Kansas City 7
Arizona 6, Texas 4
Baltimore 4, Seattle 3
Miami 13, Cleveland 4
Houston 4, Boston 1
Chicago Cubs 4, Toronto 1
Minnesota 4, N.Y. Yankees 1
Tampa Bay 8, Athletics 2
Colorado 6, St. Louis 5
Milwaukee 12, Pittsburgh 5
San Diego 11, San Francisco 1
Cincinnati 8, Philadelphia 0
Atlanta 11, N.Y. Mets 6
L.A. Angels 6, L.A. Dodgers 5

Thursday's games

Seattle at Baltimore
Chicago Cubs at Toronto
Miami at Cleveland
Philadelphia at Washington
Atlanta at N.Y. Mets
Detroit at Minnesota
Arizona at Colorado

Friday's games

Pittsburgh (TBD) at Chicago Cubs (Rea 9-5)
Milwaukee (TBD) at Cincinnati (Martinez 10-9)
Philadelphia (Wheeler 10-5) at Washington (Gore 5-12)
Texas (deGrom 10-5) at Toronto (Bassitt 11-6)
Atlanta (Fedde 4-12) at Cleveland (Cantillo 3-2)
Miami (Alcantara 6-11) at Boston (Giolito 8-2)
Seattle (Castillo 8-6) at N.Y. Mets (Manaea 1-1)
Baltimore (Young 0-6) at Houston (Valdez 11-5)
Chicago White Sox (Civale 3-7) at Kansas City (Cameron 6-5)
Detroit (Morton 7-10) at Minnesota (Ureña 0-0)
N.Y. Yankees (Gil 0-1) at St. Louis (Pallante 6-9)
Arizona (Pfaadt 12-7) at Colorado (Gordon 2-5)
L.A. Angels (Kikuchi 6-7) at Athletics (Perkins 1-2)
San Diego (King 4-2) at L.A. Dodgers (Kershaw 6-2)
Tampa Bay (Boyle 1-2) at San Francisco (Roupp 7-6)

Saturday's games

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

MLB/NFL



GARETT FISBECK/AP

Nolan McLean was selected by the New York Mets out of Oklahoma State in the third round of the 2023 MLB Draft. McLean is set to make his major league debut Saturday as a starting pitcher.

Mets promote top prospect McLean to boost rotation

BY JERRY BEACH
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Pitching prospect Nolan McLean will make his major league debut Saturday for the New York Mets, who are hoping the right-hander can provide a boost to a struggling rotation.

McLean, 24, went 8-5 with a 2.45 ERA in 21 games, including 18 starts, between Double-A Binghamton and Triple-A Syracuse. He struck out 127 batters in 113⅔ innings with a five-pitch arsenal that includes a mid-to-high 90s fastball as well as a sweeper that's been clocked in the mid-80s.

"We feel good with him going out there and giving us a chance to win baseball games at the big league level," Mets manager Carlos Mendoza said. "Credit to him that he put himself in this position."

Mendoza and swingman Paul Blackburn, who was recalled from Triple-A Syracuse on Wednesday to replace Justin Hagenman on the roster, both said they were impressed by McLean's mound maturity.

"I was there in Jacksonville (for) his first start at Triple-A and his demeanor and his presence out there — really looked like he knew kind of what he wanted to do, what he was trying to do, how he was trying to set up guys," Blackburn said. "I think that just kind of says a lot about somebody."

McLean, who played for Oklahoma State, is the first member of New York's 2023 draft class to reach the majors. He is taking the rotation spot of Frankie Montas, who was sent to the bullpen Tuesday after going 3-2 with a 6.38 ERA in his first eight games, including seven starts.

The Mets rotation ranks sixth in the majors with a 3.70 ERA, though their 591 innings are the fourth-fewest. David Peterson, the scheduled starter Wednesday night against the Atlanta Braves, is the only New York starter to pitch at least six innings in a start since June 7.

McLean, who last pitched for Syracuse on Sunday, has thrown at least six innings in nine starts this season. He reached at least 90 pitches seven times, most recently on Aug. 5.

"Every time you're able to call up a prospect, whether it's a position player or a pitcher, the expectations here is to help us win baseball games," Mendoza said.

MLB leaders

AMERICAN LEAGUE

BATTING — Judge, New York, .333; Peña, Houston, .318; Aranda, Tampa Bay, .316; Ja.Wilson, Athletics, .312; M.Garcia, Kansas City, .302; V.Guerrero, Toronto, .299; Bichette, Toronto, .296; Kirk, Toronto, .294; J.Ramírez, Cleveland, .294

RUNS — Judge, New York, 94; V.Guerrero, Toronto, 80; Ju.Rodríguez, Seattle, 79; Raleigh, Seattle, 78; J.Ramírez, Cleveland, 76; Rooker, Athletics, 76; Witt, Kansas City, 75; Neto, Los Angeles, 72; Arozarena, Seattle, 70; Buxton, Minnesota, 70; Caminero, Tampa Bay, 70

RBI — Raleigh, Seattle, 98; Ward, Los Angeles, 90; Judge, New York, 88; Greene, Detroit, 87; Caminero, Tampa Bay, 84; Pasquantino, Kansas City, 80; Bichette, Toronto, 78; Story, Boston, 75; Adell, Los Angeles, 72; Soderstrom, Athletics, 71

HITS — Bichette, Toronto, 148; V.Guerrero, Toronto, 135; Witt, Kansas City, 135; Judge, New York, 134; M.Garcia, Kansas City, 133; Rooker, Athletics, 130; J.Ramírez, Cleveland, 129; Y.Díaz, Tampa Bay, 128; Ju.Rodríguez, Seattle, 128; Altuve, Houston, 127

DOUBLES — Witt, Kansas City, 37; Bichette, Toronto, 35; Ja.Duran, Boston, 31; M.Garcia, Kansas City, 31; V.Guerrero, Toronto, 29; Henderson, Baltimore, 28; Perez, Kansas City, 28; Rooker, Athletics, 28

TRIPLES — Ja.Duran, Boston, 12; McKinstry, Detroit, 8; Bellinger, New York, 5; M.Garcia, Kansas City, 5; Buxton, Minnesota, 4; Henderson, Baltimore, 4; Isbel, Kansas City, 4; W.Pérez, Detroit, 4; Ju.Rodríguez, Seattle, 4; Volpe, New York, 4; Witt, Kansas City, 4

HOME RUNS — Raleigh, Seattle, 45; Judge, New York, 38; Caminero, Tampa Bay, 34; Ward, Los Angeles, 29; Greene, Detroit, 27; Torkelson, Detroit, 26; Adell, Los Angeles, 25; J.Ramírez, Cleveland, 25

STOLEN BASES — Caballero, New York, 35; J.Ramírez, Cleveland, 33; Simpson, Tampa Bay, 33; Robert, Chicago, 31; Witt, Kansas City, 30; Arozarena, Seattle, 23; Ju.Rodríguez, Seattle, 23; M.Garcia, Kansas City, 22; Neto, Los Angeles, 21; Story, Boston, 20

PITCHING — Crochet, Boston, 13-5; Fried, New York, 12-5; Ryan, Minnesota, 12-5; Rodón, New York, 12-7; Skubal, Detroit, 11-3; Mize, Detroit, 11-4; Valdez, Houston, 11-5; Bassitt, Toronto, 11-6; Eovaldi, Texas, 10-3; H.Brown, Houston, 10-5; deGrom, Texas, 10-5; Rasmussen, Tampa Bay, 10-5

ERA — Skubal, Detroit, 2.35; H.Brown, Houston, 2.46; Crochet, Boston, 2.48; Ryan, Minnesota, 2.72; deGrom, Texas, 2.86; Fried, New York, 2.94; Valdez, Houston, 2.97; Woo, Seattle, 3.08; Luis.Castillo, Seattle, 3.19; Rodón, New York, 3.25

STRIKEOUTS — Crochet, Boston, 188; Skubal, Detroit, 187; H.Brown, Houston, 164; Rodón, New York, 164; Flaherty, Detroit, 153; Ryan, Minnesota, 153; Kikuchi, Los Angeles, 146; Valdez, Houston, 145; Woo, Seattle, 145; deGrom, Texas, 143

NATIONAL LEAGUE

BATTING — Edwards, Miami, .305; F.Freeman, Los Angeles, .300; K.Marte, Arizona, .297; Frelick, Milwaukee, .296; Machado, San Diego, .296; Naylor, Seattle, .292; Hoerner, Chicago, .291; Arraez, San Diego, .289

RUNS — Ohtani, Los Angeles, 115; J.Soto, New York, 85; E.De La Cruz, Cincinnati, 84; Tatis, San Diego, 84; Schwarber, Philadelphia, 81; Carroll, Arizona, 78; Lindor, New York, 78; Tucker, Chicago, 77

RBI — Alonso, New York, 98; Schwarber, Philadelphia, 97; E.Suárez, Seattle, 87; Suzuki, Chicago, 85; Yelich, Milwaukee, 81; Perdomo, Arizona, 79; Ohtani, Los Angeles, 79; Wood, Washington, 78; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 78

HITS — Machado, San Diego, 138; T.Turner, Philadelphia, 137; Arraez, San Diego, 136; Ohtani, Los Angeles, 132; E.De La Cruz, Cincinnati, 130; Edwards, Miami, 130; Hoerner, Chicago, 127; Perdomo, Arizona, 126

DOUBLES — Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 31; Alonso, New York, 30; Machado, San Diego, 30; Olson, Atlanta, 30; Chourio, Milwaukee, 29; Willson.Contreras, St. Louis, 29; F.Freeman, Los Angeles, 29; Bogaerts, San Diego, 27; Harper, Philadelphia, 27; J.Lee, San Francisco, 27

TRIPLES — Carroll, Arizona, 14; J.Lee, San Francisco, 10; Ohtani, Los Angeles, 8; Harris, Atlanta, 6; Moniak, Colorado, 6; Abrams, Washington, 5; J.Beck, Colorado, 5; 12 tied at 4

HOME RUNS — Ohtani, Los Angeles, 43; Schwarber, Philadelphia, 42; E.Suárez, Seattle, 36; J.Soto, New York, 29; Alonso, New York, 28; Suzuki, Chicago, 27; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 27

STOLEN BASES — On.Cruz, Pittsburgh, 34; E.De La Cruz, Cincinnati, 31; V.Scott, St. Louis, 31; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 30; Abrams, Washington, 26; T.Turner, Philadelphia, 26; Tatis, San Diego, 24; Tucker, Chicago, 24

PITCHING — F.Peralta, Milwaukee, 14-5; Pivetta, San Diego, 12-4; Pfaadt, Arizona, 12-7; Priester, Milwaukee, 11-2; C.Sánchez, Philadelphia, 11-4; Boyd, Chicago, 11-5; Gray, St. Louis, 11-5; Luzardo, Philadelphia, 11-5

ERA — Skenes, Pittsburgh, 2.13; Abbott, Cincinnati, 2.42; C.Sánchez, Philadelphia, 2.45; Boyd, Chicago, 2.46; Wheeler, Philadelphia, 2.68; Yamamoto, Los Angeles, 2.84; Pivetta, San Diego, 2.87; F.Peralta, Milwaukee, 2.90; Ray, San Francisco, 2.98; Lodolo, Cincinnati, 3.05

STRIKEOUTS — Wheeler, Philadelphia, 189; Cease, San Diego, 169; Webb, San Francisco, 168; Skenes, Pittsburgh, 166; Gore, Washington, 158; C.Sánchez, Philadelphia, 157; Ray, San Francisco, 152; Luzardo, Philadelphia, 151; Gray, St. Louis, 148; F.Peralta, Milwaukee, 148

Patriots-Vikings joint practice spurs reunions

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — Soon after Mike Vrabel was hired as head coach of the New England Patriots earlier this year, his counterpart with the Minnesota Vikings, Kevin O'Connell, called with a invitation.

Joint practice, our place. Just like we did it before.

Two years after Vrabel brought the Tennessee Titans to Minnesota for some valuable training camp work against another team, he took New England this week for two days of drills against the Vikings in advance of their preseason game.

"There's a reason why the Patriots are here: It starts with their head football coach and their organization itself," said O'Connell, who's starting his fourth year in Minnesota. "I've got so much respect for Vrabes and our relationship over the years."

O'Connell was a rookie backup quarterback with New England in 2008, the last of eight seasons Vrabel played outside linebacker for them. Vrabel, a 14-year NFL veteran, coached the Titans for six seasons and spent 2024 as a consultant for the Cleveland Browns.

Asked about his impression of O'Connell as a player, Vrabel was ready with a quip before the teams took the field Wednesday afternoon.

"He wasn't as good as Tom Brady," he said, with a deadpan expression.

Vrabel and O'Connell were far from the only connections between the two teams. Vikings defensive coordinator Brian Flores spent 15 years with the Patriots organization in various roles. Stefon Diggs is the highest-profile New England player who was previously with Minnesota, but that list also includes backup quarterback Joshua Dobbs and center Garrett Bradbury.

Bradbury, like his former head coach O'Connell, mentioned the word "relationships" when assessing his return to a facility where he trained for six seasons after being drafted in the first round in 2019 out of North Carolina State.

"On one hand, it feels like I never left. On the other hand, I've got another jersey on and some new teammates," Bradbury said. "A lot of people here mean a lot to me and helped me the last six years, so it's good to see everyone again."

Bradbury was released with one season left on his contract, part of the Vikings' push to revamp the interior of the offensive line after they were overwhelmed in the wild card round loss to the Los Angeles Rams that left O'Connell's playoff record at 0-2. He didn't want to leave, but he's found invigoration in his new surroundings.

"I think it should be mandatory that everyone play for at least two organizations because you get to re-prove yourself, reinvent yourself," Bradbury said, recounting advice he received from a former player after he was let go. "You get to meet a lot of people, make awesome friends and see different ways of doing things."

NFL coaches have grown to much prefer the controlled setting of joint practices over exhibition games during which to test their players against different opponents. When the Patriots hosted the Washington Commanders last week, a couple of fights occurred — and Vrabel even jumped into one scrum to try to break it up before emerging with a bloodied nose.

New England and Minnesota had no such trouble, perhaps a sign of the respect between the two organizations. Because he felt the energy level was lacking, Patriots wide receiver Mack Hollins said later, the eighth-year journeyman decided to punt the ball into the bleachers after a long touchdown pass from Drake Maye.

Maye had plenty of pressure in full-team drills that likely would've resulted in sacks during games, but with no tackling allowed he was able to let several deep passes rip down the field that hit their intended targets. Former Vikings wide receiver Diggs caught one of them at the sideline with Pro Bowl cornerback Byron Murphy Jr. in coverage.



ABBIE PARR/AP

New England Patriots wide receiver Stefon Diggs (8) catches a pass against Minnesota Vikings cornerback Byron Murphy Jr. Both ran drills during a joint training camp session Wednesday in Eagan, Minn.

NFL

Bengals RB serves as offensive focal point

By Charlie Goldsmith
Associated Press

CINCINNATI — After being one of the league's top running backs in the second half of last season, the Cincinnati Bengals are looking for Chase Brown to be an even bigger focal point this season.

"I believe Chase Brown is a top-10 back in the league," offensive coordinator Dan Pitcher said. "Certainly you don't want to burn the guy out. You also want to make sure your most explosive players are on the field and ready to touch the ball as many times as possible."

Between Week 9 through Week 17 last season, Brown ranked fifth in the league in yards from scrimmage and third in touches. He missed the season finale at Pittsburgh because of an ankle injury.

At this point last year, Brown was the team's backup running back behind Zack Moss.

Then, as Brown improved his ability as a pass catcher out of the backfield, he started earning more snaps. He took advantage of the opportunity and ran with it, finishing the season with 1,350 scrimmage yards (990 yards rushing, 360 receiving yards).

This year, Brown said he feels stronger, more confident as a rusher and even more dependable as a pass catcher. He had 54 receptions last season after only 14 as a rookie in 2023.



Matt Rourke/AP

Cincinnati Bengals running back Chase Brown runs past Eagles linebacker Smael Mondon Jr. during the first half of a preseason game Aug. 7 in Philadelphia.

"Sometimes, I think about the stretch I've had and the improvements that I've made," Brown said. "I try to just stay in the moment. As cliche as it sounds. As much as I am thinking ahead sometimes, I'm really trying to just stay in the moment and focus on what plays I can make right now. The improvements I can make at practice. Learning opportunities I can take away and learn from right now so when Week 1 comes, we're full speed."

Brown followed up what's been a strong training camp with a strong performance in last Thursday's preseason opener against the Philadelphia Eagles.

He ran the ball five times for 26 yards, and caught three passes for 25 yards over the course of his two series with the first-team offense. The Bengals scored on their first two possessions with Joe Burrow and the first unit on the field, but ended up losing 34-27.

Cincinnati's second preseason game is Monday night at Washington.

"With the speed and the way he's able to use it coming out of the backfield, I don't think he really gets credit for the way he actually runs the ball," said Bengals safety Geno Stone, who faced Brown in 2023 when Stone was in Baltimore. "He's a guy who can run the ball between the tackles or outside of the tackles. He has really good balance. When he hits the hole and gets through, he's gone."

Cincinnati is redesigning their run scheme this year around Brown's strengths. Heading into 2025, the Bengals coaching staff had a series of meetings to determine how they wanted the run game to evolve.

"At the end of the conversation, it wasn't about what we think looks good on the board," running backs coach Justin Hill said. "(It was) what is Chase good at? How can we showcase his tools in the run game and in the pass game? Where we have in the run game right now is pretty true to who we think Chase is and what he can be."

Taylor, Lazard hurt as injuries pile up for Jets

By Dennis Waszak Jr.
Associated Press

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — New York Jets backup quarterback Tyrod Taylor will be sidelined through the preseason after recent knee surgery, but the team expects he should be ready for the regular-season opener.

Coach Aaron Glenn announced Tuesday after the Jets' joint practice with the Giants that Taylor had "a minor scope" on the knee that has sidelined him the last week of training camp.

"He's still going through his protocols, as far as his rehab," Glenn said. "So we'll see exactly where he is in the next couple of weeks. I don't think he'll be playing in preseason, but hopefully he'll be ready for Week 1."

Justin Fields is the Jets' starting quarterback and has bounced back from a dislocated toe on his right foot early in training camp.

Taylor, a 36-year-old veteran in his second season with New York, will serve as Fields' backup as long as he's healthy.

The Jets' quarterbacks room is a bit banged up now. Rookie Brady Cook, an undrafted free agent from Missouri, has an ankle injury after his right foot was stepped on during practice with the Giants. He left the field after practice riding in the passenger seat of a cart, but Glenn downplayed the injury.

"I think he'll be just fine," Glenn said.

Adrian Martinez, in his second year with the Jets, is the only other healthy quarterback on the roster.



Photos by Angelina Katsanis/AP

New York Jets quarterback Tyrod Taylor, left, and wide receiver Allen Lazard run drills during practice at the team's training camp July 26 in Florham Park, N.J. Both are now recovering from injuries.

New York will also be without wide receiver Allen Lazard for at least two weeks after he injured his right shoulder during the Jets' 30-10 preseason victory at Green Bay last Saturday night.

"So we will see where his situation is going into Week 1," Glenn said.

Lazard is competing for the No. 2 wide receiver spot behind Garrett Wilson, but had been mostly quiet for much of camp before the injury. His roster spot was thought by some to be in jeopardy, especially with veterans Josh Reynolds, Tyler Johnson and Xavier Gipson on the team and youngsters such as Arian Smith, Brandon Smith, Jamaal Pritchett and Quentin Skinner flashing at times during practices.

Taylor time

Rookie tight end Mason Taylor returned to practice just over a week after suffering a high ankle sprain that was expected to sideline him a few weeks.

Taylor, a second-round pick out of LSU and the son of Pro Football Hall of Famer Jason Taylor, participated in individual, positional and team drills during the session with the Giants. He also made a terrific catch, diving for a ball along the left sideline on a throw from Martinez in drills.

"I think it was outstanding the way that he was able to reach and maneuver his feet to stay in bounds on that play," Glenn said. "But the things I expect from him in the passing game, it's nothing new for that player. The thing is, he's got to make sure that he comes along at the right pace so we don't re-injure that ankle again.

"But he's a fighter and he wants to be out there. We're going to do everything we can to protect him the right way, but also let him go out there and get his work in. So I thought he had a hell of a day."

Johnson's return

Edge rusher Jermaine Johnson is being eased back to the field Tuesday after being activated from the active/physically unable to perform list Sunday.

Johnson tore his right Achilles tendon in Week 2 last season, but is in position to play in this season's opening game. He didn't participate in team drills Tuesday.

"I feel great," a smiling Johnson said. "I feel ready to go, but I trust them. I like to say that they're backing the Ferrari off the truck a little cautiously right now. I understand it, but I'm ready to go."

Working their way back

Pro Bowl defensive tackle Quinnen Williams (calf) was back in uniform after missing some time, but didn't participate in team drills as he recovers from his injury. He spent some time with the trainers during practice.

Defensive lineman Byron Cowart (ankle) was also among those sidelined, as were cornerback Azareye'h Thomas (shoulder) and running back Isaiah Davis (ankle).

Left guard John Simpson returned to practice after missing over a week with a back issue.

NFL



RICK SCUTERI/AP

Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) leads his team onto the field before a preseason game against the Cardinals on Aug. 9 in Glendale, Ariz.

Competitiveness continues fueling Mahomes in big way

By Dave Skretta
Associated Press

ST. JOSEPH, Mo. — Maxx Crosby kept running into star athletes over the summer, from NBA great Kevin Garnett to former NFL wide receiver Steve Smith Sr., and the instant connection they shared made Las Vegas' star pass rusher think about another athlete he keeps coming across a couple of times a year.

Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes.

The reason was simple: "He's the ultimate competitor," Crosby said.

"Like, I've had the honor to meet some of the greatest players, greatest people, greatest dudes across all different types of walk of life," Crosby explained, "and I could say this: Like, when you meet somebody else that's an ultimate competitor, and that is all what you're about, I don't even have to say nothing. It's just, you click right away."

Crosby and Mahomes are not exactly best of buds, but there is a healthy dose of respect between two of the fiercest rivals in the AFC West. Crosby has sacked Mahomes six times in 12 career games, yet Kansas City has won eight of the last nine matchups.

Mahomes is 12-2 against the Raiders overall, throwing 33 touchdown passes and only five interceptions.

"So I got the ultimate respect for Pat. I've said it a million times," Crosby said. "I look at myself as the ultimate competitor. I look at myself as the best in the world. I know he thinks he's the best in the world. And I've said it myself. So he brings the best out of me. I know I bring the best out of him. So definitely looking forward to those wars."

Mahomes isn't exactly sure where his competitive nature comes from, though dad is a safe place start. Pat Mahomes Sr. managed to hang around for 11 years in the big leagues, and his son spent a lot of those years hanging out in the clubhouse.

It's what drives Mahomes all offseason, when his personal trainer, Bobby Stroupe, is putting him through yet another brutal workout. It's what pushes him in practice, the boiling ones at training camp and the frigid ones late in the season. And it's what allows him to push through the pain of bumps and bruises on gameday, when other QBs might call it quits.

It's what has allowed Mahomes to continually rally his team, leading them to five Super Bowls and three championships.

"Yeah, that burn to win is at the highest level of probably any player in the NFL," Chiefs offensive coordinator Matt Nagy said. "He's built different that way, and I think when you have that, it goes on to these players on the team — offense, defense, special teams — and us as coaches. You want to make sure you are doing everything possible."

So many games in the NFL come down to the wire, Nagy said, and the sheer will to win sometimes makes the difference.

"When you have him on your side, you know he's going to give you a great chance," Nagy said. "When we lost that Super Bowl (in February), it was the very next day and he was ready to go, and we just know that it's a great, high standard that we all have."

Mahomes has readily admitted that the 40-22 loss to the Eagles in New Orleans was one of the worst performances of his career, and that the Philadelphia defense had a lot to do with it. He threw two interceptions and was sacked six times.

Still, the numbers that Mahomes — who turns 30 next month — has compiled through his first eight seasons are staggering.

His career passer rating of 102.1 is second only to Aaron Rodgers, while Mahomes' average of 288.9 yards passing per game is the best of anyone to play the quarterback position. But perhaps most importantly, he has led KC to seven of its nine consecutive AFC West titles, and then reached the conference title game in each of those seven seasons.

"I think you always have to get better," Mahomes said. "That's something that people lose track of when you have success. Obviously we didn't win that last game, but we had a lot of success last year. And I think sometimes people want to be stagnant, and they want to go out there and just do it over again. But you see with the rest of the AFC West, the rest of the AFC and the NFL, everybody is getting better. So we have to get better."

Small: Robinson learning plenty from RB coach Pitre

FROM PAGE 32

its out of the skills that don't turn heads, such as his footwork when he releases out of the backfield to go out on a pass route or where he places his hands on defenders when pass blocking.

"Can we do the little things consistently?" Pitre said. "Can we continue to focus on the details that are going to allow us to be great down in and down out?"

Robinson's eagerness to master those small fundamentals speaks volumes about where he is headed. His care over becoming better at hand placement in pass protection signals how high he wants to reach as a running back. If he wants to improve at that, how much more must he want to excel when he actually has the ball? He's like a naturally gifted student who has an A grade in the class but still wants the extra credit.

That drive can mean only good things for himself and Atlanta as it tries to end its seven-year playoff drought and establish itself as a legitimate championship contender.

Improving upon Robinson's established standard is difficult, Pitre said, but "that's not anything that I'm putting on him. That's something that he wants, and that's the part that makes it fun coaching a guy like him."

They make a good pair. Pitre is a teacher at heart. He began his career intending to be a high school coach and teacher, earning a master's degree in special education. But his excellence as a coach kept moving him up the ladder. You can hear his understanding of pedagogy in the way he talks about pacing lessons, not to overload his players, and making sure that they master the first skill before going on to the second.

"You're just slowly building the scaffolding and building that thing so slowly you can pull off a little bit and say, 'OK, here — now you go because you're ready to go do it,' if that makes sense," Pitre said.

And in Robinson, Pitre has a student who is eager and skilled at absorbing the material. Normally, it's an athlete's versatility on the field that earns him or her a description as a "Swiss Army knife." But that is how Pitre described Robinson's learning aptitude.

Robinson can take in Pitre's instruction on the practice field as well as he can by watching a video of another running back flashing a certain attribute or skill that Pitre wants him to develop.

"Well, now then, we carry it on the field," Pitre said. "Then from the field, he watches himself when we go back in the classroom, and it's just a methodical process. So he hears it, he sees it, he does it, he sees it. It's that constant, repetitive, over and over and over again process."

Greatness isn't always a juke that puts a linebacker on the ground or outsprinting a safety to the pylon for a touchdown. It can be caring enough to perfect a pass-blocking technique.

Perhaps in a couple of months, it will provide Michael Penix Jr. an extra tenth of a second to complete a routine second-down pass in the middle of the first quarter. It might go unnoticed, but it could contribute to a stack of modest gains that ultimately accumulate into a win. The challenge for Robinson, Pitre said, is to focus "on those little things that can be our slight edge."

Those little things won't make Robinson's highlight reel. But as he pursues greatness, they could help the Falcons finally win.



DANNY KARNIK/AP

From left, Falcons running backs coach Michael Pitre, running back Bijan Robinson and Detroit Lions running backs coach Tashard Choice pose for a photo after a preseason game Aug. 8 in Atlanta.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

AP picks its best from 100 years

Associated Press

Ohio State and Pittsburgh each placed three players on The Associated Press All-Time All-America team announced Thursday as part of the news organization's celebration of the 100th anniversary of the storied honor for the top players in college football.

Since 1925, nearly 2,000 men have been named AP first-team All-Americans, one of the most prestigious honors in the sport.

The Big Ten led all conferences with seven selections, two more than the Southeastern Conference.

Of the 25 players on the first team, five won the Heisman Trophy and 21 are in the College Football Hall of Fame, two are nominated for induction in 2026 and two are not eligible because they are not yet 10 years removed from their college careers.

A panel of 12 AP sports writers who cover college football selected the all-time team. It won't be, and shouldn't be, considered definitive. There have been far more great players over the last century than spots available.

For a player to qualify, he must have been an AP first-team All-American at least once. His professional career, if any, was not to be considered.

Many fans might say Anthony Munoz and Ray Guy, among others, are glaring omissions. Neither qualified for consideration.

Munoz, who played at Southern California from 1976-79, is considered one of the greatest offensive linemen of all time, college or pro. He's in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Alas, he was never a first-team AP All-American.

Guy, who played at Southern Mississippi from 1970-72, remains the only punter selected in the first round of an NFL draft. But punters were not included on AP All-America teams until 1981.

Also, a member of the all-time team could only be listed on the side of the ball where he was named first-team All-America. All-purpose players could come from any position.



STEPHEN MORTON/AP

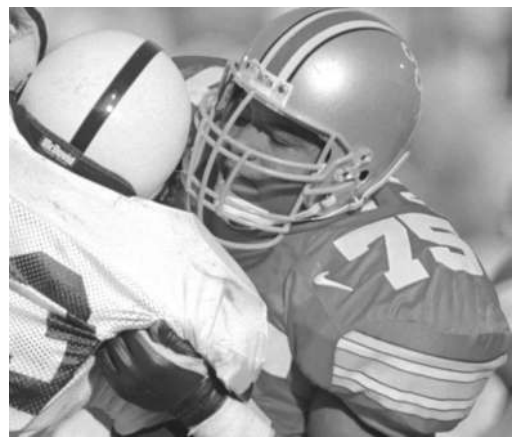
Florida quarterback Tim Tebow won the Heisman and made the AP All-America team as a sophomore in 2007. He was voted to the All-Time All-America team as the first-team QB.

Voters were cautioned against recency bias, but it is notable that only three of the first-team selections played before 1970.

Of the 12 players who were three-time All-Americans, only four made the two all-time teams picked by AP.

Florida's Tim Tebow edged Texas' Vince Young (2005) for all-time first-team quarterback. Tebow won the Heisman and made the AP All-America team as a sophomore in 2007, his first year as the starter.

He led the Gators to their second national championship in three years in 2008 and narrowly missed a chance at another when the 2009 team started 13-0 but lost to Alabama in the SEC championship game. He remains the SEC career leader in rushing touchdowns and touchdowns responsible for.



MARK HALL/AP

Ohio State tackle Orlando Pace was named first team of the AP All-Time All-America team.

AP All-Time All-America team

FIRST TEAM
OFFENSE

Wide receivers — Randy Moss, Marshall, 1997; Larry Fitzgerald, Pittsburgh, 2003
Tackles — Orlando Pace, Ohio State, 1995-96; Bill Fralic, Pittsburgh, 1982-83-84
Guards — John Hannah, Alabama, 1972; Jim Parker, Ohio State, 1956
Center — Chuck Bednarik, Penn, 1947-48
Tight end — Brock Bowers, Georgia, 2023
QB — Tim Tebow, Florida, 2007
Running backs — Barry Sanders, Oklahoma State, 1988; Herschel Walker, Georgia, 1980-81-82
Kicker — Sebastian Janikowski, Florida State, 1998-99
All-purpose — Johnny Rodgers, Nebraska, 1972

DEFENSE

Defensive ends — Hugh Green, Pittsburgh, 1978-79-80; Randy White, Maryland, 1974
Defensive tackles — Ndamukong Suh, Nebraska, 2009; Bronko Nagurski, Minnesota, 1929
Linebackers — Dick Butkus, Illinois, 1964; Derrick Thomas, Alabama, 1988; Chris Spielman, Ohio State, 1986-87
Cornerbacks — Charles Woodson, Michigan, 1996-97; Deion Sanders, Florida State, 1987-88
Safeties — Ronnie Lott, Southern California, 1980; Ed Reed, Miami, 2000-01
Punter — Tory Taylor, Iowa, 2023

SECOND TEAM
OFFENSE

Wide receivers — DeVonta Smith, Alabama, 2020; Desmond Howard, Michigan, 1991
Tackles — Jonathan Ogden, UCLA, 1995; Bryant McKinnie, Miami, 2001
Guards — Brad Budde, Southern California, 1979; John Smith, Notre Dame, 1927
Center — Dave Rimington, Nebraska, 1981-82
Tight end — Keith Jackson, Oklahoma, 1986-87
QB — Vince Young, Texas, 2005
Running backs — Archie Griffin, Ohio State, 1974-75; Tony Dorsett, Pittsburgh, 1976
Kicker — Martin Gramatica, Kansas State, 1997
All-purpose — Tim Brown, Notre Dame, 1986-87

DEFENSE

Defensive ends — Bubba Smith, Michigan State, 1966; Bruce Smith, Virginia Tech, 1984
Defensive tackles — LeeRoy Selmon, Oklahoma, 1975; Warren Sapp, Miami, 1994
Linebackers — Jerry Robinson, UCLA, 1976-77-78; Brian Bosworth, Oklahoma, 1985-86; Lawrence Taylor, North Carolina, 1980
Cornerbacks — Champ Bailey, Georgia, 1998; Tyrann Mathieu, LSU, 2011
Safeties — Bennie Blades, Miami, 1986-87; Al Brosky, Illinois, 1951
Punter — Reggie Roby, Iowa, 1981
Voters: AP sports writers Cliff Brunt, Maura Carey, Schuyler Dixon, Josh Dubow, Stephen Hawkins, Larry Lage, Mark Long, Michael Marot, Steve Megargee, Eric Olson, Eddie Pells, Noah Trister

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Several players manage to shine on shabby teams

By Steve Megargee
Associated Press

Isaac Smith knows what drew him to Mississippi State and why he has remained there.

"There's no distractions in Starkville," the junior safety told reporters during Southeastern Conference media days. "Small town. Real pretty community. The people are awesome. I fell in love with it and I'm still in love with it and will forever always be in love with it."

Smith's 127 tackles last season led the Southeastern Conference and tied him for seventh place among all Football Bowl Subdivision players, production that hasn't translated to team success. Mississippi State has gone 7-17 overall and 1-15 in SEC competition during Smith's two seasons.

Smith believes the Bulldogs have what it takes to turn things around. He considers the program a blue-collar one that values hard work.

"I love the fact that's Mississippi State's been all about that, just working hard and going to prove something that maybe people don't think you can do," Smith said.

Mississippi State's chances of being more competitive this season depend on whether Smith can help upgrade a defense that allowed 34.1 points per game last season. Texas Tech, Oklahoma State and Purdue were the only Power Four teams to give up more points per game.

"We lacked execution the whole season really — missed tackles, missed assignments," Smith said. "Quite frankly, that's why we lost a lot of games. I think we were last at about everything."

Demond Claiborne, Wake Forest: Claiborne rushed for 1,049 yards and 11 touchdowns last year for a Demon Deacons team that finished 4-8 for a second straight season. He rushed for at least 113 yards against North Carolina A&T, NC State, Stanford and Cal. He also had 23 catches for 254 yards and two more scores. The ACC preseason media poll forecasts Wake Forest to finish 16th out of 17 teams, ahead of only Stanford.

Scottre Humphrey, New Mexico: After helping Montana State reach the Football Championship Subdivision title game last year, Humphrey makes the move to the FBS ranks while trying to help the Lobos produce their first winning season since 2016. Humphrey rushed for 1,386 yards last year, which include 140 yards and the winning touchdown in Montana State's 35-31 victory over New Mexico. The Lobos' 5-7 record last year was their best since a 9-4 finish in 2016.



JAMES PUGH/AP

Mississippi State safety Isaac Smith (2) and linebacker JP Purvis celebrate after a play against Toledo during the first half in Starkville, Miss., on Sept. 14, 2024.

Devin Mockobee, Purdue: The small-town, home-stater started with the Boilermakers as a walk-on but earned a scholarship by helping Purdue win the 2022 Big Ten West Division crown. The Boilermakers have struggled since — going 4-8 in 2023 and 1-11 in 2024 — but Mockobee has remained productive. His 2,466 yards rushing rank him seventh on Purdue's all-time list. He's aiming to become the fourth 3,000-yard rusher in school history. A big season could enable him to threaten Mike Alstott's school record of 3,635 career yards rushing

Josh Moten, Southern Miss.: Moten transferred to the Golden Eagles after intercepting five passes for Marshall last season to tie for fourth place among all Bowl Subdivision players. Southern Mississippi went 1-11 last year and has won more than three games just once over the past five seasons. He intercepted a pass in four of his final five games last season.

Caleb Tiernan, Northwestern: The Wildcats went 4-8 in 2024 for their third losing season in the last four years, but they have a quality left tackle in Tiernan. He has started 30 games over the last three seasons. Pro Football Focus gave him an 88.9 pass block grade last season, ranking him sixth among all tackles. He allowed just one sack over Northwestern's final six games last year.

Cade Uluave, California: After being named the Pac-12's freshman defensive player of the year by the league's coaches in 2023, Uluave collected 71 tackles while playing nine games for the Golden Bears last season. He made at least eight stops in six different games, including a 15-tackle performance against Miami. California went 5-7 last year for its fifth straight losing season, and it's picked to finish 15th in the ACC this year.

Officials to crack down on players faking injuries

By Eric Olson
Associated Press

Officials will be cracking down on college football players who feign injuries, the number of overtime timeouts will be reduced and referees will use different verbiage when announcing the results of video reviews.

Those are among the changes for the 2025 season, the National Football Foundation announced Wednesday in its annual summary of rules changes.

Combating the practice of players faking injuries to stop the game clock was an offseason priority for the NCAA Football Rules Committee.

Beginning this season, if a player on the field presents as injured after the ball is spotted for the next play, that player's team will be charged a timeout. If the team does not have timeouts remaining, a 5-yard delay-of-game penalty will be assessed.

The player must also remain out of the game for at least one down, even if that team is granted a timeout, and may not return until receiving the approval of a medical professional.



ARTIE WALKER JR./AP

South Carolina head coach Shane Beamer reacts after his offensive momentum is slowed down by another Mississippi injury during the second half Oct. 5, 2024, in Columbia, S.C.

Feigning injuries, sometimes at the coach's instruction, has concerned the rules committee in recent years. It's a tactic defenses use to slow down tempo offenses or as a way for an offense to avoid a delay-of-game penalty or get an extra timeout.

In overtime, each team will continue to be allowed one timeout in both the first and second extra periods. After the first two overtime periods, each team will be allowed only one timeout for the remainder of the game. Previously, a team was allowed one timeout in each overtime period regardless of how many were required to decide a winner.

After video reviews, if the ruling on the field is not overturned, referees will announce that the call is "upheld." Previously the referee would say the call is "confirmed" if video showed the call was correct or "stands" if there was no evidence to overturn the ruling. If the call is changed, the referee will describe the reason.

Some other changes:

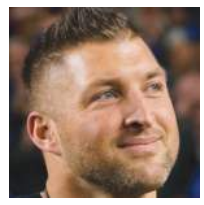
■ On kick returns, if any player on the receiving team holds out his arms to make a "T" signal during the kick, the team gives up its right to make a return and the play will be whistled dead.

■ Any defensive player within 1 yard of the line of scrimmage (stationary or not) may not make quick and abrupt or exaggerated actions that simulate action at the snap in an obvious attempt to make the offense commit a penalty. The offense will be held to the same standard as any pre-snap movement that simulates action at the snap is a foul on the offense for a false start.

■ The defense may not have more than 11 players on the field when the ball is snapped. The infraction is treated as a live-ball foul and is a 5-yard penalty. If this occurs after the two-minute timeout in either half, the offense will have the option to reset the game clock back to the time displayed at the snap.

■ All forms of gun violence are not permitted and simulating the firing of a weapon is an automatic unsportsmanlike foul. This year, if a player simulates the act of brandishing a weapon, it is considered an unsportsmanlike act.

SPORTS



Century in the making

AP releases All-Time All-America team to mark 100 years ›› College football, Page 30

NFL



MIKE STEWART/AP

The Atlanta Falcons' Bijan Robinson has emerged as an elite running back after just two seasons, but is still looking to improve by focusing on the smaller details of his game.

Sweating the small stuff

Falcons star running back Robinson gets mundane to achieve greatness

BY KEN SUGIURA
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

FLOWERY BRANCH, Ga. — As Bijan Robinson starts his third season in the NFL, his position coach said what any Atlanta Falcons fan should want to hear about the star running back.

Not only does Robinson care about improving, but he is willing to dive into the mundane process of getting better at the small details that few people notice. As running backs coach Michael Pitre put it, Robinson has an open mind and an open heart to being coached and a desire to keep improving.

"And that's where he's at right now, is that he wants all the information that he can get," Pitre said Tuesday after Atlanta's first of two joint practices with the Tennessee Titans.

Any Falcons fan knows Robinson in the broad strokes — the jaw-dropping highlights and staggering numbers that he has amassed in his first three years in the NFL testify to his gathering greatness.

The No. 8 pick of the 2023 draft has emerged as an elite player in the NFL, a running back with speed, elusiveness, vision, power and a keen sense of how to play the position. Last year, he finished third in the league in rushing yards (1,456), fourth in all-purpose yards (1,866) and tied for seventh in touchdowns (15). He led the NFL in missed tackles forced (117). It earned him his first Pro Bowl berth.

In an NFL Network video touting Robinson as the No. 62 player in the league in its top 100, 2025 rushing king Saquon Barkley called him "definitely the next great one, him and (Detroit's Jahmyr Gibbs). There's nobody who's able to cut like Bijan in the NFL."

But what Pitre laid out as Robinson's next step was making hab-

SEE SMALL ON PAGE 29

Padres take NL West lead as Dodgers continue falling ›› MLB, Page 26