NFL
Raiders look for younger players to make impact
Page 24



MILITARY
Soldier charged in shooting at Fort Stewart
Page 3



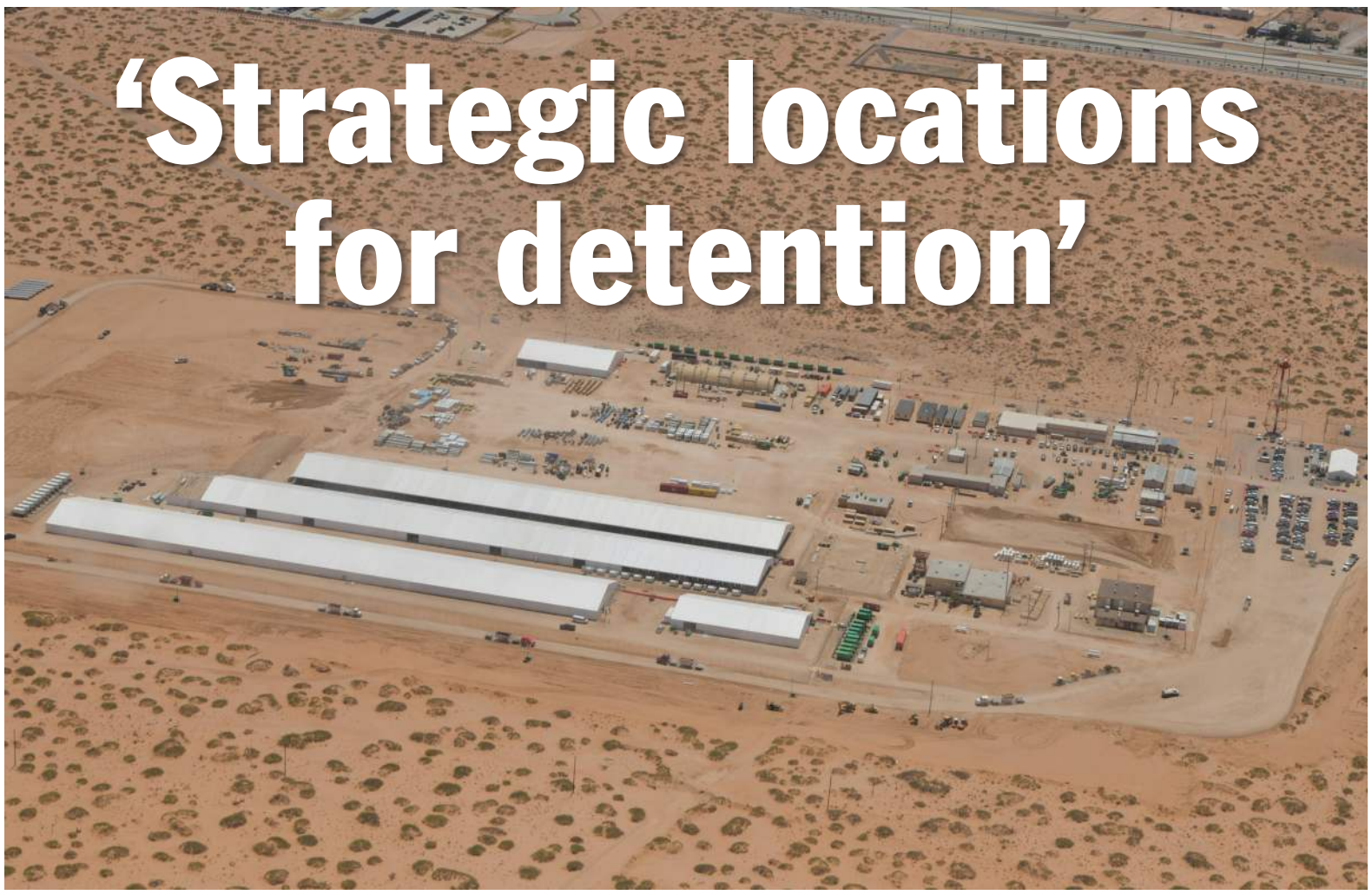
MILITARY
Pokémon card frenzy at McDonald's leads to massive food waste
Page 3

Navy orders clinician training after flaws in some health exams ›› Page 6

STARS AND STRIPES®

stripes.com

Volume 84 Edition 85 ©SS 2025 THURSDAY, AUGUST 14, 2025 平成12年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可 日刊(土日除く)
発行所 星条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価￥50
50¢/Free to Deployed Areas



El Paso Times

A detention facility for migrants at Fort Bliss, Texas, will have an operational capacity of 1,000 beds and can be expanded to 5,000.

'Strategic locations for detention'

Trump administration's plan to hold migrants at bases begins taking shape

By Maria Sacchetti, Dan Lamothe, David Nakamura and Douglas MacMillan
The Washington Post

The Trump administration's plan to use U.S. military bases as part of efforts to carry out rapid removals of undocumented immigrants from the United States is coming into focus.

Fort Bliss, the sprawling Army post in El Paso, Texas, is expected to hold 5,000 people in tentlike facilities at full capacity, which would turn it into the largest detention facility in the United States for civil detainees. ICE spokeswoman Emily Covington confirmed that authorities began holding migrants at Fort Bliss on Aug. 1.



Olga Fedorova/AP

Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents escort a detained immigrant into an elevator after he exited an immigration courtroom, June 17, in New York.

Last month, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth also approved the temporary use of Camp Atterbury in Indiana and Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey to house several thousand migrants before they are deported. Hegseth also approved a small expansion of detention beds at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba, the officials said, though the total number remains far lower than what President Donald Trump had planned for.

Taken together, the bases are at the core of the Trump administration's efforts to carry out rapid re-

SEE PLAN ON PAGE 7

Army to reclassify airborne positions

By Bradley Latham
Stars and Stripes

Some Army paratroopers will lose $150 in monthly pay next year as the service reorganizes its airborne force and reclassifies more than 22,000 paid parachutist positions.

The jobs in fiscal year 2026 will be recoded so that airborne experience is required but jump pay is not authorized, according to an administrative message delivered to the force July 30.

The change still will allow soldiers to attend airborne school but won't require them to keep their qualifications current or participate in jump operations.

Lt. Gen. Gregory Anderson, XVIII Airborne Corps commander, said a lack of available aircraft and personnel challenges with parachute riggers and jumpmasters were driving factors for this reorganization on an April episode of the "From the Green Notebook" podcast.

"We're trying to prop up a very big structure of 56,000 with dwindling resources, we're spreading those resources out, and we're undermining our own readiness goals," Anderson said.

The Army has grown its airborne force by over 13,000 positions since 2002, including activating the Arctic-focused 11th Airborne Division in June 2022.

A majority of the cuts will come from support and headquarters units, while prioritizing pay for soldiers in front-line combat positions.

"It's not about the money per se," Anderson said on the April podcast. "It's literally about the

SEE POSITIONS ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

GE Appliances shifts more production to US

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — GE Appliances plans to shift production of refrigerators, gas ranges and water heaters out of China and Mexico as part of a more than $3 billion investment to expand its U.S. operations in Kentucky, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and South Carolina.

The investment — the second-largest in the Louisville-based company's history — is expected to add more than 1,000 jobs while ramping up domestic production and modernizing plants in the next five years.

"Our long-term strategy is about manufacturing close to our customers," said CEO Kevin Nolan. "With lean manufacturing, upskilling our workforce and automation, the math works for manufacturing in the United States."

The majority of GE's appliance production is already in the U.S. and the shift means only that the company will transfer more work to its domestic plants.

GE will relocate production of gas ranges from Mexico to a plant in Georgia, while six refrigerator models now made in China will be manufactured at its Alabama plant, the company said.

In June, the company said it would move production of clothes washers from China to its sprawling manufacturing complex in Louisville. The reshoring announcements come as President Donald Trump tries to lure factories back to the United States by imposing import taxes — tariffs — on foreign goods.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Aug. 14)	0.83
British pound (Aug. 14)	$1.32
Japanese yen (Aug. 14)	144.00
South Korean won (Aug. 14)	1,349.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3744
Britain (Pound)	1.3573
Canada (Dollar)	1.3762
China (Yuan)	7.1785
Denmark (Krone)	6.3760
Egypt (Pound)	48.2684
Euro	0.8544
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8498
Hungary (Forint)	337.93
Israel (Shekel)	3.3851
Japan (Yen)	147.20
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3049
Norway (Krone)	10.1885
Philippines (Peso)	56.64
Poland (Zloty)	3.63
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7479
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2799
South Korea (Won)	1377.35
Switzerland (Franc)	0.8046
Thailand (Baht)	32.23
Turkey (NewLira)	40.7409

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

INTEREST RATES

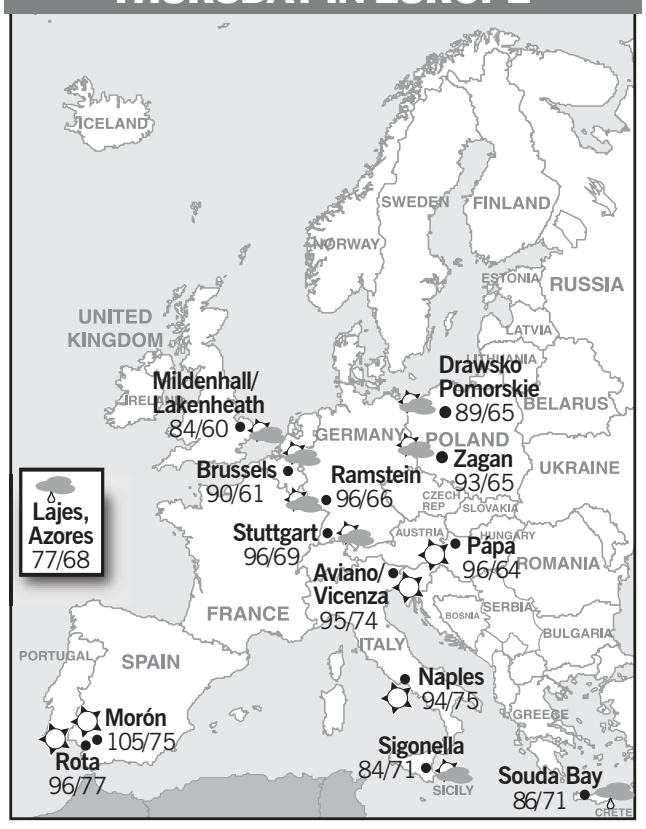
Prime rate	7.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.33
Federal funds market rate	4.38
3-month bill	4.24
30-year bond	4.88

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is compiled from weather.com

TODAY IN STRIPES

American Roundup 15
Classified 13
Comics 17
Crossword 17
Faces 18
Opinion 16
Sports 19-24

STARS AND STRIPES

However you read us, wherever you need us.

Mobile • Online • Print

EUROPE	ADVERTISING CustomerService@stripes.com	+49 (0) 0631.3615.9111 DSN: 314.583.9111
MIDDLE EAST	ADVERTISING CustomerService@stripes.com	+49 (0) 0631.3615.9111 DSN: 314.583.9111
PACIFIC	ADVERTISING PacificAdvertising@stripes.com	+81 (42) 552.2511 DSN: 315.227.7310

Round-the-world news for America's military.

Stripes.com supplies constant updates, on news of interest — including reports from our overseas military bases in Europe, Pacific, Southwest Asia and the Mideast, and coverage of the Pentagon and Capitol Hill.
Also available on mobile apps for Android and iOS.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Mobile • Online • Print

MILITARY

Soldier charged in shooting at Fort Stewart

By Corey Dickstein
Stars and Stripes

The Army on Tuesday charged the soldier accused of opening fire on his fellow troops last week at Fort Stewart, Ga., with 13 offenses, including multiple counts of attempted murder and aggravated assault.

Sgt. Quornelius Radford was formally charged with two counts of attempted premeditated murder, four counts of attempted unpremeditated murder, one count of domestic violence, three counts of aggravated assault inflicting grievous bodily harm and three counts of aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon, the Army's Office of Special Trial Counsel announced.

Radford, 28, of Jacksonville, Fla., is accused of shooting five other members of his unit — the 703rd Brigade Support Battalion of the 3rd Infantry Division's 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team — and firing at and missing a sixth on Aug. 6 before other soldiers tackled him and wrestled away his pistol.



Radford

The five victims survived the assault, but two remained hospitalized in stable condition on Tuesday, a Fort Stewart spokesman said.

Radford could face life imprisonment if convicted of the attempted murder charges. Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the military's legal system, attempted crimes can carry the same amount of punishment as crimes that were committed, apart from the death penalty.

Radford on Tuesday was ordered held in pretrial confinement, officials said. He will be moved from the Liberty County Jail just outside Fort Stewart's gates, where he has been held since Aug. 6, to the Naval Consolidated Brig Charleston located on Joint Base Charleston in South Carolina, according to the special trial counsel, which prosecutes major crimes in the service.

Radford will next face an Article 32 hearing in which a neutral Army lawyer will weigh evidence gathered in the case and recommend to service leaders whether it should proceed to a felony-level general court martial. The Article 32 process is similar to the indictment process in civilian court proceedings.

That hearing has yet to be scheduled, Army officials said.

Top leaders at Fort Stewart, including Radford's battalion commander, have said the soldier showed no signs that he would attack his fellow troopers, and he had not faced prior Army punishment.

Radford was arrested by Georgia State Patrol officers in May on drunken driving charges just outside Fort Stewart in Hinesville, Ga., court records show. He failed to alert his chain of command about that arrest, Fort Stewart officials said.

Army officials said Radford had spoken with Army Criminal Investigation Division agents about the shooting, but they have not yet publicly released any information about a potential motive. The soldier's father told The New York Times last week that Radford had claimed he faced racism at Fort Stewart and was seeking to be transferred away from the coastal Georgia Army post.

However, the count of domestic violence stems from one of the victims being an "intimate partner" of Radford, said Michelle McCaskill, a spokeswoman for the special trial counsel.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Pokémon card chaos at McDonald's led to massive food waste

By Juan King and Marc Castaneda
Stars and Stripes

A promotional campaign in Japan engineered by fast-food giant McDonald's with The Pokémon Co. apparently backfired after reports of avid collectors discarding food in search of trading cards.

The Pokémon trading card promotion, set to run throughout Japan from Saturday through Monday, was abruptly halted on the first day, according to a news release Saturday from McDonald's Japan.

"During our Pokémon Happy Meal set Pokémon card promotion, we confirmed that a portion of customers bought large quantities with the intent of reselling the cards, causing congestion and confusion at McDonald's branches and in their surrounding areas," the company said in a subsequent release Monday.

The company also condemned the waste of food and apologized for its "inadequate response."

"McDonald's does not tolerate the purchase of Happy Meals for resale or the abandonment and disposal of food," it stated.

"This situation clearly violates our long-held philosophy of 'providing a fun dining experience for children and families' and our stance as a restaurant and we sincerely acknowledge that our response was inadequate," the release stated.

Pokémon products based on the cast of anime and manga characters popular around the world seem to disappear quickly wherever they are sold. The McDonald's promotion proved no exception.

During the promotion, Pokémon Happy Sets — called Happy Meals in the United States — came with two Pokémon collectible cards, an original Pokémon Pikachu card and one random card from a set of five, according to a McDonald's Japan release Aug. 4. The promotion also included a set of eight Pokémon toys.

"I consider myself one of the lucky ones," Patrick Batac, of Stafford, Va., a civilian contractor at Yokota Naval Base, Japan, wrote Wednesday on Facebook Messenger. Batac said he visited a McDonald's in Ikedacho on Saturday looking for Pokémon cards.

"My McDonald's had zero [people] in line but there were tons of online orders," he said.

"There were literally bags of Happy Meals overflowing the counters waiting to be picked up and delivered," he said. "They limited us to five meals in person, but they had no way to limit online orders."

Batac said he succeeded in his quest. "I was able to get my five quickly, but other places I saw and heard had lines for hours," he wrote.

McDonald's Japan limited Happy Meal purchases to five per person during the promotion and urged customers not to purchase the meals solely to resell the cards, according to the Aug. 4 release.

The extra meal purchases caused a trash buildup at many stores and littered the streets nearby, according to a post Monday on the Pokémon Global News, an unofficial Pokémon Facebook page.



Photos by Pokémon Global News

Customers crowding a McDonald's Japan restaurant during a Pokémon trading card campaign Aug. 9.

Stores quickly ran out of cards, arguments flared between real fans and would-be profiteers waiting in line. Meanwhile reports circulated of some customers ordering more than five meals through the McDonald's mobile app, according to posts on Pokémon Global News.

The special Pikachu card was posted for $25 and above on eBay hours after the Pokémon promotion was stopped.

McDonald's Japan announced on Monday that future promotions will come with stricter purchase limits.

"We sincerely apologize for not being able to meet the expectations of our customers who were looking forward to the product due to the early end of distribution," the company said in its Monday release.

Stars and Stripes reporter Hana Kusumoto contributed to this report.



Bags of McDonald's Happy Meals discarded with food still inside on a Japanese street.

MILITARY

DOJ settles academy admissions lawsuits

BY LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

The Justice Department this week settled lawsuits challenging race-based admissions at the U.S. Military Academy and the Air Force Academy, ending years of legal battles over how the elite military schools select officer candidates.

The settlements with the nonprofit group Students for Fair Admissions follow the decision of President Donald Trump's administration soon after taking office to stop considering race as an admissions factor at the service academies.

The agreement avoids the need for continued litigation and includes terms that help ensure that admission is not based on race or ethnicity, a Justice Department statement Tuesday said.

"Admission to these prestigious military institutions should be based exclusively on merit," Attorney General Pam Bondi said in the statement.

Upon taking office in January, Trump approved a series of executive orders to eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives from the federal government, including a directive to military academies to halt the practice of race-based admissions.

The previous administration had defended using race in a limited way as part of a holistic review of each service academy applicant.

Students for Fair Admissions filed lawsuits against West Point, the Air Force Academy and the Naval Academy in 2023 after the U.S. Supreme Court said military service academies aren't subject to the landmark ruling that ended affirmative action at colleges.

The court at the time said military academies were not considered in that case "in light of the potentially distinct interests" they may present.

In its suit against West Point, the nonprofit group argued that the institution used race as a determinative factor in its admissions process and unconstitutionally weighed it against other considerations, such as objective metrics and leadership potential.

President Joe Biden's administration countered that the academies used race in a limited manner, and that they benefited from race considerations because the military needed a well-qualified and diverse officer corps to lead an increasingly diverse group of fighters.

Litigation in all three cases had continued when Trump took office. Shortly afterward, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth issued a memo ordering an end to race-based admissions at military academies.

A federal judge in July dismissed the suit against the Naval Academy at the request of both Students for Fair Admissions and the Justice Department.

US briefly deploys 2 warships to disputed shoal after collision

BY JIM GOMEZ
Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The U.S. deployed two warships Wednesday in a disputed South China Sea shoal where two Chinese ships collided earlier in the week while trying to drive away a smaller Philippine ship in a high-seas accident that raised alarms about maritime safety.

Both China and the Philippines claim Scarborough Shoal and other outcroppings in the South China Sea. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also lay overlapping claims in the contested waters.

The USS Higgins, a guided missile destroyer, and USS Cincinnati, a littoral combat ship, were shadowed by a Chinese navy ship while sailing about 30 nautical miles from the Scarborough Shoal. There were no reports of any untoward incident, Philippine coast guard Commodore Jay Tarriela said, citing information from U.S. officials and a Philippine surveillance flight.

The U.S. Navy has staged what it calls freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea for years to challenge China's restrictions and demand for entry notifications in virtually the entire stretch of the disputed waters that it claims.

That has angered China and its forces have had close run-ins with U.S. warships and aircraft on such patrols in international waters and airspace.

The deployment happened after Washington's ambassador to Manila, MaryKay Carlson, condemned on Tuesday "the latest reckless action by China directed against a Philippine vessel" in Scarborough.

The rich fishing atoll off the northwestern Philippines has been the scene of increasingly tense confrontations between the Chinese and Philippine coast guard, fishing and other ships in recent years.

The Philippines is the oldest treaty ally of the U.S. in Asia. Washington has repeatedly warned that it's obligated to defend the Philippines if Filipino forces come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea.

On Monday, a Chinese navy destroyer and a Chinese coast guard ship accidentally collided while trying to block and drive away a smaller Philippine coast guard ship, the BRP Suluan, about 10.5 nautical miles from Scarborough. Video footage made public by the Philippine coast guard show the Chinese coast guard ship blasting its powerful water cannon and a number of Chinese personnel standing at the bow shortly before that section was hit by the fast-turning Chinese navy ship.



Philippine Coast Guard/AP

The USS Higgins conducts freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea on Wednesday.

Shortly after the collision, the video shows the heavily shattered bow of the Chinese coast guard ship without the Chinese personnel, who were standing on deck before the crash. The Chinese navy ship sustained deep dents and what appeared to be linear gashes on its hull.

Japan, Australia and New Zealand expressed alarm on Wednesday over the dangerous maneuvers that led to the collision in the busy waters, a key global trade route.

"Japan upholds the rule of law and opposes any actions which increase tensions. Our concern goes to the repeated actions in the South China Sea," Japanese Ambassador to Manila Endo Kazuya said in a post on X.

The Australian Embassy in Manila expressed concern "by the dangerous and unprofessional conduct of Chinese vessels near Scarborough Shoal involving the Philippine Coast Guard," saying in a statement the incident "highlights the need for de-escalation, restraint and respect for international law."

"This is a learning experience for the People's Republic of China," Jay Tarriela, the Philippine coast guard commodore, told a news conference in Manila. "For so many years, we have been reminding them to stop dangerous maneuvers, to stop risky blockings, to adhere to the (anti-)collision regulations because if there is a very high chance of miscalculation, this kind of collision incident would happen."

Tarriela spoke a few hours after a Chinese fighter jet flew as close as 500 feet to try to drive away a Philippine coast guard plane on a surveillance flight on Wednesday over the Scarborough with invited journalists on board. The Chinese jet carried out dangerous maneuvers for about 20 minutes, including flying about 200 feet above the small Philippine aircraft, Tarriela said.

Report: F-15 makes arrested landing at Kadena Air Base on Okinawa

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

An F-15E Strike Eagle made a precautionary arrested landing Tuesday at Kadena Air Base, eight days after another fighter landed at the base on Okinawa with a missing wheel, according to local media reports.

The multirole fighter assigned to the 18th Wing at Kadena landed between 9:30 and 9:40 a.m., the Okinawa Times and the Ryukyu Shimpo reported, each citing unnamed eyewitnesses. The aircraft was towed to the tarmac after maintainers inspected it, the papers reported.

An arrested landing, routine on Navy aircraft carriers, occurs when a plane's tailhook snags one of several cables on the flight deck, bringing the aircraft to a rapid stop. Air Force arresting systems stop an aircraft on the runway in the event something may prevent it from stopping on its own.

The wing declined to confirm or deny the landing in an email Wednesday.

"Precautionary landings are standard procedure when pilots notice something out of the ordinary with their aircraft," it said. "We are committed to conducting safe flight operations as we uphold our defense commitments."

A spokesman with the Okinawa Defense Bureau by phone Wednesday also declined to confirm or deny the landing.

Stars and Stripes reporter Keishi Koja contributed to this report.

PACIFIC

N. Korean military conducts mortar drills

BY DAVID CHOI AND YOOJIN LEE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korea's military conducted mortar drills Monday, one week before the South and the United States are scheduled to kick off the second of their large, annual military exercises.

Mortar teams overseen by several senior North Korean military officials at an unspecified location were tasked with "striking different enemy targets in sight and major facilities," the state-run Korean Central News Agency reported Tuesday.

The drills demonstrated "the strong will of the army to … reliably defend the security and sovereignty" of North Korea from the South, KCNA reported.

The report did not state whether North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attended the demonstration.

South Korea's military is "closely monitoring the enemy's movement and maintaining readiness against possible provocations," Joint Chiefs of Staff spokesman army Col. Lee Sung Joon said during a news conference Tuesday.



Korean Central News Agency

North Korean soldiers conduct a mortar drill at an unspecified location in North Korea on Monday.

The drills were held a day after North Korean Defense Minister No Kwang-chol warned South Korea and the U.S. of "negative consequences" for conducting Ulchi Freedom Shield, a large-scale exercise the allies hold throughout the South.

North Korea routinely criticizes the South's military drills with the U.S., Japan and other nations, and condemns them as rehearsals for an invasion.

"We strongly denounce the U.S. and [South Korea] for their provocative moves of clearly showing the stand of military confrontation … and once again endangering the security environment on the Korean Peninsula," No said in a statement published Sunday by KCNA.

Ulchi Freedom Shield is scheduled to start Monday and conclude Aug. 28 throughout South Korea on air, land, sea, space and cyberspace. It is one of two major exercises the allies conduct in South Korea each year. Freedom Shield, the first exercise, was held March 10 through March 20.

Roughly 18,000 South Korean troops are expected to take part in the upcoming, defense-oriented exercise, Lee said during a news conference Aug. 7.

U.S. Forces Korea, the command responsible for 28,500 American troops in South Korea, does not provide troop figures for large-scale exercises, citing operational security.

Despite issuing warnings against Seoul, Pyongyang has taken several steps toward deescalating tensions with its neighbor in recent weeks.

South Korea's military reported Saturday that the North had removed some of its propaganda loudspeakers installed at the Demilitarized Zone dividing the two countries, a move that came five days after the South dismantled its own loudspeakers on its side of the border.

Both Koreas in June silenced their loudspeakers, which are used as a form of psychological warfare.

Japan completes Osprey moves to southern base amid local protest

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

Japan's army has finished a monthlong effort to move its fleet of V-22 Ospreys to a new base on the island of Kyushu as part of a military buildup in the country's south.

The Ground Self-Defense Force moved the last of its 17 tiltrotor aircraft on Tuesday to Camp Saga, a newly constructed base in Saga prefecture, according to a Ministry of Defense news release. The first Osprey left Camp Kisarazu, east of Tokyo in Chiba prefecture, on July 9.

About 200 protesters with the Local Residents Association Against the Deployment of Ospreys at Saga Airport rallied July 9 outside Camp Saga and Friday at Saga District Court, group leader Hatsuji Koga, 76, said by phone Wednesday.

"Ospreys have been crashing around the world, having many accidents; it's a defective aircraft," he said. "If it crashed while we're working, it will cause enormous damage."

Koga, a seaweed harvester from Saga city, filed a lawsuit against the government of Japan alleging the ministry improperly purchased the base land from local landowners using a two-thirds majority vote.

Several groups have written letters to Saga prefecture, a prefectural spokesman said by phone Wednesday without elaborating further. The prefecture referred the groups to the defense ministry.

The prefecture held three open meetings in December 2022 to inform residents about the plan to open the base, the spokesman said.

All but two of the aircraft arrived at Saga in July; the remaining pair arrived Aug. 6 and Tuesday.

One Osprey made a precautionary landing July 28 at Vice-camp Kitatokushima when a warning light illuminated during the flight to Saga from Kisarazu, according to Saga prefecture's website. The aircraft was able to complete the flight to Saga that day.

From their new location, the tiltrotors will "establish a system" to operate in conjunction with Japan's Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade at Camp Ainoura in Sasebo city, about 45 miles west, according to the ministry's release.

The tiltrotor pilots began flight training July 28 around Camp Saga, according to a training document released by the ministry. On Aug. 5, they began flying to Japanese bases in Fukuoka, Nagasaki, Kagoshima and Kumamoto prefectures.



TYLER ANDREWS/U.S. Marine Corps

V-22 Ospreys of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force prepare to land at Camp Ainoura, Sasebo, Nagasaki, Japan, in February.

Unit training, including air maneuvers and ship takeoffs and landings, will begin at bases around Camp Saga, including Camp Ainoura, at an undetermined date, the document said.

A spokesman with the Kyushu Defense Bureau, an arm of the defense ministry, by phone Wednesday referred questions about operations to Camp Saga. A spokesman at Camp Saga by phone that day declined to answer questions.

Ospreys flown by the U.S. Marine Corps will not use Camp Saga, situated adjacent to the civilian Saga Airport, according to the prefecture. A 2014 request by the ministry to permit the Marines to use the base was withdrawn Oct. 29, 2015, after prefectural Gov. Yoshinori Yamaguchi sought clarification of the plan, according to minutes of a June 12 prefectural assembly meeting.

Thousands more plaintiffs added in litigation over Red Hill water

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — More than 6,000 additional plaintiffs joined a lawsuit against the U.S. alleging they were sickened by the 2021 Navy Red Hill jet fuel spill in Hawaii, according to an amended complaint filed Tuesday in federal court.

The amended complaint, filed in U.S. District Court of Hawaii, also cites a growing number of studies linking the Red Hill jet fuel exposure to protracted health issues.

The firms of Just Well Law of Austin, Texas, and Hosoda Law Group in Honolulu now represent roughly 7,000 individuals claiming injury from fuel-tainted tap water. The fuel spill contaminated water piped into military housing areas on and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

The firms have filed three separate lawsuits, one solely representing active-duty personnel. The court subsequently consolidated the three.

The first 17 "bellwether" plaintiffs in the initial case, Feindt vs. United States, went to trial in spring 2024.

U.S. District Court Judge Leslie Kobayashi disallowed expert testimony about long-term illnesses caused by jet fuel, citing a dearth of medical studies involving human subjects.

Plaintiffs testified that they had suffered from rashes, abdominal pains, hair loss, dizziness, vomiting, brain fog and other conditions — with some conditions persisting for years.

In May, Kobayashi awarded each plaintiff amounts between $37,500 and $80,000.

MILITARY

Veterans in secret tests face VA denials



U.S. Army

Test subjects enter a chamber where they were exposed to chemical agents as part of experiments at Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland.

BY LINDA F. HERSEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Veterans injured in secret military experiments that tested hallucinogens and nerve gas on young troops more than 50 years ago said their renewed appeals for retroactive disability benefits are being denied, though a federal court directed the payouts.

The veterans are counting on a 2023 federal court decision granting full benefits to 75-year-old Army veteran Bob Taylor over injuries from the classified military experiments to bolster their own claims for disability compensation dating back to their discharges in the 1960s and 1970s.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, D.C., instructed the Department of Veterans Affairs to reexamine other claims of lifelong physical and psychological problems connected to the Army experiments at Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland.

The claims of illness and injuries range from severe post-traumatic stress disorder and memory loss to hypertension and cancer.

"This has been going on for 60 years now. It's time for them [the VA] to pay up. I have these daily intrusive thoughts. They're like nightmares but I'm wide awake," said Army veteran Dave Dufrane, 79, of Florida, who was given injections of nerve agents as an 18-year-old private first class.

But the VA this year rejected additional claims as more Edgewood veterans stepped forward to initiate actions for retroactive disability payments. The compensation at a rate of 100% would result in six-figure payouts, the veterans said.

Nearly 8,000 soldiers served as human test subjects in the classified studies the U.S. Army Chemical Corps conducted at Edgewood Arsenal. Though participation was voluntary, the veterans said they thought they would be testing military equipment.

All of the veterans denied had filed earlier claims — some decades old, said Mark Jones, who is the lawyer representing 15 Edgewood veterans.

"The VA continues to do everything possible to deny these veterans an earlier effective date," said Jones, who estimates fewer than 3,000 Edgewood veterans are alive.

The veterans were unwitting test subjects in experiments that involved administering hallucinogenic drugs and nerve agents, according to court documents.

"I never knew what I was given in those tests," said Frank Rochelle, 77, of North Carolina, a former Army corporal whose service from 1968-70 included a tour in Vietnam. The drugs were identified only by numbers.

The chemical substances were delivered in gas chambers, by injection and other means. The purpose was to evaluate the potential effectiveness of the chemicals administered in low doses as potential warfare agents, according to Senate hearings in the 1970s.

The service members had to sign secrecy oaths that banned them from discussing what happened under threat of criminal penalty. The oath was not formally lifted until 2011.

Rochelle said he learned years later that he was given a series of hallucinogenic drugs.

Rochelle — who temporarily lost sight in one eye — said he initially sought medical help from the Raleigh VA hospital in North Carolina in the 1970s, but the VA said it knew nothing about the experiments.

"When I then went to file a VA claim, I was told that the tests I took part in had never happened," Rochelle said. "The records were sealed. I had no way to prove my case. They thought I was lying."

Dufrane — an Army specialist who served from 1964 to 1967 — said the VA just denied his recent claim seeking disability payments back to his military separation date. He was exposed to chemical warfare agents by injection and in an aerosol spray, according to Army documents.

"I was in eight experiments. They put me in a padded room after injecting me with chemicals. Another time they sprayed gas in my face," said Dufrane, who has hallucinations and nightmares that continue.

In 2009, Dufrane obtained 100% monthly disability compensation for his injuries.

"But I want to be paid back to the day I got out of the Army," he said. "These problems did not just come on."

Flaws in Navy exams prompt further training

Order focuses on medical providers

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

The Navy has ordered medical providers who screen sailors for some of its most hazardous assignments to undergo training after finding unmet requirements during health exams.

The special duty examinations at issue are used to qualify sailors for diving, nuclear field duty, special operations and submarine assignments.

The directive last week from Rear Adm. Darin Via, the surgeon general of the Navy, was prompted by "substantiated allegations regarding improper performance and documentation" of exams.

It applies to undersea medical officers and examiners; aerospace medicine residents and specialists; and submarine independent duty corpsmen, among others. The focused training must be completed by Aug. 31.

The review also applies to radiation medical examinations that certify workers to receive occupational exposure to ionizing radiation, the Navy said.

Ionizing radiation is the release of energy in the form of atomic and subatomic particles or electromagnetic waves, such as X-rays or gamma rays.

The Aug. 8 order did not specify the allegations or say how many providers may not have met requirements, which include appropriate examination, documentation and program management. It also did not say how many sailors or civilians may be affected.

The Navy requires personnel in certain jobs, such as handling radioactive material, to undergo physicals to confirm they do not have a condition that could disqualify them from the work or endanger others, according to a 2022 Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program report.

Service members and other personnel are periodically reevaluated to ensure they still meet requirements, the report stated.

The Navy also monitors sailors and civilian personnel for radiation exposure, including those serving aboard nuclear-powered submarines, aircraft carriers and at facilities that build, maintain, overhaul and refuel the vessels.

Via's order also requires medical commands to contact all sailors and civilian workers qualified for nuclear field duty or occupational exposure to ionizing radiation, in order to review their most recent special duty exam to ensure compliance with required standards.

Those who can't recall their last such exam, can't confirm that it was done appropriately or have incomplete or erroneous documentation must be reexamined, the order said.

Results of the audit must be reported to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, according to the order.

Italian general serving with NATO chases down suspected jewelry thief

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — An Italian general who serves under the U.S. Navy's highest-ranking admiral in Europe and Africa recently helped catch a man suspected of snatching a necklace from a woman in Naples.

Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Sganga, the chief of staff for NATO's Allied Joint Force Command Naples, was walking with his wife downtown on Saturday when he heard a woman screaming that she had been robbed, the Italian newspaper Il Mattino reported on Monday.



Sganga

Sganga chased and caught the man at a nearby piazza. Italian police arrested the suspect and found the necklace in his possession, according to the Il Mattino report.

Sganga has served in his role under Adm. Stuart Munsch since January. Munsch is commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and Allied Joint Force Command Naples.

Sganga also heads the European Union Coordination Element, according to his NATO biography.

The U.S. military presence in Naples includes Naval Support Activity Naples, which is home to U.S. 6th Fleet. The base hosts more than 50 commands and about 8,500 personnel, according to its website.

Positions: Change in paratrooper coding could affect almost 20,000

FROM PAGE 1

forces that will jump in the alpha echelon and fight off a potentially contested drop zone. We want them at the highest level of readiness."

Paratroopers who currently receive what is formally known as hazardous duty incentive pay should direct questions about their airborne status to the local chain of command, the service said.

Estimates from the Army, originally reported by Army Times in April, put the number of affected jobs at slightly under 20,000 troops.

The Army did not immediately answer questions on the updated figures when asked Tuesday.

Soldiers who continue to receive jump pay will see a boost in line with a revision for airborne-qualified personnel announced in May by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

Paratroopers' monthly jump pay will increase from $150 to $200, while jumpmasters will receive an additional $150 per month, bringing their total to $300.

MILITARY

Plan: Base facilities would help double space for detainees

FROM PAGE 1

movals from the U.S. and a model for expanded Pentagon involvement in domestic deportation operations going forward. The plans would deepen Homeland Security's footprint in the northern U.S., where detention centers are in short supply and state laws limit cooperation with federal immigration enforcement.

"These facilities have been identified as strategic locations for detention, processing and removal operations by DHS," Andrew Whitaker, executive secretary for the Department of Homeland Security, said in a June 10 letter to defense officials requesting "immediate access" to the bases in Indiana, New Jersey and Guantánamo. He said the bases will be a "central hub" for a steady stream of removal operations.

Department of Homeland Security spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin confirmed that ICE "is indeed pursuing all available options to expand bedspace capacity."

"This process does include housing detainees at certain military bases, including Fort Bliss," she said in a statement.

Trump has long favored engaging the might of the U.S. military to carry out what he has hailed as the largest domestic deportation operation in U.S. history. He attempted to expand the military's role in deportations during his first term but faced pushback from the Pentagon. Then and now there have been concerns that the military bases are unsuitable for civil detention and will fail to meet basic safety and legal requirements such as access to lawyers and medical care.

But this year Trump has ordered the military to play a greater role, deploying thousands of troops to guard the U.S.-Mexico border and tapping military planes for some deportation flights — with relatively little resistance.

Deliberations between the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security remain complex, however, and have dragged on for months, delaying the Trump administration's ambitious goals. DHS officials have not disclosed the timeline for opening the detention facilities on the Indiana and New Jersey bases despite repeated requests for information from the media and lawmakers.

Federal officials said in an internal email earlier this year that ICE had expected to launch large-scale detention operations at Camp Atterbury in June, according to records reviewed by The Washington Post. Trump's goal of housing 30,000 migrants at Guantánamo is also unmet; Whitaker said in his June letter that the base expects to detain fewer than 500 people, including 50 beds already allocated to DHS.



El Paso Times

A detention facility for migrants at Fort Bliss, Texas, could hold up to 1,000 detainees by Sunday, ICE officials said.

Whitaker had asked in his letter for "immediate" assistance in detaining immigrants at Camp Atterbury, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst and Guantánamo. Defense officials notified DHS on July 15 — more than a month later — that Hegseth had approved the request. Officials with Hegseth's office did not respond to questions.

A defense official, speaking on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the Pentagon, said Hegseth would allow DHS to build "temporary soft-sided holding facilities" at Camp Atterbury in Indiana and Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey to house the migrants.

The timeline to use those facilities will depend on operational requirements that emerge and coordination with DHS, the defense official said.

ICE officials said that Fort Bliss is expected to hold 1,000 detainees by Sunday. The short-term "soft-sided" facility is for immigrants in deportation proceedings or with final deportation orders ready for removal via "ICE Air," as the agency's deportation fleet is known. Such facilities resemble a large tent and are equipped with climate control.

The Defense Department is funding the detention center, known as "Camp East Montana." Officials said the facility "offers everything a traditional ICE detention facility offers," including access to legal representation, a law library, and space for visitation, recreation and medical treatment. It offers nutritionally balanced meals and accommodations for people with disabilities, diet restrictions and religious beliefs, the officials said.

The buildup comes weeks after Congress approved $45 billion in funding to support the administration's goal of doubling the nation's detention capacity to 100,000 beds. To help achieve that, it has contracted an array of new types of facilities, some of which critics say don't offer detainees the same rights and level of care as they would receive in the traditional detention centers that have held most detainees for decades.

The detention centers on military bases will entrust the care of thousands of migrants to private contractors who have little or no experience detaining human beings, said Jennifer Ibañez Whitlock, senior policy counsel at the National Immigration Law Center. Acquisition Logistics Co., the contractor picked to run the 5,000-bed Fort Bliss site, has no previous experience running detention facilities, according to reporting by Bloomberg News. Last month, ProPublica reported that one of the subcontractors working on Fort Bliss is connected to a company that previously pleaded guilty to a scheme to hire undocumented workers.

When ICE detainees were sent to Guantánamo earlier this year, advocates filed a lawsuit claiming they lacked legal access at the base. And since migrants were brought to a makeshift detention center in Florida's Everglades this summer, some have complained about portable toilets that routinely backed up, swarms of mosquitoes and the inability to contest their legal status.

Military bases "are not designed, staffed or equipped for civilian detention operations," said Jason Houser, who was ICE chief of staff from 2021 to 2023. "ICE detention at these facilities significantly complicates oversight, legal access, and routine congressional and NGO monitoring, raising the risk of violations and lack of transparency."

In the June 10 letter to the Defense Department, Whitaker wrote that officials plan to stage deportation flights for a 60-day period from the Indiana, New Jersey and Guantánamo bases and then reevaluate and possibly expand the model to other bases. He wrote that officials expect to hold migrants on the Indiana, New Jersey and Guantánamo bases for about 14 days before they are removed, though he added that they could remain longer.

In response, a defense official made clear that the military's role would be limited — and imposed sometimes conflicting guardrails over what types of immigrants the bases would house.

Col. Anthony Fuscellaro told DHS in a July 15 letter that ICE staff and contractors will be responsible for "all care and handling" of detainees, including meals, clothing, medical screening and transportation. "No DOD personnel will perform such activities," he wrote.

Fuscellaro emphasized that the detainees must be "adult non-high threat illegal aliens."

Camp Atterbury is federal property operated by the Indiana National Guard and does not have an airfield for deportation flights. The Defense Department said officials may use the New Jersey base airfield for up to two commercial aircraft and crews at a time. But Fuscellaro wrote that DHS must reimburse the Pentagon for any costs.

Democratic lawmakers have expressed frustration with the military buildup as the Trump administration increasingly arrests immigrants who have never been convicted of a crime. The administration has decimated internal watchdog agencies that had monitored the government's enforcement activities for years. Lawmakers have alleged in court that officials have limited their oversight access to detention facilities.

Most of New Jersey's Democratic congressional delegation wrote to Hegseth, DHS Secretary Kristi L. Noem and acting ICE director Todd M. Lyons last month to express "serious concerns about the diversion of critical defense resources from national security priorities." They asked for a briefing.

"While U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement will oversee care, this administration's record on immigration detention demands close scrutiny. It is essential that constitutional rights are upheld and that detainees are treated with dignity and provided adequate medical care," lawmakers led by Reps. Herbert Conaway Jr., D-N.J., and Donald Norcross, D-N.J., wrote.

Hegseth had earlier said in a July 15 letter to Conaway that the detention facilities in Indiana and New Jersey "will not negatively affect military training, operations, readiness or other military requirements."

Margaret Stock, an immigration lawyer for the Cascadia Cross-Border Law firm and a former U.S. military officer, noted that previous administrations have used military bases to detain migrants. The Biden administration, for example, used Fort Bliss to house hundreds of unaccompanied minors in 2021, a situation that resulted in a federal investigation into the conditions after reports that the youths had been monitored for self-harm and panic attacks.

Stock said the Trump administration's bid to dramatically expand the number of migrants at Fort Bliss and other bases would create additional administrative hurdles for immigration lawyers seeking access to their clients on the highly restrictive military installations. And, she said, the prospect of housing large numbers of migrants would be "incredibly distracting" to the military.

"You've got a base that is supposed to focus on war-fighting and training, and they've got thousands of people that have nothing to do with the military on the base," she said. "It takes extensive resources that they should not have to deal with."

Others have celebrated the use of military bases and vowed to support the Trump administration's efforts.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, celebrated the plans for Fort Bliss on social media in late July, noting that the 5,000-bed migrant detention center would be the nation's largest detention facility.

"We will help arrest, jail, & deport illegal immigrants," he wrote on X.

NATION

General testifies as LA Guard trial comes to close

BY OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — National Guard troops repeatedly rehearsed their role in an operation at a Los Angeles park intended as a show of force against undocumented people and those protesting the Trump administration's immigration crackdown, a deputy commanding general testified Tuesday.

Maj. Gen. Scott Sherman, who commanded Guard troops in Los Angeles, was testifying at a trial to determine whether the Trump administration violated the Posse Comitatus Act when it deployed the soldiers and U.S. Marines to Southern California this summer. The 1878 law generally prohibits a president from using the military to police domestic affairs.

Sherman said the deployment of federal agents on horseback and on foot to MacArthur Park in a neighborhood with a large immigrant population was initially planned for Father's Day, June 15. But the operation was moved to July 7 after he raised concerns the park could be crowded, he said.

Sherman said the decision to shift the timing of the operation came after discussion among the National Guard, the U.S. Northern Command, the Border Patrol, Department of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Department of Homeland Security Kristi Noem.

The Guard troops were deployed to protect the perimeter and were instructed only to exit their vehicles if there was a direct threat to federal agents, he said.

All troops remained in their vehicles during the 20 minute operation. The Department of Homeland Security hasn't said if anyone was arrested.

Sherman testified during the second day of a three-day trial on whether President Donald Trump's deployment of 4,700 armed forces to Los Angeles following protests over immigration raids this summer violated the Posse Comitatus Act.

All but about 300 Guard troops have since left Los Angeles.

Sherman testified that he also raised concerns over the possibility of stationing military vehicles along Wilshire Boulevard, which traverses the park, instead of staying in the perimeter. After he raised his concerns, Gregory Bovino, the Border Patrol's El Centro sector chief in charge of the immigration crackdown in Los Angeles, questioned his loyalty, Sherman told the court.

California is asking Judge Charles Breyer to order the Trump administration to return control of the remaining troops to the state and to stop the federal government from using military troops in California "to execute or assist in the execution of federal law or any civilian law enforcement functions by any federal agent or officer."

Eric Hamilton, a deputy assistant attorney general, said in his closing statement Tuesday that the troops did not break the Posse Comitatus Act because they were not enforcing federal law and were deployed "for a purely protective function."

California Deputy Attorney General Meghan Strong told the court the troops went beyond providing protection to federal agents and federal buildings.

The troops, she said, set up roadblocks and perimeters that restricted civilian movement, detained civilians and engaged in a militaristic display of force in a public park.



SALWAN GEORGES/The Washington Post

Members of the California National Guard in Los Angeles on June 14.



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Troops load boxes of rifle ammunition Tuesday at the District of Columbia National Guard Headquarters after President Donald Trump implemented his order to use federal law enforcement and the National Guard to expel homeless people and rid the nation's capital of violent crime.

Why is the Guard in DC, and what are troops allowed to do?

BY ANDREW JEONG AND GRACE MOON
The Washington Post

National Guard troops began filing into Washington early Tuesday as part of President Donald Trump's sweeping crackdown on crime in the city.

The National Guard is typically deployed by states in response to natural disasters, although it has been used in the past by presidents to help quell domestic unrest — including President George H.W. Bush during the Los Angeles riots in 1992.

Here's what to know about the deployment of National Guard troops to D.C. and what they're allowed to do.

Why is the Guard in DC?

Trump announced Monday he would deploy some 800 National Guard troops to help officers patrol D.C.'s streets. He has described crime in the District as "out of control," and the city as ridden with "thugs" and "gang members," despite data showing crime is declining from pandemic-era spikes in D.C. and nationwide. Democratic Mayor Muriel E. Bowser has challenged Trump's assertions, noting the recent drops in crime.

Because the District of Columbia is not a state, the federal government has wide-ranging powers to intervene. Trump activated the forces under Title 32 of federal law, exercising the same power that governors use to activate National Guard troops in their own states.

What will they do?

During a White House news conference on Monday, the president said that Guard troops would work to clear homeless encampments, adding that they would "bring in military" if needed.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said in a Fox News interview Monday that the troops will not get involved in law enforcement, despite having "broad latitude." An Army spokesman said Guard troops will mostly provide administrative and logistical support for police, but in some instances they will be stationed at intersections to deter crime, The Post reported.

An Army official, speaking on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the situation, told The Post that all of the roughly 800 Guard members will be armed, with the initial plan being to serve in rotational shifts of about 200 members each.

Can they arrest people?

Yes. Title 32 allows National Guard troops to conduct arrests, though Hegseth and others have said that, in this case, they will not be performing any police functions. Hegseth said, however, that National Guard troops would be "proactive" and could "temporarily detain" crime suspects if they see something illegal happening, until police arrive.

How long will they stay?

In Monday's memorandum, Trump said troops "will remain mobilized until law and order is restored," without specifying other conditions.

Under the Home Rule Act, the president can take over the D.C. police for up to 30 days. After that time, the police would revert to local control unless Congress passes a law to allow a longer period of federal control.

The National Guard deployment could last longer. About 250 troops remained in LA at the end of last month, weeks after thousands were ordered there.

Asked how long the deployment in Washington would be, Hegseth said: "I don't know. Weeks? Months? What will it take?" he added. "That's the president's call."



PETER W. STEVENSON/The Washington Post

Asked how long National Guard troops could be in D.C., Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said, "that's the president's call."

NATION

Police: Texas shooter randomly chose victims

Taser used as suspect in 3 deaths is found naked and holding Bible

By Jamie Stengle and Jim Vertuno
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — A random shooting outside a Target store in Texas began when a gunman killed an employee collecting shopping carts then a man and his 4-year-old granddaughter, sparking a chaotic hour of stolen cars and crashes that ended with him arrested naked holding a Bible, police said Tuesday.

Ethan Nieneker, 32, is charged with two counts of capital murder and one count of murder over Monday's shooting in Austin. Court records show a series of past arrests for domestic violence and assault.

"What happened yesterday was an unprovoked and deliberate attack, a deliberate act of violence," Police Chief Lisa Davis said at a news conference. "Innocent lives were taken in broad daylight, in a place where people should feel safe to run their everyday errands and to live their everyday lives."

The police chief said that although Nieneker had a history of mental health issues, she was unaware of any specific diagnosis. Sgt. Nathan Sexton said the firearm Nieneker used in the attacks was acquired through family.

After shooting the Target employee, Nieneker shot the grandfather as he sat in the driver's seat of his sport utility vehicle, then fatally shot the little girl in the back seat before stealing the vehicle and driving away fast, police said.

"It was a completely random choosing of the victims," Sexton said.

Police said the Target employee, Hector Leopoldo Martinez Machuca, 24, was taken to a hospital where he died. Adam Chow, 65, and his granddaughter were pronounced dead at the scene while Chow's wife sustained minor injuries. The name of the child was not released.


Nieneker

Over the next hour, Nieneker tried to steal a water truck at a construction site, caused multiple vehicle crashes, wrecked Chow's vehicle and then stole a Volkswagen he'd crashed into, police said. He also tried to break into a Waymo self-driving vehicle, threw a brick through the home of an acquaintance and walked naked through a backyard.

Officers found Nieneker walking naked on a street after he ditched his clothes in a portable toilet, police said. He was holding a Bible and was subdued with a Taser when he would not comply with demands.

"He said that he was Jesus," Sexton said.

Police received multiple 911 calls as the suspect made his way across the city.

Chris Ferran said he was driving on a highway when he saw an SUV fly past him, then smash into two vehicles and keep going. "I'm not letting anybody get away with this, so I chased him down and called 911," he said.


JAY JANNER, AUSTIN (TEXAS) AMERICAN-STATESMAN/AP

This multiple-vehicle crash started when a stolen 4-Runner driven by the suspect of the Target shooting crashed into a Volkswagen before landing on top of an Infiniti SUV in Austin, Texas, on Monday.

Ferran watched as the driver pulled into a construction site, got out of the SUV and ripped a worker out of a water truck. Ferran said the SUV's driver, who was clad in what looked like swim trunks and a Hawaiian shirt, was in the truck for a while. So Ferran started shooting a video.

But when the man got out of the water truck, Ferran realized he had a gun.

"As soon as I saw that, I threw the phone down and I reversed and I was trying to get us out of there," said Ferran, who had his two daughters with him.

Jail records did not list an attorney for Nieneker on Tuesday.

Online court records show Nieneker was arrested several times in recent years in both Travis County, which includes Austin, and neighboring Williamson County.

His Travis County arrests include misdemeanors for criminal mischief and driving while intoxicated, and three arrests on felony domestic violence charges. He was convicted of a charge of assault causing bodily injury family violence in 2016 and briefly sentenced to jail.

Another charge within days of the 2016 episode was dismissed. It was not immediately clear if those two charges were related. Another charge of felony assault on a family or household member in 2019 was dismissed three years later when prosecutors could not locate the victim.

Williamson County records show repeated run-ins with law enforcement, including two cases of misdemeanor family violence in 2015 that were later dismissed. He was also convicted of possession of marijuana in 2012 and entered a no contest plea to a charge of criminal mischief in 2016.

Monday's shooting came as back-to-school shopping was in full swing ahead of the upcoming academic year. It also comes about two weeks after an attack at a Walmart in Michigan in which a man stabbed 11 people. The suspect has been charged with terrorism and multiple counts of attempted murder.

Parents and child killed when tree falls on car in Tennessee amid heavy rain

Associated Press

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — A mother, father and child were killed when a tree fell on their car during heavy rain and flooding in Tennessee, an official said Wednesday.

The three were killed when saturated ground caused a large tree to fall in the Chattanooga suburb of East Ridge just after midnight, Hamilton County Office of Emergency Management spokesperson Amy Maxwell said by telephone.

The flooding prompted rescues of people stuck in homes and swamped vehicles on Tuesday, and the region was bracing for more rainfall and flooding Wednesday. Hamilton County Mayor Weston Wamp declared a local state of emergency Tuesday night as first responders responded to flash flooding and urged people to exercise extreme caution.

The National Weather Service issued a flood watch for much of middle Tennessee through Wednesday night, warning of scattered flash flooding with tropical-like heavy rainfall and the possibility of training storms, especially over already saturated areas.

Chattanooga Fire crews rescued motorists trapped in vehicles and residents stuck in their homes, fire department officials said. Flooding closed parts of Interstate 24 in the area, but they reopened once floodwaters receded.


WTVC/AP

A tractor-trailer drives through a flooded road in Chattanooga, Tenn., on Tuesday.

Swiftwater rescue teams rescued residents of three East Ridge homes trapped by rising floodwaters, according to the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Austin Garrett said the flooding was more extensive than he had seen before, noting that it is usually concentrated in one area, The Chattanooga Times Free Press reported.

"This is extremely widespread. It made it difficult for us to even get here ourselves to try to help other people," he said.

Musk vows to sue Apple for not featuring X and Grok

Associated Press

Billionaire SpaceX, Tesla and X owner Elon Musk says he plans to sue Apple for not featuring X and its Grok artificial intelligence chatbot app in its top recommended apps in its App Store.

Musk posted the comments on X late Monday, saying, "Hey @Apple App Store, why do you refuse to put either X or Grok in your 'Must Have' section when X is the #1 news app in the world and Grok is #5 among all apps? Are you playing politics? What gives? Inquiring minds want to know."

Grok is owned by Musk's artificial intelligence startup xAI.

Musk went on to say that "Apple is behaving in a manner that makes it impossible for any AI company besides OpenAI to reach #1 in the App Store, which is an unequivocal antitrust violation. xAI will take immediate legal action."

In an emailed statement, Apple defended the fairness of its App Store.

"The App Store is designed to be fair and free of bias," it said. "We feature thousands of apps through charts, algorithmic recommendations, and curated lists selected by experts using objective criteria. Our goal is to offer safe discovery for users and valuable opportunities for developers, collaborating with many to increase app visibility in rapidly evolving categories."

The company has faced various allegations of antitrust violations in recent years. A federal judge recently found that Apple violated a court injunction in an antitrust case filed by Fortnite maker Epic Games.

As of early Tuesday, the top app in Apple's App Store was TikTok, followed by Tinder, Duolingo, YouTube and Bumble. Open AI's ChatGPT was ranked 7th.

NATION



ALEX BRANDON/AP

Sylvester Stallone is unveiled by President Donald Trump to be a recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors, at the Kennedy Center, Wednesday, in Washington.

Trump to host Kennedy Center Honors; Sly, Kiss among picks

BY TRAVIS M. ANDREWS AND JANAY KINGSBERRY
The Washington Post

President Donald Trump announced the recipients of the 48th Kennedy Center Honors on Wednesday morning — the first class of honorees since he took over the prominent Washington arts complex earlier this year. Trump serves as chair of the institution's board of trustees.

Speaking from the Hall of Nations, Trump announced the 2025 honorees by unveiling five portraits draped in velvet. Trump said he will host the ceremony, something no president has done.

The group: glam metal band Kiss, Broadway and West End star Michael Crawford, country music legend George Strait, actor Sylvester Stallone and singer Gloria Gaynor.

Actor Tom Cruise was offered the honors but declined due to scheduling conflicts, according to several current and former Kennedy Center employees, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss event plans. A spokesperson for Cruise declined to comment.

It certainly seemed as if Trump had major plans in store for the honorees. At a board meeting in March, Trump said: "We'll go slightly more conservative, if you don't mind, with some of the people. There are people out there that would not be considered that are much bigger stars than the ones that were being honored." He even suggested offering it to deceased icons and widening the scope to include athletes, business luminaries and politicians.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about Trump's class of honorees is how comfortably it fits with those that came before it. A-list actor? Check. Aging rock band? Check. Broadway star? Check.

Perhaps most notable is that not all of the artists have supported Trump, including the face — that is, the tongue — of Kiss.

Bassist Gene Simmons, whom Trump fired during the first season of "The Celebrity Apprentice," supported Trump during his first term — but soon changed his tune.

"Look what that gentleman did to this country and the polarization — got all the cockroaches to rise to the top," Simmons told Spin of Trump in 2022. "Once upon a time, you were embarrassed to be publicly racist and out there with conspiracy theories. Now it's all out in the open because he allowed it."

"I don't think he's a Republican or a Democrat," Simmons added of the president. "He's out for himself, any way you can get there. And in the last election, over 70 million people bought it hook, line and sinker."

Simmons' bandmate Paul Stanley appears to have had a more favorable view of Trump. Days after the 2024 election, Stanley wrote on X: "IT'S OVER. If your candidate lost, it's time to learn from it, accept it and try to understand why. There will be no building bridges to those you don't agree with by being condescending, insulting, talking AT them or removing yourself."

If Trump's personal tastes align with any of the picks, it would be Crawford. Trump is famously a fan of 1980s Broadway hits, particularly "Phantom of the Opera." He would often play songs from the musical at his rallies.

And in January, as president-elect, Trump named Stallone — along with Mel Gibson and Jon Voight — as "Special Ambassadors to a great but very troubled place, Hollywood, California," and tasked them with "bringing Hollywood, which has lost much business over the last four years to Foreign Countries, BACK-BIGGER, BETTER, AND STRONGER THAN EVER BEFORE!"

Strait, meanwhile, is a country legend — a genre that soundtracks many red states — but he has long kept fairly mum on his personal political leanings.

There will be some potential changes to the honors, according to the current and former employees. The center has contacted the jeweler Tiffany & Co. about redesigning the medallions, which have traditionally depicted President John F. Kennedy on one side and the building on the other, with a rainbow-colored ribbon meant to represent different artistic skills and talents. The annual dinner at the State Department may be moved to the White House. The White House and Tiffany did not respond to requests for comment.

Meanwhile, Done+Dusted, the production company that produced the past several Kennedy Center Honors (as well as recent Mark Twain Prizes for American Humor, the center's other big televised event), pulled out of producing this year's honors. Matthew Winer, the center's internal executive producer of the honors, has resigned from the center, along with Emeline Carlisle, the producer and honoree manager.

'Alligator Alcatraz' construction could halt if corners cut

BY DAVID FISCHER
Associated Press

MIAMI — Construction of a makeshift immigrant detention center in the Florida Everglades dubbed "Alligator Alcatraz" could be halted indefinitely as a federal judge considered Wednesday whether the hasty development on sensitive wetlands violates environmental laws.

Last week, U.S. District Judge Kathleen Williams ordered a two-week halt on additional construction at the site while witnesses continued to testify in the case. The first phase of "Alligator Alcatraz" opened in July and less than 1,000 detainees were being held there as of last week.

The temporary order doesn't include any restrictions on law enforcement or immigration enforcement activity at the center, which was quickly built two months ago at a lightly used, single-runway training airport. It's designed to eventually hold up to 3,000 detainees in temporary tent structures.

President Donald Trump toured the detention center last month and suggested it could be a model for future lockups nationwide as his administration races to expand the infrastructure necessary for increasing deportations.

Attorneys and people held there say worms turn up in the food, toilets don't flush and flood floors with fecal waste, while mosquitoes and other insects are everywhere. Inside the compound's large white tents, rows of bunkbeds are surrounded by chain-link cages. Detainees are said to go days without showering or getting prescription medicine, and they are only able to speak by phone to lawyers and loved ones. At times the air conditioners abruptly shut off in the sweltering heat.

The order temporarily barred the installation of any new industrial-style lighting, as well as any paving, filling, excavating, fencing or erecting additional buildings, tents, dormitories or other residential or administrative facilities. The judge is considering whether additional construction should be stopped for good.

Environmental groups and the Miccosukee Tribe want the judge to issue a preliminary injunction to halt operations and further construction, which they say threatens environmentally sensitive wetlands that are home to protected plants and animals and would reverse billions of dollars' worth of environmental restoration.

Plaintiffs presented witnesses who testified that the facility violates the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of major construction projects.

Attorneys for the state and federal government have said that although the detention center would be holding federal detainees, the construction and operation of the facility is entirely under the state of Florida, meaning the federal environmental review wouldn't apply.

The judge last week said the detention facility was, at a minimum, a joint partnership between the state and federal government.

Witnesses for the environmental groups have testified that at least 20 acres of asphalt have been added to the site since the Florida Division of Emergency Management began construction. They said additional paving could lead to an increase in water runoff to the adjacent wetlands, spread harmful chemicals into the Everglades and reduce the habitat for endangered Florida panthers.

Amy Castaneda, the Miccosukee Tribe's water resource director, testified Tuesday that nutrient runoff from the detention center could flow into tribal lands, changing vegetation growth. That could lead to fish kills and block humans and wildlife from moving throughout certain areas, she said.

Marcel Bozas, director of the Miccosukee Tribe's fish and wildlife department, said tribe members hunt and fish for subsistence and cultural reasons. Sustained human activity can drive away game animals, like whitetail deer, as well as protected species, like Florida panthers, wood storks, eastern black rails and bonneted bats, he said.

Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles executive director David Kerner testified that the 1,800 state troopers under his command are authorized to detain undocumented migrants under an agreement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. He said the federal government doesn't tell the state where to detain immigrants, and that the Everglades facility was built to alleviate overcrowding at federal immigration detention facilities, as well as state and county facilities with agreements to hold federal immigration detainees.

Kerner couldn't say how many of the "Alligator Alcatraz" detainees have been charged with violent crimes or whether any other sites besides the middle of the Everglades were considered for possible detention centers.

NATION

Poll: Americans rethink alcohol consumption



MORRY GASH/AP

Beer is displayed in a cooler at a store in Milwaukee. Fewer Americans have reported that they drink alcohol as a higher percentage view alcohol consumption as a health risk, according to a new Gallup poll.

BY LINLEY SANDERS
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Fewer Americans are reporting that they drink alcohol amid a growing belief that even moderate alcohol consumption is a health risk, according to a Gallup poll released Wednesday.

A record high percentage of U.S. adults, 53%, now say moderate drinking is bad for their health, up from 28% in 2015. The uptick in doubt about alcohol's benefits is largely driven by young adults — the age group that is most likely to believe drinking "one or two drinks a day" can cause health hazards — but older adults are also now increasingly likely to think moderate drinking carries risks.

As concerns about health impacts rise, fewer Americans are reporting that they drink. The survey finds that 54% of U.S. adults say they drink alcoholic beverages such as liquor, wine or beer. That's lower than at any other point in the past three decades.

The findings of the poll, which was conducted in July, indicate that after years of many believing that moderate drinking was harmless — or even beneficial — worries about alcohol consumption are taking hold. According to Gallup's data, even those who consume alcohol are drinking less.

The federal government is updating new dietary guidelines, including those around alcohol. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, government data showed U.S. alcohol consumption was trending up. But other government surveys have shown a decline in certain types of drinking, particularly among teenagers and young adults.

This comes alongside a new drumbeat of information about alcohol's risks. While moderate drinking was once thought to have benefits for heart health, health professionals in recent years have pointed to overwhelming evidence that alcohol consumption leads to negative health outcomes and is a leading cause of cancer.

■ **Growing skepticism about alcohol's benefits.**

Younger adults have been quicker than older Americans to accept that drinking is harmful, but older adults are coming around to the same view.

About two-thirds of 18- to 34-year-olds believe moderate drinking is unhealthy, according to the poll, up from about 4 in 10 in 2015. Older adults are less likely to see alcohol as harmful — about half of Americans age 55 or older believe this — but that's a substantial increase, too. In 2015, only about 2 in 10 adults age 55 or older thought alcohol was bad for their health.

In the past, moderate drinking was thought to have some benefits. That idea came from imperfect studies that largely didn't include younger people and couldn't prove cause and effect. Now the scientific consensus has shifted, and several countries recently lowered their alcohol consumption recommendations.

Earlier this year, the outgoing U.S. surgeon general, Vivek Murthy, recommended a label on bottles of beer, wine and liquor that would clearly outline the link between alcohol consumption and cancer.

The federal government's current dietary guidelines recommend Americans not drink or, if they do consume alcohol, men should limit themselves to two drinks a day or fewer while women should stick to one or fewer.

Gallup's director of U.S. social research, Lydia Saad, said shifting health advice throughout older Americans' lives may be a reason they have been more gradual than young adults to recognize alcohol as harmful.

"Older folks may be a little more hardened in terms of the whiplash that they get with recommendations," Saad said. "It may take them a little longer to absorb or accept the information. Whereas, for young folks, this is the environment that they've grown up in ... in many cases, it would be the first thing young adults would have heard as they were coming into adulthood."

The government is expected to release new guidelines later this year, under the directive of health secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has promised big changes. Kennedy has not hinted at how the alcohol recommendations may shift.

■ **Drinking rates fall to decade low.**

Slightly more than half of Americans, 54%, report that they drink alcohol — a low in Gallup's data that is especially pronounced among women and young adults.

Young Americans' alcohol consumption has been trending downward for years, accelerating the overall decline in alcohol consumption. In sharp contrast with Gallup's findings two decades ago, when young adults were likeliest to report drinking, young adults' drinking rate is now slightly below middle-aged and older adults.

Americans' reported drinking is among the lowest since the question was first asked in 1939. For most of the last few decades, at least 6 in 10 Americans have reported drinking alcoholic beverages, only dipping below that point a few times in the question's history.

■ **Americans who drink alcohol are consuming less.**

Even if concerns about health risks aren't causing some adults to give up alcohol entirely, these worries could be influencing how often they drink.

The survey found that adults who think moderate drinking is bad for one's health are just as likely as people who don't share those concerns to report that they drink, but fewer of the people with health worries had consumed alcohol recently.

About half of those who worry moderate drinking is unhealthy said they had a drink in the previous week, compared with about 7 in 10 who did not think drinking was bad for their health.

Overall, only about one-quarter of Americans who drink said they had consumed alcohol in the prior 24 hours, a record low in the survey. Roughly 4 in 10 said that it had been more than a week since they had poured a drink.

YouTube to begin testing new AI-powered age verification

Associated Press

YouTube was to begin testing a new age-verification system Wednesday that relies on artificial intelligence to differentiate between adults and minors, based on the kinds of videos that they have been watching.

The tests initially will only affect a sliver of YouTube's audience in the U.S., but it will likely become more pervasive if the system works as well at guessing viewers' ages as it does in other parts of the world. The system will only work when viewers are logged into their accounts, and it will make its age assessments regardless of the birth date a user might have entered upon signing up.

If the system flags a logged-in viewer as being under 18, YouTube will impose the normal controls and restrictions that the site already uses as a way to prevent minors from watching videos and engaging in other behavior deemed inappropriate for that age.

The safeguards include reminders to take a break from the screen, privacy warnings and restrictions on video recommendations.

YouTube, which has been owned by Google for nearly 20 years, also doesn't show ads tailored to individual tastes if a viewer is under 18.

If the system has inaccurately called out a viewer as a minor, the mistake can be corrected by showing YouTube a government-issued identification card, a credit card or a selfie.

"YouTube was one of the first platforms to offer experiences designed specifically for young people, and we're proud to again be at the forefront of introducing technology that allows us to deliver safety protections while preserving teen privacy," James Beser, the video service's director of product management, wrote in a blog post about the age-verification system.

People still will be able to watch YouTube videos without logging into an account, but viewing that way triggers an automatic block on some content without proof of age.

The political pressure has been building on websites to do a better job of verifying ages to shield children from inappropriate content since late June when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a Texas law aimed at preventing minors from watching pornography online.

While some services, such as YouTube, have been stepping up their efforts to verify users' ages, others have contended that the responsibility should primarily fall upon the two main smartphone app stores run by Apple and Google — a position that those two technology powerhouses have resisted.

Some digital rights groups, such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the Center for Democracy & Technology, have raised concerns that age verification could infringe on personal privacy and violate First Amendment protections on free speech.

NATION

Trump warns: 'Consequences' unless war ends

Associated Press

President Donald Trump warned Wednesday that there will be "very severe consequences" if Russian President Vladimir Putin does not agree to stop the war against Ukraine after the two leaders meet for a summit later this week in Alaska.

Trump made the comment in response to a question from a reporter after announcing this year's Kennedy Center Honors recipients in Washington. He did not say what the consequences might be.

The remark came soon after Trump consulted with European leaders, who said the president assured them he would make a priority of trying to achieve a ceasefire in Ukraine when he meets with Putin on Friday in Anchorage.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy joined several of Kyiv's main allies in the virtual meeting with the U.S. leader, and Zelenskyy told the group that Putin "is bluffing" ahead of the planned summit about Russia's ability to occupy all of Ukraine and shake off sanctions.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said afterward that "important decisions" could be made in Alaska, but he stressed that "fundamental European and Ukrainian security interests must be protected."

Merz convened Wednesday's meeting in an attempt to make sure European and Ukrainian leaders are heard ahead of the summit. He stressed that a ceasefire must come at the beginning of negotiations. He told reporters that Trump "also wants to make this one of his priorities" in the meeting with Putin.

Trump "was very clear" that the U.S. wants to achieve a ceasefire at the summit, French President Emmanuel Macron said at a separate appearance in France.

Following Friday's summit, Macron added, Trump will "seek a future trilateral meeting" involving Trump, Putin and Zelenskyy.

Merz, who described Wednesday's conversation as "constructive and good," said the Europeans made clear that "Ukraine must sit at the table as soon as there are follow-up meetings."

European allies have pushed for Ukraine's involvement in any peace talks, fearful that discussions that exclude Kyiv could otherwise favor Moscow.

The Ukrainian president, who traveled to Berlin to join the meeting alongside Merz, has repeatedly cast doubt on whether Putin would negotiate in good faith. He said Wednesday that he hoped an immediate ceasefire will be "the central topic" in Alaska, but also argued that Putin "definitely does not want peace."

Zelenskyy said Putin "is trying to apply pressure ... on all sectors of the Ukrainian front" in an attempt to show that Russia is "capable of occupying all of Ukraine."

Trump has said he wants to see whether Putin is serious about ending the war, now in its fourth year, describing Friday's summit as "a feel-out meeting" where he can assess the Russian leader's intentions. Yet Trump has disappointed allies in Europe by saying Ukraine will have to give up some Russian-held territory.

Alaska's history with Russia runs deep as Trump, Putin to meet

BY MARK THIESSEN AND GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — When President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin meet in Alaska on Friday, it will be the latest chapter in the 49th state's long history with Russia — and with international tensions.

Siberian fur traders arrived from across the Bering Sea in the first part of the 18th century, and the imprint of Russian settlement in Alaska remains. The oldest building in Anchorage is a Russian Orthodox church, and many Alaska Natives have Russian surnames.

The nations are so close — Alaska's Little Diomede Island in the Bering Strait is less than 3 miles from Russia's Big Diomede — that former Gov. Sarah Palin was right during the 2008 presidential race when she said, "You can actually see Russia from land here in Alaska," though the comment prompted jokes that that was the extent of her foreign policy experience.

Alaska has been U.S. territory since 1867, and it has since been the location of the only World War II battle on North American soil, a focus of Cold War tensions and the site of occasional meetings between U.S. and world leaders.

Here's a look at Alaska's history with Russia and on the international stage:

Trappers, Seward's Folly

The fur traders established hubs in Sitka and on Kodiak Island. The Russian population in Alaska never surpassed about 400 permanent settlers, according to the Office of the Historian of the U.S. State Department.

Russian settlers brutally coerced Alaska Natives to harvest sea otters and other marine mammals for their pelts, said Ian Hartman, a University of Alaska Anchorage history professor.

By 1867 the otters had been hunted nearly to extinction and Russia was broke from the Crimean War.

Czar Alexander II sold Alaska to the U.S. for the low price of $7.2 million — knowing Russia couldn't defend its interests in Alaska if the U.S. or Great Britain tried to seize it.

Skeptics referred to the purchase as "Seward's Folly," after U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward. That changed when gold was discovered in the Klondike in 1896.

WWII and Cold War

The U.S. realized Alaska's strategic importance in the 20th century. During World War II the island of Attu — the westernmost in the Aleutian chain and closer to Russia than to mainland North America — was captured by Japanese forces.

The effort to reclaim it in 1943 became known as the war's "forgotten battle."

During the Cold War, military leaders worried Soviets might attack via Alaska, flying planes over the North Pole to drop nuclear weapons. They built a chain of radar systems connected to an anti-aircraft missile system.

Last year the Pentagon said the U.S. must invest more to upgrade sensors, communications and space-based technologies in the Arctic to keep pace with China and Russia, and it sent about 130 soldiers to a desolate Aleutian island amid an increase in Russian military planes and vessels approaching U.S. territory.



JAMES POULSON, DAILY SITKA SENTINE/AP

New Archangel Russian Dancers perform as part of the Alaska Day Festival celebrations on Oct. 18, 2012, in Sitka, the site of the transfer ceremony conveying Alaska from Russia to the United States in 1867.



MARK THIESSEN/AP

The cemetery at St. Nicholas Church in Eklutna, Alaska, features a mixture of Russian Orthodox conventions like crosses featuring three cross beams and the Dena'ina Athabascan tradition of erecting spirit homes above the graves, on Oct. 13, 2023.

Past visits by dignitaries

Putin will be the first Russian leader to visit, but other prominent figures have come before him.

Japanese Emperor Hirohito stopped in Anchorage before heading to Europe in 1971 to meet President Richard Nixon, and in 1984 thousands turned out to see President Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II meet at the airport in Fairbanks.

President Barack Obama visited in 2015, becoming the first sitting U.S. president to set foot north of the Arctic Circle, on a trip to highlight the dangers of climate change.

Gov. Bill Walker welcomed Chinese President Xi Jinping at the airport in Anchorage in 2017 and then took him on a short tour of the state's largest city.

Poor choice for summit

Many observers have suggested that holding the summit in Alaska sends a bad symbolic message.

"It's easy to imagine Putin making the argument during his meetings with Trump that, 'Well, look, territories can change hands,'" said Nigel Gould-Davies, former British Ambassador to Belarus and senior fellow at the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London. "'We gave you Alaska. Why can't Ukraine give us a part of its territory?'"

EUROPE

With letters, elves depart St. Nikolaus for Finland

Associated Press

ST. NIKOLAUS, Germany — Santa's elves started early in Germany.

Three postal workers set off Saturday on their nearly 1,860-mile bicycle journey from St. Nikolaus, Germany, to the small town of Rovaniemi, Finland, which is home to Santa Claus Village, according to German news agency dpa.

The cyclists are traveling north to bring letters and Christmas wish lists addressed to Santa Claus from St. Nikolaus, in Germany's Saarland state, to the winter-themed amusement park perched on the edge of the Arctic Circle.

St. Nikolaus himself, with his long purple cape and a tall golden staff, was on hand Saturday to hand over the letters to the three elves. The trip will take roughly two weeks as the three cycle through Germany, Denmark and Sweden en route to Finland, dpa reported.

The group is among the Deutsche Post volunteers who answer letters from children worldwide — more than 30,000 annually — that are addressed to the St. Nikolaus post office, which has its own postal code.

The tradition dates back to 1967, and each reply features a special stamp.

The town of St. Nikolaus is one of seven places in Germany with a Christmas-themed name, all of which receive letters addressed to Santa Claus or Saint Nick.



UWE ANSPACH, DPA/AP

A postal employee rides past a waving Santa Claus on his bike in St. Nikolaus, Germany, on Saturday as three Post employees set off on their bikes to deliver letters and Christmas wish lists from children to Santa Claus Village, some 1,860 miles away in northern Finland.

This year, St. Nikolaus handed over his own wish list to the cyclists, dpa reported.

He's hoping for a reply from Santa Claus in Finland.

Southern countries fight deadly wildfires

Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — Wildfires intensified across southern Europe on Wednesday after a night-long battle to protect the perimeter of Greece's third-largest city, with at least three more deaths reported in Spain, Turkey and Albania.

Outside the Greek port city of Patras, firefighters struggled to protect homes and agricultural facilities as flames tore through pine forests and olive groves. Tall columns of flames exploded behind apartment blocks on the outskirts of the city, while dozens of vehicles burned as flames swept through a nearby impound lot.

"Today is another very difficult day with the level of fire risk remaining very high across many parts of the country," Fire Service spokesman Vassilis Vathrakoyiannis said.

As planes and helicopters dropped water, residents joined the effort, beating back flames with cut branches or dousing them with buckets of water.

Firefighting resources were stretched thin in many affected countries as they battled multiple outbreaks following weeks of heat waves and temperature spikes across the Mediterranean. On the Greek island of Chios, exhausted firefighters slept on the roadside following a night-long shift.

Aircraft rotated between blazes on the western Greek mainland, the Patras area and the island of Zakynthos. Athens also sent assistance to neighboring Albania, joining an international effort to combat dozens of wildfires. An 80-year-old man died in one blaze south of the capital, Tirana, officials said Wednesday.

Residents of four villages were evacuated in central Albania. In the southern Korca district, near the Greek border, explosions were reported from buried World War II-era artillery shells. Authorities said dozens of homes were gutted in a central region of the country.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez expressed condolences after the death of a firefighting volunteer in the hard-hit Castile and León region north of Madrid, where thousands have been displaced by evacuations.

"The wildfire situation remains serious, and taking extra precautions is essential," Sánchez wrote in an online post. "Thank you, once again, to all those working tirelessly to fight the flames."

The government raised its national emergency response level, preparing additional support for authorities overseeing evacuations and highway closures.

A forestry worker was killed Wednesday while responding to a wildfire in southern Turkey, officials said. The Forestry Ministry said the worker died in an accident involving a fire truck that left four others injured.

Turkey has been battling severe wildfires since late June. A total of 18 people have been killed, including 10 rescue volunteers and forestry workers who died in July.

STARS AND STRIPES
SERVICE DIRECTORY
The Daily Guide to Navigating The Military Business Market

Transportation 944

VEHICLE SHIPPING SERVICES

- International Shipping
- Import & Export
- Inland trucking *(U.S. & Europe)*
- Door to door pick-up/delivery service
- Customs clearance
- All Risk Marine Insurance
- Auto Insurance *(Germany only)*

For Further Information Please Contact

	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
WEB:	www.transglobal-logistics.de	www.carshipuk.co.uk	www.tgal.us

For 2nd POV Shipments - Offices / Agencies near Military Installations

Trans Global
LOGISTICS EUROPE GMBH



Are you in the picture?



Reading **Stars and Stripes** gives you a better handle on issues that affect you most.
No one covers the bases the way we do.

STARS AND STRIPES
However you read us, wherever you need us.

WORLD

Israeli gunfire kills more trying to seek out aid

Prime Minister Netanyahu says he will 'allow' Palestinians to leave Gaza Strip

BY MELANIE LIDMAN AND SAMY MAGDY
Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israeli gunfire killed at least 25 people seeking aid in Gaza on Wednesday, health officials and witnesses said, while Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel will "allow" Palestinians to leave during an upcoming military offensive in some of the territory's most populated areas.

Netanyahu wants to realize President Donald Trump's vision of relocating much of Gaza's population of over 2 million people through what he refers to as "voluntary migration" — and what critics have warned could be ethnic cleansing.

"Give them the opportunity to leave! First, from combat zones, and also from the strip if they want," Netanyahu said in an interview aired Tuesday with Israeli TV station i24 to discuss the planned offensive in areas that include Gaza City, where hundreds of thousands of displaced people shelter. "We are not pushing them out but allowing them to leave."

The office of Israel's deputy foreign minister, Sharren Haskel, said she was arriving in South Sudan for meetings in the first visit there by a senior Israeli official, but she did not plan to broach the subject of moving Palestinians.

South Sudan's ministry of foreign affairs in a statement called reports that it was engaging in discussions with Israel about resettling Palestinians baseless.

In Gaza, witnesses and staff at Nasser and Awda hospitals, which received the bodies of those who were shot Wednesday, said people were shot on their way to aid distribution sites or while awaiting convoys entering Gaza.

Among the dead were 14 Palestinians in the Teina area almost 2 miles from a food distribution site run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, according to staff at Nasser hospital.

Hashim Shamalah said Israeli troops fired toward them as people tried to get through. Many were shot and fell while fleeing, he said.

Israeli gunfire killed five other Palestinians trying to reach another GHF distribution site in the Netzarim corridor area, according to Awda hospital and witnesses.

Efforts to revive ceasefire talks have resumed after apparently breaking down last month. Hamas and Egyptian officials met Wednesday in Cairo, according to Hamas official Taher al-Nounou.

Israel has no plans to send its negotiating team to talks in Cairo, Netanyahu's office said.

Israel's plans to widen its military offensive against Hamas to parts of Gaza it does not yet control have sparked condemnation at home and abroad, and could be intended to raise pressure on Hamas to reach a ceasefire.

The militants still hold 50 hostages taken in the Oct. 7, 2023 attack that sparked the war. Israel believes around 20 are still alive. Families fear a new offensive endangers them.

When asked by i24 News if the window had closed on a partial ceasefire deal, Netanyahu responded that he wanted all hostages back, alive and dead.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty told reporters that Cairo is still trying to advance an earlier proposal for an initial 60-day ceasefire, the release of some hostages and an influx of humanitarian aid before further talks on a lasting truce.



PHOTOS BY YURI KAGEYAMA/AP

Asahi Yamauchi, 4, looks at a beetle and plays at an exhibition devoted to insects in Tokyo.

Bugs, popular pets in Japan, are buzzing with lessons on ecology

BY YURI KAGEYAMA
Associated Press

TOKYO — The pet of choice in Japan, as much as cuddly kitties and playful puppies, is the humble bug.

The bug has been a key part of Japanese culture from the Heian era classic "The Tale of Genji" to popular modern-day manga and animation like "Mushishi," featuring insect-like supernatural creatures.

Japanese people appreciate the glitter of fireflies let loose in the garden or the gentle chirping of crickets kept in a little cage. You can feed the bug pets watermelon, but special jelly pet food for bugs is also available at stores. Naturally, bugs are on sale as well, with the more esoteric ones selling for $133.

Here, crawly and buzzing critters are not just relegated to the scientific realm of the entomologist working on a taxidermy of pinned butterflies. Celebrities boast about their fascination with bug-hunting as their hobbies just like a Western movie star might talk about his yacht or golf score.

The bug as companion is an essential part of what's observed, enjoyed and cared for in everyday life, reflecting a deeply rooted celebration of humankind's oneness with nature.



Toyoji Suzuki holds a beetle, known as Hercules, at an exhibition devoted to insects.

"They are so tiny. If you catch and study them, you're sure to discover something new," says Munetoshi Maruyama, professor of bioenvironmental sciences at Kyushu University, whose fascination with bugs began as a child, like many Japanese.

Japan differs from much of the West in encouraging interaction with bugs from childhood, with lots of books written for children, as well as classes and tours.

"In Japan, kids love bugs. You can even buy a net at a convenience store," he said. "It's fantastic that bugs can serve as a doorway to science."

The love affair with bugs was clear at an exhibit in Tokyo, aptly called "The Great Insect Exhibition," running through the end of this month at the Sky Tree Tower, where crowds of children gathered around trees inside indoor cages so they could observe and touch the various beetles.

One kind of rhinoceros beetle known as Hercules, which originated in the Caribbean but is now also found in Japan, is reputed to be the biggest beetle on record, although it's just several inches in length.

"We want the kids to feel the emotions and joy of actually touching the insects here. That's really positive for the workings of a child's brain," said Toyoji Suzuki, one of the event's organizers.

Lithuania to teach thousands, including kids, about drones

Associated Press

VILNIUS, Lithuania — Lithuania's government said on Tuesday it plans to open nine drone training centers over the next three years to teach thousands of people, including schoolchildren, skills in flying and building the machines.

Drones have become increasingly common in everyday life and warfare in recent years. Lithuania's project aims to strengthen the public's abilities in drone control and engineering and "expand civil resistance training," its defense and education ministries said in a statement.

Lithuania, a NATO member country of about 2.8 million people on the alliance's eastern flank, borders both Russia's Kaliningrad exclave and Moscow-allied Belarus, and is aware of possible threats to its security.

The first three drone centers are due to open in September and the remaining six by 2028. The plan is for 15,500 adults and 7,000 children to be taught drone skills by 2028, Defense Minister Dovile Šakaliene said.

The government said the program will be adapted to different age groups.

Third- and fourth-grade students will learn to build and pilot simple drones while high-school students will design and manufacture drone parts and learn how to build and fly advanced "first-person view" drones. It plans a total investment of more than $3.8 million.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Plane hits several parked aircraft while landing

MT KALISPELL — A small plane landing on Monday at a northwest Montana airport crashed into parked aircraft, triggering a large fire but causing no serious injuries, authorities said.

The single-engine plane carrying four people was attempting to land at about 2 p.m. at the Kalispell City Airport, according to Kalispell Police Chief Jordan Venezio and the Federal Aviation Administration.

A preliminary investigation showed the pilot lost control, crashing onto the runway before the plane struck several parked aircraft, igniting fires on multiple planes, Kalispell police said. The fire spread to a grassy area before it was extinguished, Venezio said.

Witnesses said a plane crash-landed at the end of the runway and careened into another aircraft, Kalispell Fire Chief Jay Hagen said.

The passengers were able to get out on their own after it came to a stop, Hagen said. Two were slightly hurt and treated at the airport, he said.

The flight originated in Pullman, Wash., according to the National Transportation Safety Board. The plane was identified by the FAA as a Socata TBM 700 turboprop.

Mountain lion attacks girl, 11, at her home

CA MALIBU — A mountain lion attacked and wounded an 11-year-old girl outside her family's home in Malibu, Calif., then chased her mother before it was scared off, authorities said Monday.

The girl was near a chicken coop on the property Sunday evening when the cougar attacked her from behind, biting her arm, leg and lower back, according to California Department of Fish and Wildlife spokesperson Peter Tira. She was treated at a hospital for minor injuries, Tira said.

During the attack, the girl's mother heard her child's screams and ran over with one of the girl's siblings.

"That's when the mountain lion proceeded to chase the mother and the sibling," Tira told the Los Angeles Times.

Another family member had a stun gun and the sound of the weapon scared away the big cat, Tira said.

Wildlife officers later found a mountain lion in the area and euthanized it. DNA tests will confirm if it's the same animal that bit the girl.

Official: More disciplined at prison after escape

AR LITTLE ROCK — Additional employees at an Arkansas prison have been disciplined for not following procedures after a convicted murderer known as the "Devil in the Ozarks" escaped earlier this summer, a state prison system official told lawmakers Monday.

Arkansas Division of Correction Director Dexter Payne said several employees at the Calico Rock prison had been suspended and another demoted for allowing inmates to use an outdoor kitchen dock unsupervised.

"Those employees have also been disciplined for their actions," Payne told members of the Legislative Council's Charitable, Penal and Correctional Institutions Subcommittee.

The dock had played a key role in the May 25 escape of Grant Hardin from the prison, formally known as the North Central Unit. Two employees at the facility, including one who allowed Hardin on the dock unsupervised, had previously been fired in the weeks following his escape. Hardin held a job in the prison's kitchen.

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.

Hardin, a former police chief in Gateway, is serving lengthy sentences for murder and rape. He was the subject of the TV documentary "Devil in the Ozarks."



DON CAMPBELL, THE (ST. JOSEPH, MICH.) HERALD-PALLADIUM/AP

Smoking the competition

Matt Critzer competes in the 8,000 pound weight class Monday, during the tractor pulling competition held at the Berrien County Youth Fair in Berrien Springs, Mich.

100,000 acres of almond orchards are rat-infested

CA MODESTO — Almond growers across Central California say they are battling a surging rat infestation across more than 100,000 acres of orchards, resulting in economic hardship and damage.

Across Fresno, Merced, Kings and Kern counties, almond farmers have reported an increase in rodent populations as the rodents use irrigation canals and other waterways to spread across agricultural fields and orchards, according to a newsletter from the Almond Board of California in Modesto.

The impact could be significant as California is home to 80% of the world's almond production. The Golden State's almonds were once the top export to China but retaliatory tariffs have resulted in China looking for almonds from other nations instead.

Roof rats usually spend their lives above ground but have been burrowing under almond and other nut trees due to the absence of cover during the cold winter months, according to the newsletter.

Historic casino taking out all live dealer tables

NV LAS VEGAS — It is the end of an era, as the oldest casino property in downtown Las Vegas is eliminating traditional table games in favor of a new gambling experience.

Golden Gate will no longer offer live dealer table games, according to owner Derek Stevens. The 119-year-old property will phase out live dealer tables over the next several weeks, replacing them with "high-energy" slot and electronic table-game machines, Stevens said.

By mid-September, most, if not all, of the live table games will be gone.

The decision to remove live dealer tables at Golden Gate was made based on the financial success of a similar move at Circa, another downtown casino owned by Stevens. The second floor of Circa has not had live dealers for nearly a year, he said, and yet it has "exploded in popularity."

News of the changes at Golden Gate was first reported by Casino.org on Friday, which forced Stevens' hand to inform the rest of the dealers ahead of schedule, he said Saturday.

Vet seeks GOP lieutenant governor nomination

GA ATLANTA — A Gwinnett County Republican has joined the crowded race to become Georgia's next lieutenant governor.

State Rep. David Clark, R-Buford, announced Tuesday he will seek his party's nomination for lieutenant governor next year. A military veteran, Clark announced his candidacy by pledging to be "a warrior for Georgia families, values and freedom." He joins a Republican field that already includes Senate Majority Leader Steve Gooch, R-Dahlonega; Sen. John Kennedy, R-Macon; and Sen. Blake Tillery, R-Vidalia.

Lt. Gov. Burt Jones is running for governor next year.

In 2020, Clark tried unsuccessfully to replace then-House Speaker David Ralston. The following year Ralston banished him from the chamber when Clark refused to follow House rules and be tested for COVID-19. Clark relented, took a test and rejoined the House two days later.

Man tried to smuggle 850 turtles to Hong Kong

NY NEW YORK — A New York resident has admitted he tried to smuggle protected turtles worth more than $1 million from the United States to Hong Kong by shipping them in boxes labeled "plastic animal toys."

Wei Qiang Lin, a Chinese national who lives in Brooklyn, pleaded guilty Monday in federal court in New York to attempting to export more than 220 parcels containing around 850 eastern box turtles and three-toed box turtles, according to the U.S. Justice Department.

The turtles, with an estimated market value of $1.4 million, were intercepted by law enforcement at a border inspection, prosecutors said.

Eastern box turtles and three-toed box turtles are a "prized feature" in the domestic and foreign pet market, prosecutors said. The reptiles are protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Lin faces up to five years in prison when he's sentenced Dec. 23.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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

EDITORIAL

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

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast
Erik Slavin, Europe & Mideast Bureau Chief
slavin.erik@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9350; DSN (314)583.9350

Pacific
Aaron Kidd, Pacific Bureau Chief
kidd.aaron@stripes.com
+81.42.552.2511 ext. 88380; DSN (315)227.7380

Washington
Joseph Cacchioli, Washington Bureau Chief
cacchioli.joseph@stripes.com
(+1)(202)886-0033

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

CIRCULATION

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

Europe
Carlo Aquino, Circulation Manager
aquino.carlo@stripes.com
memberservices@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9136; DSN (314)583.9136

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

CONTACT US

Washington
tel: (+1)202.886.0003
633 3rd St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20001-3050

Reader letters
letters@stripes.com

Additional contacts
stripes.com/contactus

OMBUDSMAN

Jacqueline Smith

The Stars and Stripes ombudsman protects the free flow of news and information, reporting any attempts by the military or other authorities to undermine the newspaper's independence. The ombudsman also responds to concerns and questions from readers, and monitors coverage for fairness, accuracy, timeliness and balance. The ombudsman welcomes comments from readers, and can be contacted by email at ombudsman@stripes.com, or by phone at 202.886.0003.

Stars and Stripes (USPS 0417900) published daily (except Saturday, Sunday, 25 December and 1 January) for 50 cents (Monday through Thursday) and one dollar on Friday by Stars and Stripes Pacific, OPC 706 BOX 7, APO AP 96301-9001. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Stars and Stripes, OPC 706 BOX 7, AP 96301-9001.

The Stars and Stripes newspaper is authorized by the Department of Defense (DoD) for the overseas U.S. military community. As an authorized newspaper, Stars and Stripes publications may be distributed through official channels and use appropriated funds for distribution to remote locations where overseas DoD personnel are located. The content printed in this newspaper is not classified as command information and is neither endorsed by nor represents the official views of the U.S. government.

The appearance of advertising in this publication does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense, Stars and Stripes, and or services advertised. Products or services advertised shall be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user or patron.

© Stars and Stripes 2025

stripes.com

OPINION

Tariff 'Mission Accomplished' hype is just that

By Jonah Goldberg
Tribune Content Agency

On May 1, 2003, George W. Bush announced, "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended." He was standing below a giant banner that read, "Mission Accomplished." At the risk of inviting charges of understatement, subsequent events didn't cooperate. But it took a while for that to be widely accepted.

We're in a similar place when it comes to President Donald Trump's experiment with a new global trading order.

"Tariffs are making our country Strong and Rich!!!" proclaims Trump, making him not only the first Republican president in living memory to brag about raising taxes on Americans, but also the first to insist that raising taxes on Americans makes us richer.

MAGA's mission-accomplished groupthink relies primarily on three arguments.

The first is that Trump has successfully concluded a slew of beneficial trade deals. The truth is that some of those deals are simply "frameworks" that will take a long time to be ironed out. But Trump got the headlines he wanted.

The second argument is a kind of populism-infused sleight of hand. The "experts" — their scare quotes, not mine — are wrong once again.

The White House social media account crows, "In April, 'experts' called tariffs 'the biggest policy mistake in 95 years.' By July, they generated OVER $100 BILLION in revenue. Facts expose the haters: tariffs WORK. Trust in Trump."

But the high-fivers are leaving things out. The most-dire predictions of economic catastrophe were based on the scheme Trump announced on April 2, aka "Liberation Day." Trump quickly backed off that plan ("chickened out" in Wall Street parlance) in response to a bond and stock market implosion.

Saying the experts were wrong under those circumstances is like saying experts opposed to defenestration were wrong when they successfully convinced a man not to jump out a window.

The third argument, made by the White House and many others — that tariffs are working because they're raising money — is a response to a claim no one made. To my knowledge, no expert claimed tariffs wouldn't raise money.

The estimates of these revenues from Trump world are stratospheric. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick expects somewhere between $700 billion and $1 trillion per year. Last month, the government collected $29 billion. It's likely this number will significantly increase as more tariffs come online and businesses run down the inventory they stockpiled earlier this year in anticipation of more tariffs to come.

Normally, Republicans don't exult over massive revenues from tax hikes. But Trump's defenders get around this problem by insisting that money is "pouring" and "flowing" into America from someplace else.

It's true that tariff revenue is pouring into the Treasury, but that money is coming out of American bank accounts, because American importers pay the tariff. Even Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent cannot deny this when pressed. So yes, tariffs are "working" the way they're supposed to; the problem is Trump thinks tariffs work differently than they do.

It's possible some foreign exporters might lower prices to maintain market share, and some American businesses might absorb the costs — for now — to avoid sticker shock for inflation-beleaguered consumers, but what revenue is generated still comes from Americans. Ultimately it means higher prices paid here, reduced profits for businesses here or reduced U.S. trade overall.

Sometimes, when pressed, defenders of the administration will concede the true source of the revenues, but then they say the pain is necessary to force manufacturers and other businesses to build and produce in the United States. It's backdoor industrial policy masquerading as trade policy.

That, too, might "work." But all of this will take time, no matter what. And, if it works, that will have costs, too. Manufacturing in America is more expensive — that's why we manufacture so much stuff abroad in the first place. If this "reshoring" happens, our goods will be more expensive, and less money will "pour in" from tariffs.

It's difficult to exaggerate how well-understood all of this was on the American right until very recently. But the need to grab any argument available to declare Trump's experiment a success has a lot of people not only abandoning their previous dogma but leaping to the conclusion that the dogma was wrong all along.

Maybe it was, though I don't think so. The evidence so far suggests that problems are looming. The dollar is weakening. Prices continue to rise. The job market is reeling. The stock market (an unreliable metric, according to MAGA, when it plummeted after Liberation Day) is holding on, thanks to tech stocks. The truth is we won't have real evidence for a while.

It's worth remembering that Americans don't live by headlines and press releases and they don't live in the macro economy either. Declaring "Mission Accomplished" for the macro economy won't convince people they're better off in their own micro-economies when they're not.

Jonah Goldberg is editor-in-chief of The Dispatch and the host of The Remnant podcast.

Dems need a creative approach to the midterms

By Solomon D. Stevens
Tribune News Service

Let's face it. The Democratic Party is in disarray. It will not win the 2026 congressional midterm elections if it limits its message to condemning President Donald Trump. And it will not win the 2026 elections if the party is seen as a cesspool of bickering and disagreement.

Americans are fed up with the inability of Congress to act, and they have embraced a president who circumvents Congress for all of his major initiatives. If Democrats want to succeed in 2026, they need to take bold, unified action. They need a new version of the original "Contract With America."

For those who are too young (or weren't around yet) to witness the success of the original Contract With America, let me explain. It was a document — a promise, really — written by two Republican congressmen, Newt Gingrich and Dick Armey, that set out in plain language exactly what the Republicans would do if they won a majority in Congress in the 1994 elections. The Contract named eight reforms of Congress that it would implement and 10 bills it would bring to the floor for consideration. It was a stroke of genius, and it was a success. Republicans won majorities in both houses for the first time since 1953.

The Contract With America was effective because it was clear, direct and bold, but the key to making it successful was getting all but two Republicans in the House and all of the congressional candidates who were not incumbents to sign it. That gave the document the feel of an actual contract. It was powerful.

And it didn't matter whether most Americans even read the specifics of the Contract With America. The fact that it existed was evidence that Republicans knew what they wanted to do and were willing to promise they would do it. It was a sign that Republicans were poised to act. That resonated with the American people.

Rather than go on and on about how Trump is a threat to democracy, Democrats should take action to show Americans that democracy can, in fact, work. They can do that by proving that Congress can, once again, function effectively.

A Democratic version of the Contract With America would help focus the party on a particular set of issues as 2026 approaches, which is something the party desperately needs. Right now, it is almost impossible for most Americans to say what the Democratic Party stands for. And if Democrats do not define their party, their opponents will.

A new Contract With America needs to promote an agenda for all Americans, not just all Democrats. And it cannot limit itself to traditional bread-and-butter and infrastructure issues. Promoting abundance will not be enough.

A successful Contract With America needs to address at least three critical cultural concerns of Americans: immigration, diversity and education. These have been divisive issues, and Democrats need to show that they can provide a new approach to addressing them, one that will unify Americans.

The party needs to bring its left wing, right wing and moderates together, at least concerning the specifics of what they are willing to promise to the American people. And if the party cannot unify around a set of proposals for the American people, then it doesn't deserve to dominate in the midterm elections.

Trump won the 2024 election for several reasons. One crucial factor is, of course, that Joe Biden withdrew his candidacy very late, and the party did not have time to go through a regular nomination process. But even if Biden had withdrawn much earlier, the fact is that Trump was speaking to very real concerns of Americans in a way that Democrats were not.

Even with a Democratic version of the Contract With America, winning in 2026 will be an uphill battle for Democrats, with Republicans planning new gerrymandering of legislative districts in Texas, hoping to add five Republican seats in Congress.

So, this is the time for Democrats to step forward with creativity and boldness. Those who would be leaders in the Democratic Party need to come forward now, help the party define itself, and call the party to action.

Solomon D. Stevens is the author of "Religion, Politics, and the Law" (co-authored with Peter Schotten) and "Challenges to Peace in the Middle East." He wrote this for InsideSources.com.

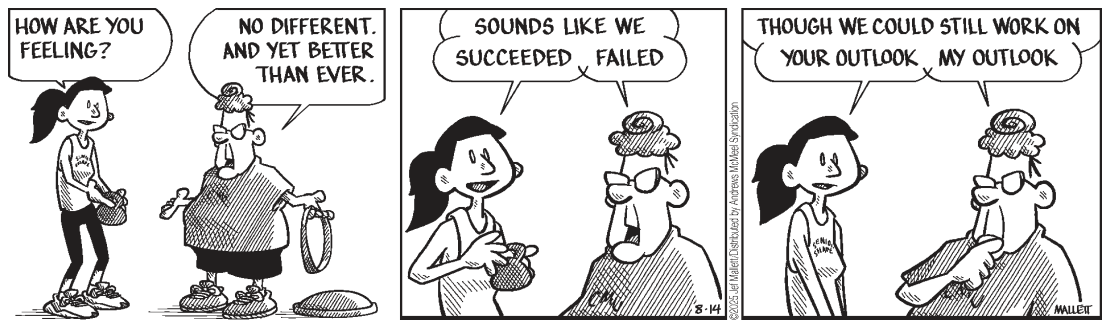
Bizarro



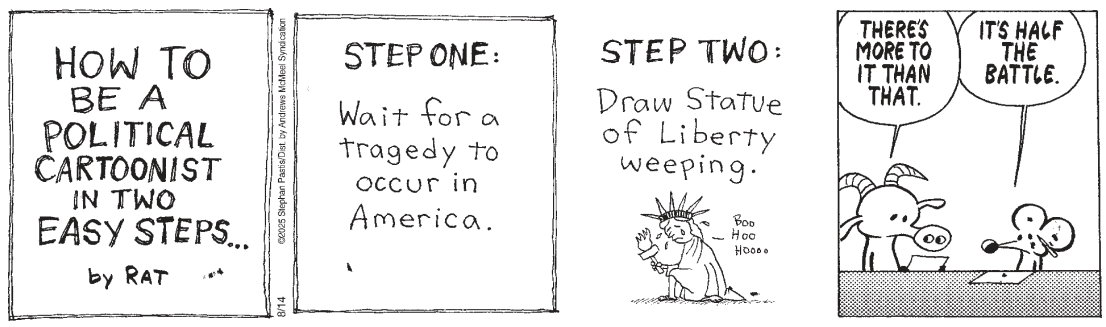
Loose Parts



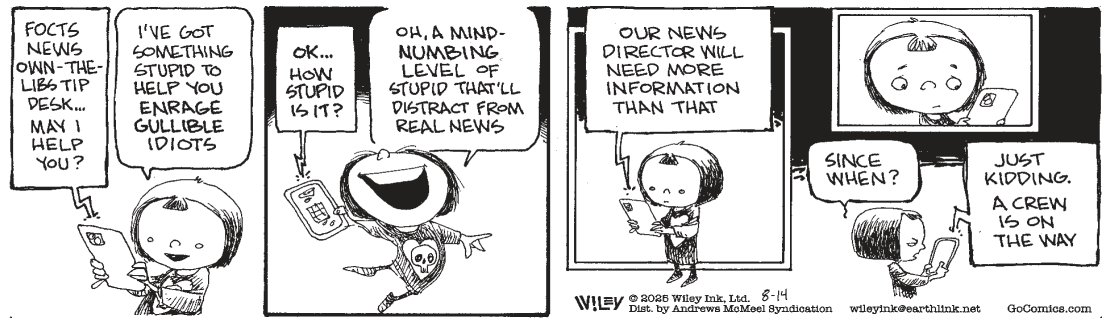
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	■	4	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12			■	13				■	14			
15			16					■	17			
■	■	18			■	19		20				
21	22				23	■	24			■	■	■
25			■	26		27	■	28		29	30	31
32			33	■	34		35	■	36			
37				38	■	39		40	■	41		
■	■	■	42		43	■	44		45			
46	47	48				49	■	50			■	■
51				■	52		53				54	55
56				■	57				■	58		
59				■	60				■	61		

ACROSS

1 Bread spread
4 Slightly
8 Concept
12 Hollywood's Lupino
13 Lady of Spain
14 Pirate's drink
15 Famous spy
17 Supreme Court count
18 Compass dir.
19 Oval
21 Apple gizmos
24 Perched
25 "Entourage" agent
26 Moray, for one
28 Station
32 Abound
34 "You've got mail" co.
36 Curved line, in music
37 Not hollow
39 "Gosh!"
41 Enzyme suffix
42 Pen tip
44 Ousts
46 Short witticism
50 Bordeaux summer
51 Asia's — Sea
52 Embassy worker
56 Batting practice enclosure
57 Joel of "Cabaret"
58 Shock partner
59 Med. plan options
60 Deserve
61 Blaster's need

DOWN

1 Morrison of The Doors
2 Nabokov novel
3 Military equipment
4 Cling (to)
5 Large snake
6 Concerning
7 Follows
8 Sets off
9 Plumbing problem
10 Billions of years
11 Screenwriter James
16 Hydrocarbon suffix
20 Young bloke
21 "Memory" musical
22 Disc-shaped cookie
23 Mermaid's home
27 Cabin component
29 Table protector
30 Expel
31 "— chic!"
33 Enjoys the party
35 Shelter
38 Compass pt.
40 Novelist Waugh
43 Sheriff's star
45 Judge in 1995 news
46 Apiece
47 Baby carriage
48 "Othello" villain
49 Actress Sorvino
53 Part of MPH
54 Bristle
55 Asian holiday

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

8-14

CRYPTOQUIP

NBSKM LBS IWWSUY PFIP GBNW, WFYYO ICM OHZW ZYP PFYHD ODYWGDHOPHBCW VHKKYM IP PFY VIDUIGL?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT MONTH OF THE YEAR DO YOU SUPPOSE WILD TREES IN FORESTS PROBABLY REALLY HATE? SEP-TIMBER.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals Y

FACES

Swift's most elaborate album rollouts

Many of the singer's announcements have involved new technologies and innovative marketing techniques

BY MARIA SHERMAN
Associated Press

Taylor Swift doesn't simply announce albums. She curates events. That's a trend that certainly did not begin with the announcement of her 12th studio album, "The Life of a Showgirl, " on Tuesday. She's long embraced new technologies and forward-thinking marketing opportunities that allow her to connect directly with fans. (Who could forget her third studio album, 2010's "Speak Now," was announced via the now-defunct Ustream? Or that 2012's "Red" was announced via Google+ Hangout — RIP — while more than 70,000 fans watched via YouTube stream? Just us?) As her profile has risen, so too have her efforts. Easter eggs abound in her album rollouts. Here are a few of her most memorable:

'Reputation' (2017)

Announcement Date: Aug. 23, 2017

How She Did It: "Reputation" arrived with much speculation — at the time, the once very public-facing Swift had begun to keep a low profile, heightening the mystery. A week before Swift announced the album — which arrived on the three-year anniversary of the announcement of her last album, 2014's "1989" — Swift deleted every post across her social media platforms. A few days later, she posted a 10-second video clip of a snake. Soon afterward, she revealed the name of her album, its release date and the fact that the first single from the project would arrive the very next day.

Release Date: Nov. 10, 2017

'Folklore' (2020)

Announcement Date: July 23, 2020

How She Did It: In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, Swift got creative. She announced that her eighth album, "Folklore," would arrive the next day — less than a year after the release of her seventh, "Lover."

"Most of the things I had planned this summer didn't end up happening, but there is something I hadn't planned on that DID happen. And that thing is my 8th studio album, folklore. Surprise," she wrote on Instagram at the time. "I've poured all of my whims, dreams, fears, and musings into. I wrote and recorded this music in isolation."

It wasn't just the album announcement that was a surprise. "Folklore" marked a sonic detour for the pop star.

Release Date: July 24, 2020



INVISION/AP

Taylor Swift, shown in February 2024 while accepting the Grammy award for best pop vocal album for "Midnights," first announced the album after taking home the top prize at the 2022 MTV Video Music Awards.

'Evermore' (2020)

Announcement Date: Dec. 10, 2020

How She Did It: A few months after the surprise release of "Folklore," the prolific Swift announced "Evermore." She called it a "sister" to "Folklore."

"To put it plainly, we just couldn't stop writing songs," Swift wrote on social media in December. "I've never done this before. In the past I've always treated albums as one-off eras and moved onto planning the next one after an album was released."

Release Date: Dec. 11, 2020

'Midnights' (2022)

Announcement Date: Aug. 28, 2022

How She Did It: Swift took home the top prize at the 2022 MTV Video Music Awards before she closed out the show with a big announcement: a new album.

"I thought it would be a fun moment to tell you that my new album comes out Oct. 21," Swift said after she won video of the year for her project "All Too Well: The Short Film," which claimed best long-form video and direction. "I will tell you more at midnight."

At the anointed hour, Swift said on social media that her 10th studio album would be called "Midnights," which she said would involve "stories of 13 sleepless nights scattered throughout my life."

Release Date: Oct. 21, 2022

'1989 (Taylor's Version)' (2023)

Announcement Date: Aug. 9, 2023

How She Did It: Taylor Swift closed the 2023 U.S. leg of her landmark Eras Tour in Los Angeles in a big way, announcing the fourth edition of her rerecording project: "1989 (Taylor's Version)."

"Instead of just, like, telling you about it, I think I'll just sort of show you," she told the crowd as the screen illuminated behind her. "'1989 (Taylor's Version)' available Oct. 27!" she cheered, pointing out that she was revealing this on the eighth month of the year and the ninth day — a numerical clue.

Then she launched into a surprise performance of the ascendant "1989" track "New Romantics" and the "Reputation"-era piano ballad "New Year's Day" for the first time during her world tour.

Release Date: Oct. 27, 2023

'The Tortured Poets Department' (2024)

Announcement Date: Feb. 4, 2024

How She Did It: The night of the Grammys, Swift provoked mass speculation when her site seemed to go down. Some theorized she was gearing up to release "Reputation (Taylor's Version)," but cryptic clues on the "crashed" site indicated that might be a misdirect. In classic Swift fashion, it was. While accepting the Grammy for best pop vocal album, Swift said she'd been keeping a secret for two years: "The Tortured Poets Department," an all-original album.

Release Date: April 19, 2024

'The Life of a Showgirl' (2025)

Announcement Date: Aug. 12, 2025

How She Did It: For her 12th studio album, Swift really embraced the number. She announced the album on her website shortly after a countdown timer expired at 12:12 a.m. on Aug. 12.

The day before, the Taylor Nation account — an official branch of her marketing team — posted a TikTok slideshow of 12 images captioned "Thinking about when she said 'See you next era ...'" That was posted 12 minutes after an image of a mysterious silhouette appeared on the social media accounts for the "New Heights" podcast hosted by Swift's boyfriend, Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, and his brother, former Philadelphia Eagles center Jason Kelce. Fans theorized the outline was of Swift. They were, of course, correct.

The "New Heights" social media accounts confirmed Swift would appear on the podcast for the first time. That appearance was scheduled for Aug. 13 — 13, of course, another number important to Swift.

Release Date: It remains to be seen.

Beyoncé wins juried Emmy for halftime show

Associated Press

Beyoncé has an Emmy to go with her 35 Grammys.

Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, her legal name, was listed as one of a half dozen people on a team that won outstanding costumes for a variety, nonfiction or reality show for "Beyoncé Bowl," her Western-themed halftime show during Netflix's Christmas NFL game between the Baltimore Ravens and Houston Texans.

The show in her hometown of Houston brought the live debut of songs from her "Cowboy Carter" album.

The special Emmy is Beyoncé's first. She has been nominated for 10 others without a victory. It takes her halfway to an EGOT with her 35 Grammys. She still needs a Tony and an Oscar to complete the quartet.

The award was among a handful of so-called juried Emmys announced Tuesday that are determined outside the regular voting process and given out by committees, with no official nominees. They are usually highly technical — several involve individual elements of the animation process — and rarely go to famous names. They are handed out at the Creative Arts Emmy Awards ceremony, held next month.



AP

Beyoncé won a special Emmy, her first, for the costumes worn during her halftime show during an NFL game on Dec. 25

Beyoncé is also nominated for best variety special as a producer of "Beyoncé Bowl" and for best direction of a variety special. Her husband, Jay-Z, is competing against her as an executive producer of Kendrick Lamar's Super Bowl halftime show.

New Venus Williams Barbie doll to be released

Venus Williams has a new Barbie, this one part of the dollmaker's Inspiring Women collection.

Williams' doll, to be released Friday, will celebrate the tennis great and pay equity champion and wear the uniform Williams wore while winning Wimbledon in 2007.

Williams' win for the fifth of her seven Grand Slam titles was the first time a woman received equal prize money as the men at a top-level tournament.

The doll, suggested to retail for $38, features Williams in all white with a green gem necklace, wristband, racket and tennis ball.

Williams also had a Barbie doll released in May 2024 as part of Barbie's 65th anniversary celebration. The company highlighted nine trailblazing female athletes.



MATTEL/AP

The Barbie Inspiring Women Venus Williams doll wears the uniform Williams wore while winning Wimbledon in 2007.

SCOREBOARD/SPORTS BRIEFS

DEALS

Tuesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Activated OF Daniel Johnson. Optioned OF Jordyn Adams to Norfolk (IL).

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Designated LF Corey Julks for assignment. Reinstated 3B Miguel Vargas from the 10-day IL. Optioned RHP Elvis Peguero to Charlotte (IL). Selected the contract of RHP Yoendrys Gómez from Charlotte.

HOUSTON ASTROS — Designated RHP Héctor Neris for assignment. Placed LHP Josh Hader on the 15-day IL, retroactive to August 11. Reinstated RHP Shawn Dubin from the 15-day IL. Recalled LHP Colton Gordon from Sugar Land (PCL).

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Sent RF Jac Caglianone and LF Mark Canha to Omaha (IL) on rehab assignments.

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Recalled INF Niko Kavadas and RHP Victor Mederos from Salt Lake (PCL). Placed OF Gustavo Campero on 10-day IL. Designated RHP Shaun Anderson for assignment.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Reinstated OF Matt Wallner from the paternity list. Optioned C Jhonny Pereda to St. Paul (IL).

NEW YORK YANKEES — Agreed to terms with C Rob Brantly on a minor league contract.

SEATTLE MARINERS — Claimed RHP Domingo Gonzalez off waivers from the Atlanta Braves and optioned him to Tacoma (PCL).

TEXAS RANGERS — Sent CF Evan Carter to Frisco (TL) on a rehab assignment.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Reinstated INF Andres Gimenez from the 10-day IL. Designated INF Buddy Kennedy for assignment.

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Sent 1B Pavin Smith to Reno (PCL) on a rehab assignment. Agreed to terms with 1B Matt Mervis on a minor league contract. Sent 2B Ildemaro Vargas to Reno on a rehab assignment.

ATLANTA BRAVES — Sent LHP Chris Sale to Gwinnett (IL) on a rehab assignment. Claimed RHP Connor Seabold off waivers from the Tampa Bay Rays and optioned him to Gwinnett.

CHICAGO CUBS — Reinstated C Miguel Amaya from the 60-day IL. Designated 3B Jon Berti for assignment. Reinstated RHP Javier Assad from the 60-day IL. Optioned RHP Nate Pearson to Iowa (IL).

COLORADO ROCKIES — Agreed to terms with RHP Kyle Brnovich on a minor league contract. Sent SS Ryan Ritter to Albuquerque (PCL) on a rehab assignment.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Recalled RHP Edgardo Henriquez. Placed RHP Brock Stewart on the IL.

MIAMI MARLINS — Activated RHP Anthony Bender from the paternity list. Optioned RHP George Soriano to Jacksonville (IL).

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Agreed to terms with RHP Julian Merryweather on a minor league contract.

NEW YORK METS — Sent RHP Tylor Megill to Binghamton (IL) on a rehab assignment.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Sent RHP Daniel Robert to Lehigh Valley (IL) on a rehab assignment.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Recalled 2B Tyler Fitzgerald from Sacramento (PCL). Optioned LHP Carson Whisenhunt to Sacramento.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Agreed to terms with OF Andrew Sojka on a minor league contract.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

PHOENIX SUNS — Hired Jesse Mermuys, DeMarre Carroll, Brian Randle, Chaisson Allen, John Little, Mike Muscala and Sean Dwyer as assistant coaches. Hired Mateen Cleaves as player development/leadership assistant.

Women's National Basketball Association

DALLAS WINGS — Released G Grace Berger. Signed G Grace Berger to a rest-of-season contract.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed WR Kelly Akharaiyi to a contract. Placed WR Trishton Jackson on injured reserve. Claimed OL Roy Mbaeteka off waivers from the Cleveland Browns and placed him on the team's exempt/international player list.

BUFFALO BILLS — Signed DB Tre Herndon. Waived TE Matt Sokol.

CHICAGO BEARS — Signed DBs Mark Perry, Mekhi Garner and Kaleb Hayes to contracts. Signed DB Millard Bradford to a contract. Waived WR John Jackson and K Jonathan Kim. Waived/injured DB Major Burns. Placed DB Shaun Wade on injured reserve.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Signed DE Titus Leo to a contract. Waived WR Chase Cota. Reverted WR Luke Floriea to injured reserve.

DALLAS COWBOYS — Released C Dakoda Shepley from injured reserve with a settlement.

DENVER BRONCOS — Activated WR A.T. Perry.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed RB Tyrion Davis-Price to a contract. Waived/injured RB Jalen White. Waived/injured CB Isaiah Dunn. Claimed WR Kawaan Baker off waivers from the Las Vegas Raiders.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Signed OT Conor McDermott to a contract. Placed TE Brevin Jordan on injured reserve.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Waived LB Liam Anderson from injured reserve with a settlement.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Signed RB Michael Wiley to a contract.

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Waived WR Seth Williams from injured reserve with a settlement.

LOS ANGELES RAMS — Reverted TE Anthony Torres to injured reserve.

MIAMI DOLPHINS — Placed RB Alexander Mattison in injured reserve. Signed RB Mike Moone and Aaron Shampklin to contracts. Waived WR Monaray Baldwin.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Placed WR Rondale Moore on injured reserve. Waived LB Brian Asamoah II. Waived/injured C Zeke Correll.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Signed RB Shane Watts to a contract. Released RB Deneric Prince.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Placed G Will Clapp on injured reserve. Signed WR Roderick Daniels, TE Seth Green and DT Jayden Peevy to contracts. Waived WR Chris Tyree from injured reserve with a settlement. Waived/injured TE Mason Pline.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Waived RB Rushawn Baker from injured reserve with a settlement.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed DT Justin Rogers. Released LS Christian Johnstone.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Reverted DB Cameron McCutcheon to injured reserve.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Signed LB Alphonzo Tuputala to a contract. Waived DB Kam Alexander.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Signed CB JayVian Farr and RB Jase McClellan to contracts. Waived/injured QB Michael Pratt. Waived K Ryan Coe.

TENNESSEE TITANS — Signed LBs Khaleke Hudson and Blake Lynch to contracts. Waived/injured LB Anfernee Orji. Waived LB David Gbenda.

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Reverted DE Viliami Fehoko to injured reserve.

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

PORTLAND TIMBERS — Transferred MF Santiago Moreno to Fluminense FC (Brazil's Serie A) in exchange for an undisclosed fee.

TENNIS

Cincinnati Open

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

Francisco Comesana, Argentina, def. Reilly Opelka, United States, 6-7 (4), 6-4, 7-5.

Andrey Rublev (9), Russia, def. Alexei Popyrin (21), Australia, 6-7 (5), 7-6 (5), 7-5.

Luca Nardi, Italy, def. Jakub Mensik (16), Czechia, 6-2, 2-1, ret.

Carlos Alcaraz (2), Spain, def. Hamad Medjedovic, Serbia, 6-4, 6-4.

Karen Khachanov (14), Russia, def. Jenson Brooksby, United States, 6-3, 6-3.

Jiri Lehecka (22), Czechia, def. Adam Walton, Australia, 7-6 (5), 7-6 (3).

Women's Singles
Round of 32

Iga Swiatek (3), Poland, def. Marta Kostyuk (25), Ukraine, walkover.

Coco Gauff (2), United States, def. Dayana Yastremska (32), Ukraine, walkover.

Ella Seidel, Germany, def. McCartney Kessler (29), United States, 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (6).

Barbora Krejcikova, Czechia, def. Iva Jovic, United States, 6-4, 3-6, 6-2.

Jasmine Paolini (7), Italy, def. Ashlyn Krueger (26), United States, 7-6 (2), 6-1.

Varvara Gracheva, Russia, def. Karolina Muchova (11), Czechia, 6-2, 6-4.

Lucia Bronzetti, Italy, def. Jelena Ostapenko (23), Latvia, 1-6, 6-3, 6-4.

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA

Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	21	11	.656	—
New York	20	11	.645	½
Indiana	18	15	.545	3½
Washington	14	17	.452	6½
Chicago	8	23	.258	12½
Connecticut	5	25	.167	15½

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	27	5	.844	—
Phoenix	19	12	.613	7½
Las Vegas	18	14	.563	9
Seattle	16	16	.500	10½
Golden State	15	15	.500	11
Los Angeles	15	17	.469	12
Dallas	9	24	.273	18½

Tuesday's games

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

Wednesday's games

Chicago at Connecticut
Golden State at Washington
New York at Las Vegas
Atlanta at Seattle

Thursday's games

No games scheduled.

PRO SOCCER

MLS

Western Conference

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

Eastern Conference

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

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

Saturday, August 16

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

Sunday, August 17

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

NWSL

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

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

Friday, August 15

Louisville at Washington
Angel City at Utah Royals FC

Saturday, August 16

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

Sunday, August 17

Houston at Gotham FC

Monday, August 18

Chicago at Seattle

AP SPORTLIGHT

Aug. 14

1959 — The formation of the American Football League is announced in Chicago. Play will begin in 1960 with franchises in six cities with the probability of adding two more teams.

1977 — The Cosmos, led by Pele, play before a Meadowlands crowd of 77,961 in East Rutherford, N.J., the most to see a soccer game in the United States. The Cosmos beat the Fort Lauderdale Strikers 8-3 in an NASL quarterfinal playoff game.

2014 — Rob Manfred is elected baseball's 10th commissioner, winning a three-man race to succeed Bud Selig.

2016 — Usain Bolt becomes the first to capture three straight 100-meter titles at the Olympics. He finishes in 9.81 — 0.08 seconds ahead of Justin Gatlin.

2021 — Arizona's Tyler Gilbert becomes the fourth pitcher and first in 68 years to throw a no-hitter in his first big league start, leading the Diamondbacks over the San Diego Padres 7-0 with the record-tying eighth no-hitter of the season.



YOUNG KWAK/AP

Oklahoma quarterback John Mateer came under scrutiny when it was revealed he made two transactions on Venmo for "sports gambling" in 2022 when he was still at Washington State.

BRIEFLY

Venmo gambling titles 'inside jokes' says Oklahoma QB

Associated Press

Oklahoma quarterback John Mateer says he has never gambled, and the school says there is no NCAA investigation after a recent report showed Mateer twice paid someone on Venmo in 2022 for "sports gambling."

"The allegations that I once participated in sports gambling are false," Mateer said in a statement Tuesday on social media. "My previous Venmo descriptions did not accurately portray the transactions in question, but were instead inside jokes between me and my friends."

Mateer, who was at Washington State during the time in question, said he can understand why the Venmo descriptions could lead one to believe otherwise, so he decided to set the record straight.

In a statement, Oklahoma said it uses ProhiBet for comprehensive monitoring of sports gambling activities.

Mateer followed former Washington State offensive coordinator Ben Arbuckle to Oklahoma this past offseason. Mateer passed for 3,139 yards with 29 touchdowns and just seven interceptions and ran for 826 yards and 15 scores last season.

Ravens get swimming lessons from Phelps

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — The Baltimore Ravens got their chance to swim with Michael Phelps.

A couple of weeks after players shot video asking the 23-time Olympic champion — and Baltimore native — for swimming lessons, Phelps showed up at practice Tuesday. Then the team posted video of players swimming and diving — or at least leaping off diving boards — at nearby Loyola University.

In one video posted by a reporter for the team's website, Phelps let everyone else have a significant head start before diving in and racing them. At least some of them did beat him to the end.

Phelps also toured the smaller pools at the Ravens' facility, and he spoke to the team on the practice field along with former Ravens star Ray Lewis.

Dimitrov out of US Open with injured chest muscle

NEW YORK — Three-time Grand Slam semifinalist Grigor Dimitrov withdrew from the U.S. Open on Tuesday, a little more than a month after he tore a chest muscle and had to quit playing against Jannik Sinner at Wimbledon.

That exit from the All England Club on July 7 — Dimitrov had taken the opening two sets against Sinner but got hurt in the third — marked the fifth consecutive Grand Slam tournament where the 34-year-old Dimitrov failed to complete a match. It also happened at the Australian Open in January and the French Open in May, plus last year's Wimbledon and U.S. Open.

Dimitrov was a semifinalist at the U.S. Open in 2019, at the Australian Open in 2017, and at Wimbledon in 2014. His highest ranking was No. 3; he is currently No. 21.

With Dimitrov out of the field, Alejandro Tabilo gets a spot in the men's singles bracket, which starts play on Aug. 24.

MLB

ROUNDUP

Ramírez sets team multi-HR record

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — José Ramírez became Cleveland's leader in multi-home run games with a drive to right field in the eighth inning as the Guardians defeated the Miami Marlins 4-3 on Tuesday night.

Ramírez had three hits and Kyle Manzardo also went deep as Cleveland won for the sixth time in seven games.

Ramírez, who snapped an 0-for-12 skid with a solo shot in the first inning, lined a cutter from Calvin Faucher (3-3) just over the wall in right field with one out in the eighth to put the Guardians back on top.

It was the 27th multihomer game of Ramírez's 13-year majors career. It was also his second this season.

"It felt good. Obviously it's not easy to play the game and it's not an easy thing to do," he said through an interpreter. "But the important part is that we won and most importantly, I want to win. So that's the real feeling at the end."

Miami tied it with three runs in the fifth. Dane Myers had an RBI base hit to left-center and Otto Lopez scored on a throwing error by Cleveland left fielder Steven Kwan, which moved Myers to third. Heriberto Hernández then doubled down the left-field line to drive in Myers.



SUE OGROCKI/AP

Guardians third baseman Jose Ramírez celebrates his second home run of the game against the Miami Marlins in Cleveland on Tuesday.

Mets 13, Braves 5: Pete Alonso broke the New York franchise home run record, going deep twice and knocking in three runs as the host Mets beat Atlanta.

Alonso's first homer, a two-run shot off Spencer Strider (5-10) in the third inning, was his 253rd.

Brandon Nimmo hit a tiebreaking three-run homer in the fourth for New York, which snapped a seven-game skid with just its second win in 13 games.

Francisco Alvarez also homered twice and Brett Baty also went deep as the Mets moved within five games of the NL East-leading Phillies.

Angels 7, Dodgers 6 (10): Shohei Ohtani lined into a triple play in the sixth inning and hit a tiebreaking homer in the ninth, but the host Angels rallied for a victory over the Dodgers on Jo Adell's walk-off single in the 10th.

The defending World Series champion Dodgers fell into a first-place tie with the Padres atop the NL West after their third consecutive loss.

Ohtani put the Dodgers up 6-5 when he homered in his fourth consecutive game.

The Angels rallied in a drama-filled ninth. Luis Rengifo singled and scored on Schanuel's sacrifice fly before Ben Casparius (7-5) struck out Taylor Ward with the bases loaded.

Diamondbacks 3, Rangers 2: Ketel Marte's solo home run to deep left field with two out in the ninth inning gave host Arizona a win over Texas.

Marte's homer off Danny Coulombe (2-1) followed consecutive strikeouts of Jose Herrera and Geraldo Perdomo. Perdomo's was the fifth for the Diamondbacks among 11 strikeouts.

Jalen Beeks (3-1) pitched 1⅓ hitless innings followed in the ninth by rookie Juan Morillo.

Arizona, 6½ games out of the NL wild-card race, has won four of its last five games.

Mariners 1, Orioles 0: George Kirby pitched seven three-hit innings, and visiting Seattle beat Baltimore for its eighth victory in a row.

The Mariners pulled even with Houston in the AL West after the Astros lost to the Red Sox later that night. Josh Naylor's RBI single in the first inning was all the scoring Seattle needed.

Kirby (8-5) struck out seven without a walk. Eduard Bazardo and Gabe Speier worked the eighth, and Andrés Muñoz labored through the ninth for his 28th save in 34 chances.

Padres 5, Giants 1: Jose Iglesias hit a two-run homer in the second inning, Jackson Merrill connected in the eighth for insurance and visiting San Diego beat struggling San Francisco.

The Padres moved into a first-place tie with the Dodgers in the NL West race after they lost to the Angels in 10 innings.

Jake Cronenworth contributed an RBI single in the fourth and Jason Adam (8-3) worked out of a bases-loaded jam by getting the final two outs of the sixth for the win.

Reds 6, Phillies 1: Brady Singer pitched six shutout innings, Spencer Steer drove in three runs and host Cincinnati beat NL East-leading Philadelphia, halting the Phillies' four-game win streak.

Singer (10-9) faced the minimum of 17 batters over the first 5⅔ innings with the only hit allowed being a single by Nick Castellanos, whose grounder deflected off the glove of shortstop Elly De La Cruz. Castellanos was later erased on a double play.

Bryce Harper spoiled the Reds' shutout bid with a two-out homer, his 18th, off Sam Moll during a downpour in the ninth inning.

Blue Jays 5, Cubs 1: Ernie Clement and Daulton Varsho homered, and host Toronto became the first AL team to reach 70 wins by beating Chicago.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. had three hits as the AL East-leading Blue Jays (70-50) improved to 23-11 against NL opponents.

The Cubs have dropped five of seven.

Royals 8, Nationals 5: Vinnie Pasquantino doubled, homered and drove in five runs as host Kansas City topped Washington to reach the .500 mark for the second time since mid-June.

Pasquantino hit Mitchell Parker's first-pitch fastball into the second row of the right field stands, a few feet inside the foul pole, expanding the Royals' lead to 4-0.

Pasquantino opened the scoring with a first-inning sacrifice fly and capped Kansas City's scoring with an RBI double in the seventh.

Brewers 14, Pirates 0: Sal Frelick and Brice Turang homered off Paul Skenes, and host Milwaukee beat Pittsburgh for their 11th consecutive victory.

Christian Yelich, Andrew Vaughn and Caleb Durbin also went deep as the major league-leading Brewers improved to 27-5 in their last 32 games.

Coupled with the Cubs' loss in Toronto, Milwaukee increased its NL Central lead to 7½ games.

Red Sox 14, Astros 1: Alex Bregman homered against his former team for a second straight game and Carlos Narváez added a three-run shot to lead visiting Boston over Houston.

Dustin May (7-8) scattered five singles across six scoreless and struck out eight in his second start since a trade from the Dodgers.

The loss dropped the Astros into a tie with Seattle for the AL West lead after the Mariners beat the Orioles 1-0 for their eighth consecutive win earlier in the day.

Athletics 6, Rays 0: Jacob Lopez struck out nine in seven shutout innings and Colby Thomas and Lawrence Butler each drove in a pair of runs as the host Athletics beat Tampa Bay.

Lopez (5-6) allowed four hits and did not walk a batter. The left-hander retired 11 of the final 12 batters he faced.

Thomas had an RBI double in the second inning and knocked in another run with a sacrifice fly in the fourth. Also in the fourth, Butler hit an RBI double and added an RBI single in the eighth.

White Sox 9, Tigers 6: Yoendrys Gómez struck out seven in five innings, Edgar Quero had three hits and three RBIs, and host Chicago scored five runs in the fifth inning in a win over Detroit.

The White Sox tied the game in the fifth inning on an infield single from Curtis Mead that drove in Kyle Teel. Colson Montgomery also had a two-run single in the inning. Brant Hurter took over in relief of Flaherty (6-12) and walked in another run.

Chicago loaded the bases again in the sixth inning, and Codi Heuer walked Andrew Benintendi to score a run and make it 6-1.

Yankees 9, Twins 1: Aaron Judge hit his first home run in nearly three weeks, Giancarlo Stanton had his first four-hit game in nearly two years and Carlos Rodón allowed one hit in seven innings as host New York routed Minnesota.

The Yankees won their third series since the All-Star break and won the first two games of a series for the first time since sweeping the Mariners from July 8-10.

Rockies 3, Cardinals 0: Kyle Freeland gave up five hits in a season-high 7⅓ innings, Hunter Goodman hit a home run and visiting Colorado beat St. Louis to snap an eight-game losing streak.

Victor Vodnik pitched the final 1⅔ innings to earn his third save and clinch the Rockies' second shutout of the season.

Scoreboard

American League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	70	50	.583	—
Boston	66	55	.545	4½
New York	64	56	.533	6
Tampa Bay	58	63	.479	12½
Baltimore	53	66	.445	16½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	69	52	.570	—
Cleveland	62	56	.525	5½
Kansas City	60	60	.500	8½
Minnesota	56	63	.471	12
Chicago	44	76	.367	24½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	67	53	.558	—
Seattle	67	53	.558	—
Texas	61	60	.504	6½
Los Angeles	58	62	.483	9
Athletics	54	68	.443	14

National League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	69	50	.580	—
New York	64	55	.538	5
Miami	57	62	.479	12
Atlanta	51	68	.429	18
Washington	47	72	.395	22

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	75	44	.630	—
Chicago	67	51	.568	7½
Cincinnati	63	58	.521	13
St. Louis	61	60	.504	15
Pittsburgh	51	70	.421	25

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	68	52	.567	—
San Diego	68	52	.567	—
San Francisco	59	61	.492	9
Arizona	58	62	.483	10
Colorado	31	88	.261	36½

Tuesday's games

Cleveland 4, Miami 3
N.Y. Mets 13, Atlanta 5
L.A. Angels 7, L.A. Dodgers 6, 10 innings
Arizona 3, Texas 2
Seattle 1, Baltimore 0
San Diego 5, San Francisco 1
Cincinnati 6, Philadelphia 1
Toronto 5, Chicago Cubs 1
Kansas City 8, Washington 5
Milwaukee 14, Pittsburgh 0
Boston 14, Houston 1
Athletics 6, Tampa Bay 0
Chicago White Sox 9, Detroit 6
N.Y. Yankees 9, Minnesota 1
Colorado 3, St. Louis 0

Wednesday's games

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

Thursday's games

Seattle (Evans 6-4) at Baltimore (Sugano 9-5)
Chicago Cubs (Boyd 11-5) at Toronto (Scherzer 2-2)
Miami (Cabrera 6-5) at Cleveland (Bibee 8-9)
Philadelphia (Luzardo 11-5) at Washington (Lord 3-6)
Atlanta (Elder 4-9) at N.Y. Mets (Senga 7-4)
Detroit (Skubal 11-3) at Minnesota (Ober 4-7)
Arizona (Rodriguez 4-7) at Colorado (Blalock 1-3)

Friday's games

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

MLB/NFL

Alonso breaks Mets home run record

By Jerry Beach
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The moment Pete Alonso couldn't have imagined as a baseball-loving kid growing up in Florida arrived Tuesday night.

Alonso broke the Mets' franchise home run record, going deep twice and knocking in three runs as New York beat the Atlanta Braves 13-5 on Tuesday night.

Alonso's first homer, a two-run shot just beyond the right-center-field fence off Spencer Strider (5-10) in the third inning, was his 253rd. He moved past Darryl Strawberry, who had held the team mark since 1988.

"As a kid, you don't really think that it's in the realm of the possibility to be a franchise home run leader," Alonso said after the Mets moved withing five games of NL East-leading Philadelphia. "You just want to get to the big leagues and give it your best. And the dream is really kind of this opaque and unknown thing. You just want to get there and compete, play for a World Series, play winning baseball.

"I mean, it's a wild dream, to be honest, and it's really special."

Following the homer, New York displayed a graphic on the scoreboard with the number 253, alongside pictures of Alonso and polar bears in honor of the slugger's nickname.

Alonso embraced Brandon Nimmo, who scored ahead of him, and another longtime teammate, on-deck hitter Jeff McNeil, before tipping his cap and blowing kisses to a near-sellout crowd that included Mets owner Steve Cohen.

"I've seen enough now where I was like, 'Man, I think that's a home run,'" Nimmo said. "Just absolutely looked like it was shot out of a cannon and has a different sound to it."



Frank Franklin II/AP

The Mets' Pete Alonso follows through on a two-run home run during the third inning against the Atlanta Braves on Tuesday in New York. It was Alonso's 253rd career home run, which broke the franchise record.

Led by manager Carlos Mendoza, players poured out of the dugout to exchange embraces with Alonso as the crowd chanted his name. Alonso emerged for another curtain call during McNeil's at-bat.

"I had tears in my eyes," Mendoza said after New York snapped a seven-game losing streak and won for just the second time in 13 games.

"For how much we've been through the past two months, to just live that moment, I think we've just got to take a step back there and appreciate what you're experiencing."

Following the inning, the Mets played the theme from "The Natural" and Alonso again tipped his cap as the camera lingered on Strawberry's No. 18 hanging above foul territory in left field at Citi Field.

"To be able to do that in front of this crowd, it's really special," Alonso said.

New York posted a congratulatory message from Strawberry on its social media channels.

"You have worked hard, you have stood up in the pressure of New York City and you have played well," Strawberry said. "It's well-deserved. You are a homegrown player. Again, congratulations and continue to have great success. All the best, buddy."

Alonso went deep again in the sixth, connecting for a solo shot off Austin Cox.

It was his franchise-record 25th multi-homer game, three more than Strawberry.

Alonso has six homers in 10 games this month — one more than he hit in 43 games from June 10 through July 30. He tied Strawberry's record by going deep against the Milwaukee Brewers on Saturday and set the record in his 965th regular-season game, 144 fewer than Strawberry.

With the record-breaker out of the way, the focus now turns to how long Alonso will remain with the Mets to add to his total.

A homegrown star, Alonso broke into the big leagues with a bang in 2019, hitting 53 home runs to set a major league rookie record and establish a franchise high for a single season.

He has played in 372 straight games, another franchise record.

"To have a player like that — you drafted, you developed and here he is, still performing day in and day out, you can't just take that for granted," Mendoza said.

After a protracted negotiation, he returned to New York as a free agent in February on a $54 million, two-year contract that includes a $24 million player option for 2026, which Alonso will likely decline.

"I have a goal to play baseball until I'm through my age-40 season," Alonso said.

"And business side, Steve and David (Stearns), they've got to come through," Alonso added with a grin, referring to the Mets' president of baseball operations.

Asked how many homers he thinks he could hit for the Mets, Alonso smiled again.

"There's only one way to find out," he said.

Bills RB Cook ends contract standoff with 4-year, $48M deal

By John Wawrow
Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Buffalo running back James Cook has ended his contract standoff by signing a four-year deal, Bills general manager Brandon Beane said Wednesday.

Cook's deal will pay him $48 million over the four years, two people with knowledge of the agreement confirmed to The Associated Press.

The contract includes $30 million in guaranteed money, one of the people said. They spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because financial details of the contract have not been announced.

The Athletic first reported the agreement.

The new deal comes a day after the fourth-year player ended his weeklong standoff by returning to practice. Cook skipped four straight sessions and although he took part in warmups, he declined to play in Buffalo's preseason-opener against the New York Giants on Saturday.

"I think there was good faith on both parts," Beane said, noting an emphasis was placed on getting a deal done once Cook returned to practice Tuesday.

Cook was the NFL's co-leader with 16 touchdowns rushing last season.

Cook was selected by the Bills in the second round of the 2022 draft out of Georgia. His older brother is Dalvin Cook, best known for his six seasons in Minnesota and who appeared in two games with Dallas last season.

Cook's 18 touchdowns, including two receiving, doubled his combined production in his first two seasons (four TDs rushing, five receiving). And he was part of an offense that finished second in the league in averaging more than 30 points per outing.



Jeffrey T. Barnes/AP

Buffalo Bills running back James Cook observes a play during a preseason game against the Giants on Saturday in Orchard Park, N.Y.

Until Wednesday, Cook proved to be the odd man out in general manager Brandon Beane's offseason binge of signing core players to multiyear contract extensions. The group was made up of quarterback Josh Allen, receiver Khalil Shakir, edge rusher Greg Rousseau, linebacker Terrel Bernard and cornerback Christian Benford.

In June, Cook said he didn't begrudge his teammates for getting extensions.

"I love those guys. Whatever they got paid, they got paid. That's not my problem," Cook said. "In the meantime, I'm here to work and be where my feet are at."

After practicing fully during Buffalo's first eight sessions of training camp this year, Cook began his "hold-in" on Aug. 3 by watching practice wearing a white sweatsuit along the sideline.

Cook also declined to participate in the Bills' voluntary spring sessions before reporting and practicing in the team's three-day mandatory minicamp in June.

He said the reason behind his decision to report was not wanting to risk getting fined.

"I like my money," Cook said. "That's why I'm here."

US OPEN/COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Venus Williams receives wild-card singles invite, will be oldest since 1981

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Venus Williams will make her return to Grand Slam tennis at the U.S. Open after a two-year absence, receiving a wild-card invitation on Wednesday to compete in singles at Flushing Meadows at age 45.

The American will be the oldest entrant in singles at the tournament since Renee Richards was 47 in 1981, according to the International Tennis Federation.

Williams had already been given a wild-card entry by the U.S. Tennis Association for next week's mixed doubles competition. Singles matches begin in New York on Aug. 24.

She is the owner of seven major singles championships — including at the U.S. Open in 2000 and 2001 — along with another 14 in women's doubles, all won with her younger sister, Serena, plus two in mixed doubles. Serena retired with 23 Slam singles trophies after playing at the 2022 U.S. Open.

The older Williams last participated in a Grand Slam tournament at the 2023 U.S. Open, losing in the first round. She hasn't won a singles match there since 2019.

When Williams came back to the tour last month at the DC Open for her first match anywhere in 16 months, a reporter asked whether that would be a one-time thing or if there were plans for other tournaments.

"I'm just here for now, and who knows?" she replied then. "Maybe there's more. ... But at the moment, I'm focused just on this. I haven't played in a year. There is no doubt I can play tennis, but obviously coming back to play matches, it takes time to get in the swing of things. I definitely feel I'll play well. I'm still the same player. I'm a big hitter. I hit big. This is my brand."

Last year, Williams had surgery to remove uterine fibroids and missed most of the season. In Washington this July, she competed for the first time since March 2024 at the Miami Open and became the oldest woman to win a tour-level singles match since Martina Navratilova was 47 at Wimbledon in 2004. Williams also won a doubles match at the DC Open.

In the process, Williams drew a ton of attention for her tennis, yes, but also for letting the world know she's engaged to an Italian actor and for her half-joking comments about needing to get back on court to get covered by health insurance.

"I love Venus. We're friends. I didn't really know this was something she was still wanting to do. But I also didn't know it was something she didn't want to do," said Mark Ein, the chairman of the hard-court tournament in Washington. "I was surprised. And it was a wonderful surprise."

Williams also entered the Cincinnati Open via a wild card last week, exiting in the first round of singles.

In New York, she will play in the Aug. 19-20 mixed doubles tournament with Reilly Opelka, a 27-year-old American who was formerly ranked in the top 20.

Other women getting singles wild cards for the U.S. Open are Americans Clervie Ngounoue, Julieta Pareja, Caty McNally, Valerie Glozman and Alyssa Ahn, plus France's Caroline Garcia — who'll be playing in her last Grand Slam tournament before retirement — and Australia's Talia Gibson.

Men's wild cards went to Americans Brandon Holt, Nishesh Basavareddy, Tristan Boyer, Emilio Nava, Stefan Dostanic and Darwin Blanch, France's Valentin Royer and Australia's Tristan Schoolkate.



NICK WASS/AP

Venus Williams celebrates her win over Peyton Stearns during a match at the Citi Open tournament July 22 in Washington, D.C.



MIKE STEWART/AP

Georgia's CJ Allen, left, and Raylen Wilson run drills during practice July 31 in Athens.

Georgia begins rebuilding defense with new blood

BY CHARLES ODUM
Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. — Glenn Schumann says comparisons are not fair to Georgia teams of the past or present.

Even so, the defensive coordinator isn't ducking the fact that the 2024 defense didn't meet the Georgia standard even while the Bulldogs won their third Southeastern Conference championship in the Kirby Smart era.

Georgia's path to 11 wins, the SEC championship game victory over Texas and a spot in the College Football Playoff was filled with harrowing results by the defense.

The defense produced three NFL first-round draft picks — Mykel Williams, Jalon Walker and Malaki Starks — despite giving up 41 points in a loss to Alabama and closing the regular season with a 44-42 win over Georgia Tech in eight overtimes.

It's no coincidence that the Bulldogs' back-to-back national championships in 2021 and 2022 were built on defense under Smart, a former defensive coach.

Georgia led the SEC in points and yards allowed in three consecutive seasons, beginning with the 2021 team that led the nation with 10.20 points allowed per game.

The proud tradition of strong defenses slipped in 2024 when the Bulldogs fell to eighth in the league with 20.57 points and 329 yards allowed per game.

"You start rationalizing stats, then you're just making excuses for a performance that wasn't up to our standard," Schumann said last week. "The number one thing we need to do better in run defense is tackle better. In fact, we did not tackle to our standard last year."

Georgia, No. 5 in The Associated Press preseason Top 25 poll released Monday, carries high expectations, including on defense.

The belief the 2025 defense can return to its lead role may be at least partly based on the championship standard of units led by such players as Travon Walker, Jordan Davis, Eric Stokes, Jalen Carter and Nolan Smith.

"Speaking of a defense, I think it really comes down to the little things," said linebacker CJ Allen, expected to be a leader of the unit. "Our whole theme and this message this whole offseason for the whole team has been fire, passion, energy. Playing with fire, passion, energy, being able to affect each other means a lot. Just coming out doing the little things."

Freshman defensive lineman Elijah Griffin, one of the top signees, has an opportunity to make an immediate impact.

"EG's doing great," Schumann said. "You always want to temper expectations on young players, but he has a maturity to him, a work ethic to him. He's obviously a big guy with a lot of athleticism. So we hope that Elijah's able to help us this year. ... He's had a good start to camp."

Linebacker Raylen Wilson and safety KJ Bolden are other leaders of the defense. Smart said he is watching the defensive line, led by junior tackle Christen Miller, as a key to the emphasis on stopping the run.

"We need him to be a playmaker," Smart said of Miller. "We need him to be disruptive. We talk about habit, we talk about quickness, speed, experience. He's our most experienced player. He has taken on this role of knowing the burden lies with him to set a standard for that group."

Smart said the goal of stopping the run "starts with that group. I mean, it's everybody, but it really starts with the defensive line, and what kind of mentality that room has. And so far, he has approached that the right way."

NFL

Jets' Fields: Focus on faith has helped shake off criticism

By Dennis Waszak Jr.
Associated Press

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — Justin Fields heard all the criticisms — and occasional kudos — that came his way from fans and media during his first four NFL seasons.

The New York Jets quarterback would let it affect him, too. It would even shape his own opinions about his play and abilities.

No more.

"I just let people be and let them speak," Fields said after a joint practice with the Giants on Tuesday. "That's not going to affect me whatsoever."

But it used to, he acknowledged.

"I would say I just kind of got like this the past six months, to be honest with you," Fields said.

It was a somewhat surprising revelation from Fields, given the ups and downs he has had during his NFL journey since being the 11th overall pick by Chicago out of Ohio State in 2021. He went from the hopeful franchise quarterback of the Bears to out the door after only three seasons, traded to Pittsburgh last year.

He started for an injured Russell Wilson and went 4-2 in six games for the Steelers before seeing the bench again in favor of the veteran — who's also now in New York, but with the Giants. During this past offseason, Fields signed a two-year, $40 million deal with the Jets — who immediately labeled him their new starter.

> **"I just let people be and let them speak. ... That's not going to affect me whatsoever."**
>
> **Justin Fields**
> New York Jets quarterback

Coach Aaron Glenn has regularly praised Fields' confidence and maturity, calling him "a mature man" Tuesday and adding that "the outside noise does not bother him."

That, however, has been a process.

"A lot's gone into that, to be honest," Fields said. "I would say experiences, for sure. But also, I think my relationship with God. I don't play for anybody's approval. You guys are all going to have your opinion and I'm never going to take any of it personal. Like I said, it doesn't matter. Y'all can have an opinion, y'all could say this and that, but at the end of the day, our lives aren't going to change.



MATT LUDTKE/AP

New York Jets quarterback Justin Fields (7) is congratulated after running for a touchdown during the first half of a preseason game against the Packers on Saturday in Green Bay, Wis.

"If I say something to y'all right now, the same thing's going to happen. It doesn't really affect life, it doesn't affect the way we live. So if you look at it from that perspective, the bigger perspective, no matter what anybody says, it doesn't matter at the end of the day. It has zero meaning to me, to anybody, and God controls everything that happens in this world."

While the 26-year-old Fields didn't detail the events that triggered his religious re-awakening, he acknowledged that the Bible has been even more impactful than any playbook.

"Yeah, I mean, me really getting closer to God, like I said, my relationship, me reading the Bible every day," he said. "And if I'm being real, there are some great lines and great wisdom that I didn't even know of. So I'm low-key addicted to getting in my Bible each and every day just because I learn something new every day and I'm able to apply it in my everyday life.

"But, I mean, I was sleeping on reading the Bible earlier in my life and I wish I would have started earlier. So I encourage y'all to, you know, go read a little bit. Start in Proverbs and move on from there."

When asked if he believes that will ultimately help him be successful, Fields didn't hesitate.

"I know it will," he said. "I know it will, for sure."

Youth: Carroll's plan to use more rookies has paid off for him before

FROM PAGE 24

Carroll used this plan with USC and the Seahawks.

He took over a Trojans program coming off a 5-7 season and by the second year had USC back on track. The Trojans went from 6-6 in Carroll's first season in 2001 to a run of seven consecutive years of at least 11 victories, winning a pair of national titles.

Seattle had won nine games over two seasons when Carroll was hired in 2010. He needed three years to get moving in the right direction, but then the Seahawks won double-digit games eight of nine seasons with two Super Bowl appearances and one championship.

He faces a similarly heavy build in Las Vegas. The Raiders are not only coming off a 4-13 season, they haven't won a playoff game since appearing in the Super Bowl in the 2002 season.

"We're moving in a good direction now," Carroll said. "I can feel it. This is how it's supposed to feel, according to what I've experienced. I couldn't tell you what's going to happen, but I do know they're going to be together, and I do know they're going to play for one another."



LINDSEY WASSON/AP

Las Vegas Raiders wide receiver Dont'e Thornton Jr. tries to grab the ball as Seahawks cornerback Josh Jobe looks on during the first half of a preseason game Thursday in Seattle.

Most of the youth movement was expected on offense. Brock Bowers put together perhaps the greatest season for a rookie tight end, and linemen Jackson Powers-Johnson and DJ Glaze started as first-year players. Plus, Jeanty as the sixth overall draft pick arrived in Las Vegas this year knowing he would be a major focus of the offense.

"We want to run the ball, so I'm going to try my best to make this offense run," Jeanty said. "We've got great receivers, great tight ends, a great quarterback, and it'll start with the run game."

Not as expected were the emergence of Thornton, Porter and defensive tackle Jonah Laulu. All three are listed on the first team.

Laulu has the burden of stepping in at the spot expected to be filled by Christian Wilkins before the Raiders released him over a dispute about his recovery plan for a broken foot. Thornton wasn't even the first receiver Las Vegas drafted this year — Jack Bech, who is running second team, went in the second round. Porter took advantage of a cornerbacks room with more questions than answers and hasn't let go of the spot.

"It was a bit intimidating at first," Porter said, "but now I embrace it every single day."

Personnel updates

Powers-Johnson returned to practice Tuesday after sitting out Sunday with a rib injury. Defensive tackle Adam Butler also was back after going home to tend to a family matter.

Guard Alex Cappa remained out with a rib injury.

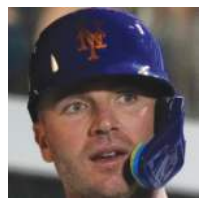
Possible fines

There hasn't been an announcement on whether Smith and defensive end Maxx Crosby will be fined for making obscene gestures to Seattle fans before Thursday's game. One fan held a sign that read: "Bigger Bust — Geno Or Ja-Marcus Russell?"

Carroll defended his quarterback's actions.

"Did you see what the sign said?" Carroll asked a reporter. "Next question."

SPORTS



Making his mark

Alonso hits 253rd home run to break Mets franchise record ›› MLB, Page 21

NFL

Youth movement underway

Veteran coach Carroll hoping younger players will get Raiders on right path

By Mark Anderson
Associated Press

HENDERSON, Nev. — Pete Carroll has made it clear since his introductory news conference in January that he intends to win now, and he and the Las Vegas Raiders have taken steps to be more competitive, such as trading for veteran quarterback Geno Smith.

But Carroll has also been forthright that rookies will get the opportunity to play, pointing to his own history with first-year players at Southern California and with the Seahawks.

And, so far, Carroll has been a man of his word, with rookies and other young players getting the chance to make a big impact both in training camp and in Thursday's preseason opener at Seattle.

The latest depth chart released Tuesday underscored that commitment.

Seven rookies are on the two-deep, including running back Ashton Jeanty, wide receiver Dont'e Thornton and cornerback Darien Porter on the first team. All three were drafted this year in the first four rounds. Eight second-year players — four on each the first and second team — also populate the depth chart.

"I'm not hesitant to play young guys," Carroll said. "We've almost forced them into it and forced to feed them until they show us who they are, what they're all about and how much they can handle. It isn't all on them. It's on us to make sure that we ask them to do things that they're capable of doing at this time."

SEE YOUTH ON PAGE 23





PHOTOS BY LINDSEY WASSON/AP

Left: Las Vegas Raiders head coach Pete Carroll low-fives running back Zamir White and guard Dylan Parham before a preseason game against the Seahawks on Thursday in Seattle. Right: There will be plenty of eyes on Las Vegas Raiders running back Ashton Jeanty after he was selected sixth overall in this year's NFL draft.

Venus Williams receives singles invitation ›› US Open, Page 22

027664 463149