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CONTINGENCY EDITION

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2026

Free to Deployed Areas

Admiral: Iran notably outclassed by US might

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Iran is no match for American military forces, the Navy's highest-ranking active-duty officer said this week.

Adm. Daryl Caudle, chief of naval operations, told hundreds of sailors at an all-hands call Wednesday that although he doesn't take Iranian posturing lightly, U.S. forces overmatched Tehran's threats "significantly" when it comes to capabilities.

"We have a very good approach of providing the president of the United States military options," Caudle told an audience at Naval Support Activity Naples. "Iran knows this. So, the fact that we have that type of capability is a strong deterrent."

The U.S. bombing of Iranian nuclear facilities in June in an operation dubbed Midnight Hammer was evidence of the American military's "capability to do things on that order and that scale," he said.

Caudle and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy John Perryman were in Naples on Wednesday and Thursday to meet with officials and sailors of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet.

The visit followed Caudle's attendance at the Paris Naval Conference earlier in the week.

On Wednesday, President Donald Trump told NBC News that Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah

SEE OUTCLASSED ON PAGE 5

RELATED

Iran, US agree to
hold nuclear talks
Friday in Oman
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JOSEFINA GARCIA/U.S. Army

U.S. soldiers patrol the area at the Winter Camp exercise at Camp Tapa, Estonia, on Monday. The United States and Russia plan to reopen high-level military-to-military dialogue after a 4-year suspension, which was sparked by tensions before Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

US, Russia revive military talks

EUCOM says dialogue is vital aspect to 'global stability and peace'

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

The United States and Russia will maintain high-level military-to-military dialogue for the first time since 2021, with the reopening of a direct communication channel that was suspended ahead of the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The agreement was reached during meetings this week in the United Arab Emirates involving Gen. Alexis Grynkeiwich, commander of U.S. European Command, and



Grynkeiwich

"Maintaining dialogue between militaries is an important factor in global stability and peace," EUCOM said without identifying spe-

counterparts from Russia and Ukraine, EUCOM said in a statement Thursday.

President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and senior White House adviser Jared Kushner also participated in the talks, EUCOM said.

cific topics expected to be discussed under the restored channel.

It will provide consistent military contact as the sides pursue a potential path toward ending the war in Ukraine, the statement added.

Dialogue between the U.S. and Russian militaries was suspended in the fall of 2021 amid tensions leading up to Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine the following February.

Since then, the U.S. and its European allies

SEE REVIVE ON PAGE 7

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Minute Maid puts frozen canned juices on ice

Associated Press

Minute Maid helped make orange juice a year-round morning staple in 1946, when it started shipping cans of frozen juice around the U.S.

But 80 years later, the brand's parent company is halting sales of frozen juice concentrates in the U.S. and Canada, saying it wants to focus on the fresh juices that customers now prefer.

"We are discontinuing our frozen products and exiting the frozen can category in response to

shifting consumer preferences," The Coca-Cola Co., which owns Minute Maid, said Wednesday in a statement.

Minute Maid's frozen juices — including several varieties of orange juice, lemonade and limeade — will be discontinued by April, with inventory available while supplies last, Coca-Cola said.

For generations, Americans who wanted orange juice without the work of squeezing fresh fruit cracked open a can and watched a cylinder of frozen juice go ker-

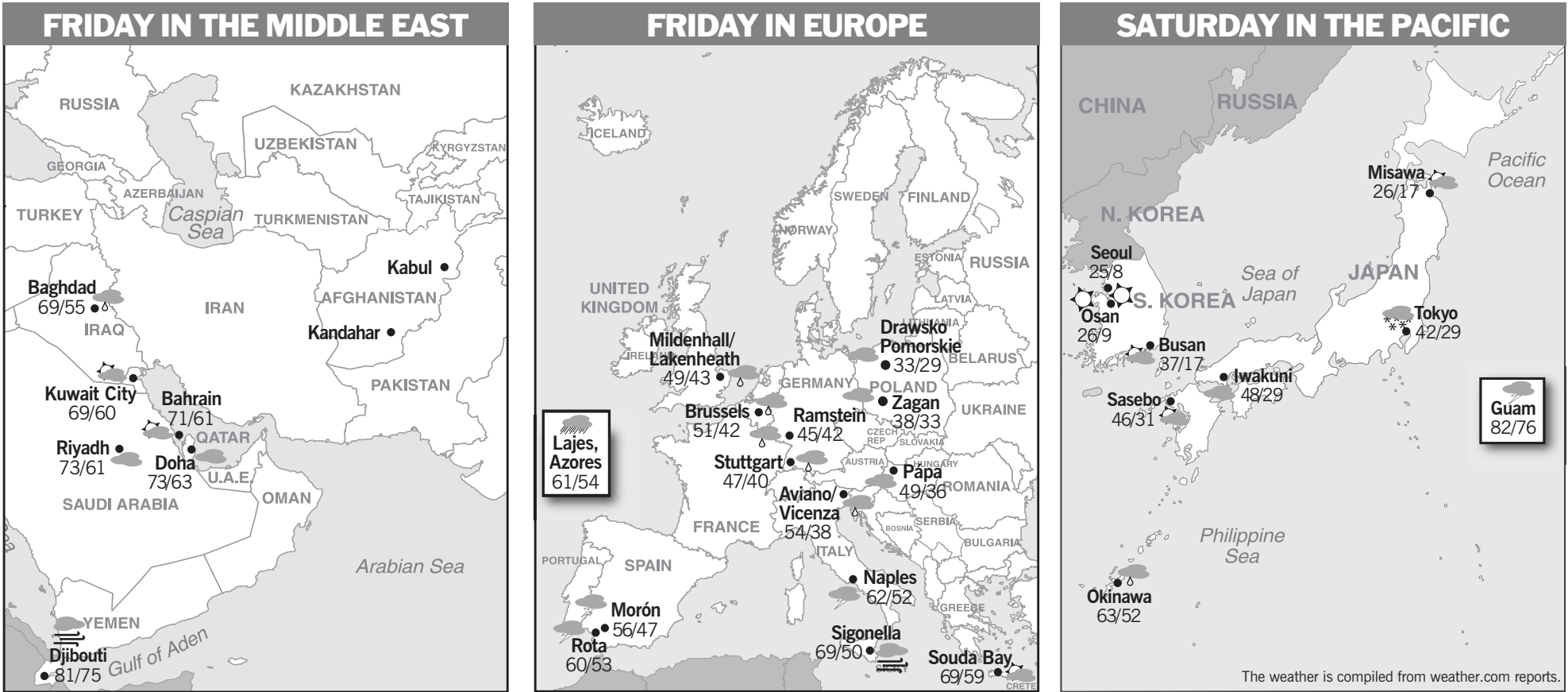
plunk into a pitcher. The concentrated juice was mixed with water to make it ready for drinking.

In recent years, orange juice has struggled as other options, like energy drinks and protein smoothies, have flooded the market. Skyrocketing prices due to poor weather conditions in Brazil and Florida haven't helped; a 12-ounce can of frozen orange juice cost an average of \$4.82 in December, up 13% from the prior year, according to U.S. government data.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates			
Euro costs (Feb. 6)	0.83	Switzerland (Franc)	0.7764
British pound (Feb. 6)	\$1.33	Thailand (Baht)	31.76
Japanese yen (Feb. 6)	152.00	Turkey (NewLira)	43.5338
South Korean won (Feb. 6)	1,424.00		
Commercial rates			
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3744	(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	
Britain (Pound)	1.3546		
Canada (Dollar)	1.3660		
China (Yuan)	6.9415		
Denmark (Krone)	6.3260		
Egypt (Pound)	46.9145		
Euro	0.8473		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8125		
Hungary (Forint)	320.71		
Israel (Shekel)	3.1090		
Japan (Yen)	156.86	Prime rate	6.75
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3068	Interest Rates Discount rate	3.75
Norway (Krone)	9.7650	Federal funds market rate	3.62
Philippines (Peso)	58.74	3-month bill	3.68
Poland (Zloty)	3.57	30-year bond	4.92
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7457		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2733		
South Korea (Won)	1,462.22		

WEATHER OUTLOOK



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MILITARY

New 3-star general will lead 5th Air Force

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A newly promoted lieutenant general will take command of 5th Air Force in Tokyo, a role that until recently was held by the head of U.S. Forces Japan but has now been split as the command expands into a broader mission.

The Senate confirmed Maj. Gen. Joel Carey's promotion to three-star rank on Jan. 30 along with his appointment to lead 5th Air Force, a position until now held by the commander of U.S. Forces Japan, also an Air Force lieutenant general.

"This change is in support of the U.S. Forces-Japan transformation into a joint force headquarters and allows for a dedicated focus on the unique operational requirements of each headquarters," 5th Air Force spokeswoman Capt. Tisha Yates said by email Thursday.

The two commands were never really combined, but have been under one commander wearing two hats since the creation of USFJ on July 1, 1957, according to Yates.

Former Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in July 2024 announced plans to transform USFJ, a liaison command, into a joint force headquarters "with expanded missions and operational responsibilities," he said at the time. The change aligned with Japan's creation in March of a Self-Defense Forces Joint Operation Command.

Lt. Gen. Stephen Jost remains USFJ's commander, a position he's held since October 2024.

Carey was nominated for the 5th Air Force spot on Dec. 18 and promotion by President Donald Trump. USFJ and 5th Air



JOHN BELLINO/U.S. Navy

Japanese Minister of Defense Shinjiro Koizumi greets Maj. Gen. Joel Carey at U.S. Indo-Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii on Jan. 12.

Force are both headquartered at Yokota, an airlift hub in western Tokyo. A change of command ceremony has not yet been scheduled, Yates said.

As 5th Air Force commander, Carey will oversee about 15,000 airmen and Defense Department civilians at three major installations: the 374th Airlift wing at Yokota; the 35th Fighter Wing at Misawa Air Base in northeastern Honshu; and the 18th Wing at

Kadena Air Base on Okinawa.

Carey — call sign Joker — in August 2024 became chief of staff at Indo-Pacific Command under Adm. Samuel Paparo. INDO-PACOM spans 36 countries and includes 380,000 service members and DOD civilians, according to the general's official Air Force biography.

Carey's military resume shows a steady progression from ROTC cadet at Baylor

University in 1992 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and NATO component command.

"His assignments have included command of an operational fighter squadron, vice commander of two air expeditionary wings and commander of three wings, including a flying training wing, air expeditionary wing and large combat wing," his biography states.

He served in a catalog of operations, from Deliberate Force — the 1995 air campaign over the Balkans to stymie Serbia's attacks on Bosnia and Herzegovina — to Enduring Freedom, providing air support in the long war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, and its follow-up operation, Freedom Sentinel.

The 5th Air Force is the service's oldest continuously serving numbered command, according to its website. It was established as the Far East Air Force in the Philippines in September 1941 and became 5th Air Force a year later.

It took part in Gen. Douglas MacArthur's island-hopping campaign across the Pacific during World War II. Two of its WWII-era pilots — Maj. Richard Bong and Thomas McGuire — are the top-scoring aces in U.S. history.

The organization played a supporting role during the Vietnam War and had responsibility for operations on the Korean Peninsula until 1986 and the creation of 7th Air Force.

Fifth Air Force today focuses on building and strengthening the alliance with Japan through initiatives with the Air Self-Defense Force, according to the organization's website.

US among 'anchor' participants at Singapore Airshow

By JEREMY STILLWAGNER
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department continued its long-running string of appearances at the Singapore Airshow by sending four aircraft and the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific to participate in the event this week.

The four aircraft are the F-35A Lightning II, MQ-9 Reaper, KC-46 Pegasus and P-8A Poseidon. They are on static display this year and not scheduled for flights, according to a Pacific Air Forces news release Tuesday.

The U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific is scheduled to perform periodically throughout the air show, which began Tuesday and concludes Sunday.

The air show was accessible mainly to trade professionals throughout the week, with the public getting their chance to attend this weekend.

The event is also a trade show, with representatives from the world's biggest aerospace companies present, from Airbus to Boeing and Lockheed Martin, Saab and Gulfstream, according to the event organizer, Experia Events Pte Ltd.

Over 1,000 companies from

more than 50 nations are attending this year's show, according to the release.

The United States is one of 14 countries whose pavilions anchor the main floor at the Changi Exhibition Centre, the largest in the show's history, according to Experia Events.

Exhibitors use the popular event to showcase the latest advances in aerospace technology and equipment while also networking with potential clients.

The 2024 air show alone generated more than \$300 million, according to the company.

The first two days of this year's event featured a space summit for the first time to create dialogue between space agencies, policymakers and investors in the burgeoning industry.

The Pentagon uses the annual event to strengthen ties with Singapore, engage with other foreign partners, showcase equipment and expand their power projection capabilities, according to Pacific Air Forces.

The first Singapore Airshow was held in 2008, and the U.S. has been a regular participant ever since, becoming the first Feature Country in 2014.



Singapore Airshow

Military aircraft perform aerobatic displays in this undated photo from the 2026 Singapore Airshow at Changi Exhibition Centre.

MILITARY

Fort Sill garrison commander removed

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

The garrison commander of Fort Sill, in Oklahoma, was removed from his position last month with the Army providing an often-cited statement that officials lost “trust and confidence” in his ability to lead.

Col. Derek Baird took command of garrison operations at Fort Sill in June 2024 and was suspended in November while Installation

Management Command conducted an administrative investigation into allegations officials did not release to the public.

He was fired from the position Jan. 28 “due to a loss of trust and confidence in his ability to command.”

The Army frequently uses the phrase as a justification for relieving a commander following an administrative review.

Additional information is pro-

tected by the Privacy Act, according to the Army.

A garrison commander oversees the day-to-day operations of an Army base, including infrastructure, security and quality-of-life for residents — similar to the role of a city manager in civilian communities.

Management and leadership of Fort Sill will sit with the post’s deputy garrison commander Julia Sibilla, an Army civilian, accord-

ing to IMCOM.

Baird enlisted in the Army more than 28 years ago and then transitioned after four years from a research technician to a field artillery officer through Officer Candidate School, according to his official service

biography.

He has deployed twice to Iraq and once to Afghanistan.

Before becoming the garrison commander at Fort Sill, he served as the assistant field artillery commandant.

He also served as a battalion commander with the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas.

Army officials declined to provide any details on Baird’s next assignment.



Baird

Soldier convicted in soldier’s 2024 death

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

A jury at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., on Wednesday found a soldier guilty in the 2024 death of another soldier whose body was found in a dumpster on post.

Spc. Wooster Rancy, 22, was convicted of the murder of Sgt. Sarah Roque, 23, and of obstructing justice, according to the Army Office of Special Trial Counsel.

The court-martial began Jan. 27 at the Pulasiki County Courthouse in Waynesville, just outside of Fort Leonard Wood.

The trial now moves into the sentencing phase, which is expected to conclude before the end of the week, according to the special trial counsel.

Roque, a mine-detection dog



Rancy



Photo provided by Fort Leonard Wood

Army Sgt. Sarah Roque, 23, with her partner Zorro, a mine detection dog, was assigned to Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., since her enlistment in 2020. Roque was killed at the base on Oct. 20, 2024.

handler from Ligonier, Ind., was reported missing when she failed to show for morning formation on Oct. 21, 2024, and a search for her began within hours, according to the Army Criminal Investigation Division.

She was found dead later that day in a dumpster near a barracks

building.

Rancy, a combat engineer from North Miami, Fla., was arrested three days later and has been in pretrial confinement at the Midwest Joint Regional Confinement Facility at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., about 240 miles northwest of Fort Leonard Wood.

Navy reservist was flying unauthorized drone shot down over Naval Air Station

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

SEATTLE — A Navy reservist was at the controls of an unauthorized commercial drone downed Tuesday over Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, the Navy said.

“The drone operator was a reservist here on temporary duty,” said Michael Welding, the air station’s spokesman. “During a break, unbeknownst to his superiors, he deployed a personal drone in violation of base regulations. The drone was detected once airborne, and countermeasures were deployed to render the device inoperable.”

NAS Whidbey Island, about 60 miles north of Seattle, is the home of the Navy’s carrier-based EA-18G Growler electronic warfare squadrons.

Base security and explosive ordnance disposal personnel secured the drone and found that it did not carry any explosives or payload that constituted a physical threat to personnel.

No one was injured in the incident, Welding said.

Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents identified “the suspect” as a reservist at the base and detained him for questioning.

Following an interview, the re-

servist was released to his unit, Welding said.

The Navy did not identify the person responsible or indicate what, if any, action would be taken in response to the incident.

Welding confirmed that the base’s defensive systems disabled the drone, which he described as a four-propeller commercial “quadcopter.”

Because of operational security, Welding said the Navy would not release specific information about how the drone was brought down.

The Navy also declined to say if the quadcopter was equipped with a camera or other devices.

Former Fort Hood OB-GYN to represent self in lawsuit

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

A former Fort Hood doctor facing multiple legal battles over allegations he secretly video-recorded his patients filed 13 handwritten pages to a Bell County, Texas, court from jail asking that a civil lawsuit against him be dismissed because it is a federal matter.

More than 80 women filed the lawsuit against Maj. Blaine McGraw, 47, accusing him of using his phone to record exams without permission, performing invasive and unnecessary exams and inappropriately touching them. McGraw, an OB-GYN, is the only person named in the suit and is representing himself, according to court records.

Without ever expressing innocence or guilt regarding the allegations, McGraw asserted that the women should use the administrative claim system set up by the Federal Tort Claims Act for their grievances, not a civilian county court.

The federal tort law outlines procedures for presenting and resolving administrative monetary claims for personal injury, property damage or death arising from the alleged negligence of officers and employees of the federal government. It is a required first step toward a lawsuit.

“Plaintiffs allege wrongful acts occurred within the walls of a military treatment facility, on federal property, by an active-duty military physician, an employee of the federal government in the performance of his duties,” McGraw wrote.

He also wrote that the complaint against him alleges that the United States government was “complicit in the alleged wrongdoing” but has been excluded as a defendant.

Among other reasons to dismiss the case, McGraw wrote that he was never properly served notice of the legal action against him. He noted he cannot look for a lawyer while in jail.

Andrew Cobos, an attorney for

the 82 women in the lawsuit, said the filing is “nothing more than a desperate attempt to hide behind legal technicalities and avoid facing a jury of the very community he betrayed.”

“While he fights over which courtroom he sits in, we remain focused on the only thing that matters — holding him accountable for the irreparable harm he caused,” Cobos said in a statement. “We are confident in our position and will not allow procedural games to delay the justice these women have earned.”

The court docket does not list a hearing date for Judge Mike Russell to hear arguments.

McGraw filed the legal paperwork from Bell County Jail, where he has been detained for pretrial confinement by the Army since Dec. 2. He was charged Dec. 9 with 54 counts of indecent visual recording involving 44 women, according to the Army. All but one of those women were patients he provided medical care to this year at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center at Fort Hood. One woman was recorded at an off-post home.

McGraw was suspended from Fort Hood’s hospital Oct. 17 after a patient accused him of secretly recording her during an exam, according to base officials. Army Criminal Investigation Division arrived within hours to begin an investigation.

McGraw moved from Hawaii to Texas in August 2023. He served in Hawaii beginning in June 2019 as an intern and then resident. Before medical school, McGraw was a physician assistant at Fort Campbell, Ky.

His medical license was issued through the state of Hawaii but expired Jan. 31, according to online state records. The state medical board also listed one pending complaint against McGraw.



McGraw

MIDEAST



ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

Adm. Daryl Caudle, chief naval officer of the Navy, left, and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy John Perryman speak Wednesday during an all-hands call at U.S. Naval Support Activity Naples in Italy.

Outclassed: Admiral touts capabilities, partners

FROM PAGE 1

Ali Khamenei should be “very worried.” Trump has repeatedly warned Iran that the U.S. has an “armada” coming to the region.

A day earlier, U.S. Central Command confirmed that a Navy F-35 Lightning II fighter jet had shot down an Iranian drone as it “aggressively” approached the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in the Arabian Sea.

U.S. and Iranian officials are scheduled to begin negotiations Friday in Oman. The administration wants Tehran to stop its nuclear program altogether and get rid of its enriched uranium, among other demands.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon has beefed up naval forces in the Middle East, sending the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group with its three destroyers and Carrier Air Wing 9 into the region.

There are at least eight Navy destroyers in the area, including two more in the Persian Gulf, one in the Red Sea and two in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

All told, there are 40,000 U.S. service members throughout the Middle East stationed in Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan and other countries.

Caudle’s remarks Wednesday were in response to a sailor’s question about concerns that potential

hostilities with Iran could ignite a broader conflict in the Middle East, putting sailors and their families there at risk.

The safety and security of U.S. forces, military families and Defense Department civilians at U.S. Naval Support Activity Bahrain and other locations in the Middle East is of the utmost concern, Caudle said.

He pointed to Joint Force capabilities along with strong partnerships throughout the region that allow base access and overflight of other nations.

Force protection is a persistent conversation for Caudle and the region’s top commanders as they weigh concerns and options, he said.

For example, amid escalating tensions with Iran in June, the Pentagon approved voluntary departures for military families. Many chose to temporarily return to the U.S.

But restricting dependents from accompanying sailors assigned to Bahrain or other Navy bases is not a favored option, as it runs counter to the service’s efforts to support the well-being of sailors, he said.

“Families are essential to the effectiveness of a sailor’s life,” Caudle said. “I’m not a big fan of unaccompanied tours.”

Iran seizes 2 foreign oil tankers

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates—Iran seized two foreign oil tankers in the Persian Gulf on Thursday, state television reported, claiming the vessels had been smuggling fuel.

The report did not provide a nationality of the tankers or say what flag they were flying under.

Gen. Heidar Honarian Mojarad, a regional commander with the Revolutionary Guard’s navy, said

the tankers had been carrying about 6,300 barrels of fuel, including diesel, and were seized near Farsi island and transferred to Bushahr.

Fifteen crew members on board the two tankers are “in custody of judicial bodies,” he said, without providing their nationalities.

Iran occasionally seizes oil-carrying vessels over similar charges in the region.

CENTCOM launches new strikes on ISIS in Syria

By LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Central Command recently launched fresh strikes against Islamic State targets in Syria, continuing its retaliatory campaign after the December killings of two American soldiers and a civilian interpreter in an ambush.

Between Jan. 27 and Feb. 2, CENTCOM forces carried out five strikes against various targets, destroying an ISIS communications site, a critical logistics center and weapons facilities, according to a Wednesday statement from the command.

“Striking these targets demonstrates our continued focus and resolve for preventing an ISIS resurgence in Syria,” CENTCOM commander Adm. Brad Cooper said in the statement. “Operating in coordination with coalition and partner forces to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS makes America, the region and the world safer.”

The U.S. maintains about 1,000 troops in Syria, primarily as part of its anti-ISIS mission.

The deadly Dec. 13 attack in Palmyra on U.S. forces who were patrolling with their Syrian partners was carried out by a gunman



DONIEL KENNEDY/U.S. Army

Two AH-64 Apache helicopters fly through a landing zone during aviation operations in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility in November. An ISIS communication site, a critical logistics center and weapons facilities in Syria were destroyed in strikes between Jan. 27 and Feb. 2, CENTCOM said.

with links to ISIS, according to U.S. and Syrian officials.

The gunman was killed by partner forces, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said at the time.

Two members of the Iowa National Guard were killed in the attack along with an American interpreter. A number of members of the Syrian security forces were wounded.

President Donald Trump and

Hegseth vowed swift vengeance against ISIS. In the months since, CENTCOM’s Operation Hawkeye Strike has killed or captured more than 50 ISIS members, the command said in its Wednesday statement.

Among those targeted was Bilal Hasan al-Jasim, an ISIS leader directly connected to the ambush who was killed in a Jan. 16 strike, according to CENTCOM.

Iran, US set to hold nuclear talks

By JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates—Nuclear talks between Iran and the United States will take place Friday in Oman, the Iranian foreign minister said, as tensions between the countries remain high following Tehran’s bloody crackdown on nationwide protests last month.

The announcement Wednesday by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi came after hours of indications that the anticipated talks were faltering over changes in the format and content of the talks. President Donald Trump, meanwhile, sent a blunt warning to Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ahead of the talks.

“I would say he should be very worried,” Trump said of Khamenei in an interview with NBC News.

Turkey had been working behind the scenes to host talks in Istanbul with regional countries taking part and discussions focused on issues like Iran’s ballistic missile program and other concerns.

Early Wednesday, a regional official said Iran was seeking a “different” type of meeting focused exclusively on the issue of Iran’s nuclear program, with participation limited to Iran and the United States. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

A similar series of talks had been hosted last year by Oman, a sultanate on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula that long as served as an interlocutor between Iran and the West. Those talks ultimately broke down in June as Israel launched what became a 12-day war on Iran that included the U.S. bombing Iranian nuclear sites.



VAHID SALEMI/AP

Carrying pictures of the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, people attend a state-organized rally Wednesday in Tehran, Iran.

A White House official, who spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to discuss the talks publicly, confirmed the talks would happen in Oman. The official said several Arab and Muslim leaders urged the Trump administration on Wednesday not to walk away from talks even as Iranian officials pressed to narrow their scope.

The official added that the White House remains “very skeptical” that the talks will be successful but has agreed to go along with the change in plans out of respect for allies in the region.

Alan Eyre, a former U.S. diplomat once involved in past nuclear negotiations with Tehran, similarly offered a skeptical opinion of talks succeeding.

“Opting for indirect talks is the diplomatic equivalent of a surgeon taking a hit of ether and then putting on gloves before a difficult surgery,” Eyre wrote on X.

PACIFIC

Airman refuses to pay restitution

BY BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

NAHA, Okinawa — A U.S. airman convicted of kidnapping and sexually assaulting a 15-year-old girl on Okinawa is facing a civil trial after objecting to a court order requiring him to pay the victim about \$17,500.

Senior Airman Brennon Washington, formerly of Kadena Air Base, was ordered on Feb. 7, 2025, to compensate the girl by a three-judge panel led by Tetsuro Sato, according to court documents.

Washington's attorney, Junji Shimizu, filed a written objection five days later, triggering a civil trial that opened Wednesday at Naha District Court.

The airman was sentenced Dec. 13, 2024, to five years in prison with hard labor after the same three-judge panel found him guilty of kidnapping and sexually assaulting the girl on Dec. 24, 2023. Evidence at trial showed Washington picked her up at a Yomitan park and took her to his home.

The girl's attorney, Erika Ikemi, initially sought about \$21,000 in compensation, citing a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder after the assault, according to court records. She reiterated that request during Wednesday's proceedings.

Ikemi submitted a medical certificate on Sept. 26 stating the girl is receiving treatment for "de-

pression presenting as self-harm, insomnia and loss of appetite," the documents show.

In a Jan. 26 filing, Shimizu asked the court to dismiss the claim, arguing the girl consented to the encounter and that her testimony lacked credibility.

Under Japan's restitution order system, crime victims or their families may seek compensation from defendants in criminal cases that result in convictions. The sentencing court reviews the case record and determines an appropriate payment amount. If the defendant refuses to comply, the victim may pursue the matter through civil trial.

Japan's Supreme Court dismissed Washington's final appeal on Jan. 30. He filed the appeal on Sept. 10, the same day the Naha branch of the Fukuoka High Court upheld his conviction.

Washington's case, along with that of Marine Lance Cpl. Jamel Clayton — convicted in June of attempted sexual assault in a separate incident — sparked protests and renewed criticism from Okinawa officials over crimes committed by U.S. service members.

In response, U.S. Forces Japan imposed stricter liberty restrictions, including a ban on drinking at off-base establishments between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m.

Clayton has also appealed his conviction and appeared in court Tuesday for his first appellate hearing.

Taiwan leader: US ties are 'rock solid'

BY SIMINA MISTREANU
Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Taiwan's ties with the United States are "rock solid," the island's president said Thursday, hours after President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping spoke on the phone about topics that included the self-ruled island's future.

"The Taiwan-U.S. relationship is rock solid, and all cooperation projects will continue uninterrupted," Taiwan President Lai Ching-te told reporters during a visit to textile merchants in western Taiwan.

The comments came after Xi, in his first call with Trump since No-



Ching-te

vember, warned the U.S. president to be "prudent" about supplying arms to the self-ruled island, according to a readout provided by China.

Taiwan is a self-ruled democracy that China claims as its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary. Beijing prohibits all countries it has diplomatic relations with from having formal ties with Taipei.

Still, while the U.S. doesn't officially recognize Taiwan as a country, it is the island's strongest informal backer and arms supplier.

In December, the U.S. State Department announced its largest-ever arms sales package to Taiwan, valued at more than \$11.1 billion and including missiles, artillery systems and drones. The package is yet to be approved by Congress.



MALIA SPARKS/U.S. Marine Corps

Members of the 25th Infantry Division fire machine guns during a Balikatan live-fire drill in Aparri, Philippines, in May.

25th Infantry Division gears up for combat 'rehearsals' in Philippines

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Hawaii-based 25th Infantry Division heads to the Philippines next month for its part in U.S. Army Pacific's annual Operation Pathways training engagements with that nation's armed forces.

Just don't call them "exercises."

"I will emphasize: We won't call these exercises," Col. Aidan Shattock, the division's deputy commander for interoperability, said by phone Tuesday.

"The Philippines look at these activities as rehearsals," he said. "We are rehearsing how they will defend their homeland and their territories."

That distinction reflects the evolution of Operation Pathways, which started in 2014 as Pacific Pathways, and the changing security in Southeast Asia.

The initial Pathways rotated small Army units into the Indo-Pacific region for a few months at a time by moving through a series of established multinational exercises west of the International Date Line.

Its redesignation as Operation Pathways in 2023 marked the initiative's shift into an Army campaign.

"Now we're focused on ... rehearsing," Shattock said. "That creates the most amount of deterrence."

That deterrence is primarily directed toward China, which main-

tains expansive but disputed claims to most of the South China Sea, including islands and atolls claimed by the Philippines.

Over the past two years, Philippine crews have captured video of Chinese coast guard vessels harassing Philippine boats with water cannons and unsafe maneuvers.

Tension between Manila and Beijing over the South China Sea is an "existential issue for the Philippines," Adm. Ronnie Gil Gavan, commandant of the Philippine coast guard, told reporters in Honolulu in January.

Operation Pathways kicks off in March with Salaknib, which has in the past included live-fire drills, logistics operations and air-assault training.

Salaknib has primarily been an army-to-army engagement between the two nations, but it is apparently expanding this year.

Philippine media reported this fall that the Japan Self-Defense Force and the Australian army will join Salaknib for the first time.

Balikatan, the largest annual engagement between U.S. armed forces and the Philippine army, begins in April.

Key activities typically include live-fire maritime strikes, amphibious assaults, cyber defense, coastal defense and disaster relief operations.

Japan, Australia and New Zealand have regularly participated in Balikatan.

Canada, however, is expected to be the third largest participant in Balikatan after signing a status of visiting forces agreement last year with the Philippines, according to reports by Philippine media.

In May, U.S. Army Pacific's Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center will deploy to the Philippines for the third year.

It employs monitors, video and other digital information to provide real-time feedback on combat to 25th ID and Philippine soldiers on the ground.

"We will conduct that with our largest footprint to date," Shattock said.

In June, the 25th is scheduled for Operation Maneuver, a massive movement of joint troops and equipment by air, sea and land.

During a similar operation last year, 25th ID soldiers joined troops from the 5th and 7th Philippine infantry divisions for maneuvers on the northern portion of Luzon, the nation's largest and most populous island.

"We are now developing that path to include the 9th Infantry Division, which is south of Manila, so that we can build in more exposure to the Philippine army forces," Shattock said.

The 25th will also continue throughout spring and summer with its transformation of several brigades into lighter, more mobile units using drones, the HIMARS rocket system and the new infantry squad vehicles, Shattock said.

EUROPE

NATO to launch Arctic surveillance mission

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

NATO is poised to step up its military presence in the Arctic region with a new surveillance mission modeled along the lines of a similar effort in the Baltics, an alliance spokesman said this week.

“The activity will even further strengthen NATO’s posture in the Arctic and High North,” Col. Martin L. O’Donnell, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe spokesperson, said Thursday.

Planning for the effort, to be called Arctic Sentry, is already underway, said O’Donnell, who did not indicate when the operation might launch.

The initiative is the latest example of how NATO is stepping up efforts aimed at countering Russia in northern Europe and along the alliance’s eastern flank. One year ago, NATO began Baltic Sentry, which was prompted by a series of suspected undersea sabotage incidents that resulted in damage to energy pipelines and communication cables.

The effort has incorporated a wide range of naval surveillance

drones, warships, submarines and aircraft to identify and track ships.

Allied officials have said the mission has paid off over the past year with fewer instances of mischief-making in the Baltic Sea.

NATO’s plan to boost operations in the High North comes as the Arctic as a whole has become a major focal point for the alliance. President Donald Trump has argued that the alliance is vulnerable to Russian and Chinese influence in the region. Trump has cited such concerns as a justification for the United States to take control of Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark.

Trump’s push for control of the territory has rattled some members of the alliance. However, tensions appear to have eased in recent weeks following Trump’s visit last month to an economic forum in Davos, Switzerland. In Davos, Trump said he and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte had reached the “framework of a future deal” on Greenland. Details of the plan, however, have yet to emerge.



BRIAN BOLIN JR./U.S. Marine Corps

U.S. Marines and sailors prepare to launch an RQ-20 Puma unmanned aircraft system from a combat rubber reconnaissance craft during Operation Baltic Sentry in Southern Finland last year.

Revive: Officials met in UAE

FROM PAGE 1
have significantly increased troop presence along NATO’s eastern flank, citing the need to deter further aggression by Moscow.

The buildup has raised the risks of an unplanned incident that could trigger a wider confrontation.

In addition to his role as the leader of EUCOM, Grynkeiwich serves as NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe, a position that gives him authority to maintain military-to-military communication with Russia’s Gen. Valery Gerasimov, chief of the general staff.

EUCOM declined to comment Thursday in response to questions seeking further information.

Grynkeiwich was in the capital of the United Arab Emirates where talks between American, Russian and Ukrainian officials on ending the war in Ukraine entered a second day and as Moscow escalated its attacks on Ukraine’s power grid, The Associated Press reported.

The resumption of the military-to-military hotline marks an effort to lower the tensions that soared since the start of the war in Ukraine and avoid collisions between the Russian and U.S. militaries.

In one such incident in March 2023, the U.S. military said it ditched an Air Force MQ-9 Reaper drone in the Black Sea after a pair of Russian fighter jets dumped fuel on it and then one of

them struck its propeller while it was flying in international airspace.

Moscow has denied that its warplanes hit the drone, alleging that it crashed while making a sharp maneuver.

It said that its aircraft reacted to a violation of a no-flight zone Russia has established in the area near Crimea amid the fighting in Ukraine.

Moscow has repeatedly voiced concern about intelligence flights by the U.S. and other NATO aircraft over the Black Sea, and some Russian officials charged that the U.S. surveillance flights helped gather intelligence that allowed Ukraine to strike Russian targets.

NATO members have been increasingly worried about intrusions into allied airspace, some of them blamed on Russia.

Some European officials described the incidents as Moscow testing out NATO’s response to potential attacks.

In September, a swarm of Russian drones flew into Poland’s airspace, prompting NATO aircraft to scramble to intercept them and shoot down some of the devices.

It was the first direct encounter between NATO and Moscow since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Later that month, NATO jets escorted three Russian warplanes out of Estonia’s airspace.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Half-century of US-Russian arms control ends with pact expiration

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV
Associated Press

MOSCOW — With the U.S.-Russia nuclear pact expiring on Thursday, President Donald Trump is renewing calls for a new stronger pact instead of extending the current agreement known as the New START treaty.

“Rather than extend ‘NEW START’ (A badly negotiated deal by the United States that, aside from everything else, is being grossly violated), we should have our Nuclear Experts work on a new, improved, and modernized Treaty that can last long into the future,” Trump said in a social media posting Thursday.

The end of the treaty would effectively lift the last remaining caps on the two largest atomic arsenals for the first time in more than a half-century.

Trump has previously indicated he would like to keep limits on nuclear weapons but wants to involve China in a potential new treaty.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin said Thursday it regretted the expiration of the last remaining nuclear arms pact between Russia and the United States.

Arms control experts say the termination of the New START Treaty could set the stage for an unconstrained nuclear arms race.

Russian President Vladimir Putin last year declared his readi-



AP

A rocket launch as part of a ground-based intercontinental ballistic missile test at the Plesetsk facility in northwestern Russia on Dec. 9, 2020.

ness to stick to the treaty’s limits for another year if Washington followed suit, but Trump has been noncommittal about extending it. Beijing has rebuffed Trump’s indication that he wants China to be a part of a new pact.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Wednesday that Trump has made clear “in order to have true arms control in the 21st century, it’s impossible to do something that doesn’t include China because of their vast and rapidly growing stockpile.”

Putin discussed the pact’s expiration with Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Wednesday, noting the U.S. failure to respond to his proposal to extend its limits and saying that Russia “will act in a balanced and responsible manner

based on thorough analysis of the security situation,” Kremlin adviser Yuri Ushakov said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow views the treaty’s expiration Thursday “negatively” and regrets it. He said Russia will maintain its “responsible, thorough approach to stability when it comes to nuclear weapons,” adding that “of course, it will be guided primarily by its national interests.”

Peskov emphasized that “if we receive constructive responses, we will certainly conduct a dialogue.”

With the end of the treaty, Moscow “remains ready to take decisive military-technical measures to counter potential additional threats to the national security,” the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

New START, signed in 2010 by then-President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, restricted each side to no more than 1,550 nuclear warheads on no more than 700 missiles and bombers — deployed and ready for use.

It was originally supposed to expire in 2021 but was extended for five more years.

The pact envisioned sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance, although they stopped in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and never resumed.

MILITARY

Dems want DOD to explain why funds classified

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Democrats on the Senate Budget Committee are asking the Department of Defense to explain why it fully classified a \$90 billion spending plan recently sent to Congress, deviating from standard practice.

Sen. Jeff Merkley, of Oregon, the top Democrat on the panel, said the decision undermined congressional oversight and was part of a pattern of transparency issues with the Pentagon, which adopted new restrictions last year on communication with lawmakers.

“Even at the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, defense appropriation spend plans were not fully classified,” Merkley and nine other senators wrote in a letter sent Tuesday to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. “It strains credulity that all the items in the \$90 billion classified spend plan are sensitive enough to warrant complete classification.”

The Department of Defense declined to comment on the letter Wednesday.

The House and Senate Armed Services Committees provided guidance for how the money

should be spent, and Sen. Roger Wicker, of Mississippi, the Republican chairman of the Senate panel, continually pressed Pentagon nominees to commit to adhering to congressional intent.

The Pentagon has not explained why the plan was classified, according to senators, even though items such as barracks improvements and benefit increases for personnel are not sensitive. Typically, only intelligence or specific sensitive programs required classified spending plans.

The \$90 billion spending plan is part of \$150 billion allocated for

defense in a sweeping Republican spending bill passed last year. Congress has yet to receive a spending plan for the remaining \$60 billion, according to Merkley.

Merkley said there are now fears the funds are being used for unintended purposes, including paying troop salaries during a lengthy government shutdown last year and providing a \$1,776 bonus to service members in December.

“Such uses appear contrary to congressional intent, which envisioned reconciliation funding as a tool for specific programmatic

needs rather than a slush fund for the President’s ad hoc priorities,” the letter states. “This underscores the risk that, absent robust transparency, reconciliation funds may be diverted to unintended purposes.”

Senators are seeking a reply from Hegseth by Feb. 20 and are urging the Pentagon to provide appropriately marked spending plans “without delay.”

“Congress cannot forfeit its constitutional role in overseeing the defense budget,” they wrote. “Transparency is not optional; it is the foundation of accountability.”

Man charged in shooting of two Guard members in DC pleads not guilty

By JESSICA SCHLADEBECK
New York Daily News

The gunman accused of shooting two National Guard members in Washington, D.C., killing one and seriously wounding the other, has pleaded not guilty to the nine charges against him — including first-degree murder.

Rahmanullah Lakanwal, 29, who was also shot before he was taken into custody, made his brief court appearance Wednesday in a wheelchair and an orange jumpsuit, CNN reported. In addition to the murder charge, Lakanwal is also facing counts of transportation of a firearm and ammunition in interstate commerce with the intent to commit a felony, three counts of assault with intent to kill while armed, and four counts of possession of a firearm during a crime of violence or dangerous offense.

The Department of Justice had said it will be seeking the death penalty in the case.

On Nov. 26, Lakanwal allegedly used a powerful Smith & Wes-

son .357 Magnum to open fire on law enforcement near the Farragut West Metrorail stop, just blocks away from the White House.

Both 24-year-old Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe and Army Spc. Sarah Beckstrom, 20, were shot. They had been deployed to the area as part of the Trump administration’s efforts to crack down on what it has called rampant crime in major cities across the U.S.

The gunman was eventually wounded by another member of the National Guard and arrested.

A day after the shooting, on Thanksgiving, President Donald Trump announced Beckstrom had died, remembering her as a “highly respected, young, magnificent person” and “outstanding in every way.” Both Beckstrom and Wolfe each suffered a gunshot to the back of the head, according to a federal criminal complaint, cited by NBC News.

Wolfe, meanwhile, continues to recover. He was transferred



DANA VERKOUTEREN/AP

This courtroom sketch depicts Rahmanullah Lakanwal, 29, seated left, with defense attorney Michelle Peterson, seated foreground, before U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta, on Wednesday, at Federal Court in Washington, as Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Tortorice speaks at the podium.

to an inpatient rehabilitation facility in December.

Authorities have said that Lakanwal entered the U.S. in September 2021 through the Biden administration’s Operation Allies Welcome initiative, a program that helped resettle Afghan allies

who worked with the U.S. during the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Lakanwal worked with the CIA by way of the “Zero Units,” a group of Afghan commandos tasked with missions planned by the agency.

Most recently, he’d been living

in Bellingham, Wash., with his wife and five kids. He applied for asylum during the Biden administration, but it was granted last year while Trump was in office.

His next court appearance is slated for May.

Navy’s next carrier, John F. Kennedy, returns from first sea trials

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

The John F. Kennedy returned to its Virginia shipyard on Wednesday, completing a weeklong sea trial as it moves toward a scheduled delivery to the Navy early next year.

The John F. Kennedy is the second of 10 planned nuclear-powered Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carriers to be built by Newport News Shipbuilding, a division of Huntington Ingalls Industries. The Navy’s most recent procurement cost estimate is \$13.196 billion.

The carrier, designated CVN-79, is scheduled to be delivered and of-



Huntington Ingalls Industries

The USS John F. Kennedy completed its first week of sea trials on Wednesday, as it moves toward a scheduled delivery to the Navy early next year.

officially commissioned into the Navy in March 2027.

“Our nation is depending on us to

deliver these critical assets that will protect freedom around the world, and we’re proud to see CVN-79 take another step toward joining the fleet,” said Derek Murphy, vice president of new construction aircraft carrier programs.

The carrier left Newport News on Jan. 30 for “testing important ship systems and components at sea,” the shipbuilder said.

Newport News Shipbuilding said technological advancements on the carrier design would increase operational efficiency and reduce manning requirements; the ship would need about 900 fewer sailors than the Nimitz-class, ac-

cording to Navy estimates. The Gerald R. Ford class also features an upgraded pair of nuclear reactors, increasing its electrical power-generation capacity.

The Ford-class carriers use an electromagnetic system on their aircraft elevators and aircraft launching systems. Adjustments to the new system have been one factor in what the Congressional Research Service says is a two-year delay in the delivery of the John F. Kennedy. Other delays were due to certification of the arresting gear.

President Donald Trump has signed an executive order telling the Navy to use traditional steam-powered catapults to launch air-

craft from future carriers. However, no aircraft carrier is scheduled to be built and delivered until after Trump leaves office in January 2029.

The Navy has started a \$145 million electrical systems overhaul at Naval Base Kitsap, Wash., where the Navy has said the John F. Kennedy will eventually be homeported. Similar upgrades will be required at bases where future Gerald R. Ford-class carriers are homeported.

The Nimitz and Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carriers are the largest warships in the world, with a displacement of about 100,000 tons, according to the Navy.

NATION



JENNY KANE/AP

Law enforcement officers look out from a United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in October in Portland, Ore.

Judge limits ICE agents in Ore. on making warrantless arrests

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — U.S. immigration agents in Oregon must stop arresting people without warrants unless there’s a likelihood of escape, a federal judge ruled Wednesday.

U.S. District Judge Mustafa Kasubhai issued a preliminary injunction in a proposed class-action lawsuit targeting the Department of Homeland Security’s practice of arresting immigrants they happen to come across while conducting ramped-up enforcement operations — which critics have described as “arrest first, justify later.”

The department, which is named as a defendant in the suit, did not immediately comment in response to a request from The Associated Press.

Similar actions, including immigration agents entering private property without a warrant issued by a court, have drawn concern from civil rights groups across the country amid President Donald

Trump’s mass deportation efforts.

Courts in Colorado and Washington, D.C., have issued rulings like Kasubhai’s, and the government has appealed them.

In a memo last week, Todd Lyons, the acting head of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, emphasized that agents should not make an arrest without an administrative arrest warrant issued by a supervisor unless they develop probable cause to believe that the person is in the U.S. illegally and likely to escape from the scene before a warrant can be obtained.

But the judge heard evidence that agents in Oregon have arrested people in immigration sweeps without such warrants or determining escape was likely.

The daylong hearing included testimony from one plaintiff, Victor Cruz Gamez, a 56-year-old grandfather who has been in the U.S. since 1999. He told the court he was arrested and held in an immigration detention facility for

three weeks even though he has a valid work permit and a pending visa application.

Cruz Gamez testified that he was driving home from work in October when he was pulled over by immigration agents. Despite showing his driver’s license and work permit, he was detained and taken to the ICE building in Portland before being sent to an immigration detention center in Tacoma, Wash. After three weeks there, he was set to be deported until a lawyer secured his release, he said.

He teared up as he recounted how the arrest impacted his family, especially his wife. Once he was home they did not open the door for three weeks out of fear and one of his grandchildren did not want to go to school, he said through a Spanish interpreter.

Afterward a lawyer for the federal government told Cruz Gamez he was sorry about what he went through and the effect it had on them.

Slotkin refuses interview with DOJ about video

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic Sen. Elissa Slotkin of Michigan is refusing to voluntarily comply with a Justice Department investigation into a video she organized urging U.S. military members to resist “illegal orders” — escalating a dispute that President Donald Trump has publicly pushed.

In letters first obtained by The Associated Press, Slotkin’s lawyer informed U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeanine Pirro that the senator would not agree to a voluntary interview about the video. Slotkin’s legal team also requested that Pirro preserve all documents related to the matter for “anticipated litigation.”

Slotkin’s lawyer separately wrote to Attorney General Pam Bondi, declining to sit for an FBI interview about the video and urging her to immediately terminate any inquiry.

The refusal marks a potential turning point in the standoff, shifting the burden onto the Justice Department to decide whether it will escalate an investigation into sitting members of Congress or retreat from an inquiry now being openly challenged.

“I did this to go on offense,” Slotkin said in an interview Wednesday. “And to put them in a position where they’re tap dancing. To put them in a position where they have to own their choices of using a U.S. attorney’s office to come after a senator.”

Last November, Slotkin joined five other Democratic lawmakers — all of whom previously served in the military or at intelligence agencies — in posting a 90-second

video urging U.S. service members to follow established military protocols and reject orders they believe to be unlawful.

The lawmakers said Trump’s Republican administration was “pitting our uniformed military and intelligence community professionals against American citizens” and called on troops to “stand up for our laws.”

The video sparked a firestorm in Republican circles and soon drew the attention of Trump, who accused the lawmakers of sedition and said their actions were “punishable by death.”

The Pentagon later announced it had opened an investigation into Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly, a former Navy pilot who appeared in the video. The FBI then contacted the lawmakers seeking interviews, signaling a broader Justice Department inquiry.

Slotkin said multiple legal advisers initially urged caution.

“Maybe if you keep quiet, this will all go away over Christmas,” Slotkin said she was told.

But in January, the matter flared again, with the lawmakers saying they were contacted by the U.S. attorney’s office for the District of Columbia.

Meanwhile, security threats mounted.

Slotkin said her farm in Michigan received a bomb threat, her brother was assigned a police detail due to threats and her parents were swatted in the middle of the night.



Slotkin

Helicopter crash kills pilot and trooper during active shooter response in Arizona

Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. — An Arizona Department of Public Safety helicopter crashed in an accident that killed the pilot and a trooper on board, after they responded to a gunbattle between police and a suspect who fired on officers from multiple rooftops over almost two hours, authorities said Thursday.

The confrontation began when officers responded to a domestic violence call around 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Flagstaff Police Chief Sean Connolly said.

A man armed with a semiautomatic long rifle opened fire on the officers and victim and an almost two-hour shootout ensued, with the unidentified suspect “hopping from roof to roof” in the neighborhood while shooting at officers, Connolly said.

The man was detained at 10:20 p.m., around the time the helicopter accident occurred, Connolly said. He did not provide information on how the helicopter crashed but said it had been providing officers on the ground with an aerial

view of what was happening.

The suspect was being treated at Flagstaff Medical Center, officials said. No one else was injured.

Amanda Brewer of Flagstaff said she and her husband heard close to 100 gunshots fired in their neighborhood beginning at around 8:40 p.m. and continuing after the helicopter arrived at about 10 p.m.

Then she could no longer hear the helicopter, there was a “giant boom”, and their house shook. “It was so powerful and so loud,” she said.



ABC15 Arizona/AP

Emergency services work at a scene of police helicopter crash in Flagstaff, Ariz., on Wednesday.

NATION

Epstein files rife with nudes, victims' names

By Philip Marcelo
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Nude photos. The names and faces of sexual abuse victims. Bank account and Social Security numbers in full view.

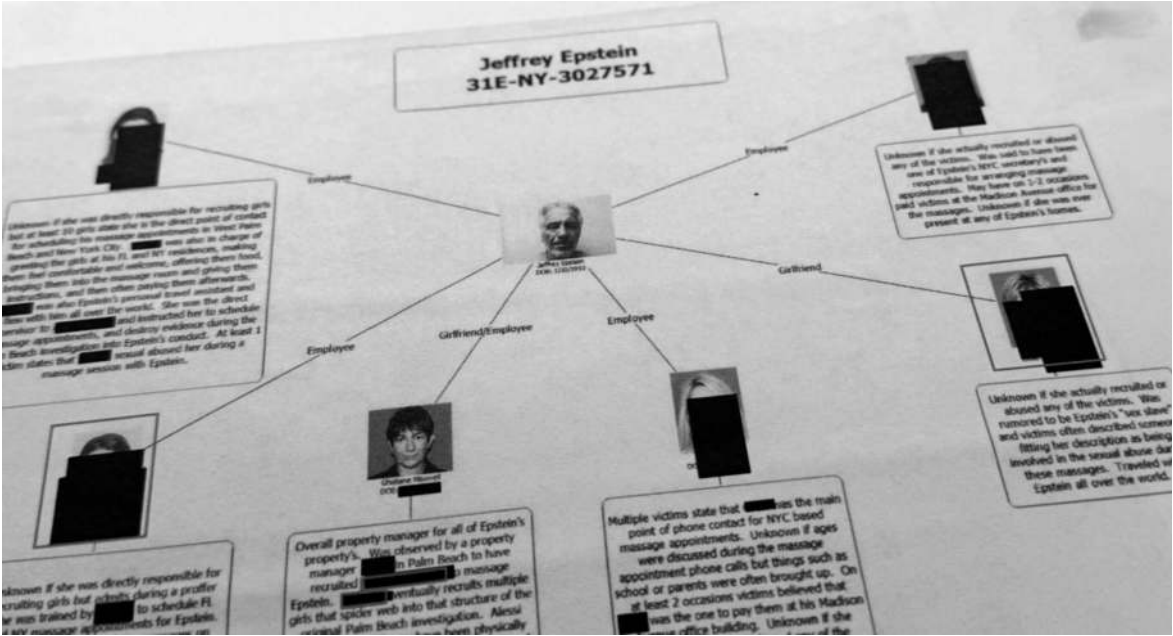
All of these things appeared in the mountain of documents released Friday by the U.S. Justice Department as part of its effort to comply with a law requiring it to open its investigative files on Jeffrey Epstein.

That law was intended to preserve important privacy protections for Epstein's victims. Their names were supposed to have been blacked out in documents. Their faces and bodies were supposed to be obscured in photos.

Mistakes, though, have been rampant. A review by The Associated Press and other news organizations has found countless examples of sloppy, inconsistent or non-existent redactions that have revealed sensitive private information.

A photo of one girl who was underage when she was hired to give sexualized massages to Epstein in Florida appeared in a chart of his alleged victims. Police reports with the names of several of his victims, including some who have never stepped forward to identify themselves publicly, were released with no redactions at all.

Despite the Justice Department's efforts to fix the oversights, a selfie taken by a nude female in a



A document that was included in the U.S. Department of Justice release of the Jeffrey Epstein files, photographed Monday, shows a diagram prepared by the FBI attempting to chart the network of Epstein's victims and the timeline of their alleged abuse.

bathroom and another by a topless female remained on the site, their ages unknown but their faces in full view, as of Wednesday evening.

Some accusers and their lawyers called this week for the Justice Department to take down the site and appoint an independent monitor to prevent further errors.

A judge scheduled a hearing for Wednesday in New York on the matter, then canceled it after one of the lawyers for victims cited progress in resolving the issues.

But that lawyer, Brittany Henderson, said they were still weighing “all potential avenues of recourse” to address the “permanent and irreparable” harm caused to some women.

“The failure here is not merely technical,” she said in a statement Wednesday. “It is a failure to safeguard human beings who were promised protection by our government. Until every document is properly redacted, that failure is ongoing.”

Annie Farmer, who said she

was 16 when she was sexually assaulted by Epstein and his confidant, Ghislaine Maxwell, said that while her name has previously been public, other details she’d rather be kept private, including her date of birth and phone number, were wrongly revealed in the documents.

“At this point, I’m feeling really most of all angry about the way that this unfolded,” she told NBC News. “The fact that it’s been done in such a beyond careless way, where people have been endan-

gered because of it, is really horrifying.”

The Justice Department has blamed technical or human errors on the problems and said it has taken down many of the problematic materials and is working to republish properly redacted versions.

The task of reviewing and blacking out millions of pages of records took place in a compressed time frame. President Donald Trump signed the law requiring the disclosure of the documents on Nov. 19. That law gave the Justice Department just 30 days to release the files. It missed that deadline, in part because it said it needed more time to comply with privacy protections.

Hundreds of lawyers were pulled from their regular duties, including overseeing criminal cases, to try and complete the document review — to the point where at least one judge in New York complained that it was holding up other matters.

The database, which is posted on the Justice Department website, represents the largest release of files to date in the yearslong investigations into Epstein, who killed himself in a New York jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial on federal sex trafficking charges.

Associated Press reporters analyzing the documents have so far found multiple examples of names and other personal information of potential victims revealed.

Judge skeptical of Trump’s latest bid to nix hush money conviction

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A federal judge appeared poised to again reject President Donald Trump’s bid to erase his hush money conviction, slamming his lawyers Wednesday for legal maneuvers he said amounted to taking “two bites at the apple.”

Directed by an appeals court to take a fresh look at the matter, Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein was at turns inquisitive and incredulous during nearly three hours of arguments as Trump seeks to move his case from the state court where it was tried to federal court, where he can ask to have it thrown out on presidential immunity grounds.

Hellerstein sparred with Trump lawyer Jeffrey Wall throughout the proceeding in Manhattan federal court and suggested the whole exercise was moot because the president’s legal team had waited too long after the historic May 2024 verdict to seek federal court relief. He said he would rule at a later date.

The judge acknowledged that

the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling about a month after the verdict that presidents and former presidents cannot be prosecuted for official acts had raised novel legal questions that had not previously been considered in the courts.

But, he said, the high court’s decision made clear that a president is not above the law.

The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in November ordered Hellerstein to reconsider his earlier decision that kept the New York case in state court. A three-judge panel found that the judge, in his September 2025 ruling, had failed to consider “important issues relevant” to Trump’s request to move the case.

Trump, a Republican, did not attend Wednesday’s arguments.

Afterward, Hellerstein thanked Wall and Steven Wu, a lawyer from the Manhattan district attorney’s office for “very provocative arguments.” The district attorney’s office prosecuted the case and wants it to stay in state court.

Trump was convicted in May

2024 of 34 felony counts of falsifying business records to conceal a hush money payment to adult film actor Stormy Daniels, whose allegations of an affair with Trump threatened to upend his 2016 presidential campaign. He was sentenced to an unconditional discharge, leaving his conviction intact but sparing any punishment.

Trump denies Daniels’ claim and said he did nothing wrong. He has asked a state appellate court to overturn the conviction.

The three judges said Hellerstein should closely review evidence Trump claims relate to official acts.

If Hellerstein finds the prosecution relied on evidence of official acts, the judges said, he should weigh whether Trump can argue those actions were taken as part of his White House duties, whether Trump “diligently sought” to have the case moved to federal court and whether the case can even be moved to federal court now that Trump has been convicted and sentenced in state court.

Unemployment benefit applications jumped last week by most in 2 months

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits jumped last week but remains in the same historically low range of the past few years.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending Jan. 31 rose by 22,000 to 231,000 from the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That’s significantly more than the 211,000 new applications that analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet had forecast.

Applications for unemployment benefits are seen as representative of U.S. layoffs and are close to a real-time indicator of the health of the job market.

A number of high-profile companies have announced job cuts in the past year, including UPS, Amazon and Dow just last week.

On Wednesday, the Washington Post laid off one-third of its staff, eliminating its sports section, sev-

eral foreign bureaus and its books coverage in a widespread purge at the storied newspaper owned by billionaire Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. The Post did not disclose how many people it has on staff, making it impossible to estimate how many people were laid off.

Mounting layoff announcements in the past year, combined with the government’s own sluggish labor market reports, have left Americans increasingly pessimistic about the economy.

Last month, the government reported that hiring remained subdued in December, capping a year of weak employment gains that have frustrated job seekers even though layoffs and unemployment remained historically low.

Employers added just 50,000 jobs last month, nearly unchanged from a downwardly revised figure of 56,000 in November, according to the Labor Department. The unemployment rate slipped to 4.4%, its first decline since June.

NATION

Investigators say Guthrie’s mom ‘still out there’

Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. — Investigators believe the missing mother of “Today” show host Savannah Guthrie is “still out there,” but they have not identified any suspects, a sheriff in Arizona said Thursday.

Pima County Sheriff Chris Nanos also said DNA tests showed blood found on Nancy Guthrie’s porch came back a match to her.

“Right now, we believe Nancy is still out there. We want her home,” Nanos said at a news conference five days after she was reported missing.

There was no public sign early Thursday of a response to NBC “Today” show host Savannah Guthrie’s message to her 84-year-

old mother’s kidnapper.

Guthrie said her family is ready to talk but wants proof that Nancy Guthrie, who authorities believe was taken from her home in Arizona against her will, is still alive. Guthrie said in a heart-wrenching video posted on social media Wednesday that her family has heard media reports about a ransom letter.

“We are ready to talk. However, we live in a world where voices and images are easily manipulated,” Savannah Guthrie said while reading from a prepared statement. “We need to know without a doubt that she is alive and that you have her. We want to hear from you and we are ready to listen.

Please reach out to us.”

Nancy Guthrie was last seen Saturday night when she was dropped off at her Tucson home by family after having dinner with them, the sheriff’s department said. She was reported missing about 14 hours later on Sunday after she didn’t show up at a church.

Guthrie has limited mobility, and officials don’t believe she left on her own. A sheriff’s dispatcher

said during the search Sunday that Guthrie has high blood pressure, a pacemaker and heart issues, according to audio from broadcastify.com.

The neighborhood’s desert terrain can make looking for people difficult, said Jim Mason, longtime commander of a search-and-rescue team in Maricopa County that isn’t involved in the search. He said it can be hard to see into

areas dense with mesquite trees, cholla cactus and desert brush.

“Some of it is so thick you can’t drive through it,” Mason said.

At least three media organizations have reported receiving purported ransom notes that they handed over to investigators. The sheriff’s department has said it was taking the notes and other tips seriously but declined to comment further.



JERRY JACKSON, THE BATIMORE SUN/TNS

Harry Dunn was a Capitol Police officer during the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. Now he is running for Maryland’s 5th Congressional District seat.

Former Capitol officer running for Md. seat

BY MARY ELLEN MCINTIRE
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Former Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn on Wednesday launched a second bid for Congress, announcing he would run to succeed retiring former House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer in Maryland.

Dunn, who garnered national attention for speaking out about his experience defending the Capitol during the Jan. 6, 2021, attack, placed second in a crowded Democratic primary for a different Maryland seat in 2024.

“Lawlessness isn’t always a mob. Now it comes with the title, a budget, a badge, a weapon, and lies from behind the podium,” Dunn said in a launch video. He compared the aggressive tactics of federal immigration and Border Patrol agents who have come under fire in Minneapolis in recent weeks to the actions of those who attacked the Capitol in 2021.

“So tell Donald Trump I’m coming back to the Capitol, this time with a vote, with oversight author-

ity, with subpoena power, with the full constitutional authority granted to a member of the United States Congress,” he added.

Nearly a dozen Democrats have already entered the race for the deep-blue 5th District, which stretches from the Washington suburbs into Southern Maryland. And more candidates could join the race ahead of the Feb. 24 filing deadline. Hoyer, who is retiring after more than 40 years in the House, last month endorsed Delegate Adrian Bofo, his former campaign manager.

Dunn has proved to be a strong fundraiser. In 2024, he outraised the rest of the 22-person field for the nearby 3rd District in the Baltimore suburbs, bringing in \$4.6 million. He later turned that campaign account into a political action committee, Dunn’s Democracy Defenders.

Still, Dunn lost the primary to state Sen. Sarah Elfreth, who took 36% of the vote to his 25% and went on to easily win the general election.

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WORLD

Nigeria: Battalion to be deployed to site attacked by militants

Associated Press
LAGOS, Nigeria — The Nigerian government has announced a new military operation to tackle Islamic militants following the killing of more than 160 people in western Kwara state, many of them reportedly for resisting extremist ideology.
Local officials said 162 people were killed during the Tuesday attack in the villages of Woro and Nuku, one of the deadliest

attacks in the country outside of the known conflict hot spots. The gunmen razed homes and looted shops in what Amnesty International's Nigeria office called "a stunning security failure."
No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack in the Muslim-majority villages. Locals and officials have pointed to various Islamic militant groups, including Nigeria's homegrown

Boko Haram or the Islamic State-linked Lakurawa.
The statement from the Nigerian presidency noted the attackers killed the villagers for rejecting "their obnoxious attempt at indoctrination, choosing instead to practice Islam that is neither extreme nor violent."
Kwara State Gov. AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq said the attack was likely carried out in response to recent counterterro-

rism operations in the region. Some similar operations have been possible due to intelligence provided by local communities.
The killings also could serve to intimidate other locals and make them more likely to comply with militants' demands.

President Bola Tinubu's office said in a statement late Wednesday that a Nigerian army battalion will be deployed to Kwara's Kaiama local government, the area where the attack happened. Kaiama has had a limited security presence until now.

Storm Leonardo slams Spain, Portugal

Associated Press
MADRID — A man died from rising floodwaters in Portugal, while a girl remained missing after she was swept away by a swollen river in Spain as Storm Leonardo brought more heavy rain and winds Thursday to the Iberian Peninsula.
In Spain's southern Andalusia region, close to 4,000 people evacuated their homes due to the ongoing storm, and dozens of roads remained closed due to flooding and landslides.
Spain's weather agency lifted the highest alert level in southern Spain, but added that another storm system was expected over the weekend. Leonardo is the latest in a series of storms that have pummelled Spain and Portugal in recent weeks.
On Wednesday night, a man died in southern Portugal after his car was engulfed by floodwaters, local media said.
The southern Portuguese city of Alcacér do Sal, about about 56 miles from Lisbon, was battling



JOAQUIN CORCHERO/AP
Flooding is seen in the town of Grazalema on Thursday during heavy rains that hit southern Andalusia.

rising waters from the river Sado, with downtown areas flooded and water levels measuring roughly 7 feet high in some places.
Heavy rains were expected to lash several regions in Portugal in the coming days. A previous storm in late January left a trail of de-

struction in the country and killed several people, according to Portuguese authorities.
In southern Spain's Malaga province, authorities were still searching for a girl who fell into the Turvilla River on Wednesday while trying to save her dog.

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HEALTH & FITNESS

What TV shows get wrong about doing CPR

Bystanders shouldn't look to their favorite drama for advice on how to save a life

BY MARK JOHNSON
The Washington Post

You've seen what a cardiac arrest looks like on television — the patient limp and pale, the alert lifesaver pounding their chest, shouting, "Stay with me! Stay with me!"

Although the depictions of bystanders administering CPR make for riveting television, they often fail to provide an accurate example of what to do when someone's life is on the line, according to a recent paper in the journal "Circulation: Population Health and Outcomes."

The paper examined 169 episodes from U.S. television shows, including "Homeland," "Yellowstone" and "NCIS: Hawaii," focusing on incidents that occurred outside of a hospital and involved nonmedical bystanders trying to save someone.

Researchers found that fewer than 30% of the episodes showing these scenarios depicted the correct steps for hands-only CPR chest compressions, but not breathing into the patient's mouth. The hands-only method was endorsed by the American Heart Association in 2008 as simpler and faster than traditional CPR.

Almost half of the episodes examined — 48% — illustrated practices now considered outdated, including mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and checking the patient for a pulse. The AHA changed its recommendations because laypeople often struggle to find a pulse under pressure, and in the first few minutes of a cardiac arrest, the patient has enough oxygen — the priority is pumping the blood.

"So, one thing we saw a lot was compressions that are not deep enough on TV," said Ore Fawole, an author of the paper and a research coordinator for a lab at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Public Health. "We really want to push back against this fear that people have, and it's a reasonable fear, but unless you're an Olympic bodybuilder, there's probably no way for you to do CPR too hard."

There is a risk that chest compressions can result in broken ribs, a concern for actors on a television show, but not for someone who has stopped breathing from a cardiac arrest.

"One of the things we talk about in our training is that doctors can fix broken ribs," said Beth Hoffman, one of the paper's authors and a professor of behavioral and community health sciences at Pittsburgh's School of Public Health. "They can fix other things that might happen in the course of doing CPR, but they can't fix a dead brain."

The study has appeared at a time when Hollywood seems to be aiming for greater accuracy in its depictions of medicine.

"Most of the medical shows we work with have at least one M.D. on their writing staff, and sometimes two or three," said Kate Folb, who directs the Hollywood, Health and Society program at the University of Southern California, Annenberg's Norman Lear Center.

The program, now in its 25th year,



HBO Max

While researchers who worked on a recent paper in the journal "Circulation: Population Health and Outcomes" found that most TV shows fail to provide an accurate example of how nonmedical bystanders should properly administer CPR, a number of doctors and EMTs have singled out the HBO Max series "The Pitt," starring Noah Wyle (above center), for its medical realism.

works with the entertainment industry to develop accurate storylines involving health and medicine.

"We know from our research and our work with shows that audiences do learn, and learn from what they see on TV," Folb said.

Surprisingly, viewers sometimes get the right message even from a sloppy portrayal on TV.

In January 2019, a 21-year-old Tucson man who worked at a tire and auto care center found a woman slumped over her steering wheel. He remembered CPR being performed on an episode of "The Office."

Hoffman said the chest compressions shown on "The Office" were given too high on the body, almost at the level of the neck. But the man in Tucson remembered how the character on TV had sung the Bee Gees song "Stayin' Alive" to time the compressions correctly; following that example, he saved the woman's life.

In 2023, a 12-year-old Florida boy saved the life of his behavioral therapist after the man lost consciousness in a swimming pool and became unresponsive. The boy had watched CPR performed on an episode of "Stranger Things."

The boy saved the man's life. Still, the depiction on "Stranger Things" wasn't perfect, according to Mikhail Varshavski, a 36-year-old family medicine doctor who works at Atlantic Health Systems Overlook Medical Center in Summit, N.J. He is better known to his 30 million followers on social media as Doctor Mike.

The character on "Stranger Things" used a precordial thump technique (a hard blow to the chest with a clenched fist), which sometimes succeeds in jolting the heart from a life-threatening rhythm

back into a regular rhythm. But the thump, while dramatic, is not routinely recommended, Varshavski said. In his popular YouTube videos, the doctor often replays clips of TV medical scenarios, "where the consistent theme is me yelling at the actors telling them that they need to do chest compressions."

Kevin M. Hazzard, author of the 2016 book "A Thousand Naked Strangers," a memoir of his nine years working as a paramedic in Atlanta, said: "I've pulled up on a number of scenes in which people are doing CPR, and I can just tell from across the street as I'm getting out of the ambulance that it's not going right."

Often the problem is the rhythm and posture.

"If you've ever seen an oil derrick, that's the move," Hazzard said. "The ideal movement is your arms are straight, elbows straight, and the flexion comes from your lower back going up and down."

Hazzard said most people don't realize until they perform CPR that it is exhausting work. He and other emergency medical technicians said that although patients on television typically revive after a couple of minutes of receiving CPR, in real life the process often requires performing chest compressions for 15 minutes or more. Even then, the chest compressions fail more often than one would assume from TV depictions. When emergency medical services workers administer CPR, only about 9.1% of patients survive to the point of being discharged by the hospital, according to the AHA.

While doctors and EMS are generally critical of the way television shows portray CPR, a number did single out the HBO Max series "The Pitt" for its realism.

The journal study found that on-screen,

nearly half of those receiving CPR are between the ages of 21 and 40. That, too, is unrealistic. In real life, the average age of a person receiving CPR is 62.

Also, about 80% of the TV episodes the researchers studied showed CPR performed in public; in fact, about 80% of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests take place at home.

Other mistakes?

On television, a person flatlines, and the medic goes rushing off for the defibrillator. The nonmedical among us tend to think the process is like jump-starting a car. It's not.

"It's like rebooting the heart. But if there's no electrical activity in the heart, then rebooting is going to be like turning on and off a computer that's not plugged in," explained Daniel Sundahl, who worked for 20 years as an advanced care paramedic in a community west of Edmonton, Alberta.

In real life, medical experts also say, the person performing CPR seldom gets emotional to the point of shouting, "Come on, Charlie. Come on!" as one of the characters does on an episode of "Lost."

They have been trained to remain as calm as possible in such situations. The one possible exception: rare instances in which they are administering CPR to a young child.

At Pittsburgh's School of Public Health, Fawole said that it is important to acknowledge "that there is some good we're seeing in these episodes," but also that there is a compelling reason to improve.

"People are going to the doctor for an hour a year," she said, "but people are watching thousands and thousands and thousands of hours of television."

MUSIC

Standing the test of time

The 11 classic albums that hit No. 1 in 1976 still admired 50 years later

PETER LARSEN
The Orange County Register

In 1976, record shoppers knew what they liked — the Eagles and Rolling Stones, Stevie Wonder and Bob Dylan — and they bought it in droves.

Only 11 different albums reached No. 1 on the Billboard 200 album chart that year, with Peter Frampton and George Benson sneaking to the top between the better-known likes of Wings; Led Zeppelin; Earth, Wind & Fire; and a few other familiar acts.

The singles chart, meanwhile, was all over the place, with radio stations in transition and not sure where to land. Wings' "Silly Love Songs" was the overall top single of '76, but Rod Stewart's "Tonight's the Night (Gonna Be Alright)" wasn't far behind.

Disco was starting to make inroads on the airwaves with No. 1 hits such as Johnny Taylor's "Disco Lady" and "Walter Murphy's "A Fifth of Beethoven." Soul and funk showed up with Ohio Players' "Love Rollercoaster" and Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music."

And '70s soft rock was hanging around too, with Barry Manilow's "I Write the Songs," Chicago's "If You Leave Me Now," and, um, the Starland Vocal Band's "Afternoon Delight," which for some reason I can still sing from memory, also all reaching No. 1.

But we're here for the albums. Without further ado ...

'Chicago IX: Chicago's Greatest Hits'

Chicago
Weeks at No. 1: 2

Chicago, which finished 1975 with three weeks at 1, held onto the top spot for two more weeks to open 1976 on the Billboard 200 album chart. This album is so stacked with hits that you can drop the needle anywhere and land on a huge hit song, from "Saturday In the Park" and "Feelin' Stronger Every Day" to "Make Me Smile" and "Wishing You Were Here." Yet somehow it didn't chart in the United Kingdom.

New and noteworthy: You know what was No. 1 on the U.K. album charts at the start of 1976? Perry Como's "40 Greatest Hits," proof that the Sex Pistols couldn't show up soon enough. Some little-known guy named Peter Frampton released an album titled "Frampton Comes Alive!" in the United States on Jan. 15. I wonder what happened with that?

'Gratitude'

Earth, Wind & Fire
Weeks at No. 1: 3

Eight months after Earth, Wind & Fire scored its first No.1 album in May 1975 with "That's the Way of the World," the soul-funk-pop band was back there with "Gratitude," a mostly live double album. There's stuff on here that's less-than-essential, but you'll feel good even listening to that. It also contained a handful of newly recorded songs, including "Sing a Song" and "Can't Hide Love."

New and noteworthy: The Thin White Duke reached record stores when David Bowie released "Station to Station" in February, an album that spun off the singles "Golden Years" and "TVC15." Diana Ross' self-titled album included the disco classic "Love Hangover," and Lynyrd Skynyrd requested that you "Gimme Back My Bullets."

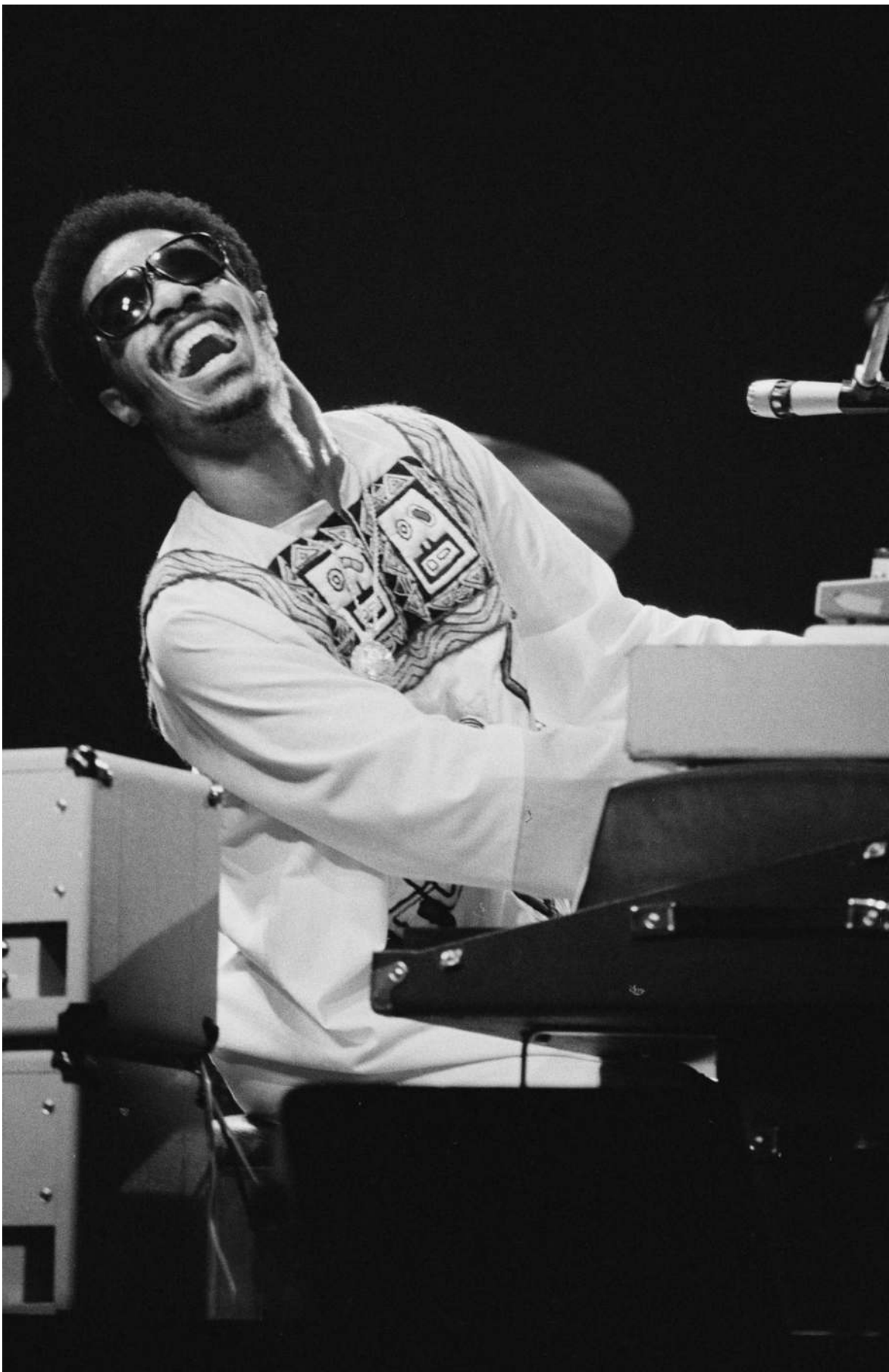
'Desire'

Bob Dylan
Weeks at No. 1: 5

Dylan released his follow-up to "Blood on the Tracks" between legs of his 1975-76 Rolling Thunder Tour, recording it before heading out in '75 with many of the same musicians. The familiarity of bard and band shines through here with classic songs such as "Hurricane," "Isis," "Mozambique" and "One More Cup of Coffee." It wraps up with "Sara," a heartfelt, unusually personal song for his soon-to-be ex-wife, Sara Dylan.

New and noteworthy: What were the Brits digging as "Desire" topped our charts? Oh dear. They'd just put "The Very Best of Slim Whitman" at No. 1 for six weeks. Phil Collins replaced Peter Gabriel as vocalist for Genesis' "A Trick of the Tail." Captain and Tennille released

SEE TIME ON PAGE 15



Stevie Wonder performs at the Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park, London, on Jan. 24, 1974. His "Songs in the Key of Life" closed out 1976 at 11 consecutive weeks atop the charts.

GETTY IMAGES/TNS

MUSIC

Time: Some chart-toppers were the bands' lesser albums

FROM PAGE 14

“Song of Joy,” and finally muskrats had something to dance to at the prom. Be-Bop Deluxe released “Sunburst Finish,” which you should go listen to now.

Their Greatest Hits (1971-1975)

Eagles

Weeks at No. 1: 5

For decades, this was the one Eagles album that almost everyone you knew had on vinyl or CD. For good reason, too, because this Eagles collection had nothing but massive hits: “Take It Easy,” “Desperado,” “Tequila Sunrise,” “Lyn’ Eyes” and more. This baby is certified to have sold more than 38 million copies in the U.S. alone, making it the No. 1 selling album of the 20th century.

New and noteworthy: Kiss released “Destroyer,” with singles such as “Shout It Out Loud” and “Detroit Rock City,” and “Beth” became Kiss’ highest-charting single ever. Marvin Gaye sang “I Want You,” one of his sexiest songs, and the Doobie Brothers were “Takin’ It to the Streets,” with Michael McDonald on vocals for the first time.

Frampton Comes Alive!

Peter Frampton

Weeks at No. 1: 10

Peter Frampton’s double live album debuted at No. 1 for a single week in April, another week in July, three more in August and five in September and October. Ten weeks, the top album of the whole year, powered by the singles “Show Me the Way,” “Baby, I Love Your Way,” and “Do You Feel Like We Do” — and that rad talk-box.

New and noteworthy: In the three weeks in August alone, Boston released its self-titled debut as did that city’s Modern Lovers; Hall & Oates delivered “Bigger Than Both of Us,” which spun off the single “Rich Girl”; and Lee “Scratch” Perry and the Upsetters released the dub classic “Super Ape.”

Wings at the Speed of Sound

Wings

Weeks at No. 1: 7

Like Frampton, Paul McCartney’s band bounced up and down to No. 1 a few times — a week in April, another in May, and five in June and July. This was a softer Wings sound than earlier albums such as “Band on the Run.” The hits included “Let ’Em In,” which taught us all what to do when someone’s knockin’ at the door, and “Silly Love Songs.” But the record was huge, and the subsequent tour, Wings Over the World, saw McCartney play live in the U.S. for the first time in a decade since the Beatles’ last shows here.

New and noteworthy: Rod Stewart’s “A Night on the Town” included “Tonight’s the Night (Gonna Be Alright),” and his classic Cat Stevens cover, “The First Cut Is the Deepest.” The title track of Maxine Nightingale’s “Right Back Where We Started From” was a delightful pop hit. The Beach Boys’ “15 Big Ones” is a good latter-day album. Reggae singer Peter Tosh made his debut with “Legalize It,” and Graham Parker and the Rumour’s “Howlin’ Wind” signaled the shift of British pub rock toward new wave.

Presence

Led Zeppelin

Weeks at No. 1: 2

Some acts are big enough that they’re always going to grab the top spot on the charts based on reputation alone. “Presence” is probably the least-known of Zeppelin’s studio albums, with only “Achilles’ Last Stand” and “Nobody’s Fault But Mine” ever being played in live shows before the band split. Today it’s seen as a return to the hard rock of Led Zeppelin’s earlier days, but in 1976 it quickly sold the usual millions of copies before being overshadowed by “The Song Remains the Same” when the concert film and soundtrack arrived that fall.

New and noteworthy: Aerosmith released “Rocks.” Soul-jazzer Roy Ayers put out “Everybody Loves the Sunshine,” the title track of which would make a few hundred hip-hop samplers happy in future decades. And the Southern California all-female rock band the Runaways released their self-titled debut, giving the world its first glimpse of future solo star Joan Jett.

Black and Blue

The Rolling Stones

Weeks at No. 1: 4

As with Led Zeppelin and “Presence,” the Stones’ album this year sold a ton, wasn’t praised as much at the time, but then saw its reputation grow as the years passed. The band didn’t technically have a lead guitarist when they recorded it — Mick Taylor quit the band two years earlier, and though Ronnie Wood plays on some of the tracks, he wasn’t officially invited to join until it was time to tour. “Fool to Cry” and “Memory Motel” are the songs you remember most.

New and noteworthy: Warren Zevon’s self-titled major-label debut didn’t sell a lot, but he still made bank thanks to Linda Ronstadt’s covers of “Carmelita,” “Poor Poor Pitiful Me” and “Hasten Down the Wind.” Billy Joel’s “Turnstiles” produced a pair of his standards, “Say Goodbye to Hollywood” and “New York State of Mind.” David Bowie added



TNS

Bob Dylan released his chart-topping album “Desire” between legs of his 1975-76 Rolling Thunder Tour.

another terrific compilation to the year with “Changesonebowie,” and the Steve Miller Band did the same with “Fly Like an Eagle,” packed with great songs.

Breezin

George Benson

Weeks at No. 1: 2

Jazz-soul guitarist George Benson broke out of the jazz genre to score a hat trick of No. 1s on the pop, R&B and jazz charts. It’s a smooth record with a pair of acclaimed and enduring hits. The single “This Masquerade,” a cover of Leon Russell’s song, went on to win the Grammy for record of the year in 1977, while the title track earned the Grammy for best pop instrumental performance.

New and noteworthy: New

releases were a bit thin during Benson’s two weeks at the top, but we did get Merle Haggard’s “My Love Affair With Trains,” for which Hag’s only original was “No More Trains to Ride.”

Fleetwood Mac

Fleetwood Mac

Weeks at No. 1: 1

Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham joined Christine McVie, John McVie and Mick Fleetwood for this album, and suddenly Fleetwood Mac rocketed toward the stardom it would achieve in the decades that followed. But it took time! The album was released in July 1975, and it wasn’t until the singles “Over My Head,” “Rhiannon,” and “Say You Love Me” had been all over the radio that the

album hit No. 1 for a week in September 1976.

New and noteworthy: Bob Dylan, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Rush all released live albums, “Hard Rain,” “One More From the Road” and “All the World’s a Stage,” respectively. Funkadelic released “Tales of Kidd Funkenstein.”

Songs in the Key of Life

Stevie Wonder

Weeks at No. 1: 11

Stevie’s masterpiece of masterpieces closed out 1976 with 11 consecutive weeks at No. 1. A double album with a bonus 4-track EP, “Songs” is stuffed with fantastic tunes from “Sir Duke,” “I Wish” and “Pastime Paradise” to “As,” “Another Star” and “Isn’t She Lovely?”

New and noteworthy: ABBA’s “Arrival” landed with hits including “Dancing Queen,” “Money, Money, Money” and “Knowing Me, Knowing You.” Elton John and Bob Seger released “Blue Moves” and “Night Moves” on the same day in October.

The Patti Smith Group released “Radio Ethiopia,” Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers dropped their self-titled debut, the Eagles checked us all into the “Hotel California,” Queen took us to “A Day at the Races,” and just before the end of the year, Blondie made its self-titled debut, too.

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ENTERTAINMENT



GETTY IMAGES/TNS

Music group U2 performs during halftime of Super Bowl XXXVI on Feb. 3, 2002, at the Superdome in New Orleans, considered one of the best halftime shows ever.

Best Super Bowl halftime shows of all time

The Mercury News offers its ranking of the top 10 so far

By JIM HARRINGTON
The Mercury News

The Super Bowl halftime show has drastically evolved over the past 60 years — arguably more than the game of football has.

And that's saying something.

Super Bowl LX's halftime show at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif., on Feb. 8 features Bad Bunny, the massively popular yet polarizing Puerto Rican singer. His selection has created such a stir that it's easy to forget that for nearly half of their existence, the halftime performances have served up a collection of university marching bands, veteran comedians and singers, soft-jazz musicians, Elvis impersonators and Up With People.

Boy band New Kids on the Block is credited with being the first mainstream pop music group to play the halftime show, in 1991. Two years later, Michael Jackson ushered in the halftime show's modern era, and since then, A-list performers — some more relevant than others — have been the staple of Super Bowl halftime shows.

But controversy has not.

Although the event may be defined by some by such polarizing moments as Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake's "Nipplegate" (2004) or M.I.A.'s middle-finger salute during Madonna's halftime show (2014), most have featured solid performances from dependable acts such



THE KANSAS CITY STAR/TNS

Kendrick Lamar's Super Bowl LIX halftime show in 2025 was a turning point where the NFL no longer appears concerned with playing it safe or trying to please everyone in the room.

as Bruno Mars, Lady Gaga and Beyoncé.

Now comes Bad Bunny, who's not only bringing the controversy in advance but has introduced politics into the discussion — a rarity for the Super Bowl. President Donald Trump has publicly criticized the NFL's choice of Bad Bunny — calling the selection a "terrible choice" and declaring himself "anti-them" — while also saying he will skip the game. He also previously described the choice as "absolutely ridiculous" and claimed he didn't know who Bad Bunny was.

Bad Bunny, for his part, has made it clear that he is no fan of Trump or his policies.

How much this will factor into this Sunday's halftime show remains to be seen. But regardless, the show will ultimately be judged on whether it's any good. After all, for every Prince (2007), there's a Maroon 5 (2019).

All of this matters, because it is the biggest music performance of the year. By far. Consider that the 2025 halftime show performance by Kendrick Lamar reportedly pulled in more than 130 million viewers (most of whom were dying to see if he'd dis his nemesis Drake — which he did), compared with just over 15 million who watched the Grammys that same year.

While most televised awards shows have seen declining ratings in recent years, the Super Bowl remains a cultural juggernaut.

Since Bad Bunny's halftime show at Levi's is drawing so much attention — and since the game turns 60 this year — we figured the time was right to reflect back on Super Bowl halftime shows through the years and list our favorites.

Our criteria was multifold, ranging from sheer quality of the musical performance to the way it resonated with viewers and reflected its times, with any tiebreakers usually going to the ones that still pulse in our hearts and minds the strongest.

On the next page are our picks for the Top 10 Super Bowl halftime shows, ranked from the merely marvelous to the absolute best.

SEE HALFTIME ON PAGE 17

ENTERTAINMENT

Halftime: Performances underscore that show now as important as game

FROM PAGE 16

10. Super Bowl XLII (2008)

Starring: Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers

Location: University of Phoenix Stadium (Glendale, Ariz.)

The skinny: Petty & the Heartbreakers underscored its position as one of the finest American rock bands of all time during a short set of such A-listers as “Free Fallin’” and “American Girl.” The big finale was pure satisfaction, as Heartbreaker lead guitarist Mike Campbell delivered fretboard fireworks on “Runnin’ Down a Dream.”

9. Super Bowl LIX (2025)

Starring: Kendrick Lamar

Location: Caesars Superdome (New Orleans)

The skinny: The Compton rapper came into the gig riding sky-high, having just swept through the Grammys one weekend prior with his Drake dis “Not Like Us.”

And the momentum only intensified during the halftime show, as Lamar wowed viewers with intensely satisfying versions of “Squabble Up,” “GNX” and other cuts. And it certainly didn’t hurt matters when the great SZA joined the rapper for “Luther” and “All the Stars.”

It was another fine Super Bowl showing for Lamar, who also performed as part of the huge hip-hop showcase with Dr. Dre, Mary J. Blige, Eminem, Snoop Dogg and 50 Cent during the 2022 halftime show.

It wasn’t all that long ago that it would have seemed nearly unfathomable for the NFL to embrace Lamar and his hit “Not Like Us” — a highly charged dis track that raises questions of sexual misconduct involving another entertainer.

Mark this one down as a turning point where the NFL no longer appears concerned with playing it safe or trying to please everyone in the room. Bad Bunny — and the controversy that follows him — is further proof of that.

8. Super Bowl XLIII (2009)

Starring: Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band

Location: Raymond James Stadium (Tampa, Fla.)

The skinny: There had been a lot of rockers/football fans who’d been waiting decades to hear “Born to Run” during a Super Bowl halftime show.

In 2009, The Boss finally delivered the goods — in glorious fashion — accompanied by his E Street Band as well as the Miami Horns and a gospel choir.

“I want you to step back from the guacamole. I want you to put the chicken fingers down and turn your television all the way up,” Springsteen commanded.

Granted, stepping aside from chicken fingers is never easy. But Springsteen made it worthwhile as he led the ensemble through “Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out,” “Working on a Dream,” “Glory Days” and, yes, “Born to Run.”

7. Super Bowl XLVII (2013)

Starring: Beyoncé

Location: Mercedes-Benz Superdome (New Orleans)

The skinny: Beyoncé is enough of a musical treat on her own, which she proved once again by mesmerizing millions with “Crazy in Love” and “End of Time” at the start of this halftime show.



Singer Katy Perry’s NFL Super Bowl XLIX performance in 2015 was the epitome of pure, over-the-top Super Bowl halftime show fun.



In 1993, Michael Jackson performed a halftime show that, for the first time, drew more viewers than the game itself.

But then she brought out Kelly Rowland and Michelle Williams for a long-anticipated Destiny’s Child reunion — running through “Bootylicious,” “Independent Women, Part 1” and “Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)” — and the event shot from merely remarkable to straight-up legendary.

6. Super Bowl XXVII (1993)

Starring: Michael Jackson

Location: Rose Bowl (Pasadena, Calif.)

The skinny: This was the first Super Bowl halftime show that drew more viewers than the game itself, marking a huge turning point in the event’s history — where nothing short of a spectacle would do for global TV viewers. And it’s no wonder why this show drew such an audience — Jackson was, after all, the undisputed King of Pop and still had the undivided attention of the music world at the time. (Also, to be fair, the game was a blowout snoozer with the Dallas Cowboys crushing the Buffalo Bills, 52-17.)

There is so much that clouds Jackson’s legacy, but go back and watch this short performance — which included a version of “Billie Jean” that simply dazzles — and you’ll witness nothing short of a singular talent.

5. Super Bowl XXXIX (2005)

Starring: Paul McCartney

Location: EverBank Field (Jacksonville, Fla.)

The skinny: Sir Paul was considered the “safe choice” to follow the 2004 Justin Timberlake-Janet Jackson fiasco — aka “Nipplegate” — calming sponsors’ nerves



Beyoncé’s 2013 halftime show is ranked No. 7 because it mesmerized millions and also included a Destiny’s Child reunion.

and uniting TV viewers around the globe on the Beatles’ absolutely awesome song catalog. That “Nipplegate” backlash would shape halftime shows for years to come, ushering in a reliance on classic rock acts like the the Who and the Rolling Stones.

McCartney, of course, used the forum to utterly charm viewers with a mix of Fab Four favorites and Wings winners, ending his set by leading a packed stadium (plus tens of millions of TV viewers) in the ultimate sing-along number, “Hey Jude.”

4. Super Bowl XXX (1996)

Starring: Diana Ross

Location: Sun Devil Stadium (Tempe, Ariz.)

The skinny: Everything about this show made us love Ms. Ross even more. The Queen of Motown delivered a show that underscored that NFL had moved on from its days of marching bands to embrace diva-era pop theatricality. First off, the set list has to rank among the best in Super Bowl history, as the Queen of Motown included so many Supremes gems — “You Keep Me Hangin’ On,” “Baby Love,” “You Can’t Hurry Love,” etc. — as well as a material from her solo catalog and beyond.

Also, the production elements were so groovy, including how the star was lowered by crane onto the stage while she was belting out “Stop! In the Name of Love.” But the moment that really solidified this halftime show’s high standing came at the finale when a helicopter arrived to take “The Original Diva” away. “Oh my, here comes my ride,” Ross remarked.

3. Super Bowl XLI (2007)

Starring: Prince

Location: Sun Life Stadium (Miami Gardens, Fla.)

The skinny: When the spotlight was at its brightest, you could count on Prince being at his very best. And no spotlight is bigger than the Super Bowl, thus it was only fitting that the Purple One delivered a show that is now regarded in nearly mythic fashion. For proof, just watch his awe-inspiring performance — widely considered to be one of the single greatest guitar solos in live music history — during the George Harrison tribute at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2004.

The Purple One’s 2007 halftime show was similarly brilliant: Just witness how he absolutely owned the night — turning the Super Bowl stage into his own personal playground as he rocketed through “Let’s Go Crazy,” “Baby I’m a Star” and other favorites on his way to the epic closer of “Purple Rain” that climaxed with tens of thousands singing along, amid shades of purple lighting, under a Miami lit up with fireworks.

2. Super Bowl XLIX (2015)

Starring: Katy Perry

Location: University of Phoenix Stadium (Glendale, Ariz.)

The skinny: Perry’s production was the epitome of the pure, over-the-top Super Bowl halftime show fun, defining the era — which continues to this day — of the spectacle most often being paramount to the success or failure of the show.

The multiplatinum-selling “California Gurl” was in top form as she powered through a seven-song set of radio hits that was as accessible to kids as it was to grandparents — well, at least if they didn’t listen too closely to some of the lyrics.

Plus, the visuals were so memorable, from the opening segment that found Perry riding onto the field aboard a giant golden tiger to the closer, which featured the vocalist crooning “Fireworks” from a shooting star. And, yes, this was the halftime show that gave us the famed “Left Shark.”

And the guest appearance by the incomparable Missy Elliott — giving, for the time, an all-too-rare Super Bowl spotlight on hip-hop — helped take the whole shebang to the next level.

1. Super Bowl XXXVI (2002)

Starring: U2

Location: Louisiana Superdome (New Orleans)

The skinny: U2 was never more magnificent than during this Super Bowl performance that doubled as a memorial, coming mere months after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. It underscored why we come together — by the tens of millions — to embrace these spectacles on the global stage, hoping for a brief moment of transcendence that would stay with us long after the telecast was over. And, wow, did we ever get one on this night.

Choreographed to perfection, yet not in a way that felt forced in the slightest, Bono and company distilled their brilliant Elevation Tour into a spellbinding three-song set that found the band performing while names of terrorist victims were shown on the big screen.

Simply put: It was one of the most poignant TV spectacles ever produced.

TELEVISION

REVIEW



MITCH HAASETH/Disney

Guest star Sabrina Carpenter poses with the Muppets for the 50th anniversary special of “The Muppet Show,” now streaming on Disney+.

Muppets special will leave you feeling good

Triumphant revival of beloved show for 50th anniversary is nostalgic, stays true to form with its loose, bubbly sense of fun

BY LILI LOOFBOUROW
The Washington Post

The 50th anniversary “The Muppet Show” special is mediocre. This is as it should be: good and right.

The beloved show Jim Henson created 50 years ago, after leaving “Saturday Night Live,” made flappable imperfection its governing ethos. The goal wasn’t to create a flawless night of entertainment; it was to mine the chaos of a production, especially backstage, for joy and laughs. Bad, on the Muppets, has always been good: That Fozzie has terrible punch lines is exactly what made his sketches fun. Miss Piggy’s insistence on her talent is marvelously undercut whenever she actually performs.

Seth Rogen (along with executive producers including Maya Rudolph, Evan Goldberg and writer Albertina Rizzo) has resurrected the show as a 30-minute special that doubles as a backdoor pilot for a possible revival. Director Alex Timbers preserves the show’s loose, bubbly sense of fun. The episode — featuring a pitch-perfect Sabrina Carpenter as Kermit’s guest star — doesn’t feel overproduced or overthought. It is merely (and I mean this as a compliment) another episode of “The Muppet Show.”

Sure, there’s (sporadically) a sense of occasion.

“We’re doing the show again, Frog!” Rowlf says, thrillingly, when Kermit — who starts the show mopily switching on the lights of the old theater — stumbles on him playing “Rainbow Connection.”

Rogen makes a brief cameo in which he’s unceremoniously bumped. But the show barely feels any need to introduce itself to new audiences. There’s no effort to modernize. This is not ABC’s “The Muppets,” the sitcom that launched in 2015 with Kermit and Miss Piggy estranged (and Piggy hosting a talk show). Or 2020’s “Muppets Now,” an ostensibly unscripted show consisting of various acts, with Scooter acting as a bridge between them.

I’ve never considered what the opposite of a reboot might look like, but “The Muppet Show” — with one exception, which I’ll get to — basically nails it. The special is unapologetically nostalgic and gloriously so. How magical it is to see that grand old marquee exactly as it was, to hear “it’s time to play the music; it’s time to light the lights,” and to watch all those fuzzy goofballs deliver that absolute bop of an opening song without a single concession to how time has, in fact, passed. (The exception is Carpenter, whose many delightful scenes opposite Miss Piggy keep driving home — to the latter’s mounting annoyance — how old she is.)

There are a few Easter eggs for superfans; in her opening number, Carpenter inflicts mild violence on a number of male Muppets in what feels like a nod to Rita Moreno’s legendary (and Emmy-winning) guest stint, which featured her singing “I Get Ideas” while genially assaulting her dance partner. But the show feels less scholarly and responsible than simply straightforward. Scooter once again knocks on the guest star’s dressing room door to announce the seconds till the curtain rises. An At the Dance segment makes good use of Pepe the King Prawn. Gonzo — still voiced, incredibly, by Dave Goelz — does one of his trademark daredevil stunts with a highbrow twist. It’s not that good. A Muppet News Flash prominently features actress Rudolph (who suffers some ill effects following a more-than-usually-perplexing Muppet Labs segment). Grumpy critics Statler and Waldorf get plenty of screen time. Best of all, the background teems with Muppet extras Muppeting hither and yon without lines or roles. Together, they create an impressively dense and populated panorama featuring some tremendously artful puppeteering that you might not even notice the first time you watch.

Carpenter’s energy is ideally calibrated for a program like this, and her final number, which I’m not allowed to describe here but which features two main Muppets, is genuinely iconic. Eric Jacobson’s Miss Piggy remains excellent throughout the episode as she struggles to ab-

sorb Carpenter’s praise while sustaining her own sense of rivalry. There is a notable change, however: She expresses surprisingly little tenderness toward her Kermit.

That brings me to the fly in the ointment, so to speak. Like Piggy, I found myself more annoyed than charmed by a frog I once adored. Kermit, “The Muppet Show’s” star and protagonist, doesn’t work well in this iteration. Matt Vogel, who took over voicing the character when Steve Whitmire was fired a decade ago, is a versatile and gifted puppeteer. But his Kermit doesn’t sound or act like the Kermit of yore, and that’s weird enough — and sufficiently drastic a change from the original, which is otherwise so faithful — that it does start to become genuinely distracting. Vogel’s Kermit is far less flappy, his jaw far less clenched. He’s less vulnerable, less volatile, less tender, less stressed. Watching Kermit decompensate over the half-hour has always been one of the show’s chief pleasures. You could practically watch Kermit’s blood pressure rising as he struggled to preserve his tolerance, patience and equanimity until he exploded — screaming or wagging his hands and head while gazing at the sky. This Kermit is comparatively composed and sedate. That’s a shame. A Muppet that’s less physically expressive is also less compelling.

That’s not a small problem. But it might not be a huge one, either. Especially since the special seemed to be tilting away from Miss Piggy’s pursuit of the frog in charge, which structured so many of the original show’s storylines.

I have other notes. I found myself thinking, for instance, of ways various sketches could have been punched up. (Some seemed more random than funny.) Then again, that’s always been the case. “The Muppet Show” has never been about being great. It’s been about feeling good. And on that front, boy, does this silly little special deliver.

“The Muppet Show 50th Anniversary Special” is streaming on Disney+.

CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

ALERT! ALERT!

BY MARK MACLACHLAN / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Mark MacLachlan is a professor of chemistry and the dean of science at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. For his research he creates new iridescent materials that mimic the structures of beetle shells — and can be used for sensing and coloration. He’s been a crossword fan since his days as a postdoctoral student at M.I.T. This is his fifth construction for The Times. — W.S.

ACROSS

1 Baggage accessory

6 Apple TV comedy that received 20 Emmy nominations for its first season

14 In which baby spiders develop

20 Home of Diego Velázquez’s “Las Meninas”

21 “I want to hear about that!”

22 Makeshift replacement for a Kleenex

23 “That cabinet with plates looks awfully full”

25 Triangular sail

26 Food court pizzeria

27 Some M.I.T. grads, for short

28 Resort amenity

30 Bob who hosted “America’s Funniest Home Videos”

31 A noble gas

33 It’s good for the long haul

36 Sphere of creativity

38 Private investigator, informally

41 Cheese in a wax coating

43 “It’s saying you completed the marathon in under two hours, which can’t be right”

45 Persian Gulf nation

47 Sneaker brand that popularized cantilever heels

49 Mix up

50 Actress Edebiri of “The Bear”

51 “Is that a cough I hear?”

54 Event for V.I.P. customers

58 The planets in our solar system, e.g.

59 Sci-fi princess

60 Stretchy material

62 Freight barge

63 Not fantastical

65 La Città Eterna

67 Haunted house sound

69 Something to use on your break?

70 “Sorry, we’ll have to put the old panes back in”

75 Group of humpbacks

76 _____ Bora (embattled Afghan region)

77 Tel _____

78 Designer Saint Laurent

79 Little bits of energy

81 New Zealanders, familiarly

84 Color of undyed linen

86 Course that doesn’t require much studying

89 “Gimme, gimme!”

91 “Those pancakes are piled way too high!”

94 Boxy transport

95 Part of a bouquet, in Bogotá

96 Like close-fitting clothes

97 It’s just under a foot

98 “Your emery board will never fit in this tiny toiletry bag”

103 Undesirable roommate

105 Word found in all but four state constitutions, but not the U.S. Constitution

106 Part of M.O.

107 Symbol of transformation in “The Silence of the Lambs”

109 Isn’t feeling great

111 Large flightless birds

112 National Poetry Mo.

114 “That ship _____ sailed”

116 Beverage brewed outside using natural heat

120 _____ beef

122 “Your waiter’s nowhere to be seen!”

126 Passes

127 Chips may go into it

128 Jane who received a Screen Actors Guild Life Achievement Award

129 Have no stomach for

130 Doesn’t care for

131 Unexpected jerk

DOWN

1 Major N.Y.S.E. events

2 Beat handily

3 “See ya later!”

4 Deck out

5 Walk

6 Cable co. that was purchased by AT&T in 1999

7 “What _____?”

8 William, Edward and Harry, e.g.

9 To a _____ degree

10 Stage booster

11 Domain for salty dogs

12 Urges to attack, with “on”

13 What this hand has: AAKQ6

14 Fluency-building subj.

15 Prosthetic facial feature of Peter Falk

16 Convey

17 Pete who co-wrote “If I Had a Hammer”

18 Skin care company

19 Football snapper

24 Thingamabob

29 Either side of a cheerleader’s “A”

32 Kind of orange

34 It’s not optional

35 Silicon Valley giant

37 Easily detached

38 Pioneering DVR brand

39 George Orwell’s first name at birth

40 Purchase for the Atari 2600

42 One cutting corners

44 Neat

46 One of Adolf Anderssen’s sacrifices in the “Immortal Game” against Lionel Kieseritzky

48 “Trade discount” quintet

52 German for “city”

53 Something to pitch

54 Univ. worker

55 Site-seeing list?

56 Forte

57 Animal whose name sounds like a pronoun

61 V-shaped designs

64 Visit, as for a safety check

66 Mathematician Lovelace

68 Human organ with the ability to regenerate itself

70 Frayed

71 Court order

72 With, in Oise

73 Exam marks

74 N.H.L. team with the longest Stanley Cup drought, familiarly

75 Smallest Canadian prov.

80 Canning package?

82 Mallorca, por ejemplo

83 Reason for turbulence

85 Anatomical appendage that only humans and gorillas have

87 Modern “seize the day”

88 Stunned

90 Computer model inputs

92 Ship that transported the Golden Fleece

93 Hardly a team player

95 Betrays, in a way

98 Like an unnatural smile

99 Tech debut of 2007

100 Examine creepily

101 _____ Mae Brown (Whoopi’s role in “Ghost”)

102 World’s most-produced organic compound

104 Puts up a false front

108 Property of curium, but not cerium

110 Eavesdrop, e.g.

113 Surrealist Magritte

115 Fit of irritation

117 Fish in niçoise salad

118 Cuts off

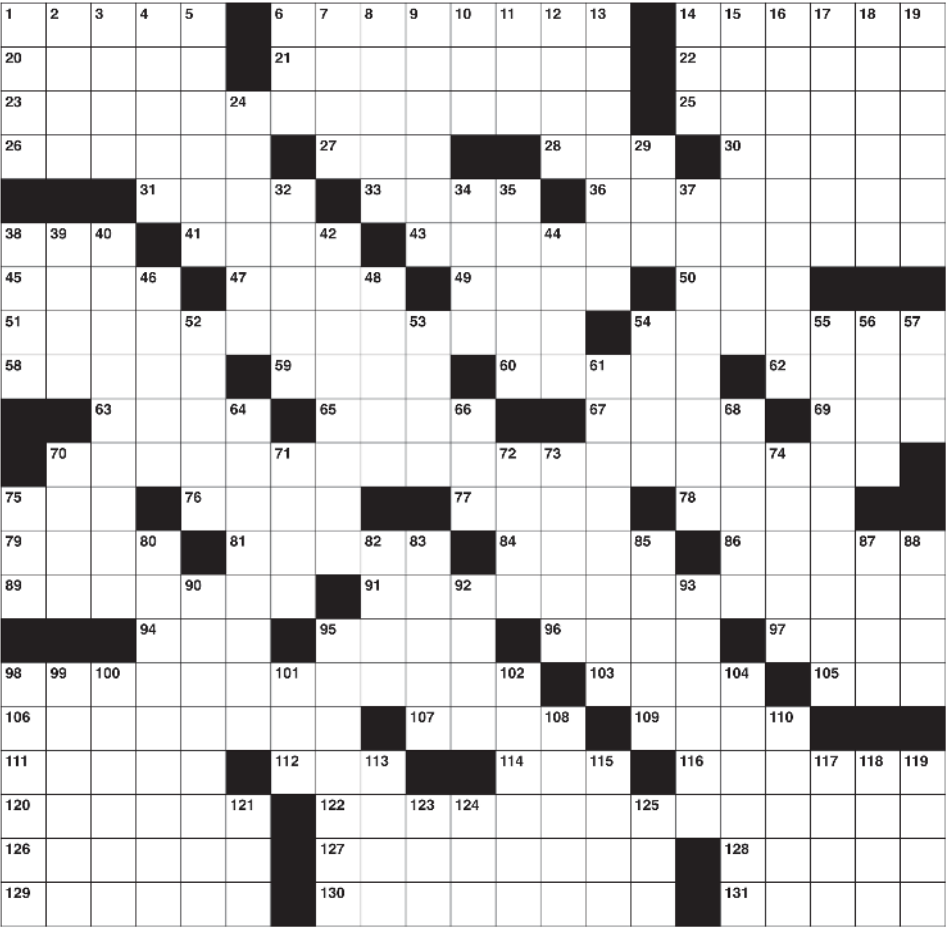
119 Actor Brody of “The O.C.”

121 “Spring forward” hrs.

123 Illegally interfere with, as an election

124 Remote abbr.

125 Special _____



GUNSTON STREET



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

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE





STARS AND STRIPES

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GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

Tech gives new way to enjoy Super Bowl

OneCourt tablets will help blind and low-vision fans follow football game with vibrations, real-time audio

By **LARRY LAGE**
Associated Press

Some blind and low-vision fans will have unprecedented access to the Super Bowl thanks to a tactile device that tracks the ball, vibrates on key plays and provides real-time audio.

The NFL teamed up with OneCourt and Ticketmaster to pilot the game-enhancing experience 15 times during the regular season during games hosted by the Seattle Seahawks, Jacksonville Jaguars, San Francisco 49ers, Atlanta Falcons and Minnesota Vikings.

About 10 blind and low-vision fans will have an opportunity to use the same technology at the Super Bowl in Santa Clara, Calif., where Seattle will play the New England Patriots on Feb. 8. With hands on the device, they will feel the location of the ball and hear what's happening throughout the game.

Scott Thornhill can't wait.

Thornhill, the executive director of the American Council of the Blind, will be among the fans at Levi's Stadium with a OneCourt tablet in their lap and Westwood One's broadcast piped into headphones. He was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa when he was 8, and later lost his sight.

"It will allow me to engage and enjoy the game as close as possible as people who can see," Thornhill told The Associated Press. "As someone who grew up playing sports before I lost my vision, I'm getting a big part of my life back that I've been missing. To attend a game and not have to wait for someone to tell me what

happened, it's hard to even describe how much that means to me. It's a game changer."

Clark Roberts experienced it firsthand.

The Seahawks fan was invited by the team to attend its home game against Indianapolis on Dec. 14 to experience the game with the OneCourt device that is the size of a thick iPad with raised lines outlining a football field.

"The device does two wonderful things," said Roberts, who lost his sight when he was 24, also due to retinitis pigmentosa. "It vibrates in different ways for different plays and through headphones, I was able to hear Seattle's amazing announcer, Steve Raible. Real-time audio is the real beauty of the device because usually when I'm listening to a game, there can be a delay of up to a minute or more and that can be challenging to constantly ask family and friends what happened. Can you imagine how this can open up everything, not just football?"

OneCourt is working on it. It has partnered with NBA and Major League Baseball teams to provide its devices at games and is in talks to make them available to the NHL, along with other leagues and sports organizations all over the world.

OneCourt launched in 2023 after founder Jerred Mace saw a blind person attending a soccer match while he was a junior at the University of Washington.

The startup with headquarters in Seattle uses the NFL's tracking data from Genius Sports and translates it into feedback for the device to create unique vibrations for



LINDSEY WASSON/AP

Clark Roberts, a blind Seattle Seahawks fan, uses a OneCourt tablet, a tactile device that translates gameplay into trackable vibrations along with real-time audio, at the T-Mobile Innovation Hub Jan. 27, in Bellevue, Wash.

plays such as tackles and touchdowns.

The data is generated from cameras and chips embedded in balls, jerseys and elsewhere. The same technology is used by the NFL's NextGen Stats for health and player safety, statistics and gambling.

"It's a testament to the maturity of the product and our company that we have gone from delivering this to a handful of teams throughout the last year or two to having it at the largest event in American sports," OneCourt co-founder Antyush Bollini said. "The Super Bowl is such an amazing event, and now blind and low-vision fans can use our technology in a way they deserve."

Ticketmaster's funding for the NFL pilot went toward underwriting the device to make it available to fans for free, according to senior client development director Scott Aller.

"This is a very, very big social impact win," Aller said. "We hope that we can make an investment like this in every single one of our markets."

After some teams approached the league about improving access for all, the NFL has spent the past few months piloting the program and decided to have the

device make its Super Bowl debut.

"It's not lost on us that we have blind to low-vision fans and we want to do right by them," said Belynda Gardner, senior director of diversity equity and inclusion for the NFL.

Gardner said the league has been very encouraged by the pilot and potential of this technology.

"We're reviewing what we learned and evaluating how it can be implemented going forward," Gardner said. "There aren't any definitive next steps and we will use the offseason to determine where this technology sits in the NFL's suite of offerings."

Thomas Rice, a Jaguars fan who is blind, said he had a seamless experience with the OneCourt device at a game in Jacksonville. Rice picked up the tablet at guest services at EverBank Stadium and after settling in at his seat, he felt and heard football in a new way.

"When Trevor Lawrence threw a touchdown pass to Brian Thomas Jr., I felt the ball travel through the air," Rice said. "When Travis Etienne ran the ball, I could feel it happen along the sideline. It was like giving me my own pair of eyes."

Smartwatch combines Western science, Eastern medicine

By **GREGG ELLMAN**
Tribune News Service

Link2Care, a next-generation preventive-health wearable platform, announced the U.S. release of its Watch2Care Vital smartwatch recently at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

The Watch2Care Vital (\$390) is touted in its press release as the first smartwatch uniting 3,000 years of traditional Chinese medicine with more than 9 million user cases of real-world health data, and advanced artificial intelligence systems. Sure, it tracks your steps, which many of us (including me) are so consumed with, but it's way more than that. Inside the smartwatch are advanced sensors that capture and analyze Western biometrics and traditional Chinese medicine pulse data in real time.

For the most part, it's an advanced health tracking device you wear on your wrist. A Link2Care representative mentioned that it was more of a device with a holistic approach.

Features include groundbreaking health-monitoring technology that focuses on organ-system insights for the heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys. The results focus on alerting users to potential health problems and on encouraging lifestyle and dietary adjustments.

The watch will provide continuous monitoring of 38 physiological metrics. Every day, the Watch2Care Vital provides AI-generated health reports and composite health scores through the Link2Care app (Apple App Store and Google Play Store), which is also used for firmware updates. The sleep monitoring feature watches for abnormal nighttime heart-rate spikes.

In my short time with the watch, I wasn't able to track anything significant in my body, but its capabilities definitely caught my attention. While it's not a smartwatch like we are used to, it does offer messages, notifications, email, end-less apps and CarPlay connectivity.

The health features are marketed to far exceed those of other smartwatches, using

Chinese medicine. You get your first report after wearing the Watch2Care Vital for 24 hours. Among the information in the report are scores out of 100 for your heart, liver, kidneys and spleen. There is also a feature to measure blood oxygen level.

Since it is paired with your smartphone, the Watch2Care Vital will send an alert when there is new mail or messages to look at on your phone. It also does tell you the time and have an alarm and weather, which is pulled from your smartphone.

The watch looks much more stylish than more popular smartwatches. It has a 48-hour battery life, which I can attest to, and charges in about an hour and a half. The watch has a 1.43-inch touchscreen with rounded edges, built into a titanium case, and Bluetooth 5.3 for pairing. It has a sparkling clear resolution of 466 by 466 and an IP67 waterproof rating.

Being a longtime Apple Watch user, I found the touchscreen on the Watch2Care Vital to be responsive and easy to use.

Online: link2care.asia



LINK2CARE/TNS

The Watch2Care Vital uses traditional Chinese medicine, Western biometrics and artificial intelligence to give you insights into the health of your heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Lindell campaign spends big on copies of memoir

MN MINNEAPOLIS — MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell raked in about \$352,000 in campaign donations in just 2½ weeks after announcing his run for Minnesota governor on Dec. 11.

Lindell’s campaign then spent more than half of the money he’s raised on copies of his autobiography, according to a newly filed year-end campaign finance report.

The Lindell for governor campaign paid about \$187,000 to MyPillow in December for copies of his self-published memoir titled, “What Are the Odds? From Crack Addict to CEO.” It was his campaign’s biggest expenditure last year, accounting for 68% of his roughly \$272,000 in spending.

Lindell signed and gave out copies of his memoir to people at a GOP gubernatorial forum in Prior Lake in January. Lindell said MyPillow, which is “employee-owned,” owns the rights to his book.

The Minnesota Campaign Finance Board has previously said it is OK for candidates who’ve published books to use them as campaign material.

Education chief: Protests must not disrupt class

FL TALLAHASSEE — School districts across Florida have heard rumblings lately about student plans to walk out of classes to protest federal immigration enforcement actions, such as the shooting of Alex Pretti in Minneapolis.

Some walkouts have already taken place, while others are being discussed for the coming days.

In response, Florida Education Commissioner Anastasios Kamoutsas told school leaders on Tuesday that they better not encourage or facilitate any such activity during class.

“Any conduct by school or district personnel that diverts students from instruction, undermines classroom authority or compromises student supervision violates professional responsibilities and warrants disciplinary action,” Kamoutsas wrote to superintendents in a letter he also posted on X.

Kamoutsas wrote that he was not suggesting students may not express their views. They have constitutional rights, including free expression and peaceful protest, he wrote, so long as they comply with state law and school district policy.

State’s red flag law expansion advances

CO DENVER — The Colorado Senate approved an expansion of Colorado’s red flag law on Tuesday, sending the proposal to the House for consideration.

Senate Bill 4 would build off Colorado’s 2019 extreme risk protection orders law, which allows family members, law enforcement, health care professionals and educators to



NORWALK (CONN.) FIRE DEPARTMENT/AP

Saving a swan

Firefighters with the Norwalk Fire Department hoist a swan up a ladder on a stretcher after freeing it from the ice on the Norwalk River, on Tuesday, in Norwalk, Conn.

petition the courts to require people to surrender their firearms temporarily. A judge must find the person to be a risk to themselves or others.

This bill would expand the list of qualified petitioners to include behavioral health professionals who are co-responders with police or other authorities in emergencies, as well as health care and educational institutions.

The Senate approved the measure on a near-party-line vote, 20-13. Democrats have nearly a 2-to-1 majority in both chambers of the legislature.

Sen. Lynda Zamora Wilson, an Air Force veteran, worried the bill would dissuade gun owners from seeking mental health help because the institution providing it could request that they lose access to their firearms.

If the bill becomes law, it “will inflict unnecessary harm on innocent citizens, waste taxpayer dollars and strain trust in our institutions,” said Zamora Wilson, an El Paso County Republican.

Driver pleads guilty to flipping off Border Patrol

MI DETROIT — A Michigan motorist accused of flipping off federal agents and cutting off a Border Patrol van has pleaded guilty to charges, according to court records.

Jacob Nathaniel Len, 30, of Ypsilanti, entered the plea last month in U.S. District Court in Detroit, court

documents said.

The filings also said he was sentenced to six months of probation, to pay a \$5,000 fine, to participate in a mental health treatment program, and to perform 40 hours of community service.

Authorities allege that on July 7, the defendant was driving a black BMW sedan on westbound Interstate 96 when he confronted four Border Patrol agents in a van transporting 15 immigrants to the North Lake Correctional Facility east of Ludington. Officials said Len moved his car in front of the agent’s van, stepped on his brakes, and stuck his hand with his middle finger extended through his car’s sunroof. They said the defendant brake-checked the CBP van a second time then drove away.

ICE releases researcher after border wrong turn

NY BUFFALO — An upstate New York research scientist arrested after making a wrong turn near the Canadian border has been released from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody after nearly a month in detention.

Shovgi Huseynov, an Azerbaijani national, has been a researcher at the University at Buffalo’s Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences since 2022.

Under his visa, he is authorized to work in the U.S. through 2029, according to a UB spokesperson.

However, Huseynov was taken into custody by border patrol agents on Jan. 7 following a navigation error.

Huseynov was driving for Lyft and attempting to drop off a passenger when he made a wrong turn onto the Peace Bridge, an international border crossing connecting Buffalo, N.Y., and Fort Erie, Ontario, local CBS affiliate WIVB reported.

Though he said he was not trying to leave the U.S., Customs and Border Protection officers arrested him and determined he “may be subject to removal from the U.S.”

On Monday, a UB spokesperson confirmed Huseynov’s release.

“The University at Buffalo community is very pleased with the federal immigration judge’s order last week granting Shovgi Huseynov’s release on bond from the detention center in Michigan,” the spokesperson said in a news release. “The university will continue to provide appropriate support to Shovgi and his attorney as his case proceeds through the federal immigration system.”

Owners sue in bid to tear down Monroe’s home

CA LOS ANGELES — A Brentwood couple is suing the city of Los Angeles and Mayor Karen Bass, claiming their constitutional rights were violated when city officials blocked them from demolishing the home where Marilyn Monroe died in 1962.

In a 37-page complaint that ac-

cuses the city of collusion and bias, the lawsuit filed by homeowners Brinah Milstein and Roy Bank claims LA “deprived Plaintiffs of their intended demolition of the house and the use and enjoyment of their Property without any actual benefit to the public.”

Milstein, a wealthy real estate heiress, and Bank, a reality TV producer with credits including “The Apprentice” and “Survivor,” bought the home for \$8.35 million in 2023. They own the property next door and hoped to tear down Monroe’s place to expand their estate.

The pair quickly obtained demolition permits, but once their plans became public, an outcry erupted. A legion of historians, Angelenos and Monroe fans claimed the 1920s haunt, where the actor died in 1962, is an indelible piece of the city’s history.

The Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission started the landmark application process in January 2024, barring the owners from destroying the house in the meantime. The LA City Council unanimously voted to designate it as a historic cultural monument a few months later, officially saving it from destruction.

Neighboring states sue over funding for tunnel

NY NEW YORK — New York and New Jersey sued the Trump administration late Tuesday, demanding the full restoration of billions of dollars in federal funding for construction of the Gateway Project’s Hudson River Tunnel.

The \$16 billion tunnel project, which would double the number of rail lines between New Jersey and New York Penn Station and generate an estimated 90,000 jobs, is set to run out of money on Friday, following a months-long refusal by the Trump administration to distribute funds dedicated by Congress.

The Manhattan Federal Court suit says President Donald Trump’s Department of Transportation is leveraging the critical completion of one of the most heavily used passenger rail lines in the U.S. “in a brazen act of political retribution.”

Federal money is earmarked to cover more than two-thirds of the tunnel’s cost.

The 116-year-old North River Tunnel, in dire need of an overhaul since Hurricane Sandy, “supports approximately twenty percent of the nation’s overall economic output and lies at the economic center of the bustling northeast region,” the suit reads.

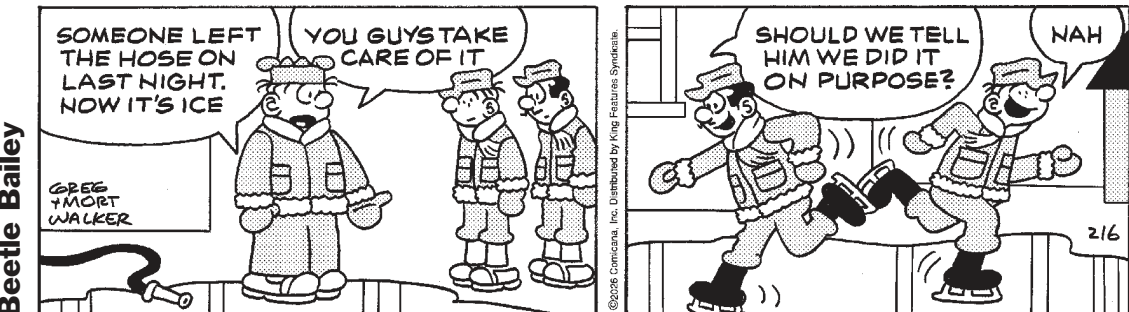
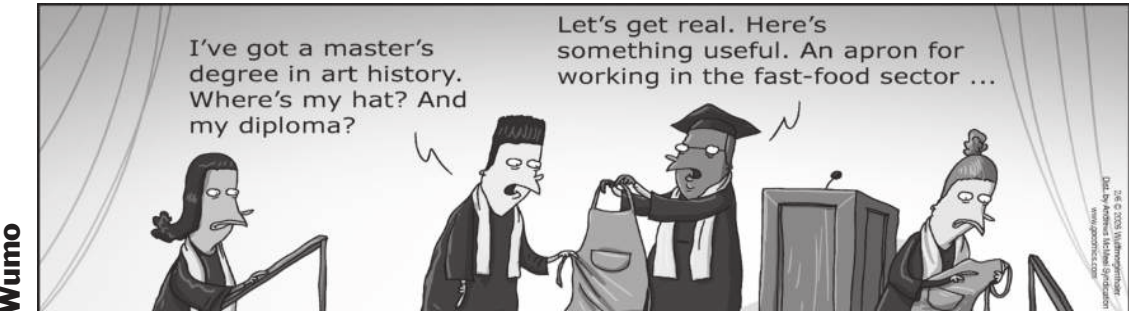
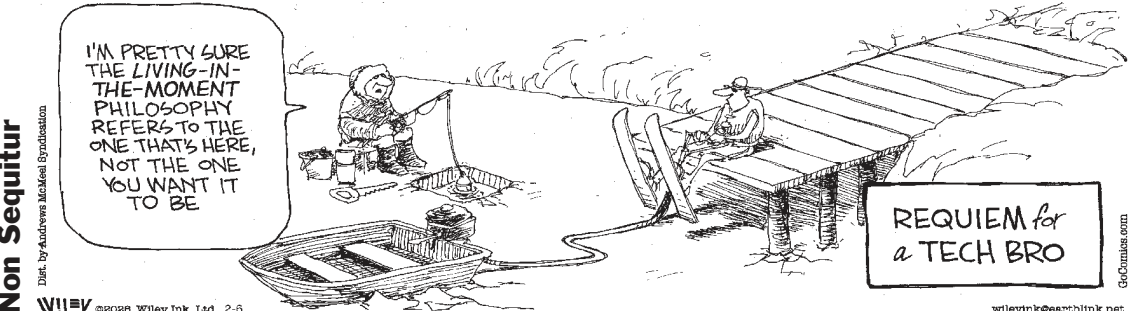
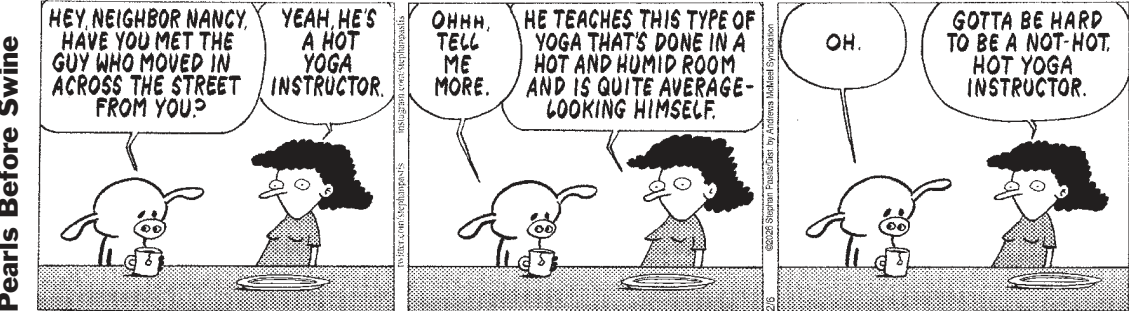
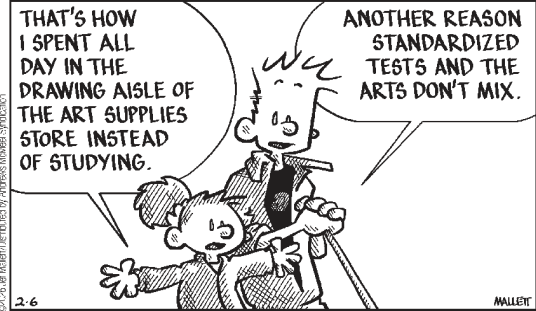
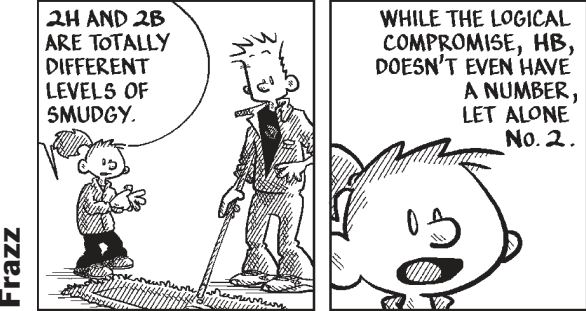
Work has been ongoing since the feds first froze funds in October, with a massive tunnel-boring machine standing by, ready to start digging through bedrock under Jersey City.

Gateway officials said last week the work would halt indefinitely on Friday if the feds don’t let the congressional dollars flow.

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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

- ACROSS
- 57 Fashion
- 22Baton Rouge sch.
- 24 O'Hare's airport code
- 26 Secretly follow
- 28 "Old MacDonald" refrain
- 30 Keats creation
- 32 Hardwood tree
- 33 Lennon's partner
- 34 Chicago — (WNBA team)
- 36 Touched down
- 38 Now
- 39 — Island
- 40 Wrath
- 42 Metal waste
- 45 Summer month in Paris
- 46 Slightly
- 48 Choice words?
- 50 Sushi choice
- 51 Compass dir.
- DOWN
- 1 Calif. clock setting
- 2 — -friendly
- 3 Giant evergreen tree
- 4 Burden
- 5 Request from the boss
- 6 Outdoor meal
- 7 Indy winner A.J.
- 8 Drink holder
- 9 "Ta-da!"
- 10 Respectful denial
- 11 Actress Thompson
- 17 Lumber mill cutter
- 19 Picture
- 21 Online info list
- 23 Brit. record label
- 24 Puccini piece
- 25 Tag sale words
- 27 Computers from Taiwan
- 29 Thick-shelled clam
- 31 Some potatoes
- 35 "21" singer
- 37 Flirt's signal
- 38 Profession
- 41 Help
- 43 Coquettish
- 44 "It can't be!"
- 45 Parka
- 47 Flowering tree
- 49 Slender woodwinds
- 52 Citric beverage
- 53 Wish otherwise
- 54 Begets
- 55 "— outta here!"
- 56 Norm (Abbr.)

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

2-6 CRYPTOQUIP

R ZRKQPSGEERP YRM UQPL

KGPQI HJ REYRLM CDVZWGVX

KWQ MRCQ KWGVX, MH GK

KDPVQI HUQP R VQY EQRJ.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NEVER LET TOO MUCH ALGAE ACCUMULATE IN AN AQUARIUM. IT MIGHT HAVE QUITE A TETRA-MENTAL EFFECT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals V

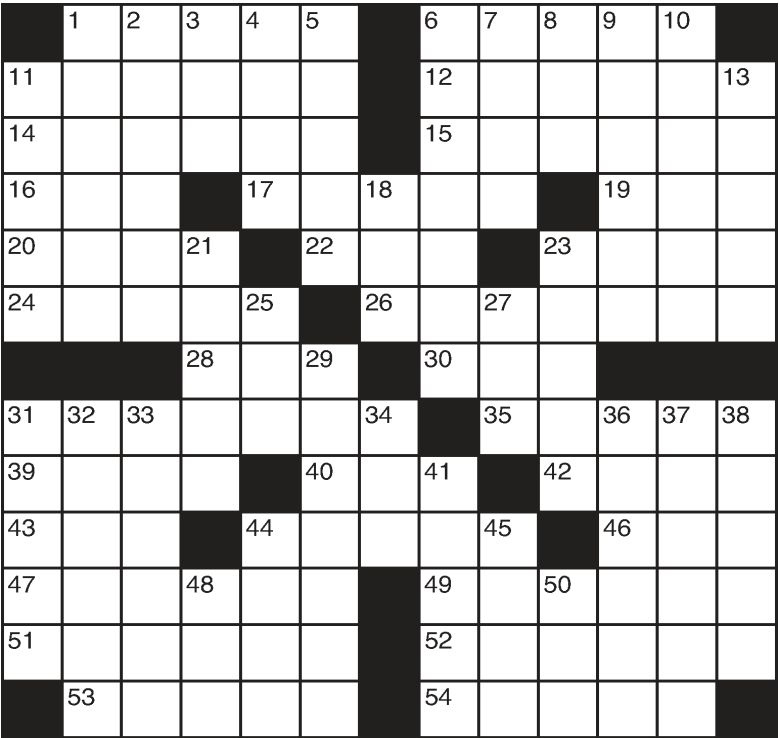
Bizarro



Loose Parts

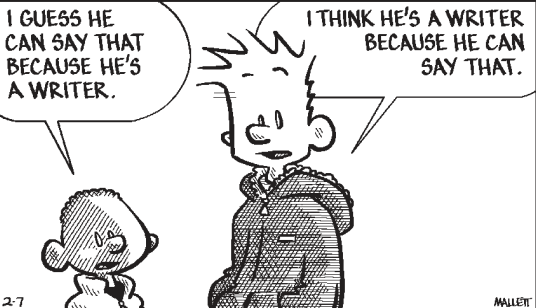


Eugene Sheffer Crossword

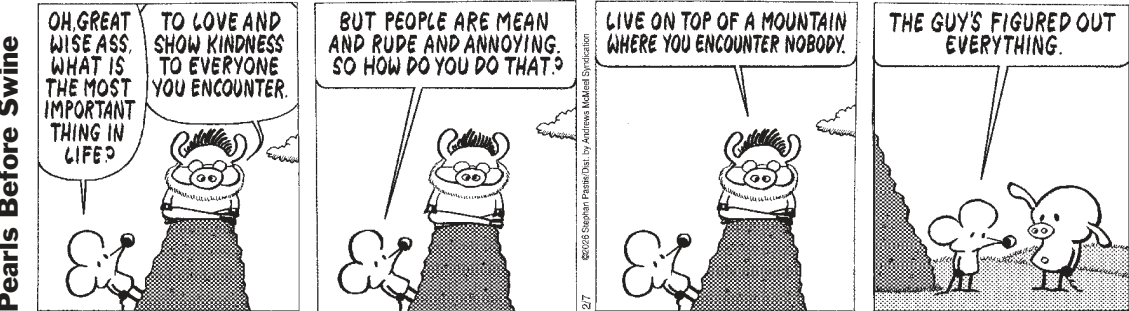


- ACROSS
- 1 Carne — (Mexican dish)
- 6 Founded (on)
- 11 Chef Lagasse
- 12 "How dare you!"
- 14 Address for a French friend
- 15 Tastelessly showy
- 16 NYC subway line
- 17 Reads quickly
- 19 Never, in Nuremberg
- 20 Old salts
- 22 Time line period
- 23 Bruins' sch.
- 24 In a sneaky way
- 26 Mozart's middle name
- 28 Small battery
- 30 Moreover
- 31 Mobile home?
- 35 Semesters
- 39 Cisterns
- 40 Nile reptile
- 42 Enlist again
- 43 K&N cry
- 44 Sir — Newton
- 46 Frazier foe
- 47 Spirited horses
- 49 Brain, slangily
- 51 Thrilling feeling
- 52 Low cards
- 53 Batting practice areas
- 54 Mortimer the dummy
- DOWN
- 1 Unprincipled
- 2 Gate tender
- 3 Palindromic constellation
- 4 Darkens
- 5 Similar
- 6 "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" role
- 7 Literary collections
- 8 Sun. talk
- 9 Show clearly
- 10 Arnaz/Ball studio
- 11 Radiates
- 13 Birds of the pampas
- 18 401(k) alternative
- 21 Marble hunks
- 23 Milk dispenser
- 25 "Homegoing" author — Gyasi
- 27 Busy insect
- 29 Gathers
- 31 Sailor's cry
- 32 Milk-related
- 33 Goddess of wisdom
- 34 Simile center
- 36 Book club fan
- 37 Pondered
- 38 Covert agents
- 41 Trousers
- 44 Not busy
- 45 "The Facts of Life" actress Mindy
- 48 Custard ingredient
- 50 Mine matter

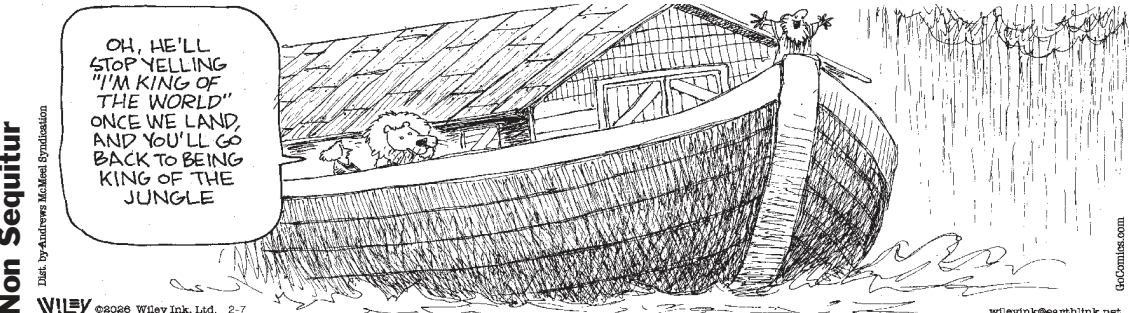
Frazz



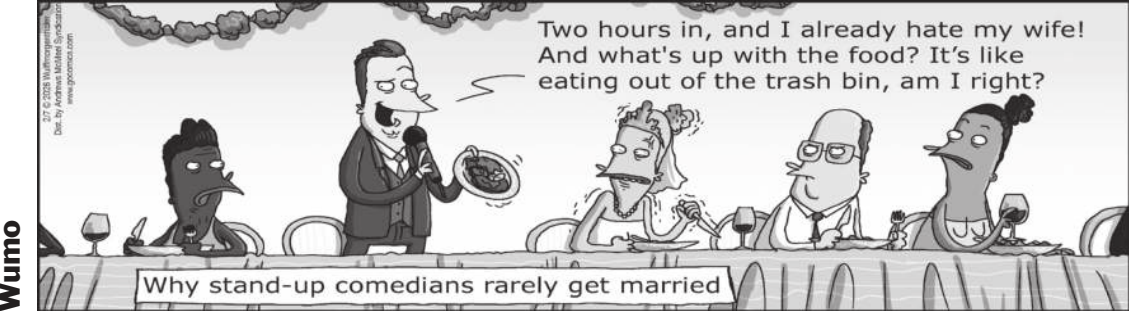
Pearls Before Swine



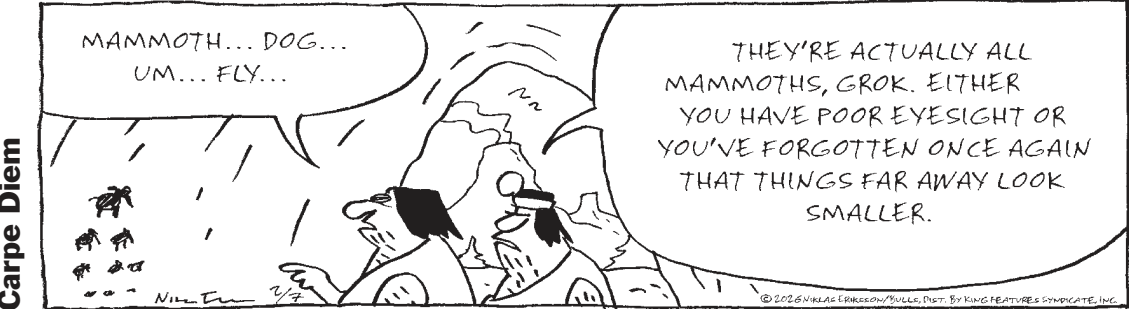
Non Sequitur



Wumo



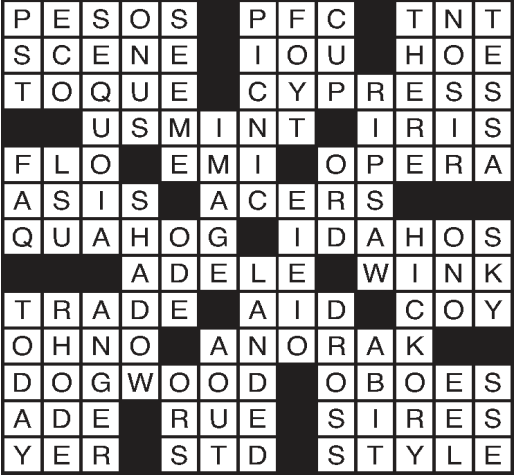
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Answer to Previous Puzzle



2-7

CRYPTOQUIP

JXIE GABHP G QXKPBXBOGVD
PCGP'R LBP G FCBIS AHOKC
BJ KBEEBO FBVQR BEXPPSQ:
"GAVXQLSQ PBB JGV."
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: A CATERPILLAR WAS VERY TIRED OF ALWAYS MUNCHING THE SAME THING, SO IT TURNED OVER A NEW LEAF.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals B



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Lt. Col. Daniel “DQ” Quinlan, Europe commander
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Jacqueline Smith

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OPINION

Choose your crisis: 6 paths to US fiscal disaster

BY GEORGE F. WILL
The Washington Post
As the national debt is a few months from reaching \$39 trillion, and perhaps \$40 trillion by the end of this year, it is puzzling how unperturbed the political class is. Or perhaps not. Writer and political agitator Upton Sinclair (1878-1968) said: “It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends upon his not understanding it.”
Or pretending not to. A bipartisan congressional consensus, more alarming than partisan rancor, is: There are no long-term fiscal gains without intense short-term political pains. So, because today’s congressional careers do not yet seem likely to coincide with coming dire consequences, let them come.
In 2016, a budget expert was allotted 20 minutes to brief Donald Trump on those possible consequences. After five minutes, Trump said, “Yeah, but I’ll be gone.” He was perfectly in sync with the political mainstream he professes to supplant.
Nevertheless, the undiscourageable Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget persists. Although few others think mere information can galvanize congressional action to forestall a darkening fiscal future, the committee recently described six possible crisis scenarios. Five are dramatic. The sixth is less so, but most alarming, and most likely.
Upwardly spiraling debt could provoke a financial crisis. Investors anxious about the U.S. fiscal outlook would demand sharply higher interest rates to entice them to purchase Treasurys. This would ignite a self-reinforcing debt spiral: Higher interest rates would slow economic growth, reducing government revenue while increasing government spending on debt service. Higher inter-

est rates on new debt would reduce the value of the much larger amount of existing debt. This would weaken the balance sheets of banks and other financial institutions. Because these would be deemed “too big to fail,” bailouts and spending to stimulate the sputtering economy would exacerbate the financial crisis.
An Everest of debt is an incentive for an inflation crisis to reduce the value of existing debt by paying lenders with debased dollars. But inflation would become baked into the expectations of investors, who would demand higher interest rates. Then R>G would bite: When interest rates paid on debt exceed the rate of economic growth, a crisis intensifies as rising interest rates depress economic growth.
An austerity crisis would occur with a large and abrupt combination of tax increases and spending reductions. Unemployment would increase, and the Federal Reserve would have little ability to combat economic contraction by reducing interest rates. Austerity is, however, rare in nations accustomed to assuming its opposite — an unending expectation, indeed entitlement, to opulence. The Economist says that “only once in the era of universal suffrage has a G7 economy” — a leading developed nation — “achieved a big fall in debt primarily by tightening its belt” (Canada in the 1990s).
A currency crisis would result from a depreciating dollar incentivizing foreign governments and private investors to diversify away from U.S. debt. A default crisis, although unlikely, would have the merit of bluntness: continuing to repay principal but not interest, or “restructuring,” which is government-speak for not repaying some debt.
The most probable, and most ominous,

outcome would be a gradual crisis. In 2021, debt service consumed less than 10% of federal revenue. In 2025: 18%. By being gradual, a protracted crisis would mean a demoralized nation slowly accommodating perpetual economic sluggishness, waning investments in research and development, social stagnation, diminished contribution from the entrepreneurial energies of talented immigrants, and waning U.S. geopolitical influence.
A gradual crisis would be anesthetizing, rather than an action-forcing, cymbal-crash event that could stimulate recuperative reforms of U.S. political culture. Instead, this culture would become more toxic. Political power would be fought for, and wielded, with the desperate ruthlessness of a zero-sum competition in which one faction’s gains must equal other factions’ losses.
So, government would simultaneously become more powerful, more divisive and less legitimate. The currency is how everyone meets the government every day through the unstated — because presumably obvious — government promise that the currency it issues is trustworthy.
Nothing unsettles a middle-class nation more rapidly than inflation, a component of all of these crises. By it, people are reminded daily that the currency is failing as a store of value. This unnerves the public as much as crime, today’s deportation mayhem and other disorders. Inflation is disorder. Its quiet ubiquity is especially sinister, making everyone feel powerless.
“Dystopian” is the antonym of “utopian.” “Utopia” was derived from Greek roots to denote something imaginary — “nowhere.” The dystopian consequences of U.S. debt could someday be everywhere.

Runoff regs skyrocket cost of building a new house

BY JUDGE GLOCK
The Washington Post
President Donald Trump announced a plan last month to lower housing costs by putting more federal money into mortgages and banning corporate investment in houses. Such efforts will do little, if anything, to make housing more affordable because state and local regulations are the main drivers of high costs.
Yet one federal regulation, about a seemingly mundane matter, is making nearly all housing and construction more expensive: rules governing stormwater.
It might sound like a minor issue, but stormwater runoff rules can add tens of thousands of dollars to the costs of a completed house. These federal regulations create onerous requirements for construction projects, add expensive features to finished buildings and sometimes stop housing development altogether. Getting the federal government to stop micromanaging stormwater runoff is one of the few ways Trump and Congress could directly reduce housing costs.
Since stormwater can pull dirt, oil and other pollutants off buildings and roads and into rivers and lakes, environmental groups have long sought ways to regulate it. In 1987, Congress required states and cities to limit runoff as part of the Clean Water Act. The Environmental Protection Agency saw an opportunity in the vaguely worded legislation to reshape much of the American landscape.
Despite lacking authority in the law itself, the EPA began requiring every construction

project over one acre to get a Construction General Permit. According to the National Association of Home Builders, these permits “are the most common environmental permit residential developers and builders must obtain.” Developers have to comply with the intricate details in the more than 100-page-long permit, in addition to 11 separate appendixes. They also have to draft a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, which can be hundreds of pages long and require details on everything from nearby historical sites to potential endangered species. Builders then must hire certified stormwater specialists to regularly inspect construction sites for runoff and fill out even more forms. Before fencing and landscaping begin, the paperwork alone can add thousands of dollars to a development.
The EPA also requires finished buildings and subdivisions to include features that limit runoff. The EPA says 95% of all building permits should include stormwater controls. New developments can be required to have features such as permeable pavements, green “swales” or ditches for runoff, dry wells to infiltrate water into the ground, green roofs and bioretention ponds. The EPA says stormwater controls should be extensive enough that runoff is no different after development than before, a particularly burdensome standard.
The EPA has never tried to calculate the full costs of its stormwater mandates, but studies show they are substantial. Beacon Economics, an independent economic research firm, estimated that the addition of stormwater mandates in San Bernardino County, Calif., “could

increase the construction cost of single-family homes by up to \$25,000.” A Rand study of Pittsburgh found that the costs of stormwater treatment for each paved acre could run over \$300,000.
Sometimes the costs go beyond dollars and cents. The proliferation of stormwater retention ponds in neighborhoods has caused a disturbing rise in children drowning. A study conducted by researchers from Nationwide Children’s Hospital found that 265 drowning deaths occurred in residential retention ponds, mainly children 1 to 4 years old, in the period from 2004 to 2020.
If these stormwater regulations truly cleaned up lakes and rivers, they might be justified. But by all indications the stormwater regulations are doing little to stop pollution. Even by the EPA’s own estimation, the costs of the most recent Construction General Permit rule outweighed the benefits. The EPA found that agriculture, not urban runoff, is the main pollution problem for rivers and streams.
Most burdens on building come from state and local governments, but Washington policymakers should focus on what they can change. The federal stormwater program is a massive burden on developers and drives up home prices across the nation with little benefit. If it were serious about cutting housing costs, the federal government would get out of the stormwater business altogether.

Judge Glock is director of research at the Manhattan Institute and author of “The Dead Pledge: The Origins of the Mortgage Market and Federal Bailouts, 1913-1939.”

Davis to Wizards in 8-player trade

BY SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

DALLAS — The Washington Wizards are acquiring Anthony Davis in an eight-player trade with the Mavericks that includes draft picks for Dallas, a person with knowledge of the deal said Wednesday.

The move is a signal the Mavericks are moving on from the widely criticized trade that sent superstar Luka Doncic to the Los Angeles Lakers for a package headlined by Davis last year.

Former general manager Nico Harrison, who was fired by Dallas in November, engineered the middle-of-the-night deal that angered fans. Trade speculation had surrounded Davis ever since Harrison was let go following a slow start to the season.

The Wizards are sending Khris Middleton, AJ Johnson, Malaki Branham and Marvin Bagley III to the Mavericks along with two first-round draft picks and three second-rounders, according to the person who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the deal had yet to be approved by the NBA.

Washington is getting three guards from Dallas in Jaden Hardy, D'Angelo Russell and Dante Exum.

The Wizards have made a stark shift recently from their rebuild after losing 67 and 64 games the past two seasons. Washington traded for Trae Young last month and now adds Davis to a group of young players that includes big man Alex Sarr, the No. 2 pick in 2024.

It's not clear if Young or Davis



TYLER TATE/AP

Dallas is trading forward Anthony Davis to the Wizards, a signal the Mavericks are moving on from the widely criticized trade that sent superstar Luka Doncic to Los Angeles last season.

will play much this season, which could be for the best given the Wizards lose their top draft pick this year if it falls outside No. 8.

Still, a deal like this suggests Washington is ready to move on from the phase of waiting for lottery luck. A 2026-27 team with Davis, Young, Sarr and other complementary players could be interesting in the Eastern Conference, although health is always a concern with somebody like Davis.

The 10-time All-Star has been out since Jan. 8 with a left hand injury and wasn't expected to return

before the All-Star break later this month.

Harrison's Doncic-for-Davis deal was so heavily criticized because he took on the big man with an extensive injury history while giving up a generational talent in his prime. Doncic was 25 at the time of the trade.

As might have been expected, Davis appeared in just 31 of a possible 84 games over two partial seasons with the Mavericks, including the two play-in tournament games he played last season.

The 32-year-old's ailments included a core muscle issue and a

calf strain before Davis injured his hand while defending a driving Lauri Markkanen of Utah last month.

The trade is a big step for Dallas toward making Cooper Flagg the next face of the franchise after Doncic. The rookie No. 1 pick set an NBA scoring record for a teenager with 49 points against Charlotte last week, and the 19-year-old is on a three-game streak of 30-point games, another league first for the under-20 group.

Flagg, who is averaging 20.1 points per game a year after leading Duke to the Final Four as just the fourth freshman to be named the AP men's basketball player of the year, doesn't turn 20 until next season.

The Mavericks lost all three games on Flagg's current 30-plus run and are on a five-game skid, a season worst. Dallas is 12th in the West at 19-31, making it increasingly unlikely that guard Kyrie Irving will play this season. The nine-time All-Star tore the ACL in his left knee last March.

Dallas is likely to miss the playoffs for the second consecutive season since Doncic and Irving led them to the 2024 NBA Finals. Boston won that series in five games.

Harrison traded Doncic believing that Davis, an elite player at both ends of the court, could pair with Irving to keep the Mavericks in contention for several years. Instead, Davis and Irving shared the court just once before Davis exited with an aggravation of his abdominal injury in the third quarter of his Dallas debut. Irving injured his knee less than a month later.

Warriors get Porzingis, send Hawks Kuminga

BY JANIE MCCAULEY
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The Golden State Warriors found their dependable big man by acquiring Kristaps Porzingis from Atlanta and granted forward Jonathan Kuminga his wish to be traded while also dealing guard Buddy Hield to the Hawks, according to a person with knowledge of the swap.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity Wednesday night because the trade had not yet been approved by the league.

Kuminga sat out Tuesday night's 113-94 loss to the Philadelphia 76ers because of a bone bruise in his left knee, his fifth straight missed game.

The Hawks had listed Porzingis — who has recently missed time with an Achilles tendon injury — as questionable for Thursday's game against Utah because of an illness. Atlanta also acquired center Jock Landale from the Jazz, a

person with knowledge of the trade told the AP.

In mid-January, Warriors coach Steve Kerr spoke with Kuminga about being out of the rotation for more than a month and the expectation that he would be traded. However, general manager Mike Dunleavy said on Jan. 20 after Jimmy Butler's season-ending knee injury that there wasn't an immediate indication other teams were interested in Kuminga.

"As far as the demand, I'm aware of that," Dunleavy said, referencing Kuminga's trade request.

"I think when you, in terms of demands, when you make a demand, there needs to be a demand on the market. So we'll see where that unfolds."

Kerr discounted any issues between him and Kuminga as the reason the high-flying forward requested a trade after not being used in 17 of 18 games — though he has been listed as injured for nine



JOHN McDONNELL/AP

Center Kristaps Porzingis, left, will have played with six teams after his trade from Atlanta to Golden State is finalized.

games this season.

A 23-year-old from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Golden State's seventh overall pick in the 2021 draft, Kuminga appeared in 20 games this season with 13 starts, averaging 12.1 points, 5.9 rebounds and 2.5 assists.

On Sept. 30, he agreed to a two-year contract that could be worth

up to \$46.5 million if the team were to exercise its option for 2026-27. Kuminga had a \$7.9 million qualifying offer in hand since June 29 but was also weighing other options and he missed the team's media day.

Kuminga missed much of last season with a right ankle injury. He averaged 15.3 points, 4.6 rebounds and 2.2 assists in 24.3 minutes over 47 games with 10 starts. He also scored 15.3 points per game over eight playoff games while shooting 48.4% from the floor and making 40% of his 3-point attempts. That included a career-best 30-point performance in Game 3 of the Western Conference semifinals against the Minnesota Timberwolves last May.

The 7-foot-2 Porzingis is averaging 17.1 points, 5.1 rebounds and 2.7 assists.

The Warriors will be the sixth team in 10 seasons for the 30-year-old Latvian nicknamed "The Unicorn" for his combination of length and outside shooting touch.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference					
Atlantic Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
New York	33	18	.647	—	
Boston	33	18	.647	—	
Philadelphia	29	21	.580	3½	
Toronto	30	22	.577	3½	
Brooklyn	13	36	.265	19	
Southeast Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Miami	27	25	.519	—	
Orlando	25	24	.510	½	
Atlanta	25	27	.481	2	
Charlotte	23	28	.451	3½	
Washington	13	36	.265	12½	
Central Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Detroit	37	12	.755	—	
Cleveland	31	21	.596	7½	
Chicago	24	27	.471	14	
Milwaukee	20	29	.408	17	
Indiana	13	38	.255	25	
Western Conference					
Southwest Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	34	16	.680	—	
Houston	31	18	.633	2½	
Memphis	20	29	.408	13½	
Dallas	19	31	.380	15	
New Orleans	13	40	.245	22½	
Northwest Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Oklahoma City	40	12	.769	—	
Denver	33	19	.635	7	
Minnesota	32	20	.615	8	
Portland	23	28	.451	16½	
Utah	16	35	.314	23½	
Pacific Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
L.A. Lakers	30	19	.612	—	
Phoenix	31	20	.608	—	
Golden State	27	24	.529	4	
L.A. Clippers	23	27	.460	7½	
Sacramento	12	40	.231	19½	
Tuesday's games					
Utah 131, Indiana 122 New York 132, Washington 101 Detroit 124, Denver 121 L.A. Lakers 125, Brooklyn 109 Atlanta 127, Miami 115 Milwaukee 131, Chicago 115 Oklahoma City 128, Orlando 92 Boston 110, Dallas 100 Philadelphia 113, Golden State 94 Phoenix 130, Portland 125					
Wednesday's games					
Minnesota 128, Toronto 126 New York 134, Denver 127, 2OT Boston 114, Houston 93 Milwaukee 141, New Orleans 137, OT San Antonio 116, Oklahoma City 106 Memphis 129, Sacramento 125 Cleveland 124, L.A. Clippers 91					
Thursday's games					
Brooklyn at Orlando Washington at Detroit Chicago at Toronto Utah at Atlanta Charlotte at Houston San Antonio at Dallas Golden State at Phoenix Philadelphia at L.A. Lakers					
Friday's games					
Miami at Boston New York at Detroit Indiana at Milwaukee New Orleans at Minnesota L.A. Clippers at Sacramento Memphis at Portland					
Saturday's games					
Washington at Brooklyn Houston at Oklahoma City Dallas at San Antonio Utah at Orlando Charlotte at Atlanta Denver at Chicago Golden State at L.A. Lakers Philadelphia at Phoenix Cleveland at Sacramento Memphis at Portland					
Scoring leaders Through Wednesday					
	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Doncic, LAL	41	434	352	1369	33.4
Gilg.-Alex., OKC	49	534	403	1558	31.8
Edwards, MIN	42	429	247	1246	29.7
Brown, BOS	46	503	251	1356	29.5
Maxey, PHI	48	486	249	1386	28.9
Mitchell, CLE	48	481	241	1381	28.8
Leonard, LAC	37	358	203	1020	27.6
Brunson, NY	46	447	230	1260	27.4
Markkanen, UTA	37	344	221	1013	27.4
Curry, GS	39	348	190	1061	27.2

WINTER OLYMPICS

Opening ceremony will be held in iconic venue

By DANIELLA MATAR
Associated Press
MILAN — Milan's San Siro stadium is set for a final hurrah.

The opening ceremony for the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics will likely be the last event of major global significance held at the iconic stadium before it is torn down in the next few years.

The 99-year-old arena is home to soccer clubs Inter Milan and AC Milan, which completed the purchase of San Siro and the surrounding area from the city in November.

The clubs plan to knock it down and build a new stadium, ready for when Italy co-hosts the 2032 European Championship with Turkey.

San Siro has a capacity of just under 76,000, although that will be reduced to 60,000 for the opening ceremony.

Here are some things to know about the historic venue:

Technically not San Siro

The stadium was originally named after the San Siro district of Milan where it is located. The name was officially changed to Stadio Giuseppe Meazza in 1980, however, several months after the legendary Milanese soccer player died.

Meazza, who was also a two-time World Cup winner with Italy, spent most of his career at Inter and had a two-year spell at Milan.

He also managed Inter on three separate occasions. It is more common for Inter fans to refer to the stadium as the Meazza than Milan fans, although most still call it simply San Siro.

The arena is also nicknamed "La Scala del calcio" (La Scala of soccer) after the famous Milanese opera house.

Rise of an icon

The stadium was built in a record time of 13 months, between August 1925 and September 1926 — making it the fifth-oldest stadium still in use in Italy.

It originally looked little like it currently does.

Piero Pirelli, president of AC Milan at the time, was a huge fan

of English soccer and took inspiration from those stadiums. San Siro originally had four separate stands and was designed purely for soccer, without an athletics track.

It did have links with another sport, however, as it served the needs of the nearby horseracing track. While some of the spaces under the stands were used as dressing rooms, showers and management offices, others functioned as stables, barns and storage rooms for fodder.

In 1947, Inter joined Milan as tenants of San Siro and shortly after the second ring was added, with the work completed in 1955 and taking the capacity to over 80,000.

For more than three decades, San Siro remained largely unchanged until its last major renovation — just before the 1990 World Cup — that saw it take on the form now globally recognized.

A third tier was built (only on three sides), supported by the now-iconic cylindrical towers arranged around the stadium which give access to the stands. Four of those 11 towers also hold up the large supporting beams for the new roof.

Not just soccer

San Siro was inaugurated Sept. 19, 1926 when Inter beat Milan 6-2 in a friendly match. It held its first league game the following month, when Milan also lost — 2-1 to Sampierdarenese.

The stadium has also hosted a number of Italy games, as well as three matches during the 1934 World Cup and six during the 1990 edition.

Rugby and boxing have also taken place at San Siro, which has also held numerous concerts featuring Italian and international artists such as: Vasco Rossi, Bob Marley, Bruce Springsteen, Michael Jackson, Madonna and The Rolling Stones.

The stadium was supposed to host the 2027 Champions League final, but uncertainty over the timetable for planned works forced UEFA to pull the plan two years ago.



LUCA BRUNO/AP

The San Siro Stadium will host the opening ceremony of the Milan Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics before it is torn down to build a new stadium. San Siro has served as a venue for boxing matches and concerts.



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON/AP

Italy's Giovanni Franzoni starts an alpine ski men's downhill training event at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Bormio, Italy, on Thursday. Many of the events will be spread throughout northern Italy.

New era of Games ready to start at Milan Cortina

By ANDREW DAMPF
Associated Press

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy — Will there be an Olympic spirit or will it seem like a bunch of individual world championships? Will a complicated transport network connecting far-flung venues run smoothly?

Will crowds fill the arenas, rinks and stadiums despite sluggish advance ticket sales? Will the controversial sliding venue and main hockey arena feel finished following construction delays? Will the locals remain more interested in soccer than snow and ice sports?

The answers to these and many other questions that shadowed the preparation of the Milan Cortina Olympics are about to be answered.

When the XXV Winter Games kick off with the opening ceremony at the San Siro soccer stadium Friday, it won't just be the athletes who are going to be tested. It's a new era for the entire Olympic movement.

Spread out over a vast swath of northern Italy, these Olympics are the first to truly embrace the International Olympic Committee's reform plan of using existing venues no matter how far apart they are.

Skating sports will be held in Milan; women's Alpine skiing, sliding and curling in Cortina d'Ampezzo; Nordic sports in Val di Fiemme; men's Alpine skiing and ski mountaineering in Bormio; snowboarding and freestyle in Livigno; and biathlon in Anterselva.

In all, this Olympic footprint covers an area of nearly 10,000 square miles. That's about the size of the state of Massachusetts.

"I do believe that we took the right decision in having a more dispersed games," new IOC President Kirsty Coventry said. "But it has — and I think we can all say very openly and honestly — it has added additional complexities."

Complexities that Olympic organizers are going to have to get used to because this is the first of several Winter Games arranged with the same model.

The 2030 French Alps Games don't even have a host city in its name. Same for Utah in 2034; and probably for a Switzerland bid — the only candidate — for 2038, too.

Spread out ceremony

Adapting to the new model extends beyond the competition.

The opening ceremony will also be spread over multiple locations, with athlete parades held simultaneously in Milan, Cortina, Livigno and Val di Fiemme. There will be two cauldrons lit, one in Milan and another in Cortina.

Former Olympic champion skiers Alberto Tomba and Deborah Compagnoni are the favorites to light the cauldrons in Milan and Cortina, respectively.

Lindsey Vonn

American skiing standout Lindsey Vonn, competing in her fifth Olympics, has mixed feelings about the new formula.

"I mean, I'm in Cortina, so there's really nothing to complain

about. I'm very happy being here. It's one of the most beautiful places in the world. But it is sad to not be closer to more of your teammates, not just in ski racing, but in any sport," said Vonn, who plans to race despite a torn ACL in her left knee.

"Salt Lake City was my favorite Olympics because we were all so close to each other. Almost everyone was in the Olympic Village in Salt Lake and this is quite different," said Vonn, referring to the 2002 Games. "A lot of the girls (teammates) were talking about wanting to watch hockey, but it's difficult. ... Obviously you can't choose that geography and where the mountains are, but I think it would have been more fun if we were all closer."

Down to the wire

The sliding center in Cortina was rebuilt against the wishes of the IOC, which preferred using an existing venue for bobsled, luge and skeleton in nearby Switzerland or Austria.

The sliding track itself is finished, tested and ready. But surrounding areas of the track are still under construction. Fortunately for organizers, it has snowed all week in Cortina.

"Obviously outside (the track) there are still some little things," Italian luger Dominik Fischnaller said. "But the snow will cover it, so we're good for the Games."

A gondola lift to the Alpine skiing center in Cortina also remains unfinished, which will slow the access of spectators to the races.

WINTER OLYMPICS

US women seeking to prove talent as hockey play begins

BY JOHN WAWROW
Associated Press

MILAN — As talented and deep as the Americans appear to be, coach John Wroblewski wasn't ready to accept his team being considered the favorite a day before the women's hockey tournament opens at the Milan Cortina Games.

After initially sidestepping the question following practice Wednesday, Wroblewski reflected more on the lows — rather than the highs — the United States has endured in the four years since he took over.

"You say we're favorites. What if you would have asked this in February of 2024?" he said, referring to the U.S. losing a seven-game Rivalry Series of exhibition games to Canada. The Americans lost the final four games by a combined margin of 16-5.

"I mean, Canada was cleaning us up in Rivalry. We weren't even getting the puck," Wroblewski said. "I remember those bruises and those scars. And I'm sure you've got Hilary (Knight) and Megan (Keller), Alex (Carpenter) in particular, they were in those games and it's not much fun to be in those games."

True enough.

The two nations are 2-2 in world championship tournaments since Canada won its fifth gold medal at the 2022 Beijing Games.

And though Canada holds the edge in winning three of the past four Rivalry Series, what's difficult to overlook is how dominating the Americans appeared in overwhelming their cross-border rivals in their most recent meetings spanning November and December.

The U.S. swept all four games by a combined score of 24-7. That included a 10-4 win in Game 3, which marked the most goals the Canadian women have ever allowed in international play.

Though the exhibition series generally isn't an indicator on how the two global powers fare in international competition, the sweep raised eyebrows over a potential shift in power favoring the Americans.

"I don't know. You tell me?" said U.S. captain Hilary Knight, who will be making her fifth and potentially final Olympic appearance. "It's a clean slate every time you get to a tournament. You have to work hard."

The U.S. opened Group A play facing the Czech Republic on Thursday in a four-game preliminary round schedule that closes with a showdown against Canada on Tuesday. And it's more than likely the two nations will meet yet again in the gold-medal match Feb. 18.

Led by captain Marie-Philip Poulin, Canada returns 16 players



ADRIAN KRAUS/AP

U.S. forward Hilary Knight, center, celebrates with defensewoman Laila Edwards, left, and forward Alex Carpenter after scoring in the third period of a Rivalry Series game against Canada on Nov. 8 in Buffalo, N.Y.

from the team that set numerous scoring records and finished 7-0 in dominating the 2022 Beijing Games. The U.S. roster, by comparison, has been transformed by a youth movement. Only 11 of 23 return from 2022 on a team featuring seven players yet to complete their college careers.

Canada coach Troy Ryan is impressed, referring to the U.S. roster as featuring one of the best young cores he's ever seen.

But he's not ready to give way to perception or prognosis, while acknowledging his team was not pleased with how it performed in the latest Rivalry Series.

"Joking with our team, I said, 'No one put a parade together for the first three Rivalry Series wins, so I'm not going to hang myself on a Rivalry Series loss,'" Ryan said.

"Correct me if I'm wrong, I think Denmark, Utica (New York), Brampton (Ontario), and Czechia, I think we were not favored," he added, referring to the sites of the past four world championships. "So it just feels normal."

The U.S. has won six straight meetings against the Canadians, dating to preliminary-round and gold-medal wins at the world championships in April.

"I don't mind being the underdog. But we don't really see ourselves as that," Canadian forward Brienne Jenner said. "We know what the expectations are for our country. But you know what, we're fine with whatever story people want to tell about us. We're ready to prove ourselves the next two weeks."

The Czechs and Finland might

also have a say in the matter. The two have split bronze over the past four world championships, with the Czech Republic winning in 2022 and '23, followed by Finland winning the past two.

"It has allowed our confidence to grow. And with confidence comes hunger. So I think we're a hungry group," Czech Republic coach Carla MacLeod said of a team that only made its Olympic debut in 2022. "It's only our second Olympics. But certainly there's a belief in the room that we can go play our best games and see where it takes us."

Switzerland rounds out Group A.

Sweden is considered the favorite to win Group B, which also features Japan, Germany, Italy and France, which is making its Olympic debut.

US Speedskating faces odd fantasy football punishments

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Fun and goofy off-ice bonding is no guarantee of Olympic success, of course.

Still, the U.S. Speedskating team competing at the Milan Cortina Winter Games starting Saturday does see value in the odd-as-can-be plastic foot attached to a phone case and the schoolkid's pink, heart-festooned backpack that Casey Dawson is schlepping around town as punishment for losing at fantasy football.

"It keeps me humble. It keeps me grounded. It puts a smile on my face every time I see it. It's kind of ridiculous, but it's fun. It keeps everything fun and light-hearted," said Dawson, a 25-year-old from Park City, Utah, whose first event at this Winter Games comes Sunday in the men's 5,000 meters.

"Unfortunately, the timing is the Games," he said. "So I have to



HOWARD FENDRICH/AP

U.S. speedskater Casey Dawson has a plastic foot attached to his phone case as part a punishment for losing in his team's fantasy football league.

carry it around for the biggest stage in the world."

Rest assured, the TV cameras

capturing every athlete's every move at the Speed Skating Stadium, a temporary structure built

for these races, will zoom in on Dawson's accessories at some point. It's probably going to come up in interviews, too.

So how did he "earn" this honor?

By bringing up the rear during the NFL's 2024-25 season in a 10-team league based on football players' individual statistics, he was stuck with the loser's gear for speedskating's 2025-26 season.

"People remember the losers," explained Ethan Cepuran, a 25-year-old from Glen Ellyn, Ill., who is slated for two long track events in Milan, "a lot more than the winners."

All of the fantasy squads in the competition are managed by speedskaters, most of whom, including Brittany Bowe, Mia Manganello, Sarah Warren and Zach Stoppelmoor, qualified for the Feb. 6-22 Olympics in Italy.

"It's a good distraction (from)

the stress of competing," Cepuran said. "We're not just talking about speedskating all the time on the road or at practice."

Emery Lehman wound up last in the most recent NFL season, which wraps up Sunday with the Super Bowl.

He'll be retiring after these Olympics, his fourth, and heading into the real world: Lehman has been studying financial planning in hopes of a job in that sector and plans to work with skaters at a Chicago rink he grew up going to.

"We're always trying to one-up ourselves," Dawson said. "Maybe it'll be a roller suitcase next season."

Lehman offered another suggestion.

"I think my punishment is I've got to come back ... to skate a 1,500," Lehman said. "That's worse than carrying the pink backpack. I'd rather carry the pink backpack."

SUPER BOWL

Diggs' fire has helped fuel Patriots' run

By KYLE HIGHTOWER
Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Left back pylon. One knee. Head bowed. Eyes closed.

That is how Stefon Diggs will spend some of his final moments prior to kickoff of the first Super Bowl of his career.

It's been a staple of the wide receiver's routine before each game he's played this season for the New England Patriots.

Following pregame warmups, he also calls his teammates in to huddle around him as he leads one of a series of impassioned, fiery and often viral speeches.

"I just say what I feel like I'm supposed to do and just go," Diggs said. "It's not so much the words, it's more so the tenacity."

Then, he turns the volume down for his prayer in the corner of the end zone.

"Taking a second to kind of appreciate where I am and give my thanks to God and kind of have my little moment with him. Thanking him for the trials and tribulations," Diggs said. "Building my character up a little bit as a person and making these shoulders weight-bearing, I guess."

Both are necessary for the player whom teammates have called the emotional centerpiece of their Super Bowl run. And for Diggs, it's been fuel during a comeback season that didn't seem likely after his tenure in Houston last season was cut short by a knee injury.

But after posting his seventh 1,000-yard receiving season in his 11th year in the league, he may also be the not-so-secret weapon for an



JOHN LOCHER/AP

New England Patriots wide receiver Stefon Diggs celebrates after winning the AFC Championship game against the Broncos on Jan. 25 in Denver.

offense that will need to be at its best against a Seattle defense that allowed an NFL-low 17.2 points per game during the regular season.

So many of the things that got Diggs to this point stemmed from an initial sense of trust he found early in his free agent process last summer.

When Diggs signed with the Texans in 2024, he acknowledged it was in an effort to chase a championship. But he purposely didn't have many expectations after signing in free agency with New England.

What drew him initially to the Patriots was a sense of trust he felt

after finding an almost instant connection with wide receivers coach Todd Downing, who was the tight ends coach in Minnesota in 2018 when Diggs was there.

He got the same thing from the "straight shooter" he met in coach Mike Vrabel, as well as offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels. It was McDaniels whom Diggs credits with unlocking a work ethic he hadn't had during his pro career.

McDaniels said the veteran receiver has been the perfect match for second-year quarterback Drake Maye.

"I think it's great for Drake to be around a player as accomplished as Stef," McDaniels said. "Drake

has learned how to assimilate with him, (to) work together with a player that has been around a long time and been around a lot of good quarterbacks. I think it's been great for Drake's growth and development."

After Diggs eclipsed 1,000 yards during New England's regular-season finale, a win over Miami, Maye's mind went back to the pre-season when he invited all the receivers to his home state of North Carolina for some throwing sessions.

He didn't think someone as "big time" as Diggs would have time to participate. But he did.

"Kind of from that point on, I felt

like, man, looking forward to getting with him on the field and seeing him do his thing, and he's done his thing time and time again," Maye said. "Some games he's not getting the ball as much as any receiver would want to, and he's still trying to block hard and keeps the energy up and breaking the team down and motivating me."

Wide receiver DeMario Douglas also said Diggs has been central to their group bonding.

"Before this season even started we got close," Douglas said. "That was a big reason of us not being selfish. Of course, we're all receivers, we all want to touch the ball. But ... like your brothers, your blood brothers, you want to see them do great no matter what. This is how it is in our room."

Diggs has also created a new Patriots fan along way, thanks to his high-profile relationship with Grammy-winning rapper Cardi B. She and Diggs also celebrated the birth of a son together in November. It's helped Diggs keep his mind on football after being accused in December of strangulation and other criminal charges in connection with a dispute with his former private chef. Diggs has denied the allegations.

As for Sunday, Diggs expects to bring the same voice for his team that he has all season.

"I mean what I say and say what I mean," Diggs said. "My teammates know that, and the biggest thing is they know I'm trying not to be a 'rah-rah' guy. I try to be more show rather than I tell. It's the fact that I can back my words up with what I say. I try to go as hard as I can to give it everything I've got."

Priceless: Darnold had 6 seasons of mediocrity before breaking through

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caught him saying he was "seeing ghosts" during a particularly bad performance in a prime-time loss to New England in 2019.

The Jets unloaded him to Carolina after the 2020 season, and Darnold wasn't any better in two seasons shuttling in and out of the lineup with the Panthers as he posted a 77.3 passer rating in 18 games.

That led Darnold to take a backup contract in free agency with the Niners at \$4.5 million for the 2023 season. He wanted to immerse himself in coach Kyle Shanahan's offense that has become so popular in the league.

"It was great to play in Kyle's system, to have Kyle as a coach, to hear him talk about football during OTAs and training camp, when we had a ton of time to talk to him as a

quarterback," Darnold said. "I soaked all those moments in to just be able to learn as much as I could, just because I felt like he talked about football in a way that I had really never heard before, so that was really special for me."

Darnold beat out Trey Lance to be the backup to Brock Purdy, whose path was in complete contrast to Darnold's. Purdy entered the league in 2022 as the last pick in the draft and became an MVP finalist in the 2023 season.

Darnold said he learned so much from watching Purdy practice and prepare, as well as from quarterbacks coach Brian Griese, who had played 11 seasons in the NFL.

But even though he wasn't playing, the physical gifts that made Darnold the No. 3 pick were evident.

"He was at a point of his career where he was at a crossroads," said Seattle offensive coordinator Clint Kubiak, who was the passing game coordinator in San Francisco in 2023. "He came into that role as Brock Purdy's backup. He was not a guy that was looking to jump in and take Brock's spot. He was supporting our quarterback. And all the while, you could see just the talent that he had and how he grew that season. Brian Griese was a phenomenal coach and continued to develop him. Then when he got his chance he was ready."

That happened the next season when Darnold won 14 games as a starter in Minnesota before flaming out in the playoffs. The Vikings then moved on and let him leave in free agency, and he came to the Seahawks to reunite with Kubiak.



BRYNN ANDERSON/AP

Seattle Seahawks quarterback Sam Darnold runs drills during practice Wednesday in San Jose, Calif., ahead of Super Bowl 60.

Darnold led Seattle to 14 wins this season — joining Tom Brady as the only quarterbacks with back-to-back seasons of at least 14 wins — and is now in the Super Bowl.

"We were really fortunate to get him," Kubiak said. "When he came to us, he was just so much

more of a mature player. He had a lot of scars and he used those scars to make himself a better player. So we just got him in the perfect time of his career when he was hungry as he could be. He took all the experience that he had and helped lead our offense."

SUPER BOWL

AP SPORTS



NFL EXTRA

THIS YEAR'S MATCHUP AMONG THE MOST UNLIKELY AT START OF SEASON

SUPER BOWL

BY ARNIE MELENDREZ STAPLETON

AP Pro Football Writer

Mike Vrabel and Sam Darnold are bringing the unlikeliest of Super Bowl matchups to Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif., a showdown that drew 4,800-to-1 odds at the start of the season.

Those preseason odds seemed about right when both the New England Patriots (80-to-1) and Seattle Seahawks (60-to-1) lost their season openers too.

But the longshots wouldn't be stopped short on their way to Super Bowl 60.

Vrabel, who was fired by the Tennessee Titans in 2023, replaced Jerod Mayo as head coach in New England after his one-year stint produced a second straight 4-13 season. Vrabel quickly turned around the Patriots (17-3), who dispatched the Chargers, Texans and Broncos — three top-5 defenses — in the playoffs on their way to their 12th Super Bowl appearance.

Vrabel, who won three Super Bowls as a playmaking linebacker for New England, could become the first person in NFL history to also win as a head coach for the same franchise.

"I won't win it. It'll be the players that'll win the game," Vrabel said. "I promise you, it won't be me that'll win it, and I promise you that I'll do everything I can, and our staff, to have them ready for the game."

Vrabel tied George Seifert of the San Francisco 49ers in 1989 with 17 victories, including playoffs, in his first season with a team.

Patriots signal-caller Drake Maye became the first member of the vaunted 2024 quarterback draft class to reach the big game — despite taking 15 sacks so far in the playoffs. With the Broncos' Bo Nix, his pre-draft training partner, watching from a suite just days after undergoing ankle surgery, Maye scrambled for 57 yards in the snow in Denver, allowing the Patriots to convert on second-and-10, third-and-9 and third-and-15 on their way to a 10-7 win over the Broncos in the AFC championship.

One of Vrabel's first moves after becoming Patriots head coach was to bring back Josh McDaniels for his third stint as New England's offensive coordinator, this time to tutor Maye, the third overall pick of the 2024 NFL draft out of North Carolina.

"He does a great job of mixing it up,



Seattle Seahawks vs. New England Patriots

KICKOFF: SUNDAY, FEB. 8, AT 6:30 P.M. EST

doing what we do best," Maye said. "I think we still haven't played our best football yet in these playoffs. I'm looking forward to seeing that and hopefully having that click and win the Super Bowl. That would be pretty cool.

"I think just having him and knowing what the game is like, he's great at having a feel for that. I think he's the best offensive coordinator in the league. I got full trust in him."

Led by quarterback Sam Darnold, who previously played for the Minnesota Vikings, San Francisco 49ers, Carolina Panthers and New York Jets, the Seahawks (16-3) rolled past the Niners and edged the Los Angeles Rams in the playoffs on their way to their fourth Super Bowl appearance and first in 11 years.

Seahawks coach Mike Macdonald has a chance to become the first head coach to win a Super Bowl as his team's primary defensive play caller. The last coach with primarily defensive roots to lift the Lombardi Trophy was

Bill Belichick after the 2018 season.

The Seahawks jumped at the chance to acquire Darnold after the Vikings let him leave following a 14-3 season that ended with back-to-back blowouts at the hands of the Lions and Rams last year. The Vikings decided to go with J.J. McCarthy and Minnesota stumbled to a 9-8 record while Darnold, who replaced Geno Smith in Seattle, was joining Tom Brady as the only quarterbacks with back-to-back 14-win seasons.

Darnold is the first QB in NFL history to do so with two different teams and his performances in these playoffs, especially the NFC championship, show he's finally shaking that label of not being a big-game quarterback.

"I mean, 300-something yards, three touchdowns, no picks," Macdonald said after Seattle's 31-27 win over the Rams to get to the Super Bowl. "Every time they went and scored he came back, made some big-time throws on third down, two-minute drive, four-minute drive. ... Just really happy for him. He deserves it. Just been a rock for us the whole year."

This Super Bowl is a rematch of Super Bowl 49, when the Seahawks were on the cusp of winning only to see Malcolm Butler intercept Russell Wilson's pass at the goal line in the waning seconds, preserving New England's 28-24 win and denying the Seahawks consecutive Super Bowl titles.

The Patriots have won a half dozen Lombardi Trophies, all with Brady, now the lead NFL analyst for Fox Sports and a limited partner of the Las Vegas Raiders, and Pro Football Hall of Fame finalist Belichick, now head coach at the University of North Carolina.

"This city is used to winning," Patriots cornerback Christian Gonzalez said. "So getting us back to where we want to be is big."

Seattle is seeking its second championship parade to go with the one from its 43-8 demolition of Denver in Super Bowl 48.

"We don't have a bunch of superstars and all that," Macdonald said. "Just a really good football team that is tough and connected and didn't blink."

These upstart Patriots have already accomplished something that their predecessors couldn't do in four tries: win a playoff game in Denver.

"It's a new team, it's a new era," Maye said. "I respect and appreciate what the Patriots dynasty did, and unfortunately, they didn't come out with some wins here, but we changed that narrative and look forward to bringing our best football to Santa Clara. That'll be pretty special."



Sam Darnold

Drake Maye

SPORTS

Multi-talented

Howe balances figure skating, military, chaplain training » **Winter Olympics, Page 29**



STEPHEN BRASHEAR/AP

Seattle quarterback Sam Darnold went from being the third overall draft pick in 2018 to being a backup with the San Francisco 49ers in 2023 to leading the Seahawks to the Super Bowl this season.

SUPER BOWL

Priceless experience

Darnold's season as backup QB with 49ers helped give him shot at championship

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — San Darnold's NFL career had hit rock bottom when he arrived in San Francisco in 2023 after failing at two spots to live up to his high draft billing.

Less than three years later, he's ready to step on football's biggest stage as the starting quarterback for the Seattle Seahawks in the Super Bowl on Sunday.

"I always believed in myself," Darnold said. "I knew that I could do this at a high level, and that was really it. That's what kept me going and I knew at some point an opportunity would arise. But even if it didn't, I knew I did everything that I can to become a better player year in and year out."

Darnold's journey from draft bust to Super Bowl quarterback is a remarkable one, and it began during his one year with the 49ers in 2023, when he started only one game and threw only 46 passes.

That season ended in a trip to the Super Bowl, where San Francisco lost 25-22 in overtime to Kansas City, when he was a backup generating little interest instead of one of the game's biggest stars at a podium answering questions from throngs of reporters.

"I was somewhere over there, standing, hoping people would talk to me," he said at Super Bowl Opening Night on Monday. "Now I'm here."

How he got here, where he will be dressing for the Super Bowl in the same locker room at Levi's Stadium where he spent the 2023 season as a backup, is a tale of perseverance.

Darnold came into the NFL as the third-overall pick of the New York Jets in 2018 following a stellar college career at Southern California, but he struggled from the start.

He had a 13-25 record and a 78.6 passer rating — the second-worst in the league among 43 quarterbacks with at least 15 starts from 2018-20 — and became the butt of jokes when a microphone



Seattle Seahawks (16-3)
vs. New England Patriots (17-3)
Super Bowl 60
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