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CHLOE JOHNSON/U.S. Marine Corps

U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Connor Lam, in an F-35A fighter jet, signals during preflight checks at Osan Air Base, South Korea, on May 11.

‘Costly, strategic blunder’

Ex-Air Force generals blast plan to cut F-35s, new surveillance plane

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

Deep cuts to the Air Force’s F-35 program and the elimination of the E-7 Wedgetail program would prove a “costly and strategic blunder” for the service, a retired three-star general said Thursday.

Retired Lt. Gen. David Deptula told reporters that the proposed cuts to the programs in the Air Force’s fiscal 2026 budget proposal unveiled last month would leave the service with problematic capability gaps given an uncertain security environment around the world. The latest budget proposal, Deptula said, would cut some 340 aircraft from the service while purchasing only 76 new airframes, including only 24 F-35As — the most advanced fighter aircraft now flying.

“The Air Force today is the oldest, the smallest and the least ready it’s ever been in its entire history,” Deptula said during a news briefing organized by the Air and Space Forces Association. “And the current programming schedule, it has [the Air Force fleet] getting even smaller as we move into the next five years, and quite frankly, there’s insufficient funding in the budget to stop that decline. That’s why raising this to the attention of Congress and the American public is so important.”

Deptula, who is the dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies and retired from the Air Force in 2010, helped organize a letter sent last week to congressional leaders warning of the dire consequences if the service’s budget proposal was enacted. It was signed by 16 retired four-star generals.

“During a period of heightened tension throughout the world, we believe such reductions will severely and unnecessarily under-

SEE BLUNDER ON PAGE 8

7th Fleet pick cut in scrutiny of drag shows

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon has pulled the nomination of Rear Adm. Michael “Buzz” Donnelly to lead the 7th Fleet following questions from a conservative news outlet about drag shows aboard an aircraft carrier nearly 10 years ago.

Donnelly was nominated June 18 by President Donald Trump for promotion to vice admiral and command of 7th Fleet, based at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, and the Navy’s largest overseas force.



Donnelly

However, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has rescinded Donnelly’s nomination, an unidentified Pentagon spokesperson said Friday by email to Stars and Stripes. The spokesperson, who declined to identify themselves, would not comment on whether the decision to withdraw Donnelly’s nomination was related to drag shows.

“The Secretary is thankful for his continued service and wishes him luck in his next position,” the email states.

The Daily Wire, a news website cofounded by conservative commentator Ben Shapiro, first reported Thursday that Donnelly’s nomination was pulled after the Daily Wire asked about his role in allowing drag shows aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan.

Donnelly, currently the head of the Chief of Naval Operations’ air warfare division, was commander of the Ronald Reagan from 2016 to 2017. He also led Carrier Strike

SEE DRAG ON PAGE 9

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Nutella maker Ferrero plans to buy WK Kellogg for $3B

Associated Press

Italian confectioner Ferrero, known for brands like Nutella and Kinder, is buying the century-old U.S. cereal company WK Kellogg in an effort to expand its North American sales.

The Ferrero Group said Thursday it will pay $23 for each Kellogg share, approximately $3.1 billion. The transaction includes WK Kellogg Co.'s manufacturing plants and the marketing and distribution of its breakfast cereals across the United States, Canada and the Caribbean.

WK Kellogg's shares were up 31% on Thursday.

Kellogg was founded in Battle Creek, Mich., in 1906 after its founder accidentally figured out how to make flaked cereal while he was experimenting with granola.

Kellogg now has four U.S. manufacturing plants, which are located in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Nebraska. It also has a plant in Mexico and a plant in Canada.

The current company was formed in 2023, when Kellogg snack brands like Cheez-Its and Pringles were spun into a separate company called Kellanova.

Kellogg has been struggling with a long-term decline in U.S. cereal consumption as consumers turned to protein bars, shakes and other breakfast items.

Cereal sales got a bump during the coronavirus pandemic as more families stayed home, but sales continued to decline after the pandemic eased.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (July 14)	0.83
British pound (July 14)	$1.32
Japanese yen (July 14)	142.00
South Korean won (July 14)	1339.00

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3744
Britain (Pound)	0.7407
Canada (Dollar)	1.3697
China (Yuan)	7.1681
Denmark (Krone)	6.383
Egypt (Pound)	49.4685
Euro	0.8553
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8494
Hungary (Forint)	341.58
Israel (Shekel)	3.3295
Japan (Yen)	147.411
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3052
Norway (Krone)	10.1244
Philippines (Peso)	56.262
Poland (Zloty)	3.6453
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7466
Singapore (Dollar)	1.28
South Korea (Won)	1378.06
Switzerland (Franc)	0.7960
Thailand (Baht)	32.44
Turkey (NewLira)	40.1608

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

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	7.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50
Federal funds market rate	4.38
3-month bill	4.35
30-year bond	4.95

WEATHER OUTLOOK

MONDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



MONDAY IN EUROPE



TUESDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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MILITARY

Hegseth orders quick add of small drones

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon wants more small, cheap, easily replaced drones in the hands of troops as quickly as possible, and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said he is cutting red tape to make that happen.

Hegseth, dressed in a dark-colored suit, took to the Pentagon's parade field on Thursday to record a video announcing his policies on new small drones — officially, unmanned aerial systems — and promoting his memorandum on the matter as an American Flag-bearing drone was flown to him by a service member. Hegseth said the memo would build off a June 6 executive order issued by President Donald Trump meant to boost America's commercial drone manufacturing and integrate them into the nation's transportation and military sectors.



COREY DICKSTEIN/Stars and Stripes

Army Sgt. Nicholas Murphy tinkers with a hexacopter drone that he built July 26, just before a test flight at a Hinesville, Ga., airfield just outside Fort Stewart. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has ordered the U.S. military to quickly buy and incorporate small and cheap drones into formations.

"This is the future," Hegseth said over the buzz of the small drone and the blasting of Metallica's 1991 hit song "Enter Sandman." "We're in the fight. We're in the fight to win it, and I'm never going to back down."

Hegseth's new policies aim to cut through bureaucratic policies that limited the military's ability to quickly purchase and field small drones with vast capabilities ranging from gathering intelligence to dropping small supplies to troops all the way to delivering lethal munitions on enemy positions.

"Lethality will not be hindered by self-imposed restrictions, especially when it comes to harnessing technologies we invented but were slow to pursue. Drone technology is advancing so rapidly, our major risk is risk-avoidance," Hegseth wrote. "The department's bureaucratic gloves are coming off."

The policy seeks to move small drones — especially lethal, one-way attack drones — into the same purchasing category as grenades and bullets, instead of classifying them more like helicopters and planes. It also lowers the decision-making authorities about purchasing drones from top Pentagon leaders to the first general, admiral or Senior Executive Service civilian in a unit's chain of command.

The memo outlines a threefold approach to incorporating more small drones into the arsenals of combat units — with an immediate focus on providing them to units focused on operating in the Indo-Pacific region. Hegseth said the military would immediately begin purchasing hundreds of American-made small, cheap drones to provide a cash influx to industry. It would quickly get those capabilities to combat units to experiment with their capabilities, and it would mandate units incorporate the small, cheap drones into all their training iterations.

"Next year, I expect to see this capability integrated into all relevant combat training, including force-on-force drone wars," Hegseth wrote.

The new policies come as Pentagon officials have closely watched Ukrainian forces innovate on the battlefield with small, lethal drones against Russian invading forces. The New York Times reported in March that drones account for some 70% of battlefield casualties in the war in Ukraine.

Last month, Ukraine launched a massive swarm of more than 100 small, cheap drones into Russian territory, striking more than 40 Russian bombers and destroying more than a dozen of them in a brazen and innovative attack on Moscow's air power.

Hegseth's memo implores American forces to find similar ways to advance drone warfare. He also calls for the military services to consider what expensive weapons systems could be replaced by cheap, disposable drones.

He gave the secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force 60 days to report to him any major weapons that could be "more cost effective or lethal" if replaced by small drones.

He also ordered the military to expand its use of 3D printing and other in-house drone building capabilities and stand up purpose-built innovation units meant to exclusively innovate drone warfare within the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps by Sept. 1.

"Our adversaries have a head start in small UAS, but we will perform a technological leapfrog and establish small UAS domain dominance by the end of 2027," Hegseth wrote in his memo. "We will accomplish this urgent goal by combining the nation's best qualities, including risk-taking. Senior officers must set the tone.

"Accelerating this critical battlefield technology requires a Department of War culture."

Court throws out plea deal for alleged 9/11 mastermind

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A divided federal appeals court on Friday threw out an agreement that would have allowed accused Sept. 11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed to plead guilty in a deal sparing him the risk of execution for al-Qaida's 2001 attacks.

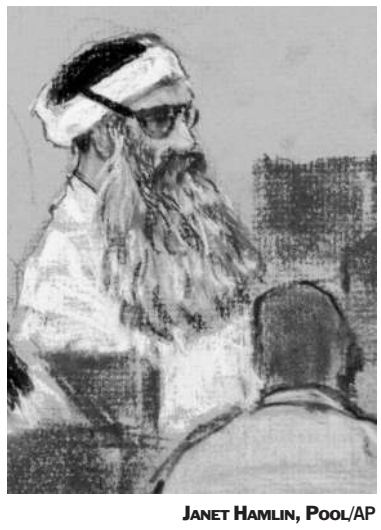
The decision by a panel of the federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., undoes an attempt to wrap up more than two decades of military prosecution beset by legal and logistical troubles. It signals there will be no quick end to the long struggle by the U.S. military and successive administrations to bring to justice the man charged with planning one of the deadliest attacks ever on the United States.

The deal, negotiated over two years and approved by military prosecutors and the Pentagon's senior official for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a year ago, stipulated life sentences without parole for Mohammed and two co-defendants.

Mohammed is accused of developing and directing the plot to crash hijacked airliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Another of the hijacked planes flew into a field in Pennsylvania.

Relatives of the Sept. 11 victims were split on the plea deal. Some objected to it, saying a trial was the best path to justice and to gaining more information about the attacks, while others saw it as the best hope for bringing the painful case to a conclusion and getting some answers from the defendants.

The plea deal would have obligated the men to answer any lingering questions that families of the victims have about the attacks.



JANET HAMLIN, POOL/AP

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed

Correction

A July 11 Washington Post story about the January midair collision between an Army Black Hawk and a passenger jet near Ronald Reagan National Airport conflated aircraft transponders with the ADS-B satellite-based location system.

Air Force nixes eyelash extensions, short boots

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Airmen will be expected to have higher boots, officers must maintain one complete set of a camouflage uniform and eyelash extensions are no longer permitted, the Air Force announced in updated service dress and appearance standards.

"Combat boots must now be between 8-12 inches in height from the bottom of the heel tread to the top of the back of the boot, and soling material will not exceed two inches in height," the Air Force said Thursday in a statement.

Eyelash extensions are prohibited, unless for medical reasons. If medical authorization is obtained, eyelashes must not exceed 12 millimeters in length, the service said. The Air Force first authorized eyelash extensions in 2021.

For Operational Camouflage Pattern uniforms, or OCPs, officers must maintain at least one complete set of either the non-fire-retardant OCPs or an improved hot weather combat OCP uniform. Airmen also received clarification on cuffs being rolled up.

"When sleeves are not rolled up, cuffs may remain visible, or members may fold their sleeves once or twice," the service said.

The various uniform and appearance changes will begin being enforced in the next few months. The changes do not apply to guardians as the Space Force is expected to unveil guidance in the coming weeks.

This is the second announcement this year regarding dress and appearance. In January, the Air Force announced it was doing away with duty-identifier patches and an array of nail polish colors, as well as men's hair not touching the ears and being clean shaven at the start of each duty day.

MILITARY

NDAA drafts back pay raise, limit Europe cuts

By Svetlana Shkolnikova
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The House and Senate Armed Services Committees unveiled legislation Friday supporting a 3.8% pay raise for service members and restricting any Pentagon efforts to undermine aid to Ukraine or drastically reduce American forces in Europe.

The two drafts of the National Defense Authorization Act, an annual must-pass bill authorizing priorities and programs for the Defense Department, indicate lawmakers' resistance to diverting attention from Europe and the war in Ukraine and will make their way through Congress in the coming months.

The Senate Armed Services Committee's bill prohibits a reduction of the U.S. military's footprint in Europe or relinquishing the position of NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, which has been held by an American since Dwight D. Eisenhower, without justification to Congress that such a move is in the national interest.

The committee's legislation also directs the chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the commander of U.S. European Command to conduct an independent risk assessment of such changes. The bill imposes a similar prohibition on drawing down U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula.

Lawmakers reacted with alarm to reports earlier this year that the Pentagon was considering ceding the role that oversees all NATO military operations in Europe to a non-American for the first time and pulling troops from the Continent in an effort to focus on deterring China in the Indo-Pacific region.

The House committee's draft measure would bar a reduction of U.S. troops in Europe below 76,000 unless the defense secretary and commander of EUCOM provide an array of assessments to Congress explaining their reasoning and certify NATO allies have been consulted.

The Senate panel approved its version of the legislation on Wednesday while the House committee will debate and vote on its draft of the bill next week.

The two panels will need to eventually come to a compromise on a major point of difference in their bills: senators are endorsing a $32 billion increase to the defense budget, authorizing $878.7 billion for the Defense Department, while House lawmakers are sticking to the $848 billion for the Pentagon requested by the Trump administration.

The spending hike in the Senate committee's bill reflects the feeling of Chairman Roger Wicker, R-Miss., and other defense hawks that the U.S. is in the most dangerous threat environment since World War II and needs to spend accordingly, senior congressional officials speaking on condition of anonymity said Friday.

Wicker has been a vocal critic of the Trump administration's defense spending plan for fiscal 2026, which begins Oct. 1, and its heavy reliance on $150 billion allocated for the military in President Donald Trump's recently adopted domestic policy megabill.

A large part of the Senate panel's proposed funding increase — more than $8 billion — will go toward shipbuilding for the Navy. Senators also authorized about $6 billion more for munitions production and $2 billion more for military construction projects.

Lawmakers on both committees are supporting the 3.8% service member pay raise requested by the Defense Department and boosting investments in housing, child care, health care and other quality-of-life improvements.

Senior congressional officials told reporters Friday that the House panel is going $250 million over the administration's request to fund new barracks. The legislation is also expanding the privatized housing program to build new unaccompanied housing.

The Senate and House panels found notable common ground on Ukraine.



Eric Kayne/Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Capitol on July 1, in Washington.

The Defense Department is not seeking any money for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, a long-standing program that allows Ukraine to purchase goods directly from the defense industry, but both committees are including hundreds of millions for the program.

The Senate panel's bill funds the initiative through 2028 and authorizes $500 million for it while the House committee's draft legislation includes $300 million for the program. The House bill also requires the president to send Congress a determination that the funding is in the national interest before it can be spent.

"What we want to do is give the president every available option that we can to help him force Putin to the table on his issue," said senior congressional officials in the House, referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Senators also included language in their legislation that requires the defense secretary to continue to provide intelligence support to Ukraine, an apparent reference to the decision by the U.S. earlier this year to briefly pause intelligence sharing with the country.

The Senate Armed Services Committee also used the legislation to respond to the Trump administration's firing of the Pentagon inspector general and senior judicial officers in the Army, Air Force and Navy.

The bill would require the Pentagon to notify Congress of the dismissal of the military's top legal advisers within five days of the decision being made.

"We felt like adding a notification not necessarily proceeding but after the fact just to let us know was a fair measure," a senior congressional official said.

House's defense bill calls for details on Golden Dome

By John M. Donnelly
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The House Armed Services Committee's draft National Defense Authorization Act would require the Pentagon to provide Congress with answers about how the department intends to realize President Donald Trump's proposed Golden Dome antimissile shield over America.

The fact that the panel's fiscal 2026 bill is asking for this information is the latest sign that even the defense oversight committees know little about what Trump's vision for missile defense might entail. This is the case despite the fact that the reconciliation bill enacted on July 4 appropriates about $25 billion for a variety of antimissile systems, many of which lawmakers said they foresee as part of the Golden Dome architecture.

Trump announced the launch of his Golden Dome project in May, but he described it only in broad terms as a way to protect America from missiles launched from anywhere in the world, including by being able to intercept them from U.S. military satellites. Even a less expansive system, if it included space assets, could cost more than $1 trillion, leading experts said.

Since Trump's announcement, the Pentagon has declined to provide the press with more information about Golden Dome, and the department canceled an industry day in June meant to inform contractors of plans. The GOP-led House Appropriations Committee, in the report accompanying its fiscal 2026 Defense spending bill, said the Pentagon has yet to give Congress information about Golden Dome and "what exactly it entails," leaving open questions about whether the proposed system is "feasible and affordable," the appropriators wrote.

The plan that the House Armed Services Committee would require of the Pentagon must be delivered within one year of the bill's enactment into law and must be updated in fiscal years 2028, 2029 and 2030.

The plan, the committee's report said, must include a missile threat assessment. The required document must also reveal to Congress the Golden Dome's proposed elements, such as sensors and interceptors on Earth or in orbit. In so doing, the plan must describe "each capability, program, and project," plus the cost, schedule and concept of operations.

The required report must also convey to Congress the system's requirements for use of the electromagnetic spectrum. Some members of Congress are concerned that portions of the spectrum required for Golden Dome may be auctioned off to commercial interests. The Pentagon report to Congress must also tell lawmakers which Defense Department organizations will execute the program and provide an assessment of the system's testing and training implications and a strategy for ensuring supply chain security.

In addition to that required plan, the bill also would mandate a separate report on the status of America's so-called theater missile defenses. Those are the antimissile systems designed to intercept short- and medium-range missiles or drones in conflict zones around the world — as opposed to the globe-spanning ballistic missile and hypersonic missile threats to America that Golden Dome would target.

Trump said in the Oval Office on May 20 that the Golden Dome system would cost $175 billion in total and would be "fully operational" by 2029 — projections that seasoned defense experts have called optimistic. Trump's sweeping description of the Golden Dome as a defense against threats from anywhere on the globe suggested the system would need to protect against even the massive missile arsenals of Russia and China.

In keeping with that view, the Republican leaders of the House Armed Services Committee have proposed in their draft NDAA to change to America's national missile defense policy. Current law says the U.S. national missile defense shouldn't be designed to intercept threats from "near-peer adversaries" — in other words, Russia and China — but instead should deter those countries through the power of America's offensive nuclear arsenal.

The current U.S. homeland antimissile system comprises 44 interceptors in Alaska and California optimized to defeat a limited attack by a handful of missiles from North Korea or other actors — not threats from Russia or China. By contrast, the House Armed Services Committee's draft NDAA would change the policy so that the U.S. strategic defense would now be geared toward defeating "any foreign aerial attack on the homeland," a far more comprehensive, expensive and technically challenging objective.

MILITARY

Bill would give remote pilots combat benefits

By Linda F. Hersey
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Remote pilots and crews operating drones in warfare would become eligible for combat-related services through the Department of Veterans Affairs under a measure in the Senate version of the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act.

The legislation will provide crews of remotely piloted aircraft documentation to prove they have conducted combat operations so that mental health care and other services are prioritized for them after military service, according to lawmakers.

The 2026 NDAA, an annual must-pass bill authorizing priorities and programs for the Defense Department, was adopted Wednesday by the Senate Armed Services Committee on a vote of 26-1. The bill sets spending at $878.7 billion for the Defense Department for fiscal 2026, which begins Oct. 1.

The NDAA emphasizes technology in fiscal 2026 with investments in unmanned technology, artificial intelligence and hypersonic weapons, lawmakers said.

The legislation for drone pilots establishes what is known as a "combat identifier," formal recognition of the crew members who remotely operate unmanned aircraft in combat missions, according to Sens. Jacky Rosen, D-Nev., and Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., both members of the Senate Armed Services Committee.



U.S. Air Force

Members of the 926th Wing try the MQ-9 Reaper simulator at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., in February.

The bill directs the Defense Department to establish the official identification for drone pilots engaging in combat operations.

"Without this important distinction, remotely piloted aircraft crew members who are transitioning to other military careers or leaving the service may face barriers to timely, high-quality mental health care services," according to the lawmakers.

Rosen and Cramer had earlier introduced the Combat Action Recognition and Evaluation for Remotely Piloted Aircraft Crews Act. The bill was added to the Senate version of the NDAA.

Rosen said the combat identification will "improve the recognition [remote operators] have earned and ensure their future care."

While many veterans benefits are available to those who have served in the military, eligibility is often tied to specific service requirements and discharge conditions, according to the VA.

Creech Air Force Base in Nevada is a hub for remotely piloted aircraft that include the MQ-9 Reaper, a medium-altitude, long-endurance remotely piloted aircraft.

"Remotely piloted aircraft crew like those at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada perform combat operations but have no status identifier in their records for having done so, making it challenging to receive the support and care they deserve once they transition," Rosen said.

While drones can be programmed to fly without direct control, many are remotely piloted with an operator controlling the aircraft from a remote location.

"Remotely piloted aircraft crews often play an integral role in achieving high-stakes, mission-critical objectives," Cramer said.

In North Dakota, the 119th Air Wing of the North Dakota Air National Guard operates MQ-9 Reapers. The 319th Reconnaissance Wing fly the RQ-4 Global Hawk, high-altitude remotely piloted aircraft.

Coast Guard gets $25B for border security, icebreakers

By Gary Warner
Stars and Stripes

The Coast Guard plans to buy 84 new ships and aircraft by 2035 with an injection of $25 billion in supplemental funding approved as part of the "One Big Beautiful Bill" Act.

Adm. Kevin Lunday, the Coast Guard's acting commandant, and other service leaders said the infusion of funds was the largest one-time boost that the service has received since it was founded in 1790. The money will allow it to simultaneously address several deficiencies — getting a jump start on building new icebreakers, adding a variety of cutters, buying helicopters and airplanes, plus adding forces to its southern border security missions. The bill would also finance the overhaul of shore facilities and piers.

The 10-year funding package was passed by Congress and signed July 4 by President Donald Trump. The money is separate from the Coast Guard's proposed $14.5 billion budget, which still requires congressional approval.

The money is a portion of the $165 billion approved overall for its parent agency, the Department of Homeland Security. Most of the DHS funds will go to the Customs and Border Protection and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agencies for immigration law enforcement in the United States and infrastructure along the southern border with Mexico.

The 55,000-member Coast Guard now operates 250 cutters, 200 fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft and 1,600 smaller boats, according to the service.

The congressional legislation signed by Trump shows new spending would buy 17 icebreakers, 21 cutters of various sizes and types, along with 40 MH-60 Jayhawk multi-mission helicopters and six HC-130J Super Hercules long-range aircraft that are used for surveillance, transport, search and rescue, and ice monitoring.

The funds for icebreakers have been a major point of contention in Congress in recent years, with the service able to field just three of the specialized ships.

The Polar Star, the Coast Guard's only heavy icebreaker, is 49 years old and spends much of the year dedicated to "Operation Deep Freeze," clearing ice around Antarctica to resupply scientific stations on the continent around the South Pole.

The Coast Guard has two medium icebreakers, the 25-year-old Healy and the Storis, a commercial ship purchased by the Coast Guard last year that was repainted and refitted for homeland security purposes.

In contrast, Russia operates 41 icebreakers, including some large nuclear-powered vessels. But many are smaller ships meant for clearing the country's many northern harbors. In January 2018, China declared itself a "near Arctic state" and has built three icebreakers.

The recent entry of Norway and Sweden into NATO has increased the number of icebreakers and shipyards capable of constructing the vessels, with the United States, Canada and Finland committing to sharing designs and shipyards to build 90 icebreakers by 2030.

However, some in Congress have complained of an "icebreaker gap" as Russia and China increasingly operate, sometimes in tandem, in Arctic waterways that have become more navigable due to climate change, resulting in thinner summer ice.

Russia plans to deploy the Ivan Papanin, a missile-carrying "combat icebreaker" into the Arctic, according to Jane's Information Service, a more than century-old British military analysis company

The move to arm icebreakers has some United States and allies considering counter moves to the stepped-up militarization of the polar region.

"This move risks raising tensions in the Arctic, a region that's already becoming more strategically contested as sea ice recedes and maritime activity increases," Rep. Mark Green, R-Tenn., said last week in an interview.

Green retired this month from the House after serving as chairman of the maritime security subpanel of the Homeland Security Committee.

The Ivan Papanin is the first icebreaker from any nation with an offensive military profile, according to Jane's. The Papanin is designed to cut through ice up to 5 inches thick. It's armed with a 76 mm gun and capable of launching cruise missiles.

The ship is one of two icebreakers that Moscow will put through sea trials before assigning them to the Russian North Fleet.

"With Russia increasingly focused on the Arctic and laying claim to large swaths of it, the Papanin class was designed to enable the Russian navy to project power more widely in the region than would be possible with conventional, non-ice-strengthened warships," Jane's reported in April.

The Coast Guard budget would also go to efforts by the service along the southern border of the United States. Special units have operated with Navy destroyers to interdict unauthorized entry into the United States, transnational drug shipments, and illegal fishing.

The Coast Guard reported several flights earlier this year using its fixed-wing aircraft to transfer people detained by immigration agents from San Diego to Texas for possible deportation processing.

Along with increases in ships, aircraft, and crews, the money will pay for upgraded at-sea systems using sensors and uncrewed air and watercraft to improve coastal surveillance of American waters.

Funds will also go to the renovation of existing shore structures and the building of new infrastructure at bases.

The Coast Guard primarily operates as the coastal and internal waterways defense of the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii — an area covering 95,000 miles of shoreline, 25,000 miles of navigable rivers and 4.5 million square miles of U.S. exclusive economic zone waters. Units and detachments are also deployed in Bahrain, Europe and Asia.

PACIFIC

US, Australia launch Talisman Sabre drills

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

ROCKHAMPTON, Australia — Military training involving more than 35,000 troops from the United States, Australia and 17 other nations began Sunday with a ceremony aboard one of Australia's largest warships.

The biennial Talisman Sabre exercise — now in its 11th iteration — is slated to run through Aug. 4. A launch ceremony took place aboard the HMAS Adelaide at Garden Island in Sydney.

"Talisman Sabre 2025 is the largest and most sophisticated warfighting exercise ever conducted in Australia," organizers said in a news release after the launch.

Australia's chief of joint operations, Vice Adm. Justin Jones, and U.S. Army Pacific's deputy commander, Lt. Gen. Joel Vowell, attended the ceremony aboard the Adelaide.



Vowell

The 750-foot-long landing helicopter dock and its sister ship, HMAS Canberra, are designed for amphibious operations and can deploy helicopters and landing craft. Each displaces 27,500 tons at full load.

The kickoff coincides with a visit to China by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. There, he is expected to meet with President Xi Jinping as Australia seeks to balance its alliance with the U.S. and relations with its largest export market.

Over the next three weeks, troops will train across Queensland, Western Australia, New South Wales, the Northen Territory and Christmas Island.

For the first time, activities will extend beyond Australia to Papua New Guinea, the release said.

Jones said that the exercise provides an unrivaled opportunity for nations to train together across land, air, sea, space and cyber domains.

"Exercise Talisman Sabre remains a powerful demonstration of Australia's enduring commitment to strengthening relationships between trusted allies and partners, in support of a peaceful, stable and sovereign Indo-Pacific," he said in the release.

On Monday, forces from the U.S., Australia, France, Japan, Singapore and South Korea are slated to conduct a live-fire demonstration at Shoalwater Bay Training Area, north of Rockhampton in Queensland.

The event is set to include live-fire from fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, artillery, multiple launch rocket systems and surface-to-air missile systems, according to the Combined Joint Information Bureau, which includes public affairs officials from the U.S., Australia and 10 other nations involved in the drills.

Other nations participating in Talisman Sabre include Canada, Fiji, Germany, India, Indonesia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Thailand, Tonga and the United Kingdom.

Malaysia and Vietnam are also attending as observers.

The exercise will include field training, force preparation, amphibious landings, ground maneuvers, air combat and maritime operations, according to the release.

It will also feature Australia's new UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters and the precision strike missile.

"Exercises like Talisman Sabre allow us to employ war winning capabilities, operate in critical locations, signal our multinational resolve, and galvanize our collective will," Vowell said in the release. "This is how we generate deterrence and work towards our ultimate goal: no war."

Workman hands Camp Humphreys to successor

BY DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — A longtime air defense officer took command of Camp Humphreys, the largest U.S. military base overseas, during a ceremony at the base Friday.

Army Col. Ryan Workman, the outgoing Humphreys commander, transferred his duties to Col. Kristin Steinbrecher, who previously led the Air and Missile Defense Test Directorate at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Humphreys, a sprawling 3,500-acre base in Pyeongtaek city 40 miles south of Seoul, is the headquarters of U.S. Forces Korea, U.N. Command, Combined Forces Command, Eighth Army and 2nd Infantry Division.

Approximately 40,000 U.S. and South Korean personnel occupy the base on a daily basis.

Workman took command of Humphreys on July 11, 2023. He will remain at Humphreys as the next Eighth Army inspector general.



DAVID CHOI/Stars and Stripes

Army Col. Kristin Steinbrecher speaks at a change of command ceremony at Camp Humphreys, South Korea, on Friday.

As garrison commander, Workman oversaw the completion of several construction projects, including a $64 million barracks for 600 soldiers and three family housing towers that cost $141 million.

Workman also supervised efforts to accommodate 750 U.S. Boy Scouts who pulled out of the 25th World Scout Jamboree in Saemangeum, about 85 miles south of Humphreys, during an intense heat wave in August 2023.

The Boy Scouts camped inside the Humphreys Middle School gym for week starting Aug. 6, 2023, while Eighth Army soldiers provided meals.

At the command changeover, Eighth Army acting commander Brig. Gen. Sean Crockett thanked Workman for "accomplishing these missions without fail."

"I thank you for your leadership," he said to a crowd of 250 people at the ceremony inside the base's Morning Calm Center. "You set the pace and example for transformation across the peninsula while here."

Workman thanked soldiers, civilian contractors and local employees for ensuring base services were operational under his watch.

"I'm often the face of the organization, but I don't actually do anything," he said in a speech. "Everything that we've accomplished … that's all really what you have all accomplished."

Steinbrecher said she would continue building on Workman's efforts and vowed to "work relentlessly" to ensure garrisoned troops are able to accomplish their mission.

"It is a deep honor and privilege to stand before you today and assume the duties as your garrison commander," she said in a speech. "I am humbled by the trust placed in me to lead this remarkable team."

Steinbrecher graduated in 2002 from Rutgers University, where she was commissioned through ROTC, according to her Army biography.

Her previous assignments include theater security cooperation planner in Djibouti, commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery of the 6th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, plans and exercise director at Joint Task Force-Bravo in Honduras and military advisor for the State Department in Washington, D.C.

Chinese fighters skirt Japanese intelligence aircraft

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

Chinese fighter jets made two close passes at Japanese intelligence aircraft again recently following a series of similar incidents last month.

A Xi'an JH-7 fighter-bomber tailed a Japan Air Self-Defense Force YS-11EB intelligence-gathering aircraft for about 15 minutes Wednesday morning and about 10 minutes Thursday morning, according to a news release put out on Thursday from Japan's Ministry of Defense.

The Chinese jet flew within 100 feet of the Japanese aircraft on Wednesday and within 200 feet on Thursday, according to the release.

The Japanese aircraft were making surveillance flights over international waters of the East China Sea, according to the release.

A photo released by the ministry shows the Chinese jet flying to the right of the YS-11EB.

No damage to the Japanese aircraft or injuries to personnel were reported.

"Such unusual close approaches by Chinese military aircraft could lead to accidental collisions, and the ministry expressed serious concern and strongly urged that no similar actions will recur," the release said.

The ministry acknowledged inquiries from Stars and Stripes about the incident on Friday but did not immediately provide responses.

Takehiro Funakoshi, Japan's vice minister of foreign affairs, expressed "serious concerns" to Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wu Jianghao on Thursday, according to a sepereate news release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that day.

Funakoshi discussed the incidents and urged Beijing to ensure that similar actions do not recur, according to the ministry.

The recent incidents follow similar close encounters between Chinese and Japanese aircraft in June.

A Shenyang J-15 carrier-based fighter tailed a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force P-3C patrol plane for 40 minutes June 7 and 80 minutes June 8, coming within 150 feet of the Japanese aircraft during both incidents, according to the defense ministry.

Also on June 8, a J-15 crossed within 3,000 feet in front of the Japanese aircraft.

No injuries or damage occurred during that incident either, the ministry said.

Both encounters involved a J-15 from the aircraft carrier Shandong, which at the time was operating alongside China's other aircraft carrier, Liaoning.

It marked the first time China's two carriers were seen operating simultaneously in the Pacific, Defense Minister Gen Nakatani said at the time.

EUROPE

NATO to give Patriot systems to Ukraine

By John Vandiver
Stars and Stripes

The United States will supply weapons to Ukraine with NATO footing the bill, President Donald Trump announced on the heels of discussions with the leader of the 32-nation defense bloc.

"We're sending weapons to NATO, and NATO is paying for those weapons," Trump said, adding that the U.S. will be reimbursed 100%.

His comments in an interview Thursday with NBC News came after a conversation earlier in the day with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, who has called on allies to bolster support for Ukraine. Rutte is set to meet Trump this week in Washington, the Associated Press reported Sunday. He plans Monday and Tuesday to hold talks with Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth as well as members of Congress.

More air defense systems are a top priority for the Ukrainians, who have been facing an onslaught of Russian drone and missile strikes in recent weeks.

The U.S.-made Patriot missile defense system is in especially high demand.

"We're going to be sending Patriots to NATO, and then NATO will distribute that," Trump said in the interview.

Trump's assertions about coordinating arms deliveries with NATO follow a brief Defense Department pause in allowing U.S. weapons shipments to Ukraine. Last week, the Pentagon halted deliveries in connection with a global review to assess stockpile levels.

But on Monday, the Defense Department said that Trump had directed it to send additional weapons to Ukraine.

In recent days, Trump has voiced frustrations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has stepped up his attacks on Ukraine despite White House calls for a peace deal.

While Trump has long been critical of the amount of U.S. funding directed toward Ukraine, he's also given praise to Ukrainian troops.

"I will say this, the Ukrainians, whether you think it's unfair that we gave all that money or not, they were very brave because somebody had to operate that stuff," Trump said. "And a lot of people I know wouldn't be operating it."

In his NBC interview, Trump said that he is "disappointed in Russia" and expects to make a "major statement" about the country and the U.S plans for dealing with it going forward on Monday.

Although he didn't go into further detail on the statement, his comments come as Senate Republicans consider a new round of sanctions on Russia.



Robert Wormley/U.S. Army

U.S. Army Patriot air defense systems are deployed to Poland in September 2024. The U.S. will send equipment including Patriot systems to NATO and the alliance will distribute the weapons to Ukraine, President Donald Trump said Thursday.

Retired officer pleads guilty to leaking information on dating site

By Rose L. Thayer
Stars and Stripes

A retired Army officer working for the Air Force pleaded guilty Thursday to conspiring to send classified national defense information through an international dating platform where he believed he was speaking with a Ukrainian woman.

Retired Lt. Col. David Franklin Slater, 64, was working for U.S. Strategic Command as an Air Force civilian when he sent the messages between February and April 2022, according to court documents filed in federal court in Nebraska, where STRATCOM is located.

The joint command is responsible for global strike and information operations for the military and is headquartered at Offutt Air Force Base.



STARS AND STRIPES

Retired Army Lt. Col. David Franklin Slater, 64, was working for U.S. Strategic Command as an Air Force civilian when he sent classified national defense information about Ukraine through a dating site.

The woman regularly asked Slater to send her classified information related to Russia's war with Ukraine that he had access to through his job, according to the plea agreement.

Messages sent to Slater included "Beloved Dave, do NATO and (U.S. President Joe) Biden have a secret plan to help us?" and "Dave, I hope tomorrow NATO will prepare a very unpleasant 'surprise' for (Russian President Vladimir) Putin! Will you tell me?"

She often referred to him as her "secret informant love" and "secret agent," according to court documents.

Slater, who was indicted in March 2024, faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and $250,000 fine, according to the plea agreement.

A hearing to sentence Slater has not yet been scheduled.

"Access to classified information comes with great responsibility. David Slater failed in his duty to protect this information by willingly sharing national defense information with an unknown online personality despite having years of military experience that should have caused him to be suspicious of that person's motives," said U.S. Attorney Lesley A. Woods for the District of Nebraska.

Slater retired from the Army in 2020 and was awarded a Bronze Star among more than a dozen other decorations, according to his official service record.

He commissioned as a logistics officer in 1984 after serving three years enlisted.

He deployed to Afghanistan three times and Iraq once.

Ukraine says it killed Russian agents suspected of killing officer

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's security agency said Sunday it tracked down and killed Russian agents suspected of shooting one of its senior officers to death in the Ukrainian capital.

The Security Service of Ukraine, or SBU, said in a statement that the suspected Russian agents were killed in the Kyiv region after they offered resistance to arrest.

A video released by the agency showed two bodies lying on the ground.

The agency said earlier that a man and a woman were suspected to be involved in Thursday's assassination of Ivan Voronych, an SBU colonel, in a bold daylight attack that was caught on surveillance cameras.

Media reports claimed that Voronych was involved in covert operations in Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine and reportedly was part of a group that helped organize Ukraine's surprise incursion into Russia's Kursk region last year.

After a series of massive attacks across Ukraine involving hundreds of exploding drones, Russia launched 60 drones overnight, Ukraine's air force said.

It said that 20 of them were shot down and 20 other drones were jammed.

The Ukrainian authorities reported that four civilians were killed and 13 others injured in Russian attacks on the Donetsk and Kherson regions since Saturday.

MILITARY

Marine Corps leader retires on Okinawa

By Brian McElhiney
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Anthony Easton closed out 31 years with the Marine Corps last week by turning over his duties as sergeant major of Marine Corps Installations Pacific to his successor and saying farewell.

A former combat engineer with a penchant for "blowing things up," Easton, a native of St. Cloud, Minn., concluded his career during a relief-and-appointment ceremony Tuesday at Foster's Officers Club. Sgt. Maj. Jorge Ortiz, a former field radio operator from Sacramento, Calif., on his second tour on Okinawa, took up the post.

More than 300 Marines and guests were on hand, including Marine Corps Installations Pacific commander Maj. Gen. Brian Wolford and 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade commander Brig. Gen. Trevor Hall.

Easton, a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, recounted the highs and lows of his service during an interview at his Foster office.

"To this day, it still puts a smile on my face, getting to go out and work with C-4 and TNT and dynamite and working with landmines," he said, referring to his occupational specialty. "I love that MOS — I literally had a blast."

Easton arrived on Okinawa in 2022 after the COVID-19 pandemic but in time to see a series of allegations of sexual assault and attempted sexual assault against U.S. service members, including a handful of Marines.



Keishi Koja/Stars and Stripes

Jorge Ortiz give his first speech as sergeant major of Marine Corps Installations Pacific during a relief-and-appointment ceremony at the Officers Club on Camp Foster, Okinawa, on July 8.

Two weeks before Easton's retirement ceremony, a Japanese court sentenced Lance Cpl. Jamel Clayton to seven years in prison for choking a woman while attempting to sexually assault her in May 2024.

Since September, two other Okinawa-based Marines have been charged in separate cases with injuring women during sexual assaults. In December, a Japanese court convicted Air Force Senior Airman Brennon Washington of kidnapping and sexually assaulting a minor a year earlier.

All these cases, and others, roiled the Okinawa community, generating numerous official complaints and prompting U.S. military officers and diplomats to make apologies. Liberty rules for all U.S. troops in Japan were tightened in October.

Easton acknowledged the problem but said most Marines are inclined to do something good on Okinawa — beach cleanups, building construction and holiday toy drives.

Drunken driving incidents involving service members are down, he added, proof that efforts to educate service members are paying off.

The installations command and the prefectural government together hosted a series of lectures last year aimed at eradicating drunken driving, according to an August news release from the command.

U.S. military and Okinawa authorities, during the first Okinawa Community Partnership Forum in May, also discussed improving the briefing given to service members new to the island.

"Morale is still really good here," Easton said.

During his stint on Okinawa, the Marine Corps activated a second littoral regiment on the island as part of its Force Design initiative. Force Design calls for a more agile, expeditionary force capable of countering China's growing military presence in the Pacific.

Easton described the new 12th Littoral Regiment — about 2,000 Marines — as "exactly what we need" in the Indo-Pacific region.

"The challenges in the Pacific are different than other places, because the Pacific is set up differently," he said. "It's the Pacific — there's islands out here. When the commandant put Force Design 2030 in place, he was thinking about those things."

Easton, during the interview, also spoke of his time in Iraq in summer 2004 with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion. He paused for a few seconds to collect himself while remembering a fellow Marine there.

Lance Cpl. Bryan Kelly, of Klamath Falls, Ore., died July 16, 2004, of wounds he received in Anbar province, the Associated Press reported at the time.

Easton said the key to "getting back on the horse" after experiencing a combat death is having conversations about what happened.

"We loved our Marine, and we're going to honor our Marine, but the mission doesn't stop just because you lose somebody," he said.

Blunder: Ex-generals highlight Israel-Iran conflict, Russian threat

FROM PAGE 1

mine our service members' ability to deter, and if necessary, prevail in future conflicts," the generals wrote in a letter organized by the Air and Space Forces Association.

The signees included six former Air Force chiefs of staff — Gens. Merrill McPeak, Ron Fogleman, Michael Ryan, John Jumper, Michael Moseley and Mark Welsh. Other signers included Gen. Joseph Ralston, a former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and NATO Supreme Allied Commander; Gen. Philip Breedlove, a former NATO Supreme Allied Commander and Air Force vice chief; Gen. Ralph Eberhart, who led U.S. Northern Command; Gen. Kevin Chilton, a former U.S. Strategic Command chief; Gen. Lori Robinson, a former NORTHCOM commander; Gen. John Loh, a former Air Force vice chief, and Gen. Herbert "Hawk" Carlisle, who lead Air Combat Command.

Air Force and Pentagon leaders have defended the proposed cuts as necessary to fund the next generation of weapons. The cuts to the F-34A Lighting II fighter program would shift $3.5 billion in funds to develop the sixth-generation F-47 stealth fighter and boost funding for the Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile and an extended-range version of the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile, service officials said while rolling out the Air Force's proposed $209.6 billion budget for 2026.

Service officials said cutting the E-7 Wedgetail program was needed due to cost overruns and uncertainty over its survivability in a combat zone. The Air Force had planned to buy 26 of the aircraft to replace older E-3 AWACs aircraft, but the service now wants to shift its surveillance emphasis to space-based satellites.

The group of retired generals warned Thursday that space-based satellites are not yet up to the task of taking over surveillance capabilities now conducted by manned aircraft.

The former top Air Force leaders said they recognized the long history of F-35 issues from cost overruns to supply-chain problems, but Congress needs to look no further than recent attacks on Iran by Israeli F-35A pilots to see the aircraft is capable.

Breedlove, a fighter pilot who retired in 2016 after leading U.S. European Command and NATO forces for three years, said Israeli pilots used the F-35A — the same model the U.S. Air Force flies — to destroy Iran's advanced anti-aircraft systems provided by Russia and give them full air superiority over the country. It allowed Israel — and later U.S. B-2 stealth bombers — to deliver unopposed strikes on military targets during the recent 12-day conflict between the two Middle East powers.

"You just need to look at what the Israelis just did in Iran as to how that works for us," Breedlove said, comparing the operation to Russia's invasion of Ukraine where it has never established air superiority. "We don't want to end up having to fight a war that is not enabled fully by our style of Western air power and air superiority."

The group suggested Congress purchase 75 F-35As in fiscal 2026, in part to deter China from attacking Taiwan, which its president, Xi Jinping, has vowed to return to Chinese control. Breedlove said Israel's use of the F-35s against Iran should give Xi pause in ordering such an invasion.

"Mr. Xi … just watched the F-35 march into Iran, a long way from Israel, and establish air superiority over the enemy's battlefield, … the F-35 did that while fighting against some of the best Russian [air defense systems] outside of Russia," Breedlove said. "This is an inflection point for Xi — and others — that American air power … can give him pause."



Nicholas Rupiper / U.S. Air Force

U.S. Air Force Maj. Melanie "Mach" Kluesner, pilot of the F-35A Demonstration Team, prepares to land during a sunset performance at the Sun 'n Fun Airshow in Lakeland, Fla., April 2.

But scaling back the F-35 and the E-7 programs could change that calculus, generals worried.

"If conflict does come, there will be no more decisive question than who controls the skies over the Pacific," they wrote. "The actions Congress takes this year — specifically through the acquisition of 75 F-35As and ensuring the operational deployment of the E-7 — could be critical in deterring and, if necessary, prevailing in near-term conflicts."

MILITARY

Pearl Harbor arrives for Pacific Partnership

By Wyatt Olson
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — USS Pearl Harbor pulled into its namesake port last week as it prepares to lead the Navy's largest annual maritime humanitarian and medical assistance mission in the Indo-Pacific.

The amphibious dock landing ship arrived at this joint base on Tuesday and is serving as the flagship for the Pacific Partnership mission lasting through November.

"The USS Pearl Harbor is, in some ways, a large floating truck loaded with all of our medical and construction supplies," Capt. Mark Stefanik, the mission's commander, told reporters Thursday while standing dockside of the 600-foot-long ship.

He was joined by Cmdr. Alban Dervishi, the ship's commanding officer, and United Kingdom Royal Marines Col. Matt Churchward, the mission's deputy commander.

The amphibious ship "provides a good avenue for U.S. power in the Pacific in terms of being able to provide the material we need for these missions," Stefanik said.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has declared "lethality" to be the touchstone of the Defense Department under Donald Trump's second administration, which has instituted deep cuts in foreign aid that have long fostered America's soft power.

But Pacific Partnership remains in place as a demonstration of America's willingness to assist its Pacific neighbors.



Photos by Wyatt Olson/Stars and Stripes

Capt. Mark Stefanik, left, commander of the Navy's Pacific Partnership mission, speaks with reporters at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, on Thursday. Next to him is the mission's deputy commander, United Kingdom Royal Marines Col. Matt Churchward.



The USS Pearl Harbor, a 600-foot-long amphibious dock landing ship, will serve as flagship for the mission.

The mission, now in its 21st iteration, focuses entirely on assisting small nations in civic development such as expanding hospitals, schools and infrastructure and preparing for natural disasters.

"We believe that we prepare in calm so that we can respond in crisis," Stefanik said. "The Navy has been a big, big part of crisis response in the Pacific for all kinds of natural disasters. So if we come in and have the opportunity to build these capacities and build these partnerships — while it's not a crisis — when we do come, we're much more effective for all kinds of missions."

This year's mission includes visits by the Pearl Harbor to Papua New Guinea, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Samoa and Vanuatu.

Small "fly-in" projects were held last month in the Philippines, Fiji and Tonga.

The hospital ship USNS Mercy has served as the flagship for numerous Pacific Partnership missions in the past, but the Pearl Harbor's sick bay is serving the medical function this year.

"The hospital ship obviously has a lot more direct-care capability in terms of medical supplies and stuff," Stefanik said.

However, he said, the amphibious ship carries a crew of about 300 sailors who can be utilized for mission tasks — manpower that the Mercy does not have.

An amphibious dock landing ship is built to transport Marines to Pacific islands in the event of conflict or assisting during disasters. The ship is designed to sink about 10 feet, allowing water to flood a large bay in the stern that buoys an amphibious boat for delivering the Marines ashore.

The Pearl Harbor is the only American ship on the mission, but it will be joined by South Korean and Japanese vessels during some stops, Stefanik said. Great Britain, Canada and Germany are also helping out on part of the mission, he said.

The six-month mission, which ends Nov. 16 in Vanuatu, is designed to coincide with the Indo-Pacific's hurricane season "so that we're out there as a ready force in case something does happen," he said.

Drag: In 2023 letter, conservative group demanded probe of sailor's 'digital ambassador' status, actions

FROM PAGE 1

Group 5 and Task Force 70 at Yokosuka Naval Base from 2021 to 2023.

While Donnelly was skipper of the Reagan, then-Petty Officer 3rd Class Joshua Kelley occasionally performed drag shows aboard the carrier under the stage name "Harpy Daniels."

Kelley also won second place and a $1,000 Navy Exchange gift card in a lip-sync competition aboard the carrier, the Military Times reported in August 2018.

Kelley — now a petty officer first class with the guided-missile destroyer USS Bulkeley at Naval Station Rota, Spain — also served as one of five members of the Navy's Digital Ambassador Pilot Program, a recruitment effort between October 2022 and March 2024.

The conservative nonprofit America First Legal criticized Kelley's role as a "digital ambassador" and alleged Kelley took part in inappropriate political activity, showed contempt toward superiors and misused a service member's uniform. America First Legal, in a June 2023 letter to then-Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro and other senior administrators, demanded an investigation into its allegations.

"In order to preserve the Navy's reputation, swift action must be taken to restore good order and discipline and to prevent further partisan activity that implies Navy endorsement of particular candidates and causes," Jacob Meckler, the group's legal advisor, said in a news release at the time.



Charles Scudella III/U.S. Navy

Then-Petty Officer 3rd Class Joshua Kelley performs during a Morale, Welfare and Recreation lip sync battle aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, on Nov. 29, 2017.

Based in Washington, D.C., the non-profit was co-founded by Gene Hamilton, a former Trump administration official, and Stephen Miller, a senior Trump official during his first term now serving as homeland security adviser and deputy chief of staff for policy.

DOD ends 3-year bid to revive Cold War era Soviet seaplane

By Zade Vadnais
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. military program that sought to resurrect a secretive Soviet aircraft design has been scrapped, meaning no American successors to a plane dubbed the Caspian Sea Monster are on the horizon anymore.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency effort known as Liberty Lifter, with its concept for aircraft that skim just above large bodies of water and thus can avoid radar detection, was shut down in June.

DARPA's aim with the program was to build a seaplane that might "transform fast logistics missions" for the Defense Department and also provide "sea-based search and rescue and disaster response at the scale of ships with the speed of air transport," according to the agency's Liberty Lifter webpage.

In the three years of the program's existence, researchers worked on creating modern-day versions of the ekranoplan. The airplane uses the aerodynamic interaction between the wings and the water surface to fly swiftly at low altitude.

Liberty Lifter began in 2022 with the intention of updating the Soviet Union's pioneering idea for a heavy-lift, long-range seaplane capable of carrying large payloads without relying on ports or runways.

The name ekranoplan incorporates the Russian words for "screen" and "glider." Soon after puzzled Cold War-era CIA analysts first saw one in the 1960s, the 540-ton craft was christened the Caspian Sea Monster.

Amid the shutdown of the U.S. ekranoplan development effort, an image of a Chinese aircraft of that type that has been widely shared on social media is shining a new spotlight on the technology.

It is "a new and previously unreported type," military open source intelligence analyst H. I. Sutton wrote in Naval News, adding that this Chinese ekranoplan is the most ambitious one built in decades.

MIDEAST

Attack on Qatar base hit dome used by US

BY JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — An Iranian attack on an air base in Qatar that's key to the U.S. military hit a geodesic dome housing equipment used by the Americans for secure communications, satellite images analyzed Friday by The Associated Press show.

Hours after the publication of this AP report, Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell acknowledged that an Iranian ballistic missile had hit the dome. Qatar did not respond to requests for comment about the damage.

The Iranian attack on Al Udeid Air Base outside of Doha, Qatar's capital, on June 23 came as a response to the American bombing of three nuclear sites in Iran — and provided the Islamic Republic a way to retaliate that quickly led to a ceasefire brokered by President Donald Trump ending the 12-day Iran-Israel war.

The Iranian attack otherwise did little damage — likely because of the fact that the U.S. evacuated its aircraft from the base, which is home to the forward headquarters of U.S. Central Command, before the attack.



PLANET LABS PBC/AP

This satellite image shows damage two days after Iran's June 23 attack on Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, that hit a geodesic dome housing equipment used by the U.S. military for secure communications.

Trump also has said that Iran signaled when and how it would retaliate, allowing American and Qatari air defense to be ready for the attack, which briefly disrupted air travel in the Middle East, but otherwise didn't tip over into the regional war long feared by analysts.

Satellite images from Planet Labs PBC show the geodesic dome visible at the base on the morning of June 23, just hours before the attack.

The U.S. Air Force's 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, which operates out of the base, announced in 2016 the installation of the $15 million piece of equipment, known as a modernized enterprise terminal. Photos show a satellite dish inside of the dome, known as a radome.

Images taken June 25 and every day subsequently show the dome is gone, with some damage visible on a nearby building. The rest of the base appears largely untouched in the images.

In a statement, Parnell said the missile strike "did minimal damage to equipment and structures on the base."

"Al Udeid Air Base remains fully operational and capable of conducting its mission, alongside our Qatari partners, to provide security and stability in the region," he added.

The London-based satellite news channel Iran International first reported on the damage, citing satellite photos taken by a different provider.

In the U.S., Trump described the Iranian attack as a "very weak response." He had said that Tehran fired 14 missiles, with 13 intercepted and one being "set free" as it was going in a "nonthreatening" direction.

"I want to thank Iran for giving us early notice, which made it possible for no lives to be lost, and nobody to be injured," he wrote on his website Truth Social.

The White House had no immediate comment after Parnell's acknowledgment Friday. Trump visited Al Udeid on May 15 as part of his Mideast tour.

After the attack, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard insisted that the air base had been the "target of a destructive and powerful missile attack." Iran's Supreme National Security Council also said that the base had been "smashed," without offering any specific damage assessments.

Potentially signaling that he knew the dome had been hit, an adviser to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei separately said that the base's communications had been disconnected by the attack.

"All equipment of the base was completely destroyed and now the U.S. command stream and connection from Al Udeid base to its other military bases have been completely cut," said Ahmad Alamolhoda, a hard-line cleric.

Meanwhile, Iran's foreign minister said Saturday that his country would accept a resumption of nuclear talks with the U.S. if there were assurances of no more attacks against it, state media reported.

At least 30 are killed in Israeli strikes, Gaza officials say

BY WAFAA SHURAFA AND IMAD ISSEID
Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip killed at least 30 people on Sunday, including six children at a water collection point, while the Palestinian death toll passed 58,000 after 21 months of war, local health officials said.

Israel and Hamas appeared no closer to a breakthrough in indirect talks meant to pause the war and free some Israeli hostages after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Washington visit last week. A new sticking point has emerged over Israeli troops' deployment during a ceasefire.

Israel says it will end the war only once Hamas surrenders, disarms and goes into exile, something it refuses to do. Hamas says it is willing to free all the remaining 50 hostages, about 20 said to be alive, in exchange for an end to the war and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces.

Throughout the war in Gaza, violence has surged in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Funerals were held there Sunday for two Palestinians, including Palestinian-American Sayfollah Musallet, killed by Israeli settlers, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

In central Gaza, officials at Al-Awda Hospital said it received 10 bodies after an Israeli strike on a water collection point in nearby Nuseirat. Among the dead were six children.

Ramadan Nassar, a witness who lives in the area, told The Associated Press that around 20 children and 14 adults had been lined up to get water. He said Palestinians walk more than a mile to fetch water from the area.

The Israeli military said it was targeting a militant but a technical error made its munitions fall "dozens of meters from the target."

In Nuseirat, a small boy leaned over a body bag to say goodbye to a friend.

"There is no safe place," resident Raafat Fanouna said as some people went over the rubble with sticks and bare hands.

Separately, health officials said an Israeli strike hit a group of citizens walking in the street on Sunday afternoon in central Gaza City, killing 11 people and injuring around 30 others. Dr. Ahmed Qandil, who specializes in general surgery, was among those killed, Gaza's Health Ministry said. A ministry spokesperson, Zaher al-Wahidi, told the AP that Qandil had been on his way to Al-Ahli Arab Baptist Hospital.

In the central town of Zawaida, an Israeli strike on a home killed nine, including two women and three children, officials at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital said.

Israel's military said it was unaware of the strike on the home, but said it hit more than 150 targets over the past 24 hours, including what it called weapons storage facilities, missile launchers and sniping posts. Israel blames Hamas for civilian casualties because the militant group operates out of populated areas.

Gaza's Health Ministry says women and children make up more than half of the over 58,000 dead in the war. The ministry, under Gaza's Hamas-run government, doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count. The U.N. and other international organizations see its figures as the most reliable statistics on war casualties.

The Hamas-led attack on Oct. 7, 2023, that sparked the war killed some 1,200 people and abducted 251.

Israel's Energy Minister Eli Cohen told right-wing Channel 14 that his ministry will not help rebuild infrastructure in Gaza. "Gaza should remain an island of ruins to the next decades," he said.

EU entity: 15 still unaccounted for after Houthi attack in Red Sea

BY JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Four people are presumed dead and 11 others are still missing after a Liberian-flagged cargo ship sank in the Red Sea following an attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels, a European Union naval mission said Friday.

The update from the EU's Operation Aspides came as private security forces continue to search for survivors from the Eternity C, a Greek-owned bulk carrier that sank on Wednesday.

Ten people were recovered alive from the attack, including eight Filipino crew members and a Greek and Indian from the vessel's three-man security team, the EU operation said.

Fifteen people remain unaccounted for, including the four presumed dead, the mission said.

"All nearby vessels are advised to have a sharp look out," the EU mission said.

The Houthis have said they hold some of the crew. The U.S. Embassy in Yemen — which has operated from Saudi Arabia for about a decade — has described the Houthis as having "kidnapped" the mariners.

The death toll is the highest from any seaborne assault carried out by the Iranian-backed Houthis in the crucial maritime trade route where $1 trillion in cargo once passed through annually.

The rebels say they are attacking ships to support Palestinians in the Gaza Strip during the Israel-Hamas war, and have in total sank four vessels and killed sailors who had no direct role in the war.

The attack on the Eternity C followed the sinking of the bulk carrier Magic Seas in a similar attack several days earlier. Neither the European naval force nor the U.S. had been escorting the two vessels when they were attacked.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the Houthi attacks, calling them "a dangerous re-escalation in this critical waterway."

"Beyond being an unacceptable attack on the safety and security of seafarers, these acts also violated the freedom of navigation, caused a hazard to maritime transport and represent a serious risk of a significant environmental, economic and humanitarian damage to an already vulnerable coastal environment," he added in a statement.

The Houthis have held mariners in the past. After seizing the vehicle carrier Galaxy Leader in November 2023, the rebels held the crew until January this year.

From November 2023 to December 2024, the Houthis targeted more than 100 ships with missiles and drones. The stopped their attacks during a brief ceasefire in the war. They later became the target of an intense weekslong campaign of airstrikes ordered by President Donald Trump before he declared a ceasefire had been reached with the rebels.

NATION

Trump readies 30% tariffs against EU, Mexico

By Aamer Madhani
Associated Press

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. — President Donald Trump on Saturday announced he's levying tariffs of 30% against the European Union and Mexico starting Aug. 1, a move that could cause massive upheaval between the United States and two of its biggest trade partners.

Trump detailed the planned tariffs in letters posted to his social media account. They are part of an announcement blitz by Trump of new tariffs aimed at allies and foes alike, a bedrock of his 2024 campaign that he said would set the foundation for reviving a U.S. economy that he claims has been ripped off by other nations for decades.

In his letter to Mexico's leader, President Claudia Sheinbaum, Trump acknowledged that the country has been helpful in stemming the flow of undocumented migrants and fentanyl into the United States. But he said the country has not done enough to stop North America from turning into a "Narco-Trafficking Playground."

"Mexico has been helping me secure the border, BUT, what Mexico has done, is not enough," Trump added.

Trump in his letter to the European Union said the U.S. trade deficit was a national security threat.

"We have had years to discuss our Trading Relationship with The European Union, and we have concluded we must move away from these long-term, large, and persistent, Trade Deficits, engendered by your Tariff, and Non-Tariff, Policies, and Trade Barriers," Trump wrote in the letter to the EU. "Our relationship has been, unfortunately, far from Reciprocal."

The letters come in the midst of an on-and-off Trump threat to impose tariffs on countries and right an imbalance in trade. Trump in April imposed tariffs on dozens of countries, before pausing them for 90 days to negotiate individual deals. As the three-month grace period ended last week, Trump began sending his tariff letters to leaders but again has pushed back the implementation day for what he says will be just a few more weeks.

If he moves forward with the tariffs, it could have ramifications for nearly every aspect of the global economy.

In response, the EU said it will suspend retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods scheduled to take effect Monday in hopes of reaching a trade deal with the Trump administration by the end of the month.

"This is now the time for negotiations," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told reporters in Brussels on Sunday, after Trump sent his letter announcing new tariffs of 30% on goods from the EU and Mexico.

The EU — America's biggest trading partner and the world's largest trading bloc — had been scheduled to impose "countermeasures" starting Monday at midnight Brussels time (6 p.m. EDT; 22:00 GMT). The EU negotiates trade deals on behalf of its 27 member countries.

Von der Leyen said those countermeasures would be delayed until Aug. 1, and that Trump's letter shows "that we have until the first of August" to negotiate.

"We have always been clear that we prefer a negotiated solution," she said. If they can't reach a deal, she said that "we will continue to prepare countermeasures so we are fully prepared."

Europe's biggest exports to the U.S. are pharmaceuticals, cars, aircraft, chemicals, medical instruments and wine and spirits.

Meanwhile, the Mexican government said it was informed during high-level talks with U.S. State Department officials Friday that the Trump letter was coming. The delegation told Trump officials at the meeting it disagreed with the decision and considered it "unfair treatment," according to a Mexican government statement.

Sheinbaum, who has sought to avoid directly criticizing Trump in the early going of her presidency, expressed a measure of confidence during a public appearance on Saturday that the U.S. and Mexico will reach "better terms."

"I've always said that in these cases, you need a cool head to face any problem," Sheinbaum said.

Fla. facility impressions differ wildly by party

By Jennifer Peltz and Alexandria Rodriguez
Associated Press

OCHOPEE, Fla. — Democratic lawmakers condemned Florida's new Everglades immigration detention center after visiting Saturday, describing it as crowded, unsanitary and bug-infested. Republicans on the same tour said they saw nothing of the sort at the remote facility that officials have dubbed "Alligator Alcatraz."

The state-arranged tour came after some Democrats were blocked earlier from viewing the 3,000-bed detention center that the state rapidly built on an isolated airstrip surrounded by swampland. So many state legislators and members of Congress turned up Saturday that they were split into multiple groups.

"There are really disturbing, vile conditions and this place needs to be shut the hell down," U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a Democrat, told reporters after visiting the agglomeration of tents, trailers and temporary buildings. "This place is a stunt, and they're abusing human beings here."

Cage-style units of 32 men share three combination toilet-sink devices, the visitors measured the temperature at 83 degrees Fahrenheit in a housing area entranceway and 85 in a medical intake area, and grasshoppers and other insects abound, she and her fellow Florida Democrats said.

Although the visitors said they were not able to speak with the detainees, Rep. Maxwell Alejandro Frost, also a Democrat, said one called out "I'm an American citizen!" and others chanted "Libertad!," Spanish for "freedom."

State Sen. Blaise Ingoglia, a Republican from Florida, countered that he had seen a well-run, safe facility where the living quarters were clean and the air conditioning worked well.

"The rhetoric coming out of the Democrats does not match the reality," said Ingoglia, who said he toured in the same group as Wasserman Schultz. Ingoglia said a handful of detainees became "a little raucous" when the visitors appeared, but he did not make out what they were saying.



Alexandra Rodriguez/AP

Dianne Mourer waves an American flag as Rana Mourer stands in front of a sign reading "Alligator Alcatraz" outside the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Facility, on Saturday, in Ochopee, Fla.

State Sen. Jay Collins was in another group and said he also found the detention center to be clean and functioning well: "No squalor."

Collins, a Republican, said he saw backup generators, a tracking system for dietary restrictions and military-style bunks with good mattresses. The sanitation devices struck him as appropriate, if basic.

"Would I want that toilet-and-sink combination at my bathroom at the house? Probably not, but this is a transitional holding facility," Collins said by phone.

Journalists were not allowed on the tour, and lawmakers were instructed not to bring phones or cameras inside. Messages seeking comment were sent to the state Division of Emergency Management, which built the facility, and to representatives for Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican. DeSantis spokesperson Molly Best highlighted one of Ingoglia's upbeat readouts on social media.

Across the state in Tampa, federal Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said of the Everglades detention center that "any issues that were there have been addressed." She added that she has talked with five unnamed Republican governors about modeling other facilities on it.

DeSantis and fellow Republicans have touted the makeshift detention center, constructed in days as an efficient and get-tough response to President Donald Trump's call for mass deportations. The first detainees arrived July 3, after Trump toured and praised the facility.

Ahead of the facility's opening, state officials said detainees would have access to medical care, consistent air conditioning, a recreation yard, attorneys and clergy members.

But detainees and their relatives and advocates have told The Associated Press that conditions are awful, with worm-infested food, toilets overflowing onto floors, mosquitoes buzzing around the fenced bunks, and air conditioners that sometimes shut off in the oppressive South Florida summer heat. One man told his wife that detainees go days without getting showers.

'Alligator Alcatraz' firm donated to Fla. GOP, got contracts

By Romy Ellenbogen
Tampa Bay (Fla.) Times

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — A Texas-based company gave $10,000 to Florida's Republican Party days before getting state contracts to help with transportation at a state-run detention facility for migrants in the Everglades.

IRG Global Emergency Management Inc. made the donation on June 24, according to state campaign finance filings, days after state Attorney General James Uthmeier first publicly floated the "Alligator Alcatraz" detention center. The same day it made the donation, the company inked a $1.1 million contract with the state to "provide operational support services in support of migration efforts in the State."

On July 1, the company got two more contracts with Florida, one for $2.9 million and another for $2.2 million, for site shuttles, armory systems, on-site emergency services and air operations. The address listed on both contracts is in Ochopee, Fla., where Alligator Alcatraz is located.

A spokesperson for IRG Global did not return two requests for comment Friday.

A spokesperson for Gov. Ron DeSantis said his office has no involvement with the Republican Party of Florida. A spokesperson for the state GOP did not respond Friday to a request for comment.

Alligator Alcatraz isn't the first time the emergency management firm or its affiliate company has worked with Florida.

IRG Global is affiliated with ARS Global Emergency Management, which in Florida's business filings is listed as Access Restoration Services. A spokesperson for ARS did not respond to requests for comment Friday.

That group was involved in Florida's 2023 effort to relaunch a program to fly migrants to left-leaning cities and states.

Last month, IRG also received a $19.6 million contract from the state for planes to fly people out of Israel amid the conflict with Iran.

ARS previously donated about $150,000 to the state GOP through contributions in February 2023 and October 2024.

NATION

Search suspended in Texas amid flood warnings

By Gabriela Aoun
Associated Press

KERRVILLE, Texas — Emergency crews suspended their search for victims of catastrophic flooding in central Texas on Sunday morning amid new warnings that additional rain would again cause waterways to surge.

It was the first time a new round of severe weather has paused the search since the flooding earlier this month.

Ingram Fire Department officials ordered search crews to immediately evacuate the Guadalupe River corridor in Kerr County until further notice, warning the potential for a flash flood is high.

Search-and-rescue teams have been searching for missing victims of the July 4 weekend flooding that killed at least 129 people and left more than 170 missing.

As heavy rain fell Sunday, National Weather Service forecasters warned that the Guadalupe River could rise to nearly 15 feet by Sunday afternoon, about five feet above flood stage and enough to put the Highway 39 bridge near Hunt under water.

"Numerous secondary roads and bridges are flooded and very dangerous," a weather service warning said.

The destructive, fast-moving waters rose 26 feet on the Guadalupe River in just 45 minutes before daybreak on July 4, washing away homes and vehicles. Ever since, searchers have used helicopters, boats and drones to look for victims and to rescue people stranded in trees and from camps isolated by washed-out roads.

More than 160 people still are believed to be missing, and at least 118 have died in the floods that laid waste to the Hill Country region of Texas. The riverbanks and hills of Kerr County are filled with vacation cabins, youth camps and campgrounds, including Camp Mystic, the century-old all-girls Christian summer camp. Located in a low-lying area along the Guadalupe River in a region known as flash flood alley, Camp Mystic lost at least 27 campers and counselors and longtime owner Dick Eastland.

The flood was far more severe than the 100-year event envisioned by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, experts said, and moved so quickly in the middle of the night that it caught many off guard in a county that lacked a warning system.

President Donald Trump on Friday toured the devastation and lauded state and local officials. Trump has repeatedly promised to do away with FEMA as part of his larger pledges to dramatically shrink the size of government, and he's fond of decrying officials in Democrat-run states hit by past natural disasters and tragedy. But the president struck a far more somber and sympathetic tone while visiting America's most populous Republican state.



Jacquelyn Martin/AP

From left, first lady Melania Trump, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and President Donald Trump are briefed on flood damage in Kerrville, Texas, on Friday. At least 120 people died in the flooding this month.

"The search for the missing continues. The people that are doing it are unbelievable," Trump said at a makeshift emergency operations center inside an expo hall in Kerrville.

"We just visited with incredible families. They've been devastated," the president said of a closed-door meeting he and first lady Melania Trump had with the relatives of some of those killed or missing.

The first lady described meeting "beautiful young ladies" from the area who she said gave her a "special bracelet from the camp in honor of all the little girls that lost their lives." She promised to return to support the camp in the future.

Bondi fires 20 DOJ employees involved in Trump prosecutions

By Perry Stein and Amy B Wang
The Washington Post

Attorney General Pam Bondi last week fired multiple Justice Department employees who were involved in two federal prosecutions of President Donald Trump during the Biden administration, according to several people familiar with the terminations who spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid retribution.

In total, 20 people were fired from the department, including two prosecutors who worked under former special counsel Jack Smith, according to one person familiar with the removals. The rest of the dismissed employees were support staff and U.S. marshals who assisted those prosecutors, the person said.

Smith, who was appointed by then-Attorney General Merrick Garland, led the department's investigation into Trump's efforts to overturn Joe Biden's 2020 election victory, as well as a separate case focused on Trump's mishandling of classified documents found in his Mar-a-Lago home.

A representative for the Justice Department declined to comment Saturday on the firings, which were first reported by Axios.

Trump had long referred to the pair of investigations Smith led as part of a politically motivated "witch hunt" against him. During the 2024 campaign, he vowed to fire Smith on his first day back in the White House if he won the election. Smith resigned from the Justice Department shortly before Inauguration Day in January after winding down the federal criminal cases against Trump, which prosecutors said could no longer go forward because of longstanding Justice Department policy against prosecuting a sitting president.



Demetrius Freeman/The Washington Post

Attorney General Pam Bondi, right, last week fired multiple Justice Department employees who were involved in two federal prosecutions of President Donald Trump.

As part of the election-related investigation, Trump was indicted by a federal grand jury in August 2023 on four criminal counts. In the classified documents case, Trump faced charges that included willful retention of national defense secrets, obstruction of justice and conspiracy.

However, neither case went to trial. The election-interference indictment was delayed after a Supreme Court ruling last summer greatly expanded presidential immunity for actions taken while in office. U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon in Florida tossed the classified documents indictment two weeks later, ruling Smith had been unlawfully appointed.

Furor over Epstein files sparks clash between DOJ officials

By Eric Tucker
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department and FBI are struggling to contain the fallout from this month's decision to withhold records from the Jeffrey Epstein sex trafficking investigation, which rankled influential far-right media personalities and supporters of President Donald Trump.

The move, which included the acknowledgment that one particular sought-after document never actually existed, sparked a contentious conversation between Attorney General Pam Bondi and FBI Deputy Director Dan Bongino at the White House last week. The spat threatened to shatter relations between them and centered in part on a news story that described divisions between the FBI and the Justice Department.

The cascade of disappointment and disbelief arising from the refusal to disclose additional, much-hyped records from the Epstein investigation underscores the struggles of FBI and Justice Department leaders to resolve the conspiracy theories and amped-up expectations that they themselves had stoked with claims of a cover-up and hidden evidence. Infuriated by the failure of officials to unlock, as promised, the secrets of the so-called "deep state," Trump supporters on the far right have grown restless and even demanded change at the top.

Trump expressed frustration in a social media posting on Saturday over the divide among diehards of his "Make America Great Again" movement over the matter, and expressed support for Bondi. His lengthy post made no mention of Bongino.

"What's going on with my 'boys' and, in some cases, 'gals?' " Trump wrote. "They're all going after Attorney General Pam Bondi, who is doing a FANTASTIC JOB! We're on one Team, MAGA, and I don't like what's happening."

Tensions that simmered for months boiled over on July 7 when the Justice Department and FBI issued a two-page statement saying that they had concluded that Epstein did not possess a "client list," even though Bondi had intimated in February that such a document was sitting on her desk, and had decided against releasing any additional records from the investigation.

The department did disclose a video meant to prove that Epstein killed himself in jail, but even that raised the eyebrows of conspiracy theorists because of a missing minute in the recording.

NATION

Freed from ICE detention, activist Khalil files $20M claim against White House

By Jake Offenhartz
Associated Press

NEW YORK — On a recent afternoon, Mahmoud Khalil sat in his Manhattan apartment, cradling his 10-week-old son as he thought back to the pre-dawn hours spent pacing a frigid immigration jail in Louisiana, awaiting news of the child's birth in New York.

For a moment, the outspoken Palestinian activist found himself uncharacteristically speechless.

"I cannot describe the pain of that night," Khalil said finally, gazing down as the baby, Deen, cooed in his arms. "This is something I will never forgive."

Now, weeks after regaining his freedom, Khalil is seeking restitution. On Thursday, his lawyers filed a claim for $20 million in damages against the Trump administration, alleging Khalil was falsely imprisoned, maliciously prosecuted and smeared as an antisemite as the government sought to deport him over his prominent role in campus protests.

The filing — a precursor to a lawsuit under the Federal Tort Claims Act — names the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the State Department.

It comes as the deportation case against Khalil, a 30-year-old recent graduate student at Columbia University, continues to wind its way through the immigration court system.

The goal, Khalil said, is to send a message that he won't be intimidated into silence.

"They are abusing their power because they think they are untouchable," Khalil said. "Unless they feel there is some sort of accountability, it will continue to go unchecked."

Khalil said he plans to share any settlement money with others targeted in Trump's "failed" effort to suppress pro-Palestinian speech. In lieu of a settlement, he would also accept an official apology and changes to the administration's deportation policies.

A White House spokesperson deferred comment to the State Department, which said its actions were fully supported by the law.

In an emailed statement, Tricia McLaughlin, a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security, called Khalil's claim "absurd," accusing him of "hateful behavior and rhetoric" that threatened Jewish students.

The filing accuses President Donald Trump and other officials of mounting a haphazard and illegal campaign to "terrorize him and his family," beginning with Khalil's March 8 arrest.

On that night, he said he was returning home from dinner with his wife, Noor Abdalla, when he was "effectively kidnapped" by plainclothes federal agents, who refused to provide a warrant and appeared surprised to learn he was a legal U.S. permanent resident.

He was then whisked overnight to an immigration jail in Jena, La., a remote location that was "deliberately concealed" from his family and attorneys, according to the filing.



YUKI IWAMURA/AP

Pro-Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil poses for a portrait during an interview, July 3, in New York.

Inside, Khalil said he was denied his ulcer medication, forced to sleep under harsh fluorescent lights and fed "nearly inedible" food, causing him to lose 15 pounds. "I cannot remember a night when I didn't go to sleep hungry," Khalil recalled.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration publicly celebrated the arrest, promising to deport him and others whose protests against Israel it dubbed "pro-terrorist, anti-Semitic, anti-American activity."

Man sentenced to life in Pa. for shooting and beheading father

By Mark Scolforo and Mike Catalini
Associated Press

A Pennsylvania man who posted a video of his father's severed head on YouTube was convicted of murder Friday and sentenced to life without parole.

Bucks County Judge Stephen A. Corr found Justin D. Mohn, 33, guilty in the January 2024 shooting death of his father at their home in the Philadelphia suburb of Levittown.

After the sentencing, Bucks County District Attorney Jennifer Schorn told reporters Mohn had exhibited a "complete and utter lack of remorse," calling it an "unimaginable, unfathomable crime."

"We are satisfied that this was the right outcome to guarantee that the community at large is safe from Justin Mohn," Schorn said.

His defense attorney called it an "undoubtedly difficult case to preside over."

"Cases involving the loss of life are always the most difficult, and that difficulty is compounded when the prosecution seeks the death penalty. The commonwealth originally sought the death penalty in this case, and based on the defense that was presented on behalf of Mr. Mohn, my client will not face that penalty," said Mohn's lawyer, Steven M. Jones, in an email. He declined to comment on whether Mohn will appeal.

Prosecutors said Mohn shot his father, Michael F. Mohn, 68, with a newly purchased pistol, then decapitated him with a kitchen knife and machete. The 14-minute YouTube video he posted was live for hours before it was removed.

Mohn testified during the trial that he shot his father while trying to arrest him on what he said were false statements and treason but his father resisted, so he fired at him. He said he severed his head to send a message to federal workers to meet his demands, which included their resignation among other things.

In victim impact statements read in court Friday, family members and others recalled Michael Mohn as a loving husband and father, a man of humility and humor who enjoyed reading, exercising and playing the guitar.

Justin Mohn was arrested later on the day of the murder after scaling a fence at Fort Indiantown Gap, the state's National Guard headquarters. Prosecutors said he called for others to join him in attempting to overthrow the U.S. government.

Mohn had a USB device containing photos of federal buildings and apparent instructions for making explosives when he was arrested, authorities said.

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	GERMANY	UNITED KINGDOM	U.S.A
Phone:	+49-(0)6134-2592730	+44-(0)1638-515714	+1-972-602-1670 Ext. 1701
Toll-free:	0800-CARSHIP (Germany only)		+1-800-264-8167 (US only)
E-Mail:	info@transglobal-logistics.de	enquiries@carshipuk.co.uk	info@tgal.us
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WORLD

Russia warns against targeting N. Korea

BY HYUNG-JIN KIM
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Russia's foreign minister warned the U.S., South Korea and Japan against forming a security partnership targeting North Korea as he visited his country's ally for talks on further solidifying their booming military and other cooperation.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov spoke Saturday at North Korea's eastern Wonsan city, where he met the country's leader, Kim Jong Un, and conveyed greetings from President Vladimir Putin.

Kim during the meeting reaffirmed his government's commitment to "unconditionally support and encourage all measures" taken by Russia in its conflict with Ukraine.

He said Pyongyang and Moscow share identical views on "all strategic issues in conformity with the level of alliance," according to North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency.

Lavrov called for the two countries to further strengthen their "strategic and tactical cooperation and intensify concerted action" in international affairs, KCNA reported.

Relations between Russia and North Korea have been flourishing in recent years, with North Korea supplying troops and ammunition to support Russia's war against Ukraine in return for military and economic assistance.

That has raised concerns among South Korea, the U.S. and others that Russia might also transfer sensitive technologies to North Korea that can increase the danger of its nuclear and missile programs.

Speaking with reporters after a meeting with his North Korean counterpart Choe Son Hui, Lavrov accused the U.S., South Korea and Japan of what he called military buildups around North Korea.

"We warn against exploiting these ties to build alliances directed against anyone, including North Korea and, of course, Russia," he said, according to Russia's state Tass news agency.

The U.S., South Korea and Japan have expanded or restored their trilateral military exercises in response to North Korea's advancing nuclear program. The three countries held a joint air drill Friday involving U.S. nuclear-capable bombers near the Korean Peninsula as their top military officers met in Seoul and urged North Korea to cease all unlawful activities threatening regional security.

North Korea views major U.S.-led military drills as invasion rehearsals and has long argued it is forced to develop nuclear weapons to defend itself from U.S. military threats.



AP

In this photo provided by the North Korean government, its leader Kim Jong Un, right, talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, second left, in Wonsan, North Korea, Saturday.

Aid cuts halt HIV vaccine research

BY MOGOMOTSI MAGOME
Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG — Just a week had remained before scientists in South Africa were to begin clinical trials of an HIV vaccine, and hopes were high for another step toward limiting one of history's deadliest pandemics. Then the email arrived.

Stop all work, it said. The United States, under President Donald Trump, was withdrawing all its funding.

The news devastated the researchers, who live and work in a region where more people live with HIV than anywhere else in the world. Their research project, called BRILLIANT, was meant to be the latest to draw on the region's genetic diversity and deep expertise in the hope of benefiting people everywhere.

But the $46 million from the U.S. for the project was disappearing, part of the dismantling of foreign aid by the world's biggest donor earlier this year as Trump announced a focus on priorities at home.

South Africa has been hit especially hard because of Trump's baseless claims about the targeting of the country's white Afrikaner minority. The country had been receiving about $400 million a year via USAID and the HIV-focused PEPFAR.

Now that's gone.

Glenda Grey, who heads the BRILLIANT Program, said the African continent has been vital to the development of HIV medication, and the U.S. cuts threaten its capability to do such work in the future.

The BRILLIANT program is scrambling to find money to save the project. The purchase of key equipment has stopped. South Africa's health department says about 100 researchers for that program and others related to HIV have been laid off. Funding for students involved in experiments for the projects is at risk.

And now the number of HIV infections will grow. Medication is more difficult to obtain. At least 8,000 health workers in South Africa's HIV program have already been laid off, the government has said. Also gone are the data collectors who tracked patients and their care, as well as HIV counselors who could reach vulnerable patients.

For researchers, Universities South Africa, an umbrella body, has applied to the national treasury for $110 million for projects at some of the largest schools.

During a visit to South Africa in June, UNAIDS executive director Winnie Byanyima was well aware of the stakes as research and health care struggle in South Africa and across Africa at large.

Other countries highly dependent on U.S. funding are already increasing resources, she said.

"But let's be clear, what they are putting down will not be funding in the same way that the American resources were funding," Byanyima said.



THEMBA HADEBE/AP

Laboratory technician Nozipho Mlotshwa works on samples at University of the Witwatersrand Medical School, in Johannesburg, South Africa, May 22.

Islamic State-aligned rebels kill scores of civilians in Congo

BY JEAN-YVES KAMALE AND WILSON MCMAKIN
Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo — Rebels affiliated with the Islamic State group killed 66 people in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, local officials said Saturday.

Fighters with the Allied Democratic Forces, which has ties to ISIS, killed civilians in the area of Irumu in the east of the country bordering Uganda.

The attack comes as eastern Congo may see an end to its ongoing war with M23, a separate rebel group which is backed by the government in Rwanda, another of Congo's neighbors.

Jean Tobie Okala, the spokesperson for the United Nations mission in Ituri in eastern Congo, called the attack on civilians a "bloodbath."

The ADF is a Ugandan Islamist group that operates on both sides of the porous border.

All the victims, including women, were killed with machetes, said the president of a local civil society, Marcel Paluku.

The number of people taken hostage is currently unknown.

The attack is suspected to be in response to an escalating bombing campaign by joint Congolese and Ugandan forces that started on Sunday.

The number of ADF fighters in Congo is unclear, but they are a significant presence in the region and regularly attack civilians.

The group originated in the late 1990s in neighboring Uganda and became affiliated with ISIS in 2019. Muslims make up about 10% of the Congolese population, most of them in the east.

Assailant dead after fatal shooting outside of Vienna

Associated Press

VIENNA — Police in Austria said a man was fatally shot and a woman seriously wounded on Sunday morning by an assailant who took his own life. The shooting happened in the town of Traiskirchen, 20 miles south of Vienna.

Austria News Agency quoted local police spokesman Johann Baumschlager as saying that the suspect fled in a vehicle and later took his own life.

The Lower Austrian State Office of Criminal Investigation is investigating the shooting but could not immediately give any further details.

Local media reported that the shooting was preceded by an argument between the three people.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

New coal mine intended to extract rare earths

WY CHEYENNE — The developer of what would be the first new coal mine in Wyoming in decades plans to process the fossil fuel to extract hard-to-get metals that are crucial for tech products and military hardware.

Energy Secretary Chris Wright, former West Virginia U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon, and Wyoming's congressional delegation were on the VIP list for a groundbreaking ceremony Friday at the Ramaco Resources Inc. Brook Mine outside Ranchester in far northern Wyoming.

Rare earth elements are a family of 17 metallic elements with unusual properties that make them useful for specific applications.

China supplies almost 90% of the world's rare earths. Concern about continued access to the substances has been a focus of recent negotiations between China and the U.S., and led the Trump administration to try to encourage more production domestically.

State's first standalone children's hospital slated

NC APEX — North Carolina's first standalone children's hospital will be built in a bedroom community near the state capital, the project's health systems announced Thursday, creating a campus estimated to bring 8,000 jobs to the area.

UNC Health and Duke Health announced in January an agreement to jointly build the proposed 500-bed pediatric hospital and linked facilities in the state's Research Triangle region, which includes Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill. Leaders of the health systems said Thursday that the "North Carolina Children's" project will be constructed in Apex, about 20 miles southwest of downtown Raleigh.

The 230-acre campus will also include a children's outpatient care center, over 100 behavioral health beds and a research and education center operated by Duke University and University of North Carolina medical schools.

Feds say Republican ran $140M Ponzi scheme

GA NEWNAN — A prominent state Republican was running a Ponzi scheme that defrauded 300 investors of at least $140 million, federal officials said in a complaint filed Thursday.

The civil lawsuit by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission said First Liberty Building and Loan, controlled by Brant Frost IV, lied to investors about its business of making high-interest loans to companies. Instead, investigators said, it raised more money to repay earlier investors.

Frost is alleged to have taken more than $19 million of investor funds for himself, his family and affiliated companies even as the business was going broke, spending $160,000 on jewelry and $335,000 with a rare coin dealer. Frost is also said to have spent $320,000 to rent a vacation home over multiple years in Kennebunkport, Maine.

Workers fired after 'Devil in the Ozarks' escape

AR LITTLE ROCK — Two employees at an Arkansas prison where an inmate known as the "Devil in the Ozarks" escaped have been fired for policy violations, corrections officials said Thursday as they faced questions from lawmakers who said the escape points to deeper problems.

The head of the Arkansas Board of Corrections told state lawmakers the violations allowed Grant Hardin to escape from the Calico Rock prison wearing a makeshift law enforcement uniform on May 25. But officials have said there was no evidence employees knowingly assisted Hardin's escape.

One of the fired employees had allowed Hardin onto an outside kitchen dock unsupervised and the other employee worked in a tower and had opened the gate Hardin walked through without confirming his identity, Chairman Benny Magness said.

Hardin was captured 1.5 miles northwest of the Calico Rock prison on June 6. Authorities said he escaped by donning an outfit designed to look like a law enforcement uniform. Magness said the outfit was crafted from an inmate uniform and kitchen apron dyed black using a marker while a soup can lid and a Bible cover were fashioned to look like a badge.



GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ/AP

Big and stinky

Claire Wernecke takes a selfie with the blooming corpse flower, also known as Titan Arum, at Conservatory of Flowers in San Francisco last week. The corpse flower gets its name from its rotten flesh smell when it blooms, which occurs once every few years.

Officials survey aftermath of deadly Ruidoso flood

NM SANTA FE — At least 200 homes were damaged during a deadly flash flood in the mountain village of Ruidoso, and emergency managers warned that number could more than double as teams survey more neighborhoods.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham was among the officials who took an aerial tour of Ruidoso and the surrounding area as they looked to bolster their case for more federal assistance for the community, which has been battered over the past year by wildfires and repeated flooding.

An intense bout of monsoon rains set the disaster in motion Tuesday afternoon. Water rushed from the surrounding mountainside, overwhelming the Rio Ruidoso and taking with it a man and two children who had been camping at a riverside RV park. Their bodies were found downstream.

Opioid overdose deaths down 36% in 2024

MA BOSTON — Opioid related overdose deaths fell 36% in Massachusetts in 2024, reaching their lowest point since 2013, according to provisional CDC data.

In 2024, Massachusetts had 1,340 confirmed opioid-related overdose deaths, down 764 from 2023, the federal data showed.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health said the reduction in fatal overdoses is likely contributed to by significant investments to expand access to services. The department cited housing programs for people with a substance use disorder, increased access to opioid use disorder medications and community-based services like Peer Recovery Support Centers.

In 2024, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a nearly 27% decrease in drug overdose deaths across the U.S. from the previous year, "the largest one-year decline ever recorded."

More time sought in hate crime against white man

HI HONOLULU — A Native Hawaiian man who was convicted of a hate crime against a white man must be re-sentenced, a U.S. appeals court ruled Thursday, and the result could be several more years in prison.

Kaulana Alo-Kaonohi was sentenced to six-and-a-half years in 2023 by a judge in Honolulu after a jury found him and another Native Hawaiian man guilty.

The jury found that Alo-Kaonohi and Levi Aki Jr. were motivated by Christopher Kunzelman's race when they punched, kicked and used a shovel to beat him in 2014 for trying to move into their remote Maui village.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals panel also ruled Thursday to affirm Alo-Kaonohi's conviction.

At least 25 hospitalized after mass overdose

MD BALTIMORE — At least 25 people were hospitalized Thursday following a "level one" mass overdose event in Baltimore.

Baltimore City police and fire officials said paramedics first responded to a 911 call for a single overdose around 9:25 a.m. in the Penn-North neighborhood. Upon arriving at the scene, they discovered other people collapsed in the streets.

At least five of the victims were in critical condition, officials told NBC affiliate WBAL. Authorities said the number of overdoses is expected to rise as they search for other suspected cases in the area.

Officials did not disclose what substances the victims had used, though community organizers told The Baltimore Banner there were rumors of a "bad batch" of drugs in the neighborhood.

"It's like a mass shooting," drug treatment outreach worker Vincent Timmons told the Banner, but "they didn't use no gun, they used narcotics."

From The Associated Press and Tribune News Service

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Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
Laura Law, Chief Operating Officer
Lt. Col. Daniel "DQ" Quinlan, Europe commander
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EDITORIAL

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

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast

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

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

Pacific

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

+81.42.552.2511 ext. 88380; DSN (315)227.7380

Washington

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

(+1)(202)886-0033

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

CIRCULATION

Mideast

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

Europe

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

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

Pacific

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

CONTACT US

Washington

tel: (+1)202.886.0003

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

Reader letters

letters@stripes.com

Additional contacts

stripes.com/contactus

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Jacqueline Smith

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OPINION

COVID sparked an epidemic of intellectual malpractice

By George F. Will
The Washington Post

The worst public health crisis in 100 years became arguably the worst public policy failure in U.S. history because of *social* pathologies that the pathogen triggered. The coronavirus pandemic is over. What it revealed lingers: intellectual malpractice and authoritarian impulses infecting governmental, scientific, academic and media institutions.

This is unsparingly documented by two Princeton social scientists, Stephen Macedo and Frances Lee, in "In Covid's Wake: How Our Politics Failed Us." The most comprehensive and aggressive mobilization of emergency powers in U.S. history, wielded with scant regard for collateral consequences, exacerbated inequalities, included "extraordinary restrictions on free speech" and constituted a "stress test" that "the central truth-seeking departments of liberal democracy: journalism, science, and universities" frequently flunked. Macedo and Lee say the "moralization of disagreements" stifled dissent, employing censorship and shaming.

Incantations to "follow the science" obscured this: Science cannot "tell us what to do" because gargantuan government interventions in society involve contestable judgments across the range of human values. And large uncertainties, requiring difficult choices demanding cost-benefit analyses that were neglected during the pandemic.

The authors, self-described as "on the progressive side," detail how "the class biases of pandemic restrictions" — favored the "laptop class" of knowledge workers and others able to work remotely. "Essential workers," about one-third of the workforce, largely working class and disproportionately minorities, were expected to carry on. There was *no* historical precedent for success in what was attempted: using non-pharmaceutical interventions — lockdowns, social distancing, masking, etc. — to stifle a pandemic. And there was, Macedo and Lee report, "no relationship between the stringency of state" restrictions and COVID mortality rates.

The biomedical establishment, academia and remarkably unquestioning media reacted ferociously — politically, not scientifically — against the theory that the pandemic's origin was a leak from a Chinese lab doing "gain of function" research that engineers especially transmissible and/or virulent viruses. This origin is now widely deemed plausible, even probable. The authors note that Anthony Fauci, the leading U.S. infectious-disease specialist, initiated the writing of a paper, more political than scientific, asserting the virus' natural origin, then cited the paper against the lab-leak hypothesis. He repeatedly and clearly misled Congress with emphatic denials of his involvement in funding gain-of-function research.

The three eminent epidemiologists who wrote the October 2020 Great Barrington Declaration — proposing pandemic mitigations focused on the elderly and persons with comorbidities — were disparaged by Francis Collins, then head of the National Institutes of Health, as "fringe" figures. This adjective conveys a presumption against departures from groupthink. Galileo was a fringe figure.

In September 2020, about 100 Stanford public health professors denounced a colleague — author of five books of health care policy — whose sin was arguing that policy should "minimize all harms," not simply to stop the coronavirus "at all costs." Two months later, Stanford's Faculty Senate voted overwhelmingly to censure him. Censure, not refute. Those declaring the scientific consensus unquestionable included two professors of comparative literature and a professor of theater and performance studies.

Despite the fact, quickly known, that COVID largely spared the young, the heads of the major teachers unions called for prolonged school closures, during which their members were paid. Even after the ineffectiveness of masking was revealed, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said children as young as 2 should wear them all day.

In the ever-overwrought Atlantic magazine, Georgia's decision to end lockdowns was called an "experiment in human sacrifice." But cumulatively, the consequences of unfocused measures taken against the coronavirus — from cancer screenings missed because of lockdowns, to a generation's learning loss and a legacy of chronic absenteeism from schools, to myopia in children from excessive screen time, to accelerated dementia among the isolated elderly — were worse than the disease, whose infections were mostly (more than 98%) mild. The costs of hysteria, partly driven by "noble lies" to panic the public into compliance with authoritarian measures, will, Macedo and Lee say, affect "the health, wellbeing, and longevity of the whole population years into the future."

"The 'pandemic,' " write Macedo and Lee, "was routinely said to have closed schools, businesses, theaters, travel, and so on, rather than government officials' decisions." The authors have produced the most dismaying dissection of U.S. policymaking since David Halberstam's Vietnam War policy autopsy, "The Best and the Brightest."

Their book is more dismaying, but also exhilarating. Vietnam revealed the insularity and hubris of a small coterie of foreign policy shapers. Macedo and Lee identify much broader and deeper cultural sicknesses. But their meticulous depictions and plausible explanations of the myriad institutional failures demonstrate social science at its finest.

Megabills didn't break US economy before and won't now

By Allison Schrager
Bloomberg Opinion

Opinions of the One Big Beautiful Bill tend toward the extreme. One of its main authors calls it "the greatest piece of Republican legislation in a generation," while one of its most authoritative critics says it makes him ashamed to be an American. So allow me to offer what counts as a radical view: The bill is neither as terrible as its opponents say nor as impressive as its supporters claim.

The reason markets are not responding more to the 870-page bill is that they see it for what it is — just another in a very long line of very big bills that add to the debt but won't break the economy, at least not soon.

Such bills always contain some good stuff and some bad stuff. Some of the better provisions of this bill make permanent the beneficial aspects of Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017. The increased standard deduction, for example, makes the tax code less distortionary. Allowing full expensing for corporate research and investment will increase growth.

The bill also keeps the lower rates from the 2017 law, which accounts for a lot of its multitrillion-dollar cost. That's something America can't really afford — but it doesn't need a sudden $4.5 trillion tax increase that hits the middle class, either. When the U.S. increases taxes, there are better ways to do it.

One of the more controversial aspects of the bill is its cuts to Medicaid in the form of work requirements for able-bodied, working-age adults who aren't caregivers. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that this will kick 11.8 million people off health insurance. But the CBO's record in predicting the effects of health care legislation is not great, and there are reasons to think this could be an overestimate. If that's true — see what I mean about these big bills being a mixed bag? — that means more debt.

At any rate, it's clear that Medicaid needs reform. Its costs have been growing over the decades, even compared to other entitlements, as states enroll more people and pay more for services. The design of the program, in which the federal government pays most of the costs and the states provide the care, invites waste and inefficiency: States tax hospitals and nursing homes, and then claim more federal funding to finance the higher cost of care the tax imposes. This bill takes a step in the direction of reform and prevents states from charging higher hospital taxes.

Of course, there's bad stuff in the bill, too. Eliminating taxes on interest payments for car loans, increasing the SALT cap, and raising the exemption for estate taxes is regressive and expensive. It's also hard to justify not taxing tips or overtime pay.

Still, for most Americans, their taxes and health insurance will remain unchanged. If Americans bear any cost in the near term, it will be in the form of higher interest rates from increased debt levels. And it is hard to pin that on this bill alone, given the nonstop spending bonanza the government has been on since the pandemic.

The main problem with this bill is it was a missed opportunity to take on the government's growing debt crisis. America needs major reform to both broaden the tax base and simplify the tax code. It also needs more entitlement reform — not just Medicaid, but Social Security and Medicare, too. The bill addresses none of this.

To be fair, President Donald Trump did not run on that platform. Promising to increase taxes and cut benefits may not be a winning strategy politically, but that doesn't mean it's not necessary. Hyping this bill as either an economic disaster or triumph is missing the point. It's just another piece of legislation that is adding to a slow-moving disaster.

Allison Schrager is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering economics. A senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, she is author of "An Economist Walks Into a Brothel: And Other Unexpected Places to Understand Risk." This column reflects the personal views of the author and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

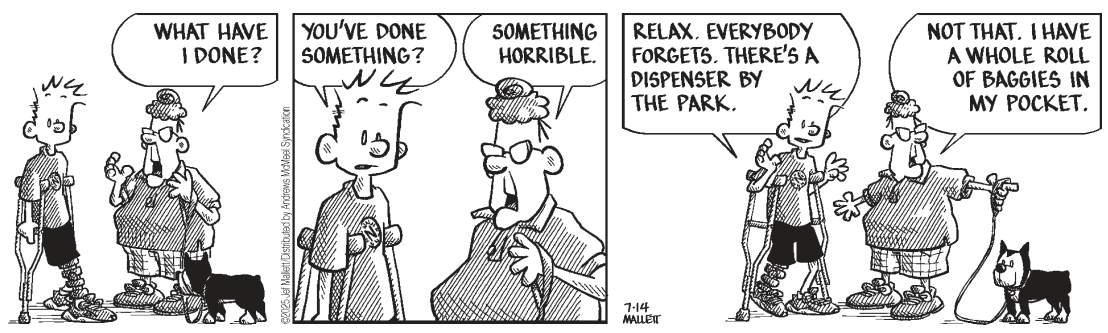
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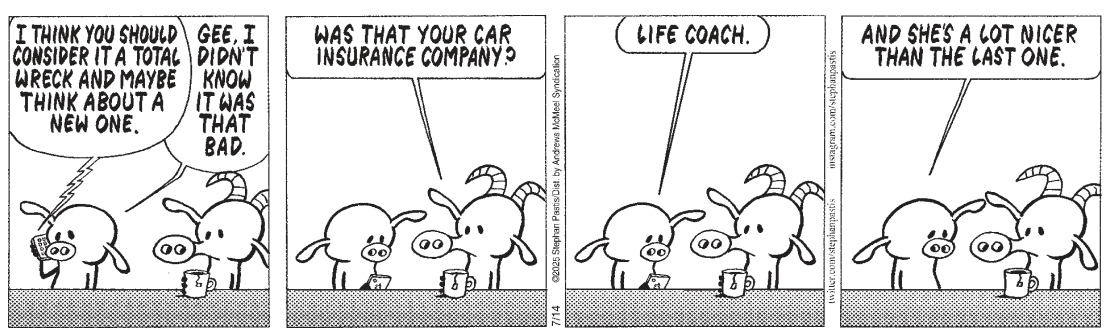
Loose Parts



Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



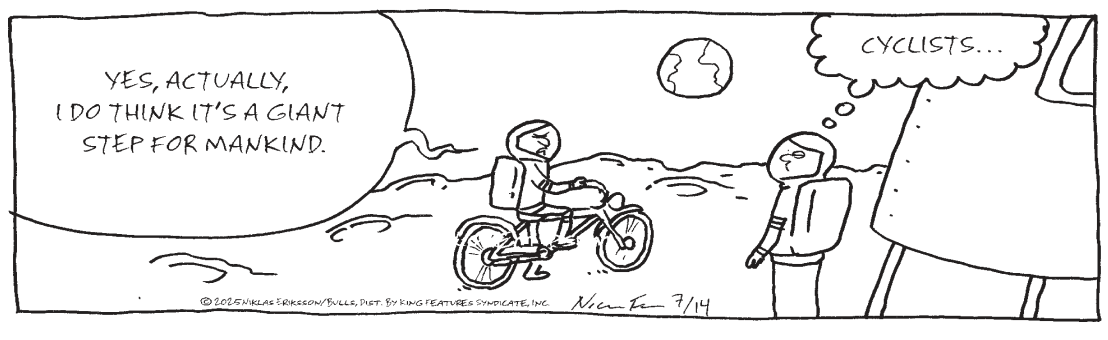
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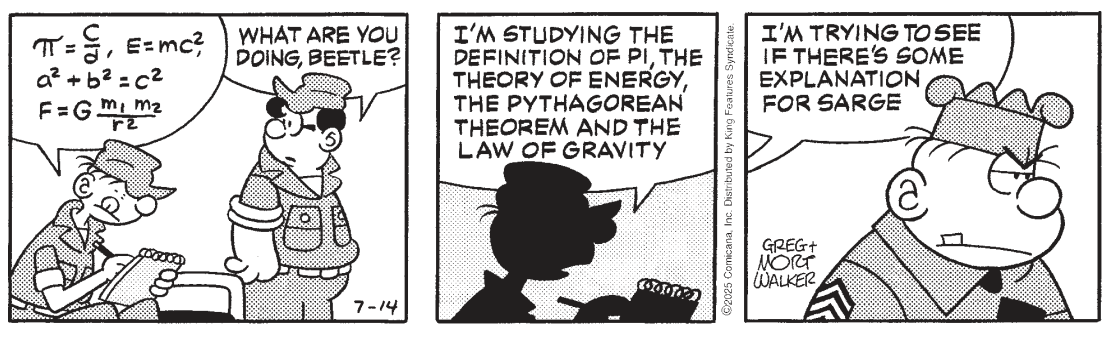
Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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

ACROSS

1 Now, on a memo
5 Nero's 700
8 Wound cover
12 Fish lover's deli order
14 Irene of "Fame"
15 Vindictive
16 Villain in "Wonder Woman"
17 Choice words?
18 Tuba sound
20 Ongoing quarrels
23 Golf hazard
24 "Three Sisters" sister
25 Diving birds
28 Solidify
29 Picture puzzle
30 Poetic contraction
32 Hoops great Jordan
34 Challenge
35 Mythical birds
36 Disney deer
37 Stir up
40 Workout unit
41 Frayed
42 Loyal
47 Power co. supply
48 City dweller
49 Meeting, in slang
50 Guitar master Paul
51 "Zounds!"

DOWN

1 Off-roader (Abbr.)
2 Take to court
3 Raggedy doll
4 Asian temple
5 OED entries
6 French vineyard
7 Like a rainbow
8 Shrimp recipe
9 Kvetch
10 Region
11 Wild party
13 Towel word
19 Klutzes
20 Skyline concealer
21 Grade sch.
22 Wrinkled fruit
23 Toothpaste holders
25 Placid
26 Linguist Chomsky
27 Belgrade resident
29 Frat letters
31 Outdoor gear brand
33 Ab-toning exercise
34 Author du Maurier
36 Test version
37 Dazzles
38 Actor's quest
39 Raw materials
40 Steakhouse order
43 Consist of
44 Pear-shaped fruit
45 Actress Hagen
46 Guided

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

7-14

CRYPTOQUIP

DVJULJHP WLOVW ULLY EPJL ZEL DQZDGX MJLIX MLZH LKC LA CEP XYG CL JPXWKP ALQYX: XZLLIPJ-ODH.

Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF SUPERMODEL KLUM IS MAKING NO ATTEMPT TO CONCEAL HERSELF, WHAT IS SHE? HEIDI IN PLAIN SIGHT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals H

FACES

Finding new rhythms

Mexican musician Natanael Cano's new album, 'Porque La Demora,' expands his sound with reggaeton, Afrobeats and other urban genres

By Berenice Bautista
Associated Press

Natanael Cano was not afraid to leave the terrain of corridos tumbados that made him famous to experiment with trap, reggaeton, Afrobeats and other urban genres in his new album.

Cano had tried out some of this genres in albums like "NataKong" and "Trap Tumbado," but felt it was time for a radical turn. "Porque La Demora," which can be translated as "Why the Delay?" dropped July 1 and may answer questions about the gap between his previous album, 2023's "Nata Montana," with its first track, which has Cano rapping.

"I'm happy to make this music, change the rhythm a little, I think it's something fresher. And more than trying to show people that more can be done, I enjoyed it a lot; I really enjoyed making this music," he said in a recent interview in Mexico City.

Cano envisions "Porque La Demora" as the soundtrack to a party. The first song that paved the way for this album is "Como Es," a trap created with the producer EQ.

For those looking for a sample of his new sound, Cano recommends listening to "Polos Opuestos." Also noteworthy is "Mary Poppins" with Chilean star FloyyMenor, one of the new generations of Latin urban artists.

"Floyy Menor and I vibed very well," he said. "People are going to like it; I loved it."

He recorded "Como Tony" with Eladio Carrión and teamed up with Myke Towers and Ganggy for "El Juez." Victor Mendivil, a musician originally from the Mexican state of Sonora like Cano, shares two songs: "Bellakita" and "Comida del Espacio."

Cano's past is not completely erased. He summoned another great of the corridos, Gabito Ballesteros, for "Perlas Negras," one of the album's standout songs with Afrobeat influences.

Last week, he premiered the video of the reggaeton "Hoy Nos Amanecio" with Badguychapo and Capo, recorded in Punta Mita.

"I went to suffer," he joked about the Mexican beach used as location.

Cano was recently announced as one of the artists who will perform at the Coca-Cola Flow Fest, a major Latin urban music festival held in Mexico City, and he will also be at the Baja Beach Fest, a more eclectic festival in northern Mexico.

Cano called Mexico's push for artists not to perform songs that promote crime (and the prospect of U.S. visa cancellations for regional Mexican music performers) a "smoke screen."

"Well, if it will help them solve what is happening, go ahead; we are not going to give it. And if not, then let people express themselves in the ways they want, which in the end is not illegal," he said.

"If there is no need, then don't do it if there is no reason to do it."

Cano had protection from Mexican authorities after threats from criminals, but does not have a visa to appear in the United States after a traffic violation and attempted bribery in Sonora. Regardless, he is confident that he will eventually be able to perform stateside.

"It will be achieved, sooner or later. This is not going to last long. In other words, everything passes, and we are going to be there. Hopefully, we can sing to people for the first time," Cano said.



GINNETTE RIQUELME/AP

Mexican singer Natanael Cano performs April 5 in Mexico City. Cano released a new album July 1, "Porque La Demora."

Bieber's long-awaited 7th album, 'Swag,' out

By Maria Sherman
Associated Press

Never say never! Justin Bieber surprised fans July 11 by releasing "Swag," his seventh studio album, hours after he teased it on billboards and social media posts.

It is his first album since 2021's "Justice" and his first since becoming a father last year.

"Inspired by his devotion as a husband and father, this new era of music has fueled a deeper perspective and more reflective sound, resulting in some of his most personal music yet," Def Jam Recordings said of the 21-track album.

The singer shared images of billboards on his official Instagram account last week along with a tracklist that included song names like "All I Can Take," "Walking Away," "Dadz Love" and "Forgiveness."

There's a lot to love across the 21 tracks of the intimate "Swag." Here are a few choice cuts.

■ **"Daisies":** The second track on the album may very well be its strongest: an exemplar in Bieber's slow-burn brand of alternative R&B-pop, now anchored with lo-fi guitar. Here, his sweet voice is pronounced — exactly what his most dedicated fans want to hear.

■ **"Devotion" ft. Dijon:** Dijon is a rising R&B voice; some fans might be familiar with his 2021 debut album "Absolutely" or his contribution to Bon Iver's "SABLE, fABLE" from earlier this year. He makes for a standout collaboration on "Swag," a sweet song about deepening affection.

■ **"Go Baby":** Bieber married model Hailey Baldwin in 2018; she's long been source material for his most loving tracks. "Go Baby" is a standout for that reason. "That's my baby, she's iconic," he opens the track, "iPhone case, lip gloss on it," referencing her Rhode skin care and beauty brand, which she sold to Elf Beauty in a $1 billion deal.

■ **"Walking Away":** Marriage isn't easy; that's clear on "Walking Away," a slightly more up-tempo track where Bieber makes his dedication evident. It's the perfect song for dancing in the kitchen with your partner.

■ **"All I Can Take":** The throwback opener has a vintage groove — echoes of Beiber's early work, now matured to reflect his current adult reality. He sounds as sweet as ever in the prechorus, his declaration of "Ooh, baby, don't it feel good? Baby, don't it feel nice? / Ooh, baby, don't it feel good? You don't have to think twice."



AP

Justin Bieber has released his seventh studio album and first in four years, "Swag."

In 2023, Bieber sold the rights to his music — all six of his albums, including hits like "Sorry" and "Baby" — to Hipgnosis, a U.K.-based music investment company. The deal's financial details were not disclosed, but Billboard Magazine reports that the sale was worth an estimated $200 million.

Larry David teams with Obamas for HBO US history sketch show

By Andrew Dalton
Associated Press

Larry David will bring his grumbly sensibility to U.S. history in a team-up with Barack and Michelle Obama for an HBO sketch show, the network announced July 10.

The "Curb Your Enthusiasm" creator and "Seinfeld" co-creator will act as executive producer, writer and star of the limited series consisting of six half-hour episodes, produced by the Obamas' company, Higher Ground.

The show marks the 78-year-old David's return to HBO just over a year after the end of the 12th and final season of "Curb Your Enthusiasm." His "Curb" showrunner Jeff Schaffer will co-write and direct episodes.

HBO did not give a premiere date, but the show is meant to mark the nation's 250th anniversary next year.

The untitled series' description is: "President and Mrs. Obama wanted to honor America's 250th anniversary and celebrate the unique history of our nation on this special occasion. ... But then Larry David called."

Statements from those involved suggest the tone it will take.

"Once 'Curb' ended, I celebrated with a three-day foam party. After a violent allergic reaction to the suds, I yearned to return to my simple life as a beekeeper, harvesting organic honey from the wildflowers in my meadow," David said. "Alas, one day my bees mysteriously vanished. And so, it is with a heavy heart that I return to television, hoping to ease the loss of my beloved hive."



David

In his statement, Barack Obama said, "I've sat across the table from some of the world's most difficult leaders and wrestled with some of our most intractable problems. Nothing has prepared me for working with Larry David."

David, known for his sitcoms and stand-up, was a writer and star on ABC's "Saturday Night Live" knockoff "Fridays" in the early 1980s, and later wrote briefly for "SNL" itself.

SCOREBOARD/OLYMPICS

TRANSACTIONS

Saturday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BOSTON RED SOX — Placed RHP Hunter Dobbins on the 15-day IL. Recalled RHP Richard Fitts from Worcester (IL).
CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Optioned LHP Fraser Ellard to Charlotte (IL).
CLEVELAND GUARDIANS — Optioned RHP Nic Enright to Columbus (IL).
HOUSTON ASTROS — Sent RHP Cristian Javier to FCL Astros on a rehab assignment.
TEXAS RANGERS — Sent RHP Josh Sborz to Round Rock (PCL) on a rehab assignment.

National League

ATLANTA BRAVES — Placed 3B Austin Riley on the 10-day IL. Activated LHP Joey Wentz. Recalled SS Nacho Alvarez Jr. from Gwinnett (IL). Optioned RHP Nathan Wiles to Gwinnett.
CHICAGO CUBS — Selected the contract of RHP Brooks Kriske from Iowa (IL). Optioned LHP Jordan Wicks to Iowa.
CINCINNATI REDS — Reinstated OF Jake Fraley from the 10-day IL. Optioned 1B Christian Encarnacion-Strand to Louisville (IL).
PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Released 1B Matt Gorski.
ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Optioned RHP Matt Svanson to Memphis (IL). Recalled RHP Gordon Graceffo from Memphis.
SAN DIEGO PADRES — Optioned RHP Ryan Bergert to El Paso (PCL). Recalled RHP Alek Jacob from El Paso.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

SAN ANTONIO SPURS — Re-signed G Jordan McLaughlin to a contract.

Women's National Basketball Association

LOS ANGELES SPARKS — Waived C Mercedes Russell.
MINNESOTA LYNX — Waived F Alissa Pili.

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

FC DALLAS — Transferred F Leó Chú to FC Alverca (Portugal).

National Women's Soccer League

CHICAGO STARS FC — Reinstated G Mackenzie Wood from the D-45 injury list.

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA

Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	13	6	.684	—
Atlanta	12	8	.600	1½
Indiana	10	10	.500	3½
Washington	10	10	.500	3½
Chicago	7	13	.350	6½
Connecticut	3	17	.150	10½

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	18	4	.818	—
Phoenix	14	6	.700	3
Seattle	13	8	.619	4½
Golden State	10	10	.500	7
Las Vegas	10	11	.476	7½
Los Angeles	6	14	.300	11
Dallas	6	15	.286	11½

Thursday's games

Minnesota 91, Los Angeles 82
Washington 70, Las Vegas 68

Friday's games

Indiana 99, Atlanta 82
Seattle 79, Connecticut 65

Saturday's games

Chicago 87, Minnesota 81
Las Vegas 104, Golden State 102

Sunday's games

Dallas at Indiana
Atlanta at New York
Connecticut at Los Angeles
Washington at Seattle

Monday's games

Minnesota at Chicago
Phoenix at Golden State

PRO SOCCER

MLS

Western Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Diego FC	13	6	3	42	46	30
Minn. United	11	4	7	40	39	25
Vancouver	11	5	5	38	35	25
Seattle	9	6	6	33	31	28
Portland	9	5	6	33	30	28
LA FC	9	5	5	32	35	24
Colorado	8	10	5	29	27	33
San Jose	7	8	7	28	42	37
Austin FC	7	8	6	27	15	23
Houston	7	10	5	26	29	35
Real Salt Lake	7	10	4	25	23	28
Sporting KC	6	11	5	23	35	41
FC Dallas	5	10	6	21	27	39
St Louis City	3	12	6	15	21	34
LA Galaxy	3	13	6	15	24	43

Eastern Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Philadelphia	13	5	4	43	37	21
Cincinnati	13	6	3	42	35	31
Nashville	12	5	5	41	38	25
Columbus	11	3	8	41	38	29
Inter Miami CF	11	3	5	38	44	30
Orlando City	9	5	8	35	40	29
NYC FC	9	8	4	31	27	24
New York	8	8	6	30	33	27
Charlotte FC	9	11	2	29	36	36
Chicago	8	9	4	28	40	38
New England	6	8	7	25	26	25
Atlanta	4	10	7	19	23	38
D.C. United	4	11	7	19	18	41
Toronto FC	4	11	6	18	24	29
CF Montréal	3	13	6	15	19	41

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

Saturday's games

Charlotte FC 2, New York City FC 0
CF Montréal 1, Orlando City 1, tie
Philadelphia 2, New York 0
Atlanta 1, Toronto FC 1, tie
Miami 2, Nashville 1
New England 0, Austin FC 0, tie
San Diego FC 2, Chicago 1
Seattle 3, Sporting Kansas City 2
Minnesota 4, San Jose 1
Columbus 4, Cincinnati 2
Colorado 3, Vancouver 0
Real Salt Lake 1, Houston 0
LA Galaxy 2, D.C. United 1
Los Angeles FC 2, FC Dallas 0

Sunday's games

Portland at St Louis City

Wednesday's games

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

Saturday, July 19

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

AP SPORTLIGHT

July 14

1951 — Citation is the first horse to win $1 million in a career by taking the Hollywood Gold Cup by four lengths in Inglewood, Calif. Citation retires after the race with total earnings of $1,085,760.
1964 — Jacques Anquetil wins his fifth Tour de France, his fourth straight title of the cycling event.
1968 — Hank Aaron hits his 500th home run off Mike McCormick as the Atlanta Braves beat the San Francisco Giants 4-2.
1986 — Jane Geddes beats Sally Little in an 18-hole playoff to take the U.S. Women's Open championship.
2005 — In Oklahoma City, the United States is beaten in an international softball game for the first time since 2002, losing 2-1 to Canada in the inaugural World Cup of Softball.
2009 — The American League continues its dominance over the National League with a 4-3 win in the All-Star game in St. Louis' Busch Stadium. The AL is 12-0-1 since its 1996 defeat at Philadelphia, the longest unbeaten streak in All-Star history.
2011 — Amateur Tom Lewis shoots a record 5-under 65 in the opening round of the British Open. The 20-year-old Lewis posts the lowest round ever by an amateur in golf's oldest major to pull even with Thomas Bjorn at Royal St. George's.
2013 — Jordan Spieth becomes the youngest winner on the PGA Tour in 82 years. The 19-year-old outlasts David Hearn and Zach Johnson on the fifth hole of a playoff to win the John Deere Classic. He's the first teenager to win since Ralph Guldahl took the Santa Monica Open in 1931.
2015 — Mike Trout becomes the first player in 38 years to lead off the All-Star Game with a home run, and the American League beats the National League 6-3 for its 10th win in 13 years. Trout also becomes the first player to be selected the game's MVP two years in row.
2018 — Angelique Kerber claims her first Wimbledon title with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over seven-time champion Serena Williams.
2019 — English Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton wins a record sixth British Formula 1 Grand Prix at Silverstone.



MARK REIS, USOPC/AP

Former Olympic rower Anita DeFrantz, left, and IOC President Kirsty Coventry pose for a photo at the 2025 U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Colorado Springs, Colo., on Saturday.

DeFrantz among key women inducted into Hall of Fame

BY EDDIE PELLS
Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — In some ways, one of the longest-serving members of the International Olympic Committee, Anita DeFrantz, paved the way for the new president of the IOC, Kirsty Coventry, to get to where she is today.

That why Coventry, the first female leader of the IOC, pulled a big surprise Saturday. She traveled to Colorado Springs to watch DeFrantz, a trailblazing Olympic rower in 1976 and IOC member since 1986, get inducted into the Team USA Hall of Fame.

"She opened up so many doors, for me and for so many others," said Coventry, who took over as president last month, in an interview with The Associated Press before the ceremony. "I'm extremely grateful for that. I know that I've got to make sure I do that for other women."

The 72-year-old DeFrantz is part of a class that includes eight individual women — among them 11-time Olympic medalist Allyson Felix, four-time Olympic champion Serena Williams, three-time Olympic champion Kerri Walsh Jennings and 2012 all-around gymnastics champion Gabby Douglas.

Also inducted Saturday were Bode Miller, Mike Krzyzewski, Phil Knight, Steve Cash, Susan Hagel, Flo Hyman and Marla Runyan, along with the 2010 four-man bobsled team and the 2004 women's wheelchair basketball team.

Coventry showed up for DeFrantz, who played an important role in moving votes toward the five-time Olympic swimmer from Zimbabwe in the seven-person race to succeed Thomas Bach earlier this year.

This was one of Coventry's first big — albeit low-key — trips in the new role, and DeFrantz was shocked to see the new president standing there as she got out of her car to head into the ceremony at the Broadmoor.

DeFrantz described herself as a little lonely when she went to her first IOC meeting in 1986.

"I walked in and I thought, 'This is odd,'" she said. "It was this cavernous room" and she was one of only five female committee members there.

One of her main goals in becoming a shaper of world sports policy: "We had to help people open their minds a little."

While, in some ways, the Olympics has been ahead of its time in the effort to bring women into big-time sports — 22 women participated in the 1900 Olympics while, for instance, it took until 1981 for the NCAA to sanction women's basketball — it has also shined a global spotlight on some inequities that have existed for decades.

Women's rowing didn't debut at the Games until the 1976 Olympics where DeFrantz and her teammates won bronze. Only last year did the Olympics achieve gender parity, with women making up half of the approximately 10,500 athletes, according to the IOC.

DeFrantz, a vice president of the 1984 LA organizing committee, helped spark that progress. She served as chair of the IOC's women in sport commission for 20 years. She became a member of the IOC executive board in 1992 and was elected as the IOC's first female vice president in 1997.

A generation later, Felix began her own fight to highlight the way women were treated when they became pregnant. She forced a seismic change in contract terms that, for decades, had given little leeway to female track stars who put careers on hold to have children.

Felix is now a member of the IOC as well, following in the footsteps of both DeFrantz and Coventry as Olympic athletes who now have seats at the decision-making table.

"I feel really blessed to come after Anita and I've told her this many times, she has paved the way," Felix said. "She's a game-changer. Just what she's seen and contributed to is incredible. For someone like me, it's just wanting to carry on her legacy."

DeFrantz's honor comes at yet another tenuous time for women in sports, punctuated by headline-grabbing debates about eligibility and gender testing in track, boxing, swimming and other sports that will likely bring leaders like Coventry and DeFrantz into the mix.

Coventry said it's important to "protect the female category," and has signaled that the IOC will take a more active role in setting guidelines for participation.

But for the 41-year-old president, this was a night for celebrating a mentor who made her role in today's debates possible.

"It's all about letting people have opportunities," DeFrantz said. "You can't make an Olympian. But you can open the door to possibilities."

MLB

ROUNDUP

Buxton's cycle lifts Twins to victory

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — All-Star center fielder Byron Buxton hit for the cycle on his bobblehead day, completing it with a solo home run in the seventh inning, and the Minnesota Twins routed the Pittsburgh Pirates with a 12-4 victory.

Buxton hit a single in the first inning, a triple in the second and a double in the third. He singled again in the fifth before stepping to the plate in the seventh for one more chance at the first cycle ever at Target Field, which opened in 2010.

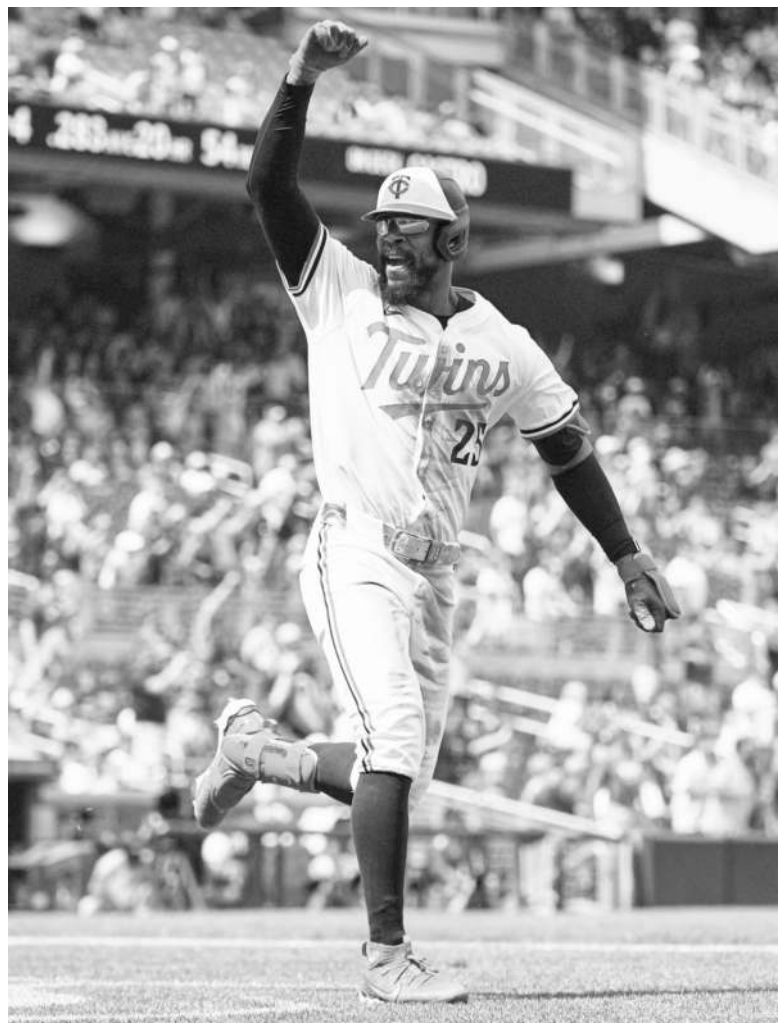
"I'd be lying if I said I wasn't nervous before the game started, just knowing it was bobblehead day," Buxton said. "Obviously you want to come out and do something good."

Facing Pirates reliever Andrew Heaney, Buxton hit a solo homer 427 feet to center field to complete the cycle — and send Target Field into a frenzy. His timing was perfect, as Saturday's giveaway at the stadium was a Buxton bobblehead of his "Buck Truck" home run celebration.

"It's special," Buxton said. "To be able to come out on bobblehead day like this and have a day like this is something I won't forget."

Buxton's homer came two days before the Home Run Derby, in which he'll participate in his home state of Georgia at Truist Park in Atlanta.

Kody Clemens hit a three-run homer in the Twins' six-run second inning. Matt Wallner and Willi Castro each hit solo homers, with Castro's coming right after Buxton's momentous blast.



ABBIE PARR/AP

The Minnesota Twins' Byron Buxton runs the bases after hitting a solo home run to complete the cycle during the 7th inning against the Pittsburgh Pirates on Saturday in Minneapolis. The Twins won 12-4.

Guardians 6, White Sox 2: Kyle Manzardo hit a tiebreaking home run and All-Star Steven Kwan drove in two runs to help visiting Cleveland beat Chicago.

Manzardo's solo shot in the sixth off reliever Jordan Leasure (2-5) gave the Guardians a 3-2 lead and helped Tanner Bibee (5-9) secure his first win since May 22.

Kwan had a sacrifice fly in the seventh, and he added a RBI single in the ninth as Cleveland won for the fifth time in six games.

Cubs 5, Yankees 2: Matthew Boyd won a matchup of All-Star left-handers as Max Fried left early because of yet another blister on his pitching hand, and visiting Chicago stopped New York's five-game winning streak.

A first time All-Star, Boyd (10-3) won his fourth straight start and fifth consecutive decision, giving up four hits in eight scoreless innings with six strikeouts and no walks. He threw 62 of 85 pitches for strikes.

Braves 7, Cardinals 6: Sean Murphy, Ronald Acuña Jr. and Marcell Ozuna homered and visiting Atlanta rallied against St. Louis' two top relievers for the win.

Murphy, who hit the two longest home runs of this season at Busch Stadium on Friday night, put the Braves ahead 6-5 with a high drive that cleared the glove of José Fermín as he leaped at the left-field wall in the eighth.

Mariners 15, Tigers 7: Randy Arozarena homered and scored four times as visiting Seattle defeated Detroit.

Arozarena singled and scored in the second, was hit by a pitch and scored on Luke Raley's homer in the third, and singled and scored in the seventh before hitting a two-run homer in the eighth.

Dodgers 2, Giants 1: Michael Conforto had three hits and scored twice, Shohei Ohtani took another encouraging step back on the mound in his recovery from elbow surgery and visiting Los Angeles beat San Francisco to end a seven-game losing streak.

Ohtani threw three scoreless innings in his longest outing in a Dodgers uniform since signing with the team in 2023. He allowed one hit and had four strikeouts.

Red Sox 1, Rays 0: All-Star Garrett Crochet pitched a three-hitter with nine strikeouts for his first career shutout and complete game, leading host Boston past Tampa Bay for its ninth straight victory.

The 26-year-old Crochet (10-4), a second-time All-Star, opted not to pitch in the game Tuesday in Atlanta so he could rest his arm for the second part of the season. He didn't walk a batter in his 100-pitch gem.

Marlins 6, Orioles 0: Janson Junk allowed five hits over seven innings to prevail in a pitcher's duel with former Miami standout Trevor Rogers, Derek Hill drove in two runs and Xavier Edwards homered to help the visiting Marlins beat Baltimore.

Junk (4-1) walked none and struck out two in the longest outing of his career. The right-hander had only two perfect innings, but repeatedly came up with the right pitch when it mattered.

Reds 4, Rockies 3: Will Benson tied it in the ninth inning with an RBI triple and scored on second baseman Orlando Arcia's fielding error to give host Cincinnati a win over Colorado.

Rookies Ryan Ritter and Yanquiel Fernandez provided the offense for the Rockies. Ritter, who played in his first big league game June 6, hit his first career home run with Fernandez on in the third inning. Fernandez had three hits, including an RBI double in the seventh inning.

Brewers 6, Nationals 5: Caleb Durbin hit an RBI single with one out in the ninth inning to cap a three-run rally and give host Milwaukee a win over Washington for its sixth consecutive victory.

Pinch-runner Andruw Monasterio took third on a groundout. Brice Turang was walked intentionally and advanced to second on defensive indifference. Durbin then sliced a singled down the right-field line.

Mets 3, Royals 1: Juan Soto homered to lead visiting New York past Kansas City.

Soto's two-run shot into the right field fountains opened the scoring in the fourth. Over his last 20 games, he has nine home runs and 19 RBIs.

Padres 5, Phillies 4: Jackson Merrill broke out of a slump with two home runs off All-Star Zack Wheeler, and Manny Machado hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the seventh inning for host San Diego, which won its second straight game against Philadelphia.

Merrill hadn't homered since May 27, a span of 35 games. He hit a two-run, opposite-field shot to left center with one out in the second to tie the game at 2. His solo shot to right center with one out in the sixth tied the game at 4.

Astros 5, Rangers 4 (11): Zack Short hit a walk-off RBI single in the 11th inning after Christian Walker tied it with a sacrifice fly and host Houston beat Texas.

Short hit a 1-1 pitch to right field off Hoby Milner after Robert Garcia (1-5) walked two to load the bases.

Angels 10, Diamondbacks 5: Mike Trout homered and had a two-run single to close in on two milestones, Yusei Kikuchi (4-6) overcame Eugenio Suárez's two home runs and host Los Angeles beat Arizona on Saturday night.

Trout hit his 17th home run of the season in the fifth, a two-run shot, then capped off a four-run eighth with his second hit. He finished the game with 395 career homers and 994 RBIs.

Athletics 4, Blue Jays 3: Brent Rooker hit a go-ahead two-run homer in the fifth inning and Mason Miller struck out Ernie Clement and George Springer looking with the tying run on second in the ninth inning as the host Athletics beat Toronto.

Miller walked pinch hitter Joey Loperfido leading off the ninth and Nathan Lukes bunted him to second. Miller fanned Clement with a 103.3 mph fastball and Springer on a slider after topping 102 on his two previous pitches — both strikes.

Scoreboard

American League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	55	40	.579	—
New York	53	42	.558	2
Boston	52	45	.536	4
Tampa Bay	50	46	.521	5½
Baltimore	43	51	.457	11½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	59	37	.615	—
Minnesota	47	48	.495	11½
Kansas City	46	50	.479	13
Cleveland	45	49	.479	13
Chicago	32	64	.333	27

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	56	39	.589	—
Seattle	50	45	.526	6
Los Angeles	47	48	.495	9
Texas	47	49	.490	9½
Athletics	40	57	.412	17

National League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	55	41	.573	—
Philadelphia	54	41	.568	½
Miami	43	51	.457	11
Atlanta	42	52	.447	12
Washington	38	57	.400	16½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	56	39	.589	—
Milwaukee	55	40	.579	1
St. Louis	50	46	.521	6½
Cincinnati	49	47	.510	7½
Pittsburgh	38	58	.396	18½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	57	39	.594	—
San Diego	52	43	.547	4½
San Francisco	52	44	.542	5
Arizona	46	50	.479	11
Colorado	22	73	.232	34½

Friday's games

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

Saturday's games

Minnesota 12, Pittsburgh 4
Cleveland 6, Chicago White Sox 2
Chicago Cubs 5, N.Y. Yankees 2
Atlanta 7, St. Louis 6
Seattle 15, Detroit 7
L.A. Dodgers 2, San Francisco 1
Boston 1, Tampa Bay 0
Miami 6, Baltimore 0
Cincinnati 4, Colorado 3
Milwaukee 6, Washington 5
N.Y. Mets 3, Kansas City 1
San Diego 5, Philadelphia 4
Houston 5, Texas 4, 11 innings
L.A. Angels 10, Arizona 5
Athletics 4, Toronto 3

Sunday's games

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

Monday's games

No games scheduled

Calendar

July 13-15 — Amateur draft, Atlanta
July 14 — Home Run Derby, Atlanta
July 15 — All-Star Game, Atlanta
July 27 — Hall of Fame inductions, Cooperstown, N.Y.
July 31 — Last day during the season to trade a player, 6 p.m. EDT
Aug. 2 — Atlanta vs. Cincinnati, Bristol, Tenn.
Aug. 17 — New York Mets vs. Seattle at Williamsport, Pa.

MLB ALL-STAR GAME

Skenes, Skubal named starting pitchers

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Pittsburgh's Paul Skenes will start his second straight All-Star Game for the National League and Detroit's Tarik Skubal will open for the American League on Tuesday night at Truist Park.

Major League Baseball made the announcement Saturday night.

Skenes will become the first pitcher to start consecutive All-Star Games since Washington's Max Scherzer and Boston's Chris Sale in 2017 and '18. Sale started three in a row beginning in 2016.

Skenes and Skubal are 1-2 in average four-seam fastball velocity among those with 1,500 or more pitches this season. Skenes is at 98.2 mph and Skubal is at 97.6 mph, according to MLB Statcast.

Skenes worked around Juan Soto's walk in a scoreless first at Arlington, Texas, last year, throwing at up to 100.1 mph. He made the start after just 11 major league appearances, the fewest for an All-Star.

Skubal pitched a perfect second inning in his first All-Star appearance last year, following Baltimore's Corbin Burnes to the mound.

A 23-year-old right-hander, Skenes is 4-8 despite a major league-best 2.01 ERA for the Pirates, who are last in the NL Central. The 2024 NL Rookie of the Year has 131 strikeouts and 30 walks in 131 innings.



ABBIE PARR/AP

In just his second MLB season, Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Paul Skenes will make his second All-Star start Tuesday in Atlanta. Skenes finished the first half with a 2.01 ERA and and 131 strikeouts in 121 innings.

Skubal, a 28-year-old left-hander, is the reigning AL Cy Young Award winner. He is 10-3 with a 2.23 ERA, striking out 153 and walking 16 in 121 innings.

In other All-Star news, the addition of Milwaukee Brewers rookie phenom pitcher Jacob Misiorowski to the National League All-Star team drew mixed reactions around Major League Baseball.

Some players and fans quickly took to social media to express their frustrations over a player with only five starts in the majors being added to the NL roster instead of other players who have put up as good, if not better, numbers during the first half of the season.

If Misiorowski pitches Tuesday, he would eclipse Skenes' mark for the fewest major league appearances by a player in an All-Star Game.

Dodgers manager Dave Roberts, who will manage the NL squad in Atlanta, is on the opposite end of the spectrum.

Roberts made it clear that he had no voice in selecting Misiorowski but sees the move as a positive, given the entertainment value of the Midsummer Classic.

"The All-Star Game is about the fans," Roberts said. "Yes, this kid hasn't pitched a whole lot in the big leagues but I do think it sparks some more excitement, seeing the velocity."

The 23-year-old, who is 4-1 with a 2.81 ERA, quickly gained attention when he threw a 100.5 mph fastball for his first pitch in the big leagues.

Brewers manager Pat Murphy said he understood the backlash from around the league, but sees it as giving fans what they want.

"People want to see Miz pitch," Murphy said. "He's the new shiny toy in the league. It's not deserving, that has nothing to do with it. He's been given this opportunity. It's not his fault.

"This wasn't a fly by night decision. This is something they thought through. I think it would be really tough for the kid to say no to that."

Murphy likened Misiorowski to former Detroit Tigers pitcher Mark "The Bird" Fidrych.

Fidrych was an All-Star his first two seasons in the majors, a unique player who would often talk to the ball while on the mound.

Fans embraced Fidrych and his eccentricities because he had the stuff on the mound to back it up. He pitched 24 complete games as a rookie in 1976, including back-to-back games when he logged 11 innings each time.

"From what I know of The Bird, it just seems that he was really authentic and really super talented," Murphy said. "There's some parallels there for sure."

Dodgers prospect De Paula's homer powers NL to win in Futures Game

BY CHARLES ODUM
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Josue De Paula hit a three-run homer in a four-run fourth inning and the National League beat the American League 4-2 on Saturday in the All-Star Futures Game featuring top prospects.

The National League is 4-1-1 since the Futures Game moved from a U.S. vs. World format to AL vs. NL in 2019.

Noah Schultz, a left-hander in the Chicago White Sox's organization, gave up four hits and four runs, including the line-drive homer by De Paula that traveled 416 feet to right-center. De Paula, an outfielder, plays for Class A Great Lakes in the Los Angeles Dodgers' organization.

De Paula, selected the game's Most Valuable Player, said the homer is "definitely a motivator" in his path to the major leagues.

"For me mentally, a big moment," De Paula said. "It proved to me, especially to myself, who I really am."

Schultz then gave up a single to LuJames Groover, who scored on Owen Caissie's double to left field.

New York Yankees infield prospect George Lombard Jr., the son of Detroit Tigers bench coach George Lombard, walked, stole second base and scored on Braden Montgomery's groundout in the third to give the AL a 1-0 lead. Lombard also had a double.

Josue Briceño, a Double-A catcher for Detroit, tripled and scored on Sebastian Walcott's sacrifice fly in the fourth to push the lead to 2-0.

Chill bumps for Chipper

Two former Atlanta stars, Chipper Jones and Marquis Grissom, were the managers for the NL and AL, respectively.

Jones was an eight-time All-Star third baseman who spent his entire career with Atlanta before becoming a first-ballot Hall of Fame inductee in 2018.

Jones and Grissom were teammates on Atlanta's 1995 World Series championship team. Grissom caught a fly ball in center field for the clinching final out in the win over Cleveland.

"You can't measure my chill bumps right now with a yard stick," Jones said when asked about the memory of watching Grissom "just glide to it and knowing that he's got a bead on it and this puppy's over, it was like it was happening in slow motion."

For starters

Right-hander JR Ritchie, an Atlanta prospect who has pitched for High-A Rome and Double-A Columbus this season, because the 10th pitcher to start a Futures Game in his organization's home park.

Ritchie had two strikeouts in a scoreless first inning.

Ritchie said he received a phone call from Jones telling him he would start.

"It was unbelievable," Ritchie said. "I never thought Chipper Jones would call me."

Left-hander Parker Messick, who is with Cleveland's Triple-A Columbus, had a scoreless first inning for the AL.

Father and son

Grissom's son, Marquis Grissom Jr., a right-hander for the Washington Nationals' Triple-A Rochester, gave up one run in one inning for the NL while his father was in the opposing dugout. He said he was looking forward to bragging about the win to his father.



CHARLES ODUM/AP

Dodgers prospect Josue De Paula hit a three-run home run in the All-Star Futures Game, which proved to be the difference in the NL's 4-2 win.

"He lost!" Grissom Jr. said. "He took the L so he better be ready when I get home!"

"I'm just happy to be a part of this, and get a chance to see my son, all the work he's put in to be a part of this and excel his baseball career," the elder Grissom said, adding the chance "to be around the future stars of the game, it doesn't really get any better than that for me."

Switch-pitcher skills

Seattle minor leaguer Jurrangelo Cijntje showed off his switch-pitching skills in his scoreless second inning for the AL.

He recorded a strikeout against Jesús Made while pitching from the right side, when threw from the left side while coaxing a fly ball from De Paula before giving up a single to LuJames Groover, again from the right side and then switching yet again to strike out Joe Mack and end the inning.

GOLF/SOCCER



LAURENT CIPRIANI/AP

Grace Kim, of Australia, plays on the fourth hole during the last round of the Evian Championship women's tournament in Evian, eastern France, on Sunday. Kim forced a playoff and went on to win her first major title.

Kim gets first major win after stunning Evian finish

Associated Press

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, France — Grace Kim always dreamed of winning a major on the LPGA Tour. What happened Sunday in a wild final hour at the Evian Championship was beyond her imagination.

"I don't know how it happened, really," Kim said after an eagle-birdie-eagle finish to win on the second playoff hole against Jeeno Thitikul.

A final round at Evian Resort that nearly saw Lottie Woad become the first amateur to win a major in 58 years ended with Kim standing upright after her 12-foot eagle putt dropped, with her hand over her mouth, motionless as she tried to digest what had transpired.

Two shots behind on the final hole, Kim hit a 4-hybrid so perfectly that it slowed at the top of a slope behind the flag and rolled back to 2 feet for an eagle and a 4-under 67 to force a playoff with Thitikul.

Kim's approach to the par-5 18th in a playoff bounced off a cart path, over rocks and into the water, while Thitikul was in good position to make birdie. Tournament over? Not quite. Kim pitched over the pond and across the green and into the cup for birdie to stay alive.

"I was pretty bummed to find out that my ball was in the middle of the water. But, again, it's not quite finished until the very end," Kim said. "Just wanted to make sure I got it there. Yeah, just happened to have chipped it in. I don't know if I can do it again."

Back to the 18th for a third time — twice in the playoff — the Australian again hit 4-hybrid to 12 feet. Thitikul, who missed an 8-foot birdie putt in regulation for the win, missed the green to the left and chipped to 5 feet. She never had to putt.

Kim holed the eagle putt to capture her first major, and second LPGA title.

She is a four-time winner of Karrie Webb's scholarship, which entails spending time with Australia's greatest golf champion. Kim was at Hazeltine in 2021 when Hannah Green won the Women's PGA. She is the second straight Aussie to win a major, following Minjee Lee.

"It's a huge achievement for me," Kim said. "I've had a lot of doubts early this year. I was kind of losing motivation. I kind of had to get some hard conversations done with the team. Yeah, kind of had to wake up a little bit. So to be sitting here next to this trophy is definitely surreal."

It was a big setback for Thitikul, who along with Ai Miyazato is the only woman to have reached No. 1 in the world ranking without winning a major.

Thitikul's biggest challenge had been Woad, the No. 1 amateur who was coming off a win in the Irish Women's Open and at one point had the lead on the back nine of Evian Resort. She closed with 64 and then waited to see if that would be enough.

Woad was bidding to become the first amateur to win a major since Catherine Lacoste at the 1967 U.S. Women's Open.

Thitikul birdied the 17th to take the lead, and the Thai player was on the verge of her first major when she laid up short of the pond and hit wedge into 8 feet on the final hole.

But then Kim appeared with the sublime 4-hybrid to 2 feet for eagle. Thitikul's birdie putt for the win just missed to the right and she shot 67 to join Kim at 14-under 270.

"I think I'm so proud of myself on battling out there today," Thitikul said.

Woad had mixed emotions at the end, happy about her opportunity to play the LPGA but bummed about not getting birdie on the 455-yard closing hole.

"I'm going to be thinking about one shot probably for a while, but I'm very happy how I played today," said Woad, who won the Augusta National Women's Amateur in 2024. "Great week."

Kim's victory extended what is already a record streak in the LPGA Tour's 75-year history, the 18th consecutive tournament to start a season with a different winner. It also makes 13 different winners in the last 13 majors.

FIFA, players' unions reach consensus on rest between matches

BY SAMUEL PETREQUIN
Associated Press

FIFA said several players' representative groups and the sport's governing body have reached a consensus on the need for a period of rest of 72 hours between matches, and agreed that players should have a minimum of 21 days of holidays at the end of each season.

It was unclear, though, whether the consensus would lead to a binding agreement since FIFPRO, the sport's global players' union, did not take part in the discussions.

FIFA did not immediately say which groups attended the talks on the eve of Sunday's Club World Cup final between PSG and Chelsea, mentioning "representatives of several player unions from around the world."

The tournament was held during the European offseason and has faced criticism from unions, as an increased focus on player welfare has been leading to calls for mandatory rest periods and a greater emphasis on player safety during matches.

Days before the start of the month-long Club World Cup, soccer chiefs faced renewed calls to safeguard players over growing fears of injuries and burnout. Last month, France's union of professional soccer players launched a scathing attack on the competition, saying it is "urgent to stop this massacre" amid ongoing concerns about extreme player workloads.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino and other officials from soccer's governing body met with representatives of players' unions from around the world in New York. FIFA hailed the discussions as "progressive," adding that players' health is a "top priority."

"There is a consensus that there must be at least 72 hours of rest between matches, and that players should have a rest period/holiday of at least 21 days at the end of each season," FIFA said. "This period should be managed individually by each club and the respective players also depending on their match calendars and taking into account applicable collective agreements."

Enforcing a 72-hour period strictly could mean big adjustments to some game schedules and TV deals. FIFA didn't indicate how it would work in practice. European teams playing in the Europa League late Thursday evening routinely play domestic league games the following Sunday. With a strict 72-hour break, they might have to wait until Monday to play again.

That would be a major headache for the German Bundesliga. It abolished Monday evening games in 2021 after years of protests by fans who wanted easier-to-attend weekend kickoffs. When it introduced the unpopular Monday kickoffs four season earlier, the German league argued it would mean more rest for Europa League teams.

The new Bundesliga TV deal starting next season also doesn't include any Monday games.

FIFA added that a rest day per week should also be allowed and that travel demands as well as climate conditions will also factor into future competition planning.

The Club World Cup involving 32 of the world's top teams has faced pushback since FIFA announced it would be added to an already saturated calendar. The tournament should be played every four years, sandwiched in between the men's World Cup, European Championship and Copa America. It went ahead against the backdrop of legal challenges in Europe, strike threats and repeated concerns over players' mental and physical welfare due to too many games.



CHRIS SZAGOLA/AP

FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaks at a welcoming event for the Club World Cup tournament April 10 in Philadelphia.

WIMBLEDON



KIN CHEUNG/AP

The United States' Amanda Anisimova, right, leaves the court after losing to Poland's Iga Swiatek during the women's singles final at Wimbledon in London on Saturday.

Anisimova shows gratitude after dropping title match

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

LONDON — Amanda Anisimova kept apologizing to the spectators at Centre Court — for her performance in a 6-0, 6-0 loss to Iga Swiatek in the Wimbledon final and for the emotions that made it hard to deliver a speech afterward.

Through it all, Anisimova, a 23-year-old American in her first major title match, made sure to thank her mother for making a rare trip to watch her daughter play in person.

"My mom is the most selfless person I know, and she's done everything to get me to this point in my life," said Anisimova, whose father died in 2019 when she was 17.

Then, turning to address her mother, Anisimova continued as her eyes welled with tears: "So thank you for being here and breaking the superstition of flying in."

And then in a tongue-in-cheek reference to her 57-minute defeat, Anisimova said with a laugh, "It's definitely not why I lost today."

"I'm so happy that I get to share this moment and for you to be here and witness this in person. I know you don't get to see me live, playing, that much anymore, because you do so much for my sister and I, and you always have," Anisimova said. "I love you so much."

> **"I know I didn't have enough today, but I'm going to keep putting in the work."**
>
> **Amanda Anisimova**
> Wimbledon runner-up

Just participating in a Grand Slam final — after eliminating No. 1-ranked Aryna Sabalenka in the semifinals, to boot — represented quite a success for Anisimova, a 23-year-old who was born in New Jersey and grew up in Florida from age 3.

She was a top player in her teens, beating Coco Gauff in the 2017 U.S. Open junior final, and quickly made a mark as a professional by reaching the French Open quarterfinals two years later.

In May 2023, she announced she was taking a mental health break from the tour because of burnout.

Anisimova returned to action in 2024, but her ranking of 189th just 12 months ago was too low to get into the field automatically at an event like Wimbledon, so she unsuccessfully attempted to qualify for the tournament.

"No matter what happened today," Swiatek told her, "you should be proud of the work you're doing."

On Saturday, she became just the second woman in the Open era, which began in 1968, to get to a Grand Slam final a year after losing in qualifying. And now she will break into the top 10 for the first time.

After the match, she told her team she appreciates them for "just taking care of me" during "the whole journey it's been, this whole past year."

"I know I didn't have enough today, but I'm going to keep putting in the work," Anisimova said. "And I always believe in myself, so I hope to be back here one day."

Difficulties: Victory puts former No. 1 seed back on winning track

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on a good path, you can always get back to it if you put enough effort and you have good people around you."

There was a not-long-ago stretch in which she was considered far-and-away the best in women's tennis.

"She's an unbelievable player," Anisimova said.

Adding to Slams

Swiatek held the No. 1 ranking for most of the past three seasons. She put together a 37-match winning streak in 2022 that included six tournament titles until it ended — where else? — at Wimbledon.

She won five Grand Slam titles, four on the red clay at the French Open and one on the hard courts at the U.S. Open, and established herself as a bona fide star.

Except there was always the matter of what went on when Swiatek played on grass. Zero titles. Zero finals. One quarterfinal run at the All England Club.

The questions kept arising, from herself and from others. Then those doubts spread to other events and other surfaces.

Swiatek left the 2024 Olympics, held at Roland-Garros, with a bronze medal after losing in the semifinals. She departed Wimbledon last year in the third round, the U.S. Open in the quarterfinals. She exited the French Open last month in the semifinals, ending her bid for a fourth consecutive championship there.

In all, Swiatek went more than a year without reaching a final anywhere.

Ban weighed heavy

Then there was the matter of a one-month doping ban she accepted after failing an out-of-competition drug test. The International Tennis Integrity Agency accepted her explanation that the result was unintentional and caused by the contamination of a non-prescription medication she was taking for issues with jet lag and sleeping.

"The second half of last year was extremely challenging for me, especially due to the positive doping test and how circumstances completely beyond my control took away my chance to fight for the highest sport goals at the end of the season," Swiatek wrote in a social media post in March, adding that the episode "forced me to rearrange certain things within myself."

Eventually, Swiatek was able to Saturday, "I came back to being my old kind of self," even if she still is "way more scared about eating something that will be contaminated."

On June 12, a month to the day before facing Anisimova — Swiatek checked her phone's calendar to be sure — and a week after her 26-match French Open winning streak came to a close, it was time to get to work.

Swiatek headed to the Spanish island of Mallorca to practice on grass. Next up was a trip to Germany for more training before entering a tournament there. She made it all the way to that final before ultimately losing and tearing up during the post-match ceremony.

Two weeks later, at Wimbledon, Swiatek was all smiles, and as she left her last interview of the day, she joked: "That was a good therapy session."



KIN CHEUNG/AP

Iga Swiatek serves to Amanda Anisimova during the Wimbledeon final match Saturday. Swiatek won her first Wimbledon title, sixth Grand Slam championship overall and first since last year's French Open.

SPORTS



On the bump

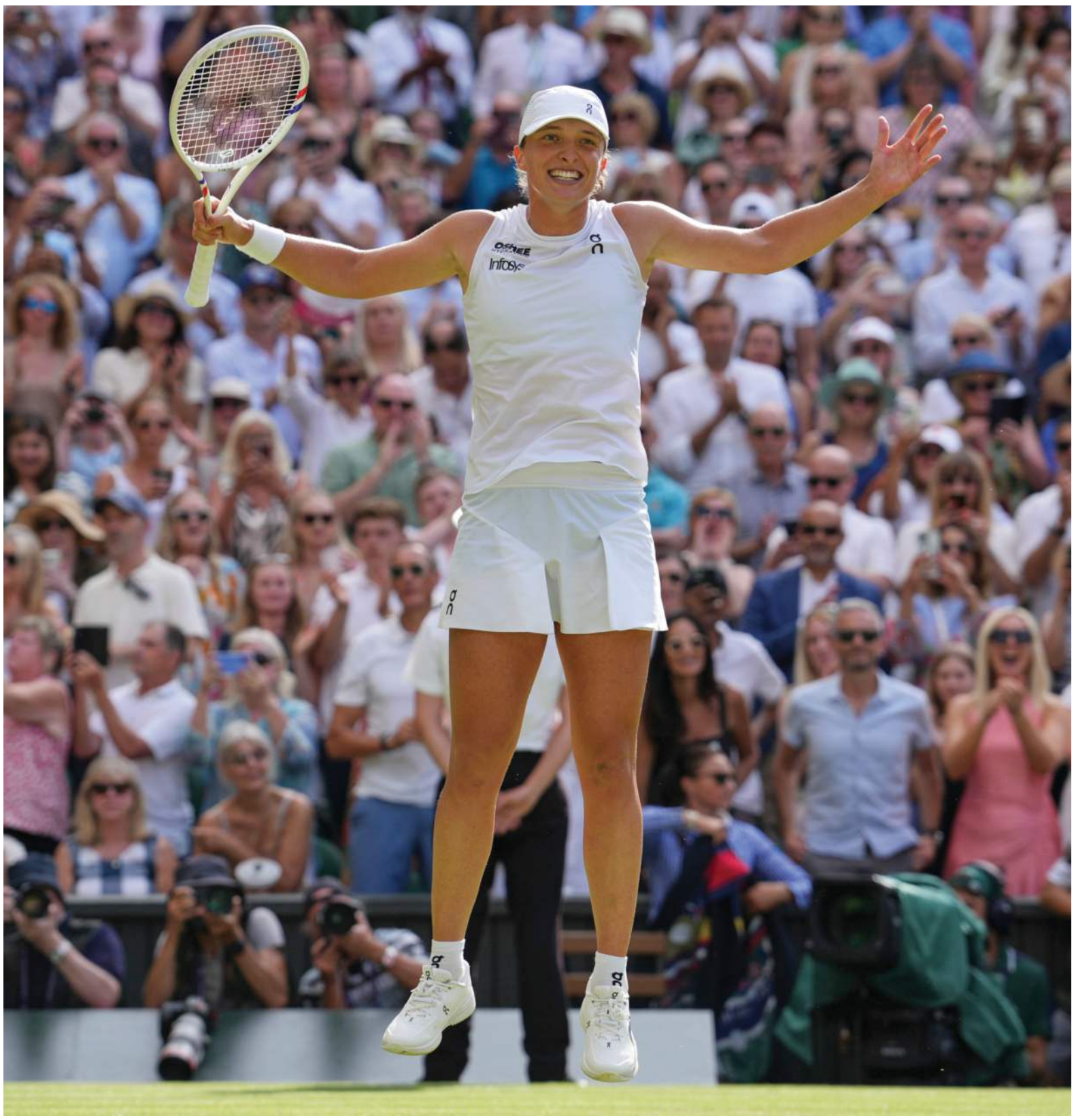
Skenes, Skubal named All-Star Game starting pitchers ›› MLB, Page 21



WIMBLEDON

Overcoming difficulties

Swiatek weathers challenging year involving doping case, title drought



KIN CHEUNG/AP

Poland's Iga Swiatek celebrates after beating Amanda Anisimova, of the U.S., to win the women's singles final at Wimbledon in London on Saturday.

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

LONDON — For weeks while back home in Warsaw last year, Iga Swiatek hung out with friends and made new ones, but didn't dare tell them about a doping case that was hanging over her.

"Obviously, in the back of my mind," she said Saturday evening at the All England Club, "I had this thing."

There was more going on, too, and she only opened up to her family and her team. A coaching change. A long-for-her title drought. A ranking drop. Her grandfather's passing.

"It all (happened) together," Swiatek said. "It wasn't easy."

And so, in some ways, the Wimbledon championship Swiatek claimed Saturday with a 6-0, 6-0 victory — yes, read that score again — in 57 minutes over Amanda Anisimova could be viewed as more than merely a significant on-court result.

Multiple surfaces

It mattered, of course, that Swiatek finally conquered grass courts, in general, and that venue, in particular. That the 24-year-old from Poland became the youngest woman with at least one major trophy on all three surfaces since 2002, when Serena Williams did it at age 20. That Swiatek now needs only an Australian Open title to complete a career Grand Slam.

In the bigger picture, though, this triumph followed a difficult 12-plus months and provided the following takeaway, in Swiatek's words: "The lesson is just that even when you feel like you're not

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Anisimova gracious in defeat, thanks mom for attending
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Kim's thrilling rally gives her Evian title win ›› Golf, Page 22

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