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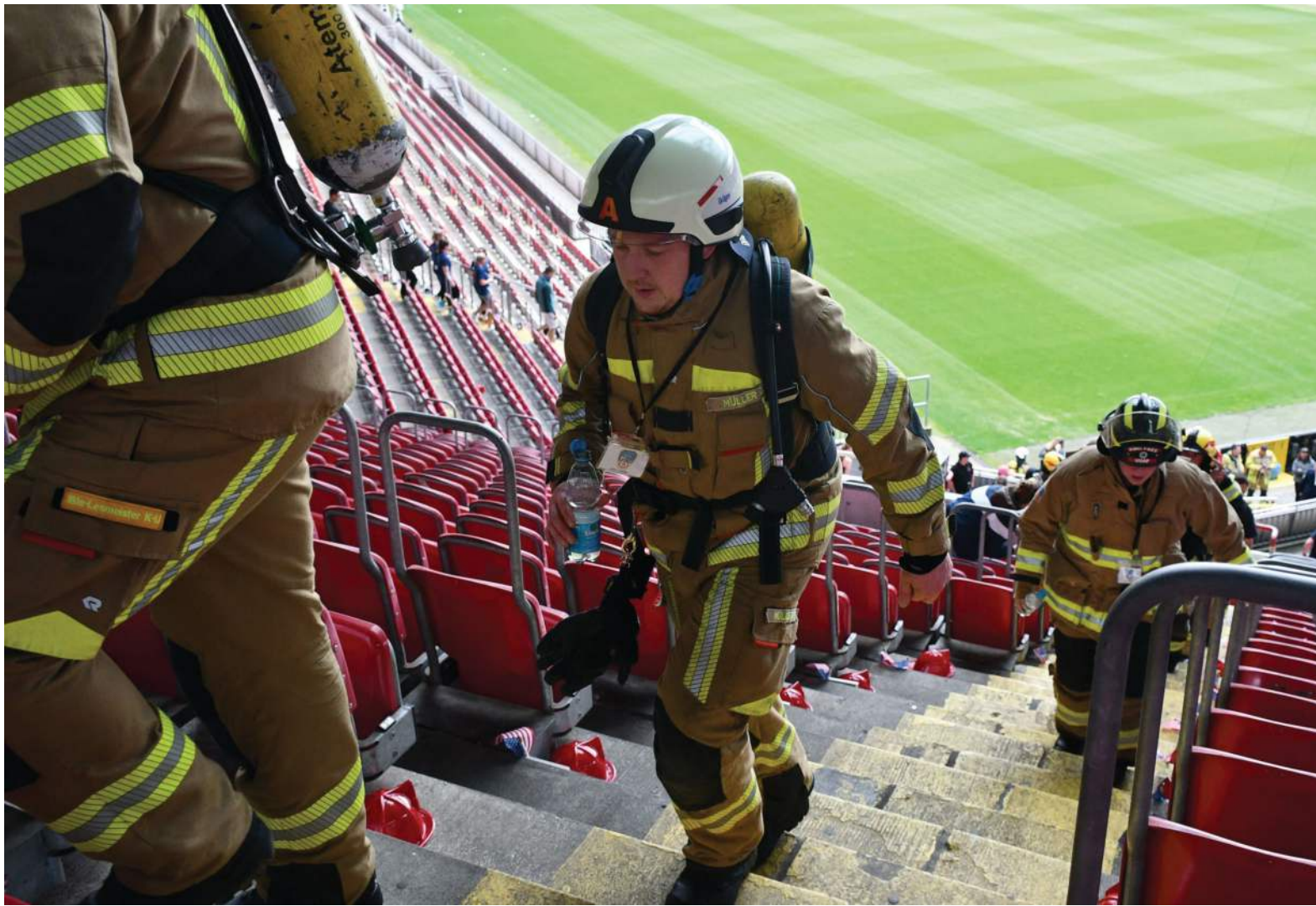
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LARA KORTE/Stars and Stripes

Firefighters climb the steps of Fritz Walter Stadium in Kaiserslautern, Germany, on Thursday in honor of the first responders who died in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Germans and Americans climbed 2,071 steps representing the 110 floors of the twin towers of the World Trade Center.

Walking in their footsteps

US military community, Germans honor 9/11 first responders with stadium stair climb

By LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Anger over the 9/11 attacks is what prompted Capt. Imran Chatriwala to join the Air Force more than two decades ago, a career he hadn't intended to pursue.

Now a detachment commander in the Office of Special Investigations at Ramstein Air Base, Chatriwala joined nearly 300 Americans and Germans at the land-

mark Fritz Walter Stadium on Thursday to mark the anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001, with a memorial stair climb.

"For a lot of us, I think it's still a point in our history that kind of shaped who we are as Americans," said Chatriwala, who at the time was a 21-year-old enrolled at the University of Texas at Austin.

As he was coming out of volleyball class, students gathered around TVs in a little cafe and

watched the fiery impact of the second airplane to hit the World Trade Center in New York.

What he saw put him on a trajectory that would lead him to his present assignment in Kaiserslautern, home to the largest overseas U.S. military community.

Thursday's 9/11 Stair Climb at the 50,000-seat home of the FC Kaiserslautern soccer team was the third such event, and it drew the largest turnout yet, organizers said.

Participants included Ramstein airmen, civilians and members of the Kisling NCO academy at Kapfaun Air Station, as well as German firefighters and police officers.

The afternoon began with renditions of the German and American national anthems before participants took to the stadium to climb the 2,071 steps representing

SEE CLIMB ON PAGE 5

Authorities search for sniper who killed Kirk

By ERIC TUCKER,
ALANNA DURKIN RICHER
AND JESSE BEDAYN
Associated Press

OREM, Utah — The sniper who assassinated Charlie Kirk is believed to have jumped off a roof and fled into a neighborhood after firing one shot and has not been identified, authorities said Thursday in disclosing they have recovered a high-powered, bolt-action rifle they believe was used in the attack and are reviewing video footage of the person they believe was responsible.

The shooter appeared to be of college age and blended in on the university campus where Kirk was killed Wednesday, said Beau Mason, the commissioner of the Utah Department of Public Safety. It remained unclear how far the shooter has traveled, though law enforcement officials say nearby woods where the rifle was found have been secured.

Kirk's casket is to be flown from Utah to Arizona aboard Air Force Two on Thursday.

Even as law enforcement offi-

SEE SNIPER ON PAGE 9



TESS CROWLEY, THE DESERET NEWS/AP

Charlie Kirk speaks before he is shot at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah, on Wednesday.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES								
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Germany	\$3.622	\$4.195	\$4.551	\$4.196				
Change in price	+1.5 cents	+2.1 cents	+2.1 cents	+3.2 cents				
Netherlands	..	\$4.989	\$5.578	\$5.285				
Change in price	..	+8.5 cents	+9.1 cents	+9.0 cents				
U.K.	..	\$4.207	\$4.563	\$4.208				
Change in price	..	+2.1 cents	+2.1 cents	+3.2 cents				
					Azores	..	..	\$4.409
					Change in price	..	..	+2.1 cents
					Turkey	..	..	\$4.201
					Change in price	..	..	+2.1 cents
					Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective Sept. 13. The change in price is from Sept. 5.			

PACIFIC GAS PRICES								
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Japan	..	\$4.179	..	\$3.819	South Korea	\$3.279	..	\$4.209
Change in price		+2.0 cents	..	+3.0 cents	Change in price	+1.0 cents	..	+2.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.299	..	..	\$3.819	Guam	\$3.309	\$3.879	\$4.239
Change in price	no change	..	..	+3.0 cents	Change in price	+2.0 cents	+2.0 cents	+2.0 cents
					*DieselEFD **Midgrade			
					Pacific prices for the week of Sept. 13-19			

EXCHANGE RATES				
Military rates			Switzerland (Franc)	0.7963
Euro costs (Sept. 12)	0.83		Thailand (Baht)	31.73
British pound (Sept. 12)	\$1.32		Turkey (NewLira)	41.2893
Japanese yen (Sept. 12)	144.00		(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.)	
South Korean won (Sept. 12)	1351.00		INTEREST RATES	
Commercial rates			Prime rate	7.50
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3745		Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50
Britain (Pound)	0.7379		Federal funds market rate	4.38
Canada (Dollar)	1.3848		3-month bill	4.03
China (Yuan)	7.1207		30-year bond	4.75
Denmark (Krone)	6.3589			
Egypt (Pound)	48.1725			
Euro	0.8519			
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7897			
Hungary (Forint)	333.46			
Israel (Shekel)	3.3235			
Japan (Yen)	147.36			
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3048			
Norway (Krone)	9.8933			
Philippines (Peso)	57.07			
Poland (Zloty)	3.62			
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7473			
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2818			
South Korea (Won)	1389.57			

WEATHER OUTLOOK



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MILITARY



AP photos

Police and military police secure parts of a damaged UAV shot down Wednesday by Polish authorities at a site in Wohyn, Poland.

NATO leaders express alarm over Russian drone incursion in Poland

By CLAUDIA CIOBANU
Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Poland’s prime minister pledged Thursday to push ahead with a “great modernization program” for his country’s military and Finland’s president warned of further unease over security in Europe, a day after Russian drones struck on Polish soil and alarmed NATO leaders about what the Kremlin’s future territorial ambitions might be.

The incursion Wednesday, which came during unrelenting Russian strikes on neighboring Ukraine, deepened long-standing fears that the three-year war between Poland’s neighbors could precipitate a wider conflict. U.S.-led efforts to steer Moscow and Kyiv toward a peace settlement have so far failed to get traction.

European officials described the incursion as a deliberate provocation, forcing the NATO alliance to confront a potential threat in its airspace for the first time and compelling it to take stock of its military response.

NATO’s supreme commander in Europe, U.S. Gen. Alexus Gryn-kewich, said Thursday that the alliance wasn’t certain about the number of drones that entered Polish territory, nor whether they were fired intentionally.

“But we will learn lessons. We will learn of things that we need to enhance our posture, to handle these limited incursions,” Gryn-kewich said in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Several European leaders said they believed the incursion amounted to an intentional expansion of Russia’s assault against Ukraine.

The foreign ministers of Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania published a joint statement calling the incursion “a deliberate and coordinated strike constituting an unprecedented provocation and escalation of tension.”



A destroyed roof of a house, after Russian drones violated Polish airspace, in Wryki near Lublin, Poland, Wednesday.

President of Finland Aleksander Stubb, who met Thursday with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, said now “the line between war and peace has been blurred” and that Wednesday’s events were another milestone following Russia’s illegal seizure of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014.

The Kremlin said it had nothing to add to a Wednesday statement by Russia’s Defense Ministry, which insisted that Russian forces had not targeted Poland and that it was open to discuss the incident with Polish officials.

The U.N. Security Council scheduled an emergency meeting on the drone incursion on Friday afternoon at Poland’s request.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk addressed Polish troops at an air base in the central city of Lask on Thursday, praising the quick response from the troops and NATO allied forces from the Netherlands.

But the response also brought questions about the wisdom of using advanced fighter jets to shoot down relatively cheap drones. Poland expects to receive its first F-35 fighter jets from the United States next year, Tusk said. It will be the

first delivery of some of the 32 aircraft expected by 2030 as part of a support package finalized five years ago, he said.

Polish President Karol Nawrocki, visiting a base in Poznan-Krzesiny on Thursday, struck a defiant tone in a statement that said Poland “doesn’t get scared by Russian drones.”

The Polish Air Navigation Agency announced that Poland was introducing air traffic restrictions in the eastern part of the country. It said the step was taken at the request of the Polish army for national security reasons.

Poland said some of the drones that entered its airspace Wednesday came from Belarus, where Russian and local troops have begun gathering for war games scheduled to start Friday. Poland is closing its border with Belarus at midnight Thursday, a planned move also associated with the military exercises.

The European Council on Foreign Relations, a think tank, concluded that Putin is testing Europe’s resolve against the threat from Moscow while the United States demands it shoulder more of the financial burden.

House passes defense bill with troop pay raise

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The House approved an annual defense policy bill on Wednesday that authorizes a 3.8% pay raise for troops, bolsters support for European partners and restricts gender-affirming medical treatment.

Many Democrats refused to vote for the legislation due to several Republican amendments that target transgender individuals and forbid the Defense Department from funding certain health care for them. The vote was 231-196.

“None of these amendments are remotely necessary,” said Rep. Adam Smith of Washington, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee. “They are an effort to take advantage of a culture-war partisan issue to drive a wedge into this bill. It doesn’t belong here.”

The provisions include a ban on Tricare, the military’s health care program, from providing gender-related medical treatment and on the Exceptional Family Medical Program from approving gender transition procedures.

Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C., won approval for amendments that prohibit males at military service academies from participating in female athletics and that require individuals on military installations to access single-sex spaces that correspond with their sex.

The Senate is voting on its own version of the legislation, and both chambers will need to negotiate and vote on a final version before the bill can be sent to President Donald Trump’s desk.

Divisive social issue provisions are typically stripped from the final bill.

The legislation’s primary focus is on reforming the Pentagon’s slow and costly weapons acquisitions process — reducing decision timelines for requirements from three years to as few as three months.

It also builds on the quality-of-life improvements for military members initiated under last year’s defense policy bill.

Service members would see a 3.8% pay raise under the bill, as requested by the Trump administration.

The family separation allowance, which helps offset expenses incurred when a service member is separated from their family for more than 30 days, would go up

from \$250 to \$400 per month.

Eligibility calculations for the basic needs allowance would exclude the basic housing allowance from a service member’s household income to allow more troops to qualify for the benefit.

“These and several other provisions in the bill will certainly positively impact service members’ pocketbooks and their ability to put food on the table,” said Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, D-Pa.

Another provision waives fees and co-pays for Tricare’s dental program for all members of the selected reserve.

The legislation also extends an at-home child care pilot program and authorizes nearly \$3 billion in construction for new barracks and family housing, dining facilities, medical facilities, child care centers and schools.

The bill also pushes back against the Trump administration’s moves to withdraw from Europe.

The House’s legislation authorizes \$400 million for the long-standing Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, and lawmakers added an amendment requiring the Pentagon to maintain military cooperation with Baltic allies Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

“This amendment is necessary because there are some appointees in the Pentagon who’ve embraced a foolish policy of decoupling from Europe and weakening our leadership in NATO, and we’ve got to stand opposed,” said Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb.

Lawmakers also reasserted congressional war powers, approving a bipartisan amendment repealing laws that green-lighted the 2003 Iraq invasion and the 1991 Gulf War. Democrats and some Republicans have raised concerns about presidential abuse of the authorizations.

China remains a top priority in the legislation. The bill authorizes more than \$1.5 billion for projects needed to carry out military operations in the Indo-Pacific and \$1 billion for the Taiwan Security Cooperation Initiative to strengthen the island nation’s defense capabilities.

The legislation also authorizes \$22 billion in shipbuilding for additional submarines and surface vessels, \$38 billion for new aircraft, \$15 billion to restore munitions stockpiles and \$142 billion to develop new technologies for the battlefield.

MILITARY

High fitness scorers exempt from fat standards

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Soldiers who score at least 465 points on the Army Fitness Test are eligible to be exempt from the service's body fat standards, the Army announced Wednesday.

"This is a welcome continuation of our previous policy under the former Army Combat Fitness Test," Sgt. Maj. Christopher Stevens, the senior noncommissioned officer for the Army personnel office, said in a statement. "It rewards soldiers who consistently demonstrate high levels of fitness, which supports readiness, health and creates a culture that values performance."

The maximum score that soldiers can get on the AFT is 500 points. To be eligible for the exemption, soldiers are required to score 80 points or more on each of the five events.

Soldiers who qualify for exemptions but do not meet the Army's height and weight standards will not be required to be measured by a tape test, according to the Army



A soldier pushes through the Army Fitness Test during the U.S. Army Europe and Africa Best Squad Competition in Grafenwoehr, Germany, Aug. 20.

SCYRRUS CORREGIDOR/U.S. Army

announcement.

The directive is effective immediately. Exemptions are valid until the next record test, or no longer than eight months for active-duty soldiers or 12 months for National Guard and Reserve soldiers.

The announcement follows revisions to the fitness test. In June, a revised version called the Army Fitness Test replaced the 3-year-old Army Combat Fitness Test.

The updated test features five events and introduces higher, sex-neutral and age-normalized standards for soldiers in combat arms roles.

The new test began phased implementation June 1 and will take full effect at the start of 2026 for active-duty personnel and on June 1, 2026, for Reserve and National Guard members, the Army announced at the time.

Changes to the test came in the wake of a March memo from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth calling for a review and enhancement of physical fitness standards in combat arms roles.

Lawmakers target Pentagon over UFO sighting transparency

By LINDA F. HERSEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Descriptions of mysterious aircraft that withstood a missile strike and hovered over a U.S. Air Force base highlighted veterans' firsthand reports of UFO sightings at a dramatic hearing by a special House task force collecting evidence on "unidentified anomalous phenomena."

But one of the veterans speaking Tuesday before the House Oversight and Government Reform Task Force on the Declassification of Federal Secrets complained he faced retaliation by the Defense Department and intelligence officials that included blacklisting from employment at federal intelligence agencies.

Air Force veteran Dylan Borland, a former geospatial intelligence specialist at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia, claimed he faced reprisal after reporting a UAP event he witnessed.

Borland said a triangular aircraft hovered above him for several minutes after he stepped outside for a cigarette break while on overnight duty at Langley Air Force Base in 2012.

"This craft interfered with my telephone, did not have any sound and the material it was made of appeared fluid or dynamic," Borland told the task force. "It displayed zero kinetic disturbance, sound or wind displacement."

The UAP then rapidly "ascended to commercial jet level" and left the area at a high rate of speed, he said.

Borland said he was interviewed by AARO in 2023 about the incident, but his claims were dismissed.

AARO — the Pentagon's All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office — was established to investigate UAP sightings by military personnel. He said the agency's assessments do not support the reported sightings by military personnel.

AARO has maintained it has no verifiable evidence from anecdotal reports of extraterrestrial activity or technology.

"AARO uses a rigorous scientific framework and data-driven approach to better understand UAP. We will follow the science wherever it leads," according to the agency's website.

Borland said he faced discrediting because of his report, as well as workplace retaliation and "manipulation of his security clearance."

"I am unemployed now and have no job prospects," said Borland, who met with the Office of the Intelligence Community Inspector General about his experience.

"I and many other individuals [who made UAP reports] feel discarded and separated from the country they served," he said. "I have endured sustained reprisals from government agencies for more than a decade."

Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., who is chairwoman of the task force, accused the Defense Department and intelligence community of a "lack of transparency."

She said the task force has been denied access to video and files related to UAP incidents.

Luna suggested there is a cover-up by defense officials of evidence about UAP encounters. "The American people are not fragile and do not need to be shielded like children from reality," Luna said.

"For too long, the issue of unidentified anomalous phenomena — commonly known as UAPs — has been shrouded in secrecy, stigma and in some cases outright dismissal," Luna said at the start of the 2½-hour hearing. "This is about national security and government accountability."

The Pentagon did not respond to a request for comment.

Rep. Eric Burlison, R-Mo., a task force member, played a video

he said showed an MQ-9 Reaper striking an unidentified orb moving fast off the coast of Yemen in October 2024. The orb kept flying after being hit by a Hellfire missile, he said.

"I'm not going to speculate what it is. But the question is, why are we being blocked from this information?" said Burlison, who complained the Defense Department is not fully disclosing what it knows about UAP incidents.

Rep. Jasmine Crockett, D-Texas, said many UAP sightings may be the work of adversaries with new capabilities to gain military advantage. "Those are the likely explanations for these mysteries," she said.

But Crockett emphasized that military personnel who "risk careers and reputations" to report UAP sightings need protection.

"We need to ensure that people who come forward and make reports can do so without fear of retaliation," she said.

Special Forces NCO gets confinement for slamming toddler son into wall

By LYDIA GORDON
Stars and Stripes

A Special Forces soldier in North Carolina who shoved his 3-year-old son's head into a wall in a fit of domestic violence will receive a bad-conduct discharge and spend 75 days of confinement.

Sgt. 1st Class Nathaniel Lightfield, 31, was sentenced last month by a military judge after a court-

martial jury found him guilty of battery of a child below the age of 16, a statement Wednesday from the Army Office of Special Trial Counsel said.

Lightfield, an engineer with the 3rd Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces Command, committed the crime on May 10, 2023, while he was stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C.

He was watching his son during a scheduled custody visit. When his ex-wife arrived to pick up the child, the 30-pound boy had bruising on his face and forehead as well as injuries to his shoulders and head, prosecutors said.

Lightfield told her he didn't know how the injuries occurred, but the boy later told hospital staffers that his father had hurt

him, according to the statement.

Medical personnel reported the case to the Army's Criminal Investigation Division.

During questioning, Lightfield told CID agents how he had injured his son, who "was crying and saying 'it hurt,'" according to the statement.

Despite believing the boy might be concussed, Lightfield refused

to seek medical care for him, prosecutors said.

"Sgt. 1st Class Lightfield's actions in battering his 3-year-old son out of anger fall far short of the standards we set for our non-commissioned officers and Soldiers," prosecutor Capt. Gabrielle Lucero said in the statement. "Soldiers are meant to protect the most vulnerable, not harm them."

MILITARY

Australia to spend \$1.1B on underwater attack drones

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Australia will spend 1.7 billion Australian dollars (\$1.1 billion) on building dozens of locally developed underwater attack drones, Defense Minister Richard Marles said on Wednesday.

The first of the stealthy, long-range Ghost Sharks will be delivered to the Australian navy in January next year under a five-year contract with Sydney-based Anduril Australia, Marles said.

“Australia is leading the world in terms of autonomous, underwater military capabilities,” Marles told reporters in Sydney.

The large, autonomous underwater vehicles would significantly boost Australia’s undersea war-

fare capabilities, complementing a fleet of submarines powered with U.S. nuclear technology, Marles said.

The first of those submarines provided under the AUKUS partnership with the United States and Britain won’t be delivered to Australia until 2032.

Marles would not say precisely how many Ghost Sharks would be built. But he said the Australian navy would be provided with “dozens” over the next five years.

He also wouldn’t comment on the Ghost Sharks’ range other than to describe it as “very long range.”

As an island continent and a trading nation, Australia sees the possibility of its sea routes being blocked by an enemy as a major

strategic threat.

A Chinese navy flotilla conducted a live-fire exercise in the sea between Australia and New Zealand in February in what was widely regarded as a demonstration of China’s growing military reach.

The flotilla almost completely circumnavigated Australia. The Chinese navy rarely travels so far south.

California-based Anduril Industries was contracted in 2022 to produce three Ghost Shark prototypes for the Australian navy.

The Ghost Shark is designed to perform intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance roles as well as strike operations, a government statement said.

Chief of Navy Vice Adm. Mark



MICK TSIKAS, AAP IMAGE/AP

Australian Minister for Defense Industry Pat Conroy and Defense Minister Richard Marles, left, are pictured with an autonomous undersea attack drone known as the Ghost Shark at HMAS Kuttubul naval base in Sydney, on Wednesday.

Hammond said the drones could be launched from the shore and from surface ships.

Hammond said he expected the “undersea battlespace” will become increasingly congested and contested.

“I believe our allies and partners will continue to enjoy a capability advantage in that space provided we invest in capabilities like Ghost Shark and others as well as our crewed systems for years to come,” Hammond said.

Climb: German lauds firefighter unity

FROM PAGE 1

the 110 floors of each of the twin towers.

Some donned their military uniforms for the trek. Others carried American flags and wore backpacks.

Many of the firefighters were dressed in full gear, wearing helmets and hauling tanks of oxygen as they wound up and down the stadium steps in a single-file line.

Leon Krueger, a German member of the KMC Fire Department, said his legs were shaking after the trek. His goal was to complete all the laps without stopping, as a way to honor the 9/11 first responders. He said it’s a bond that transcends national borders.

“I think the whole firefighter family, we weld together,” he said.

Before the start of the event, each participant was given a lanyard with the name of a person killed in the World Trade Center attack. As they climbed the steps, they passed photos of the deceased firefighters and small American flags that were taped to the stadium stairs.

It took about an hour for all of them to complete the trek. Toward the end, as many grew fatigued, they shouted out words of encouragement to one another, passing out water bottles and offering fist bumps as they finished their final laps.

When Master Sgt. Trevor Derr first organized the event in 2023, he said it drew 55 participants. He was gratified to see such a large turnout this year.

A member of the 86th Maintenance Group at Ramstein, Derr was in his last week of basic train-



LARA KORTE/Stars and Stripes

A firefighter carrying an American flag climbs the steps of Fritz Walter Stadium, in Kaiserslautern, Germany, on Thursday, in honor of first responders who died during 9/11. Photos on the seats are of victims.

ing in San Antonio when 9/11 happened.

He said it’s important as time goes on to make sure younger generations remember the tragedy. Among the climbers Thursday were 12 students from a local German high school.

It’s also a chance for the com-

munity and service members to develop a more personal connection to those who gave their lives, he said.

“It’s not just a Facebook post,” Derr said. “Being able to physically do something and relate to what the firefighters went through means a lot more to them.”

Navy sailor charged in slaying of shipmate

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

A Navy sailor is charged with murder and sexual assault in connection with the death of a fellow service member whose badly decomposed body was found just a few miles from Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia.

Seaman Jeremiah Copeland, a culinary specialist assigned to the destroyer USS James E. Williams, also is facing additional charges of sexual misconduct, making false statements, wrongfully broadcasting or distributing intimate photographic data and obstructing justice in the death of Angelina Resendiz, according to the Navy judge advocate general corps’ website.

The service has not publicly identified Copeland, but the JAG corps website lists a J. Copeland scheduled for an Article 32 hearing Sept. 18. The hearing would evaluate whether there is sufficient evidence to believe that the accused committed the crimes charged and determine whether the case should proceed.

In June, an attorney for Resendiz’s family told a Norfolk news station that Copeland was being held in pretrial detention in connection with Resendiz’s death. Esmeralda Castle, Resendiz’s mother, told Stars and Stripes in July that her daughter was last seen with Copeland.

Copeland, of Washington state, joined the Navy in July 2023. He was assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman in December 2023, serving a little more than a year on the ship before being transferred to Williams in January.

Resendiz, a culinary specialist also assigned to Williams, was first reported missing May 29. But it wasn’t until June 3 — five days after she was last seen or in contact with family and friends — that a statewide missing adult alert was issued.

That lag occurred because the Navy initially considered Resendiz absent without official leave, a response that has drawn criticism from her family and congressional inquiries into the handling of her disappearance.

Twelve days after Resendiz was first reported missing, her body was found June 9 in a wooded area about 10 miles from Naval Station Norfolk and returned to her family later that month. Earlier this month, the Navy denied any wrongdoing in response to Resendiz’s disappearance and death, the Norfolk ABC affiliate WVEC-TV reported Saturday. The report cited a letter from Navy Secretary John Phelan sent in response to an inquiry from U.S. Rep. Vicente Gonzalez of Texas. The letter was given to the news station by Castle.

“The Navy’s actions in response to Petty Officer Resendiz’s disappearance and death were in accordance with current U.S. law and Navy Regulations and policy,” Phelan wrote in the Sept. 2 letter.

Last month, the Virginia Medical Examiner’s Office ruled that the manner and cause of Resendiz’s death could not be determined. Such a ruling can be made when information pointing to one manner of death is no more compelling than one or more other competing manners of death, according to the National Association of Medical Examiners.

PACIFIC

Marine Corps Ospreys to remain in Australia

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey tiltrotors will stay in Australia when a rotational force returns home this fall, according to the country's defense department.

Marines have been deploying annually to the Northern Territory on six-month rotations since 2012. This year's Marine Rotational Force-Darwin includes 2,500 Marines.

Tiltrotors have been part of the rotations since 2017, when they arrived at Royal Australian Air Force Base Darwin.

The green light to store and maintain the Ospreys was announced Thursday in an Australian Defence Department news release.

"At the conclusion of this year's 14th MRF-D rotation, MV-22 aircraft will remain behind in Australia," the department said. "This will increase availability of the aircraft for training, significantly reduce transportation costs and remove the import-related impost on Australian border agencies."

The Ospreys will be positioned at Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport, Queensland, Capt. Johnny Fischer, a spokesman for the rotational



Maj. Gen. Matthew Mowery, left, deputy commander of Marine Corps Forces Pacific, tours the flight line Sept. 7 with Maj. Christopher Jaspersen, executive officer of Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 363, at Royal Australian Air Force Base Darwin in Australia.

force, said by email Thursday.

"Initially, Marines will handle maintenance and preparation, with contracted support assuming sustainment responsibilities later," he said. "Before returning to flight, each Osprey will undergo comprehensive inspections, system checks and test procedures conducted by certified Marine

Corps professionals."

Prepositioned American military equipment played a role in the biennial Talisman Sabre drills, involving more than 40,000 troops from the United States, Australia and 17 other nations training across the southern continent from July 13 to Aug. 4.

The exercise marked the first

major movement of prepositioned U.S. gear from South Australia to the country's northeast, Maj. Adan Cazarez, a spokesman for the 8th Theater Sustainment Command in Hawaii, said by email July 22. He declined to discuss specifics of the equipment for security reasons.

Operating primarily out of Darwin and the northern Australian training areas, the Marines use MV-22s to maintain security, work with Australian forces and provide a platform for the Marines to engage with partners across the region, according to the Australian news release.

In July, four Ospreys from Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 363 flew from Australia to Clark Air Base in the Philippines to participate in a relief mission following typhoons, tropical storms and monsoon rains.

Leaving Ospreys in Australia "represents the continuing development of a deeper relationship with the United States," Australian army Brig. Gen. Mick Say, director-general of the Force Posture Initiatives Branch, said in the release.

The initiatives encompass the Marine Corps rotations along with

U.S. aircraft rotations and infrastructure improvements to bases in Australia's north.

Other U.S. systems may be positioned in Australia, bringing with them significantly more American personnel, former Australian assistant defense secretary Ross Babbage said in an email Thursday.

He pointed to plans for a rotational force of four U.S. and British nuclear-powered submarines in Western Australia as early as 2027. That presence stems from the 2021 AUKUS security pact among Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Pentagon is reviewing the agreement amid concerns over whether U.S. industry can deliver submarines to Australia in the coming years while still meeting Navy requirements.

"Skilled personnel are capable of maintaining most of these systems in Darwin, Perth and elsewhere," Babbage said. "Where deeper skills and expertise is needed for systems, such as the MV-22 Osprey, there should be few difficulties extending the substantial helicopter and other maintenance skill pools as may be needed in the period ahead."

Navy officer pleads guilty to killing wife in Japan

By BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Navy officer faces 23 years in prison in exchange for pleading guilty to killing his wife last year in a Japanese hotel, according to a Navy spokesman.

Lt. Cmdr. Christopher Olsen, during a hearing Wednesday at Naval Base San Diego, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the death last October of Jessica "Jesse" Arguinizoni Olsen, U.S. Naval Forces Japan spokesman Cmdr. Paul Macapagal said by email.

Olsen will be separated from the Navy and forfeit all pay and allowances. He paid \$10,654 in restitution to his wife's family for funeral expenses, Macapagal said.

Olsen was scheduled for a court-martial in October at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, on charges of unpremeditated murder and obstruction of justice. The obstruction charge was "withdrawn and dismissed pursuant to the plea agreement," Macapagal said by phone Thursday.

Jesse Olsen, 37, was found dead in a hotel room in Fukuoka, about 80 miles northeast of Sasebo Naval Base, Japan, on the morning of Oct. 28.

The Navy alleges that Christopher Olsen — at the time assigned to the amphibious transport dock USS New Orleans at Sasebo — killed his wife "on or about Oct. 26" by "strangulation and blunt force trauma to the head," according to a charge sheet released May 13.

Jesse Olsen's body was returned to her family on Nov. 16, her sister, Dominique Arguinizoni, told Stars and Stripes in May. She said the family was told that Jesse suffered injuries to her head, including her face, and that her jaw and hyoid bones were broken.



Lt. Cmdr. Christopher Olsen and his wife, Jessica "Jesse" Arguinizoni Olsen, pose in this undated photo provided by Jesse's sister.

The family's request to review the deal was denied, Arguinizoni

said. She said the family "made it explicitly clear that we did not support offering a plea deal."

"While the sentence brings

some accountability, no number of years will ever equal the life Jesse lost," Arguinizoni wrote Thursday in an email from the United States.

"We did receive the restitution for her funeral expenses, but no payment can undo our loss. What our family seeks is not financial — it is justice, remembrance and for Jesse's voice to continue to be heard. We are grateful that her voice was acknowledged in court, and our deepest wish remains that she be remembered for the vibrant, loving person she was, not only for the crime that took her from us."

Macapagal could not immediately provide a response. Christopher Olsen's defense attorney, Lt. Cmdr. Daniel Phipps of the Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps, did not respond to phone calls seeking comment Thursday.

Philippines protests China's plan for nature reserve at disputed shoal

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines protested on Thursday a plan by China to establish a nature reserve at one of the most hotly disputed shoals in the South China Sea and demanded that Beijing immediately withdraw it.

China's State Council on

Wednesday announced the approval of a plan to create a national nature reserve at the Scarborough Shoal. The aim is to protect a coral reef, according to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

The Scarborough Shoal is one of many South China Sea islands, is-

lets and reefs that are claimed by China and its neighbors, including the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Its Philippine name is the Bajo de Masinloc.

The Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said a diplomatic protest was underway "against

this illegitimate and unlawful action by China as it clearly infringes upon the rights and interests of the Philippines in accordance with international law."

The Philippines has declared that any Chinese construction at Scarborough, which Beijing, Manila and Taiwan all claim, would

be a red line.

China's State Council said in its notice Wednesday that the "establishment of the Huangyan Island National Nature Reserve is an important guarantee for maintaining the diversity, stability and sustainability of the natural ecosystem of Huangyan Island."

MILITARY

US, Indian soldiers train together in Alaska

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

U.S. and Indian soldiers are training side by side in Alaska even as relations between the two nations have flagged in recent months over the Trump administration's tariff policy and its disputed claim of brokering a Pakistan-India ceasefire.

Soldiers with the 11th Airborne Division are hosting roughly 450 Indian troops for the annual Yudh Abhyas exercise, which alternates venue each year between the two countries.

The exercise began in 2004 as an exchange focused on counterinsurgency but has evolved over the years into field training that also includes conventional threats and disaster relief. The two-week exercise ends Sunday.

"Exercises such as Yudh Abhyas create the ideal environment to test concepts, refine procedures and most importantly, learn from each other's experience," Brigadier Rajiv Sahara, commander of the Indian army's 65th Infantry Brigade, said in an U.S. Army news release Sept. 2.

The near future of America's relationship with India, however, remains "cloudy," Richard Rossow, an India expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank based in Washington, D.C., said in an email Saturday.

"U.S.-India relations are certainly hitting a rough patch, largely driven by the Trump Administration's overbearing pressure on India to achieve modest gains on trade market access, as well as a sudden improvement in the U.S. government's views of Pakistan," Rossow said.



EVERETT BABBITT/U.S. Army

U.S. and Indian soldiers carry out weapons training during the Yudh Abhyas exercise at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, on Sept. 5.

"I think most damage can be undone if we get the pending trade agreement concluded and other key dialogues resume."

President Donald Trump imposed a 25% tariff on Indian imports on Aug. 7, then levied an additional

25% on Aug. 27, declaring the added tariff was in response to India continuing to import oil from Russia.

India's Ministry of External Affairs decried the latter tariff as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable."

The tariffs follow Trump's repeated claims that he had brokered a ceasefire for a border skirmish between India and Pakistan—a claim that has roiled Indian officials.

India has long maintained that disputes with Pakistan must be resolved bilaterally, with any outside

interference regarded as undermining India's sovereignty.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Trump by phone in June that the American president had nothing to do with the ceasefire, according to an Aug. 30 report by The New York Times.

In late August, Modi joined a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in China hosted by President Xi Jinping and attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

On the summit's red carpet, "Xi, Modi, and Putin strode together, awkwardly holding hands, beaming for the cameras," the Council on Foreign Relations said in a Sept. 5 online article.

Despite the issues of tariffs and ceasefire, India seems willing to forge ahead with military collaboration, with the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C., describing Yudh Abhyas as "one of the cornerstones" of cooperation in a news release last week.

"India now conducts more military exercises with the United States than with any other country," Shyam Tekwani, an India expert at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, said by email Wednesday. "That's the clearest signal of direction as it shows how central the U.S. has become to India's operational planning."

Economic pain over tariffs will not "tilt Delhi's compass" toward Russia or China, Tekwani argues in a paper published Tuesday in the center's online journal Security Nexus.

"India cannot advance—militarily, economically, or technologically—without U.S. partnership," he wrote.

"This tilt is not ideological; it is infrastructural. Access to jet engine technology, maritime surveillance, space situational awareness, precision strike systems, and secure communications flows only through U.S.-led cooperation."

Fort Hood soldier sentenced to 60 years in shooting death

By **ROSE L. THAYER**
Stars and Stripes

A Fort Hood soldier was sentenced to 60 years in prison for his role in the shooting death of a fellow soldier who was the mother of his child, according to court documents.

Army Cpl. Nakealon Mosley, 28, was an automated logistics specialist assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division at the time of the shooting, Sept. 4, 2021, outside of a



Mosley

nightclub in Killeen, Texas.

Sgt. Francine Martinez, 24, was hit by gunfire in her vehicle and died in the hospital nearly two

weeks later.

Mosley and his roommate Demetrius Lavar Jones Jr., a 26-year-old former Army private,

were at the nightclub together when they ran into Martinez, according to the Killeen Police Department. After arguing in the parking lot, Martinez left in one vehicle, and Mosley and Jones left in another.

Gunshots fired from the men's vehicle hit Martinez, according to police. Witnesses of the shooting told Killeen police officers that Mosley and Martinez had been romantically involved in the past

and had a child together.

A Bell County jury found Mosley guilty of murder in July, and Judge Wade Faulkner sentenced him Tuesday.

The Army has begun the process to discharge Mosley, who enlisted in 2016, from the service, according to the 1st Cavalry Division.

An attorney listed for the soldier did not respond Wednesday to a request for comment.

Jones, a cavalry scout from 2018 to 2021, is also charged with murder in connection to Martinez's death, according to court and military records.

His jury trial is set to begin Monday with the same judge, according to court records.

Martinez was a cannoneer with the 1st Cavalry Division. She enlisted in April 2018 and served one deployment to Afghanistan, according to Fort Hood.

\$181M contract awarded for self-powered missile defense site on Guam

By **ALEX WILSON**
Stars and Stripes

A California defense contractor and its Guam subsidiary have been awarded a \$181.1 million contract to build part of an \$8 billion missile defense system on the U.S. territory in the Pacific.

The project calls for construction of a self-powered missile defense site and was awarded to Tutor Perini Corp. of Los Angeles and its Guam unit, Black Construction Inc., the company said in a Tuesday news release.

The work is part of the first

phase of the Missile Defense Agency's Enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense system, which is designed to counter cruise, ballistic and hypersonic missiles that could be launched by China or North Korea.

Construction is scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2026. The contract includes two options that could raise the total to \$193.2 million, according to the company.

The release said the site will include its own power generation facility with standby power, a switchgear building, fuel and wa-

ter storage, a fire pump, an entry control facility and other infrastructure. It did not specify the site's operational purpose.

Alternatively referred to as the Guam Defense System, the Defense Department describes the project as a "comprehensive, persistent, 360-degree layered" shield composed of 36 missile launchers, 23 communication towers and 14 radar systems across 16 sites — eight on Naval Base Guam, six on Andersen Air Force Base and two at Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz.

The project falls under the Pacific Deterrence initiative, created in fiscal year 2021 to counter China's military buildup in the region.

The U.S. faces "one of the most dangerous strategic environments" in its history that's "characterized by China's unprecedented military buildup and its intent to seize control of the Indo-Pacific," the Defense Department wrote in its fiscal year 2026 budget request.

The DOD is "focused on deterring China by prioritizing combat

credible military forces postured in the Western Pacific to deter by denial, as well as demanding regional allies and partners to significantly increase their own level of defense effort," it said.

The Pentagon is seeking just over \$10 billion for the initiative in fiscal 2026. The House on Wednesday passed its version of the National Defense Authorization Act, and the Senate is considering its version. Both chambers must agree before the bill goes to President Donald Trump for final approval.

MILITARY

Fast-tracked drone directives take flight

Army's I Corps gets its hands on new multi-role system

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. — “America’s First Corps” was the first to get its hands on a new multipurpose drone system the Army has fast-tracked to deploy with all Army divisions by the end of 2026.

Teams of soldiers in late August double-timed through a three-week course with simulators and then in the field at a remote part of the sprawling 86,000-acre Pacific Northwest base shared by the Army and Air Force.

The drones are dubbed “LE-SR” for “Launched Effects — Short-Range.” Towed or trucked to the battlefield or fired from helicopters, the “effects” refer to multiple roles the payload can play.

“Non-lethal effects” include unmanned reconnaissance, communications and enemy signal jamming. With “lethal effects,” the payload is a warhead, and the drone swoops, loops or spirals down to explode on enemy command posts or troop concentrations, or it knocks out radar and air defenses to clear the way for manned attack aircraft.

“We can push further, faster into more restricted terrain because we know we can use the scout drone to know what’s ahead of us,” said 1st Lt. Zach Glenn of the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment. “And we can also use the attack drones with information from the scout to eliminate the enemy assets at up to a 70-nautical-mile range.”

“Launched Effects” is one of several drone initiatives, from unmanned drone “wingmen” for future Air Force fighter jets to un-



An AEVEX Atlas III takes flight at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington during tests in August.

“Adaptation is no longer an advantage — it’s a requirement for survival.”

Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll and Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Randy A. George

crewed surface ships and submersible drones for the Navy.

The goal is to buy or build “first-person-view” or “kamikaze” drones that can be carried, launched and controlled by a single soldier.

“The United States is lagging behind, and the gap is growing,” Army Col. Neil Hollenbeck, an assistant chief of staff for NATO



Soldiers put into place a portable Anduril Altius 600 LE system to the staging area at Lewis-McChord in Washington.

Rapid Deployable Corps-Turkey, wrote in the U.S. Army’s September issue of Military Review.

Hollenbeck said the war in Ukraine showed how short-lived an advantage in drone technology can be. With each innovation by Ukraine or Russia, the other side quickly found weaknesses, adapted and now they are shooting down swarms of drones.

“In the first two years of the war, drone warfare went through four evolutions of tactics and technology,” Hollenbeck wrote. “Today, the innovation cycle for drones in Ukraine is closer to three months.”

Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll and Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Randy A. George wrote in May that the service needed to abandon obsolete technology and move quickly on drones and counter-drone technology.

“Adaptation is no longer an advantage — it’s a requirement for

survival,” Driscoll and George wrote.

The Pentagon wants to deploy weapons on the battlefield significantly faster than the current years-long development process, from concept to prototype to production. That timeline that doesn’t include training soldiers to use the weapons, or the logistics of how to get them deployed worldwide.

The Army plans to test several types of existing and planned drones in a continuous feedback loop between what the defense industry produces and what soldiers want. The back-and-forth iteration will inform changes in the choices for new and future drones.

The new “Launched Effects” drones are being designed so that most soldiers can use the systems without being designated as experts. Eventually, modular controllers and launchers will be developed so that any soldier can

use an LE at any time. Troops taking part at Lewis-McChord included a Stryker battalion, helicopter crews and infantry units.

“What’s hard for people in the Army to visualize is what the next fight looks like,” said Lt. Col. Michael Wallace, commander of 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment. “These soldiers are walking point on what comes next.”

The Lewis-McChord training and simulation was designed to test the platforms for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions. The teams set up launch plans and strike targets about 3 to 4 miles out, and the drones crossed different terrains.

The Army teams fielded three systems. Raytheon’s Coyote Block III drone flew from a rectangular launcher; Anduril Industries’ Altius 600 was fired from three long tubes; and the Atlas system by AEVEX Aerospace flung silver glider-like fuselages skyward with compressed air.

When announcing the Army’s priority changes April 30, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said he wants development and testing to coincide to increase the speed of production — even if there are bumps along the way.

And there were some bumps: The first Raytheon Coyote Block III failed to deploy its wings fully on launch and spun into nearby pine trees. A second Raytheon round put into a launch fared worse, plopping out of the launcher and nosediving into thick brush, igniting a fire of several acres that required a response from a base firefighting team and put more launches on hold.

The system did execute a successful launch late in the day, officials said. The other two systems flew successfully the following day.

Brig. Gen. Cain Baker, director of the Army’s Future Vertical Lift-Cross Functional Team, based at Redstone Arsenal, Ala., said the program would have moments where things didn’t work as planned.

“When you have a mis-launch, or you have something where it doesn’t perform correctly, we have to learn from that, right?” Baker said. “At the end of the day, we had a lot more successes than we had failures.”

Baker said getting the systems into the field for I Corps to fly, then incorporating their ideas into design changes invests the soldiers in the system’s rapid development.

“When you bring a capability out to the field and you put it in the hands of soldiers, and you get the feedback that they really want it and they like it, and they need it — that is the biggest accelerator that I can have,” Baker said.



A battery of launch tubes for the Raytheon Coyote Block 3 Launch Effects drones are set up up at Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

NATION

Sniper: Politicians, citizens react to news of assassination

FROM PAGE 1

cials revealed new details about an attack they called targeted, much remained unclear nearly 24 hours later, including the sniper's identity, motive and whereabouts. Two people detained Wednesday were released after neither was determined to be connected to the shooting, but by Thursday officials expressed confidence they had tracked the shooter's movements on campus in the run-up to it.

Later Thursday, the FBI released two photos of a person of interest in connection with the shooting as investigators appealed to the public for information. The photos show a person wearing a hat, sunglasses and a long-sleeve black shirt.

Law enforcement recovered a Mauser .30 caliber bolt-action rifle hidden in a towel in a wooded area near the university campus along what they suspect to be the shooter's path as they fled the scene, according to information circulated among law enforcement and shared with The Associated Press. Besides the spent cartridge recovered in the chamber, three other rounds were loaded in the magazine. The weapon and ammunition are being forensically analyzed by law enforcement at a federal lab for clues that could help identify the shooter or the motive.

Kirk, a close ally of President Donald Trump, was killed in broad daylight while speaking about social issues at a Utah Valley University campus courtyard. The circumstances brought renewed attention to the escalating threat of political violence in the United States that in the last several years has cut across the ideological spectrum. The killing drew bipartisan condemnation, but a national reckoning over ways to prevent political grievances from manifesting as deadly violence seemed elusive.

The attack was captured on grisly videos circulating on social media that show Kirk speaking into a handheld microphone when suddenly a shot rings out. Kirk can



ALEX GOODLETT/AP

Joseph Vogl stands outside Timpanogos Regional Hospital on Wednesday in Orem, Utah.

be seen reaching up with his right hand as blood gushes from the left side of his neck. Stunned spectators gasp and scream before people start running away.

Trump said he would award Kirk the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the U.S., while Vice President JD Vance and his wife, Usha, were set to visit with Kirk's family in Salt Lake City. Vance posted a remembrance on X chronicling their friendship, dating back to initial messages in 2017, through Vance's Senate run and ultimately praying after hearing of the shooting. Kirk played a pivotal role in setting up Trump's second Republican administration, Vance wrote.

"So much of the success we've had in this administration traces directly to Charlie's ability to organize and convene," Vance wrote. "He didn't just help us win in 2024, he helped us staff the entire government."

Kirk was speaking at a debate hosted by his nonprofit political youth organization, Arizona-based Turning Point USA, at the Sorensen Center courtyard on campus. Immediately before the shooting, he took questions from

an audience member about gun violence.

"Do you know how many transgender Americans have been mass shooters over the last 10 years?" the person asked. Kirk responded, "Too many."

The questioner followed up: "Do you know how many mass shooters there have been in America over the last 10 years?"

"Counting or not counting gang violence?" Kirk asked.

Then a shot rang out.

The shooter, who Gov. Spencer Cox pledged would be held accountable in a state with the death penalty, wore dark clothing and fired from a building roof some distance away.

Madison Lattin was watching a few dozen feet from Kirk's left when she heard the bullet hit him.

"Blood is falling and dripping down, and you're just like so scared, not just for him but your own safety," she said.

She saw people drop to the ground in an eerie silence pierced immediately by cries. She and others ran. Some fell and were trampled in the stampede.

When Lattin later learned that Kirk had died, she wept, she said, describing him as a role model



AP

A person of interest in connection with the fatal shooting of Charlie Kirk at Utah Valley University on Wednesday in Orem, Utah.

who had showed her how to fight for the truth.

About 3,000 people were in attendance, according to a statement from the Utah Department of Public Safety. The university police department had six officers working the event, along with Kirk's own security detail, authorities said.

Trump announced Kirk's death on social media and praised the 31-year-old co-founder and CEO of Turning Point as "Great, and even Legendary." Later, he released a video in which he called Kirk a "martyr for truth and freedom."

Utah Valley University said the campus was evacuated after the shooting and will be closed until Monday.

Meanwhile, armed officers walked around the neighborhood bordering the campus, knocking on doors and asking for any infor-

mation residents might have on the shooting. Helicopters buzzed overhead.

Wednesday's event, billed as the first stop on Kirk's "The American Comeback Tour," had generated a polarizing campus reaction. An online petition calling for university administrators to bar Kirk from appearing received nearly 1,000 signatures. The university issued a statement last week citing First Amendment rights and affirming its "commitment to free speech, intellectual inquiry, and constructive dialogue."

Last week, Kirk posted on X images of news clips showing his visit was sparking controversy. He wrote, "What's going on in Utah?"

The shooting drew swift bipartisan condemnation as Democratic officials joined Trump, who ordered flags lowered to half-staff and issued a presidential proclamation, and other Republican allies of Kirk in decrying the violence.

"The murder of Charlie Kirk breaks my heart. My deepest sympathies are with his wife, two young children, and friends," said Gabrielle Giffords, the former Democratic congresswoman who was wounded in a 2011 shooting in her Arizona district.

In a joint statement, the Young Democrats of Connecticut and the Connecticut Young Republicans called the shooting "unacceptable."

"There is no place in our country for such acts regardless of political disagreements," they said.

The shooting appeared poised to become part of a spike of political violence that has touched a range of ideologies and representatives of both major political parties. The attacks include the assassination of a Minnesota state lawmaker and her husband at their house in June, the firebombing of a Colorado parade in June to demand Hamas release hostages and a fire set at the house of Pennsylvania's governor, who is Jewish, in April. The most notorious of these events is the shooting of Trump during a Pennsylvania campaign rally last year.

Trial starts for man accused of attempting to assassinate Trump

Associated Press

FORT PIERCE, Fla. — Prosecutors, other attorneys and observers assembled in a federal courtroom Thursday for the start of opening statements in the trial of a man charged with trying to assassinate President Donald Trump while he played golf in South Florida last year, when he was campaigning for a second term.

Ryan Routh is representing himself after U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon agreed to let him dismiss his court-appointed attorneys. They

are, however, standing by in the courtroom if needed.

He has pleaded not guilty to charges of attempting to assassinate a major presidential candidate, assaulting a federal officer and several firearm violations.

Until this week, Routh has appeared at hearings shackled at the wrists and ankles and dressed in a tan jail jumpsuit. But with jurors present, Routh has been unrestrained and dressed in a sport coat and tie.

Cannon has said Routh will be al-

lowed to address jurors and witnesses from a podium, but he will not have free rein of the courtroom.

A panel of 12 jurors and four alternates was sworn in Wednesday, at the federal courthouse in Fort Pierce, Fla.

There are four white men, one Black man, six white women and one Black woman on the jury, and the alternates are two white men and two white women. The panel was selected from a pool of 180 potential jurors.

The trial begins nearly a year af-

ter prosecutors say a Secret Service agent thwarted his attempt to shoot the Republican presidential nominee. It's expected to run two or three weeks.

Prosecutors have said Routh, 59, methodically plotted to kill Trump for weeks before aiming a rifle through the shrubbery as Trump played golf on Sept. 15, 2024, at his West Palm Beach country club. A Secret Service agent spotted Routh before Trump came into view. Officials said Routh aimed his rifle at the agent, who opened fire, causing

Routh to drop his weapon and flee without firing a shot.

Just nine weeks earlier, Trump had survived another attempt on his life while campaigning in Pennsylvania. That gunman had fired eight shots, with one bullet grazing Trump's ear, before being shot by a Secret Service counter sniper.

Cannon is a Trump-appointed judge who drew scrutiny for her handling of a criminal case accusing Trump of illegally storing classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach.

South Korean workers held in raid depart US, head for home

Associated Press
ATLANTA — A plane carrying more than 300 workers from South Korea who were detained during an immigration raid at a battery factory in Georgia last week left Atlanta shortly before noon Thursday, bound for South Korea.
The workers traveled by bus from a detention center in south-east Georgia to Atlanta earlier in the day for their flight, which is expected to land in South Korea on Friday afternoon. South Korea's Foreign Ministry said the detainees released by U.S. authorities included 316 Koreans, 10 Chinese nationals, three Japanese nationals and one Indonesian.
More than 300 Koreans were among about 475 workers detained during last week's raid at the battery factory under construction on the campus of Hyundai's auto plant west of Savannah.
South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung called Thursday for improvements to the United States' visa system, saying Korean companies will likely hesitate to make new investments in the U.S. until that happens.
Lee said during a news conference that Korean and U.S. officials had a back-and-forth discussion over whether the detainees would be leaving under "volun-



Buses carrying detained South Korean workers arrive at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport on Thursday.

tary departure" or deportation.
While those discussions were ongoing, U.S. officials started to return the detainees' belongings. Then, however, "everything suddenly halted," Lee said, adding that they were told that was due to instructions from the White House.
"President [Donald] Trump had directed that the (detainees) should be allowed to return home freely and those who didn't want to go didn't have to," he said. "We were told that, because of that instruction, the process was paused and the administrative proce-

dures were changed accordingly."
A South Korean Foreign Ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the diplomatic process, said Trump had halted the process to hear from South Korea on whether the Koreans should be allowed to stay to continue their work and help train U.S. workers or should be sent back to South Korea.
Lee said during his news conference that the U.S. gave the detainees a choice between staying and going home. Ultimately, one South Korean national who has relatives in the U.S. chose to stay, Lee said.

Judge blocks Trump policy that ends some social services for noncitizens

Associated Press
A federal judge on Wednesday blocked Trump administration restrictions on services for immigrants in the country illegally, including the federal preschool program Head Start, health clinics and adult education.
The order from the judge in U.S. District Court in Rhode Island applies to 20 states and the District of Columbia, whose attorneys general, all Democrats, sued the administration. It puts the administration's reinterpretation of a Clinton-era federal policy on hold while the case is decided.
Under the proposed changes, some community-level programs would be reclassified as federal public benefits, making them inaccessible to people without legal status. Individual public benefits, such as food stamps and college financial aid, have been largely unavailable to people in the country without legal status.
U.S. District Judge Mary McElroy, who was appointed by Trump in 2019, said in her order that the policy rollout was "rushed" in a way that would worsen the impact for people

cut off from community services and those tasked with verifying eligibility.
"The Government argues that it has somehow interpreted this statute incorrectly for the nearly thirty years that it has been the law," McElroy wrote. "In its view, everyone ... has misunderstood it from the start — at least until last month, when the right way to read it became clear to the Government. The Court is skeptical of that."
Messages seeking comment were left with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Education Department, the Department of Labor and the Department of Justice, which each were named as defendants.
The states' lawsuit argued the government failed to follow the rule-making process and did not provide the required notice on conditions placed on federal funds.
The rule changes had been paused initially within the states that sued after they reached a temporary agreement with the Trump administration.
"With this victory, we are protecting children's education, safeguard-

ing critical health care, and preserving the safety net that keeps families afloat," New York Attorney General Letitia James said.
Proponents of Head Start immediately voiced concern that the new policy would harm immigrant communities by taking away health services and educational opportunities. The administrative burdens of implementing the new rule would cause many under-resourced Head Start programs to close, according to the plaintiffs' complaint.
The federal government said it interprets Head Start as a federal public benefit, similar to welfare programs that exclude immigrants in the country illegally. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., whose agency oversees Head Start, said the directive would stop diverting "hardworking Americans' tax dollars to incentivize illegal immigration."
In addition to preserving Head Start access, the lawsuit sought to block restrictions on other federal programs, including substance abuse services, mental health resources in schools, career and technical education, and job training.

Senate Republicans hold off Dems on Epstein info release

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — In a close vote, Senate Republicans defeated an effort Wednesday by Democrats to insert language into Congress' annual defense authorization bill that would have forced the public release of case files on the sex trafficking investigation into the late Jeffrey Epstein.
The Senate voted 51-49 to dismiss the changes to the bill, with Republican Sens. Josh Hawley of Missouri and Rand Paul of Kentucky joining with all Democrats in opposition.
For months, Democrats have clamored for the release of what's become known as the Epstein files, looking for practically every opportunity to force Republicans to either join their push for disclosure or publicly oppose a cause that many in the Republican base support. President Donald Trump as he was running for president signaled that he was open to releasing a full accounting of the case, but is now trying to dismiss the push as a "Democrat hoax."
So far, Democrats have been successful in forcing Republican leadership to grapple with the issue, yet it was unclear whether they would actually be able to crack Trump's hold on congressional Republicans to force legislation through Congress.
"I ask my Republican colleagues, after all those years you spent calling for accountability, for transparency, for getting to the bottom of these awful crimes, why won't you vote yes?" Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said in a floor speech Wednesday.
The New York Democrat maneuvered earlier Wednesday to force a

procedural vote on language that would force the Department of Justice to release the Epstein files, inserting it into an annual defense policy bill that Congress has to pass. Senate Republican leadership was then forced to hold a vote to dispense with Schumer's amendment, arguing that he was inserting political gamesmanship into defense legislation that often enjoys bipartisan support.
"It does not belong on the Department of Defense policy bill," said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine.
Senate Majority Leader John Thune, a South Dakota Republican, said earlier this week that the Justice Department "has already released tons of files" on Epstein.
"I trust them in terms of having the confidence that they'll get as much information out there as possible in a way that protects the rights of the victims," he added.
Still, many in the Republican base — as well as some victims of Epstein's abuse — have been unsatisfied with what the Justice Department has so far released.
The calls for disclosure of Epstein's case has at moments consumed Congress, looming over politics even more than when Epstein killed himself in a Manhattan jail while awaiting trial in 2019 on charges that said he sexually abused and trafficked dozens of underage girls. The case was brought more than a decade after he secretly cut a deal with federal prosecutors in Florida to dispose of nearly identical allegations. Epstein was accused of paying underage girls hundreds of dollars in cash for massages and then molesting them.

Student shoots 2 peers, then himself at Colo. high school

Associated Press
DENVER — A student shot two of his peers Wednesday at a suburban Denver high school before shooting himself and later dying, authorities said.
The handgun shooting was reported around 12:30 p.m. at Evergreen High School in Evergreen, about 30 miles west of Denver in the Rocky Mountain foothills.
Shots were fired both inside and outside the school building, and law enforcement officers who responded found the shooter within five minutes of arriving, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office spokesperson Jacki Kelley said.
None of the law enforcement offi-

cers who responded to the shooting fired any shots, Kelley said.
The teens were originally listed in critical condition, St. Anthony Hospital CEO Kevin Cullinan said. Their ages were not released.
By early evening, one teen was in stable condition with what Dr. Brian Blackwood, the hospital's trauma director, described as non-life threatening injuries. He declined to provide more details.
More than 100 police officers from the surrounding area rushed to the school to try to help, Kelley said.
The high school with more than 900 students is largely surrounded by forest. It is about a mile from the center of Evergreen.

NATION



Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert Kennedy Jr. touts the federal seizure of illegal vape products Wednesday in Bensenville, Ill.

Agents seize 600K smuggled illegal vapes

Associated Press
BENSENVILLE, Ill. — Federal agents seized hundreds of thousands of illegal vaping products in raids across the country on Wednesday as the Trump administration moved to crack down on devices that are regularly used by teens in the U.S. after being smuggled in from China.
Attorney General Pam Bondi, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and other top federal officials traveled to Illinois to tout the seizures, which included more than 600,000

illegal products taken from a distributor outside of Chicago, officials said. They stood outside the warehouse flanked by colorful boxes of vapes in fruity flavors that officials say are being illegally sold at stores nationwide.
It's the latest attempt by law enforcement to staunch the flow of unauthorized vapes that have flooded into the U.S. in kid-friendly flavors, often from China. Their influx has forced the FDA to try to eliminate thousands of illegal products sold by under-the-radar importers and distributors.

Musk briefly loses crown as world's richest person

Associated Press
NEW YORK — The battle among billionaires for bragging rights as the world's richest person got heated Wednesday with the surprising surge of an old contender: Larry Ellison.
In a stunning few minutes after markets opened, stock in Ellison's Oracle Corp. rocketed more than a third, enough for him to temporarily wrest the title from its long-time holder Elon Musk and hand it to the software giant's co-founder.
But the stock market is fickle, and Musk was back on top by the end of the day, at least according to Bloomberg, as Oracle gave up a bit of its earlier gains.

For those keeping score, the difference now is a billion, which isn't much given the size of the figures: Musk's \$384.2 billion versus \$383.2 billion for Ellison.
The dueling fortunes are so big each could fund the lifestyles of 5 million typical American families for a year, about the entire population of Florida, allowing them to all quit their jobs. Or they could just tell all of South Africa to take a vacation for year.
The brief switch in the ranking came after a blockbuster earnings report from Oracle powered by multibillion dollar orders from customers as the artificial-intelligence race heats up.

US inflation worsened in August as gas, food, airfare costs rose

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — Inflation rose last month as the price of gas, groceries, hotel rooms and airfares rose, along with the cost of clothes and used cars.
Consumer prices increased 2.9% in August from a year earlier, the Labor Department said Tuesday, up from 2.7% the previous month and the biggest increase since January. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices rose 3.1%, the same as in July. Both figures are above the Federal Reserve's 2% target.
The reading is the last the Fed will receive before its key meeting

next week, when policymakers are widely expected to cut their short-term rate to about 4.1% from 4.3%. Inflation remains stubborn while the job market is weakening, diverging trends that would require polar reactions from Federal Reserve policymakers.
Hiring has slowed sharply in recent months and was lower than previously estimated last year. The unemployment rate ticked up in August to a still-low 4.3%. And weekly unemployment claims rose sharply last week, the government also reported Thursday, a sign layoffs may be picking up.
On a monthly basis, overall in-

flation accelerated, as prices rose 0.4% from July to August, faster than the 0.2% pace the previous month. Core prices rose 0.3% for the second straight month.
Gas prices jumped 1.9% just from July to August, the biggest monthly increase since a 4% rise in December. Grocery prices climbed 0.6%, pushed higher by more expensive tomatoes, apples, and beef. The cost of travel soared, with air fares rising 5.9% just from July to August and hotel room prices rising 2.3%.
The impact of tariffs appeared to be mixed, with many imported goods rising in price but modestly.

Jobless benefit claims last week hit highest number in nearly 4 years

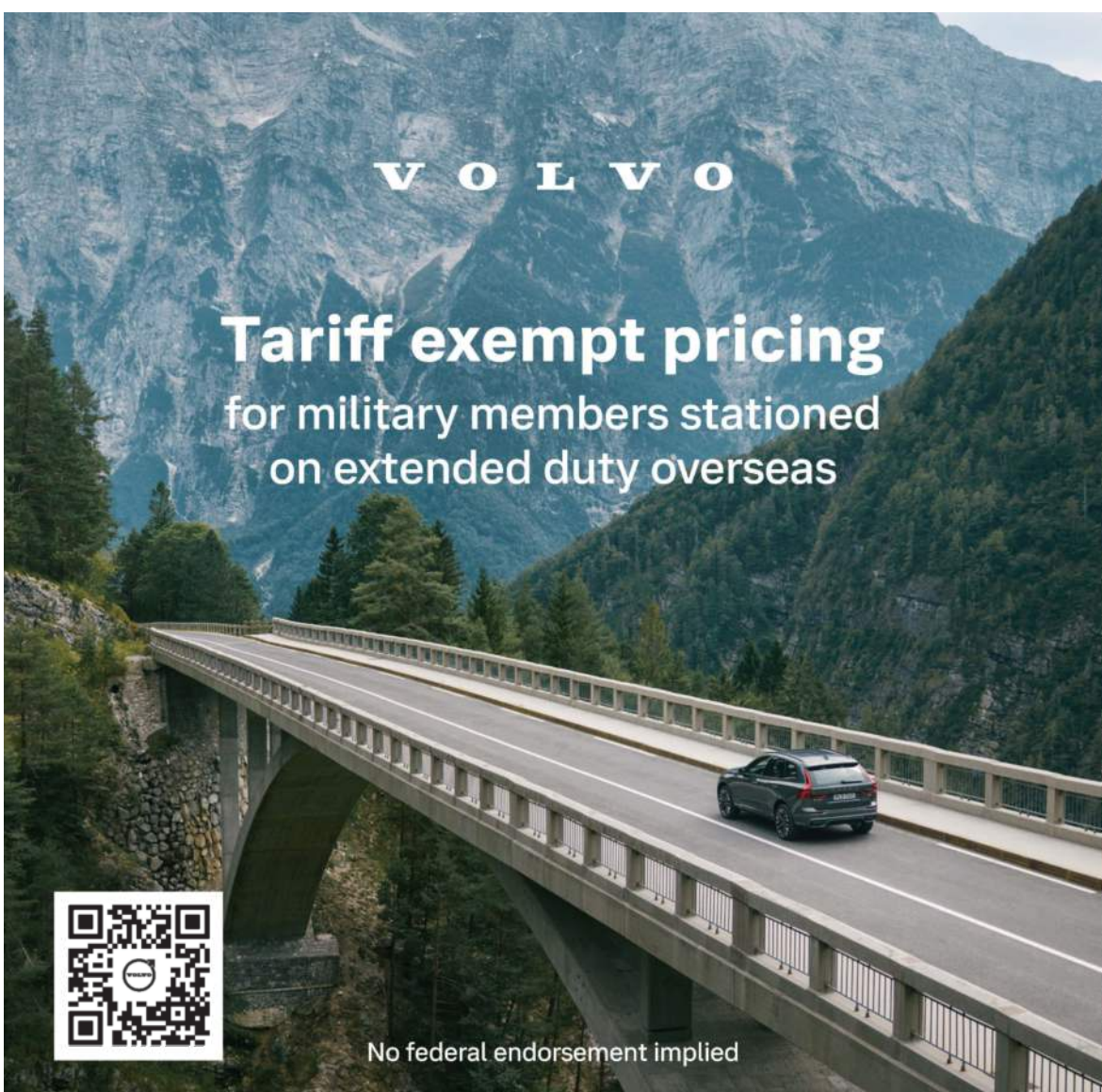
Associated Press
WASHINGTON — U.S. jobless claim applications jumped to their highest level in almost four years last week, the latest sign that the labor market is softening.
The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits for the week ending Sept. 6 rose 27,000 to 263,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That's the

most filings since the week of Oct. 23, 2021, and well above the 231,000 economists forecast.
Weekly applications for jobless benefits are considered a proxy for layoffs and have mostly settled in a historically low range between 200,000 and 250,000 since the U.S. began to emerge from the pandemic nearly four years ago.
Despite last week's increase,

layoffs remain relatively low by historical measures and hiring has weakened, a trend economists describe as "no hire, no fire."
Earlier this week, the Bureau of Labor Statistics issued a massive preliminary revision of U.S. job gains for the 12 months ending in March, further evidence that the labor market has not been as strong as previously thought.

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WORLD

Yemen’s national museum damaged during Israeli airstrikes, Houthis say

Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen — The Israeli airstrikes in Yemen that killed at least 35 people and wounded more than 130 others also caused damage to Yemen’s national museum and other historical sites in its capital city, the Houthi Ministry of Culture said Thursday.

The status of the artifacts inside the museum is still unclear, but thousands of historical artifacts are at risk of damage, according to the ministry. Associated Press photos and video footage from the site of Wednesday’s strike showed damage to the building’s facade.

The ministry called on the United Nations cultural agency UNESCO to condemn the attack and to intervene to help protect this historical building and its artifacts.

Most of those killed were in Sanaa, the capital, where a military headquarters and a fuel station were hit on Wednesday, the Houthi-run health ministry said.

Israel has previously launched waves of airstrikes in response to the Houthis’ firing of missiles and drones at Israel. The Iran-backed Houthis say they are supporting Hamas and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and on Sunday they sent



Flames and smoke rise following Israeli airstrikes in Sanaa, Yemen, on Wednesday. The strikes reportedly killed at least 35 people.

a drone that breached Israel’s multilayered air defenses and slammed into a southern airport.

Separately, the Israeli military said Thursday it carried out strikes in Lebanon targeting what it described as a Hezbollah “site used for the production and storage of strategic weapons” in the Bekaa valley and infrastructure belonging to Hezbollah in the area of Zrari-

yeh in the south.

Since a U.S.-brokered ceasefire halted the latest Israel-Hezbollah war in November, Israel has continued to carry out near-daily strikes in Lebanon that it says are aimed at stopping the militant group from rebuilding its capabilities.

Lebanese officials say the strikes are in violation of the ceasefire.

Qatar: Israel ‘killed any hope’ of hostage release with strike

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Qatar’s prime minister said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “killed any hope” of releasing hostages still held in the Gaza Strip after Israel attacked Hamas leaders in Doha.

The comments from Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, ahead of appearing at the United Nations on Thursday, underscored the wider anger among Gulf Arab countries over Israel’s strike that killed at least six people.

“I was meeting one of the hostages’ families the morning of the attack,” Sheikh Mohammed told CNN in an interview aired late Wednesday. “They are counting on this (ceasefire) mediation. They have no other hope for that.”

Sheikh Mohammed added: “I think that what Netanyahu has done yesterday (Tuesday), he just killed any hope for those hostages.”

His remarks came as thousands of Palestinians continued to flee Ga-

za City ahead of Israel’s impending offensive there. The numbers leaving the city have grown in recent days, though many have refused because they say they no longer have the strength or money to relocate.

The Israeli military’s plans for the next phases of its operation in what it calls Hamas’ last remaining stronghold are aimed at taking over the largest Palestinian city that’s already devastated from earlier raids and experiencing famine.

The attack on the territory of a U.S. ally alarmed countries in the Mideast and beyond. It also marked a dramatic escalation in the region and risked upending talks aimed at ending the war and freeing hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza.

Sheikh Mohammed was expected to attend a U.N. Security Council meeting later Thursday, and Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was set to visit Doha to underscore Pakistan’s support for Qatar’s security and sovereignty.



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WEEKEND



Bieber's 'Swag II' for the die-hards
Music, Pages 28-29

Double trouble

'Twinless' a dark comedy that addresses the nature of grief while exploring concepts of identity, loneliness

- **Movie profile, Page 16**
- **Movie review, Page 17**



Dylan O'Brien, left, and James Sweeney star in "Twinless."
AVA PELLOR/For The Washington Post

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

Express yourself on a collaborative canvas

More than 10.6M users using wplace to design pixel art on the website’s global map

By Wyatte Grantham-Philips and Itzel Luna
Associated Press

In one new corner of the internet, users are invited to “paint the world.” And paint they have. Welcome to wplace — an ever-evolving, gamified global map overflowing with drawings made on a more than 4-trillion-pixel canvas.

Images of Icelandic singer Laufey float over Reykjavík, while tributes for the late Tejano singer Selena Quintanilla surround Corpus Christi, Texas. The crest of San Lorenzo and other soccer clubs fill Buenos Aires. “Squid Game” fan art can be found on the outskirts of Seoul. And Walter White’s opening monologue from “Breaking Bad” sits near Albuquerque, N.M.

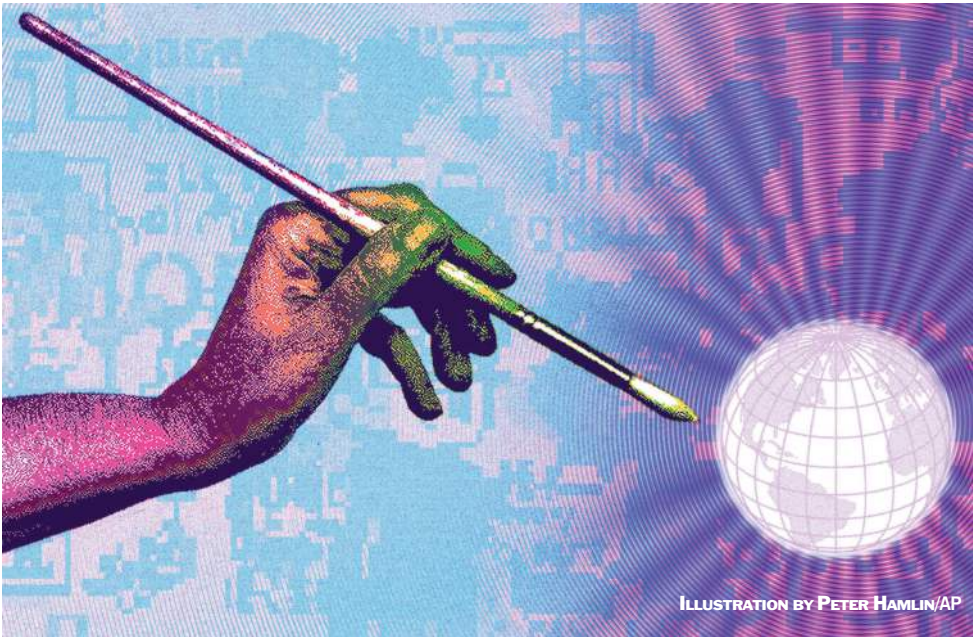
Wplace launched July 21, but the artwork is already overwhelming — ranging from simple stick figures and thin-lettered words, to colorful fan art and highly detailed images users build under online pseudonyms.

“It’s wild, and chaotic and crude,” said Yotam Ophir, a University at Buffalo professor of communication whose research includes analyzing digital spaces. That’s part of wplace’s appeal, he added, describing the site as a somewhat of a “rebellion” against what the internet has become.

“It’s not going to break Facebook,” he said. “But it’s kind of a reminder that things can be done differently.”

Wplace had garnered more than 10.6 million users worldwide as of Sept. 4, co-founder Enzo Watanabe told The Associated Press. With that explosion in just over a month, moderation challenges have arisen. Watanabe said via email that the project’s growth “exceeded all expectations” — but acknowledged that “adjusting to the high demand has been challenging.”

The game was developed in Brazil over three months by a single person, he said,



and is now run by a team of 46, in addition to volunteers.

One pixel at a time

New users begin with a small, fixed number of pixels, and more become available every 30 seconds. The more you contribute, the more pixels are available to you — sort of “like a leveling system” seen in video games, said Moira Hemens, a 19-year-old user from Edmonton, Alberta.

Even with bigger pools of pixels, it can take a lot of time to bring map paintings to life.

“Every art piece takes me hours to design in advance,” Hemens said. One drawing she recently finished, of a Pokémon named Leafeon in her hometown, took her two days to design outside of wplace — and then another day to build in it, she said. But Hemens notes that she loves art, and checks the map and places pixels almost every morning now.

Muhammad Aliy Fattah bin Yusrizal, a 21-year-old from Malaysia, similarly says wplace has become an outlet for his creativity.

The site “is one of the places that I can express myself,” Fattah said, noting he’s

mostly contributed art dedicated to his favorite video games and placed atop his home country.

Users from around the world also team up to bring larger projects to life — like “The Neighborhood,” which sits in a corner of Yuma County, Ariz. Real-life resident Krista Rider, 25, started by drawing two homes. It now has over 50, connected by paths, patches of grass and rivers.

“I wanted to do something nice that could lift people up, give them something that they feel like they’re contributing to, whether it’s big or small,” Rider said.

Moderation challenges

While unfiltered chaos is arguably much of the point of wplace’s interactive map, the site still outlines general rules barring inappropriate content, bots, disclosing someone else’s personal information or painting over other art “using random colors or patterns just to mess things up.” Wplace says it has systems in place to erase drawings that go against its rules — and a report button to flag serious cases.

But users in online discussion threads dedicated to wplace have complained that such moderation is not enforced, or ad-

dressed in a timely manner — with some stressing particular concern about hate speech and doxing.

“The amount of moderators they have currently is not really enough for the amount of people that are actually on the site,” says Aaron Hickerson, a 35-year-old user in Germany. “It kind of leaves the system that they have overwhelmed.”

Some say they’ve seen their work disrupted — or, in video game terms, “griefed” — by the same users over and over again. And others have pointed out map art that includes racist words or images, sexually explicit content, vandalized pride flags and Nazi symbols. In response, users have made collective callouts to help cover up such content.

Wplace said it aims to “keep improving” moderation — in addition to looking for technology that will aid server performance and potentially provide more security features.

“The challenge is big, but we are doing our best,” Watanabe said.

Some users have also become used to their art simply being covered up over time. Emily Northrip, a college student in Boston, recently completed a drawing of the superhero character Invincible. When she returned days later, someone else had drawn pupils over his goggles.

But Northrip found the addition funny. Wplace is “a public server,” she said, “If someone wants to draw something over your pixels, they can.”

What’s next for wplace?

With the resources required to meet erupting demand, some question whether wplace should keep accepting new submissions forever.

“I definitely don’t want it to stay around forever, because I think it’ll just fall apart if it does,” Hemens said, noting wplace could perhaps create a snapshot capturing the map so far — or pause and open future contributions later, similar to a predecessor, Reddit’s now-retired r/place.

Watanabe said that wplace intends “to continue welcoming new contributions,” as well as host in-platform events.

Massage your tired legs after a long day with Urevo’s Relax

By Gregg Elluman
Tribune News Service

After a long and tiring day, your legs will benefit from Urevo’s new AI-powered Wireless Relax Massager (\$249.99, available in green or black). The portable massager is part of the Urevo Wellness Care series of products. It’s designed for a variety of uses, including overall muscle relaxation, stress relief and pain management. It can be taken anywhere.

If you do have any medical condition, contact your doctor. And Urevo states on its site that you should consult a doctor if discomfort occurs.

Without making any official medical claims, after using the Urevo wireless Relax Massager for several days, my unofficial opinion is — wow! It is fabulous. I found myself looking forward to getting my tired legs home just to use it. It’s that good.

The massage system features built-in airbags that provide an immersive experience. Each unit features an internal air pump that simulates a massage with adjustable airflow control. It was surprisingly addictive, in a positive way.

After unboxing, put on the left and right sleeves, which are made with breathable fabric and

wrap around the entire leg for a 360-degree snug and comfortable fit. Each sleeve has a controller box that needs to be placed on the outside of the leg to access the buttons for power, modes, intensity and heat levels.

The artificial intelligence technology is said to monitor your muscle tension and discomfort levels, adjusting the intensity and massage modes for personalized, targeted relief.

There are three modes — relaxation, recovery or shape — three heat settings and three intensity levels, which will cover a gentle soothing massage up to a



Urevo/TNS

The Urevo Relax Massager uses built-in airbags to massage the legs.

deep tissue therapy massage.

Settings, modes and more can be accessed using the manual buttons or within the companion AI-Powered Wellness app, which also provides recommendations for post-exercise recovery.

The app provides data reports after your massage is completed, detailing the effectiveness of each session.

The app’s algorithm will analyze your legs before the massaging begins. It detects pain points and evaluates pain sensitivity, resulting in recommendations for personalized massage parameters.

The 2500mAh rechargeable battery provides up to 150 minutes of continuous operation.

Online: urevo.com

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Team Cherry photos

Hollow Knight is a 2017 indie game that’s achieved cult status, with its sequel, Silksong, becoming the year’s most anticipated release.

No longer a Hollow Knight skeptic

Critic revisits 2017 indie hit, finds narrative full of more purpose than initially thought

By GENE PARK
The Washington Post

From its opening seconds, Hollow Knight displays a rare sort of bravery, and I’m not talking about the titular hero who wanders into its dark world.

The bravery is in its storytelling, trusting the audience to enter a monotone, dead world with no character motivation, no overarching goal and no real context besides appeasing the wanderlust of the player assuming the role of a stubby, empty-eyed shell of a being. It’s this exact bravery that made this game challenging for me in 2017. Its obtuse storytelling, told through gameplay and environments, felt too detached for my taste at the time.

Its sequel, Silksong, was teased in 2019 and was suddenly, finally released last week. So it was the perfect time for me to revisit this revered indie darling, famously created by a team of three Australian developers called Team Cherry who funded the game through Kickstarter.

The rediscovery has been a revelation. I had to remind myself of this game’s aimless opening because by the end of its story, the Hollow Knight and I carried ourselves with intention and purpose. This knight was no longer hollow, as my experiences, memories and choices had filled his soul with resolute clarity.

As the knight, players explore Hallow- nest, a hollowed-out underground king- dom of bug people who have gone mad. Part of the game’s allure, and its chal- lenge, is that it asks the audience to be proactive. Its monotone aesthetic put me off at first, but playing it in 2025 only fur- ther demonstrates its timeless qualities. Thick outlines illustrate the game’s roots



The environments and music in Hollow Knight work toward creating a sense of history and ecology as players discover its world.

as a flash-based game from the old in- ternet, a powerful evocation for misty- eyed millennials such as myself, and its cute, ink-soft character designs make it appealing to people of all ages.

Hollow Knight is a shining modern example of the Metroidvania genre, a portmanteau of Nintendo’s Metroid, which solidified the adventure game formula that encourages exploration and finding new items to access new areas in a maze- like world, and the Castlevania series, which many argue enhanced and perfect- ed that formula. With more than 15 million copies sold, Hollow Knight is also one of its most successful.

Like the PlayStation classic Castlevania: Symphony of the Night, Team Cherry’s game plays with expectations of the genre. Getting lost in video games can be a frus- trating experience, but Hollow Knight is an invitation to stay adrift in its darkness, as the fauna of Hallow- nest outline and gently brighten the world like a streetlamp against the night. The score by composer Christopher Larkin is ambient, a contrast

to the rhythmic, propulsive beats of the 2D-gaming genre. Each of Larkin’s com- positions also fill out that blackness with an exploration of soft melody and sound that evoke ecology, ritual and history.

The game is in two dimensions, but because of this blend of art and sound, Hallow- nest becomes an immersive, enve- loping environment. This is best demon- strated in Hallow- nest’s fallen capital, City of Tears, where the harp in Larkin’s score mightily tries to match the sound of the raindrops’ cascade down ancient window panes. I couldn’t help but sit on a bench and reflect on this textured sense of isola- tion, itself an endless hollow night.

Purpose and clarity indeed arrive, fed through meeting colorful, memorable characters such as the sequel’s protago- nist, Hornet, a sisterly and agile knight on her own journey, and Zote the Mighty, a crowing but hapless fellow traveler. The gameplay borrows only one mechanic from the popular and influential Dark Souls series, that of running back to the player’s location of failure to regain pro-

gress. It’s probably the only unnecessary feature, encouraging runbacks in a game that is already all about backtracking and rediscovery.

But like Metroid and Souls, Hollow Knight tells its story through the environ- ment and seemingly disconnected tales of other travelers. It’s perhaps thanks to the expressive 2D art style and game mechan- ics that Team Cherry communicates its story more clearly than the Souls series, also known for its obtuse narratives.

By journey’s end, my Hollow Knight gained and achieved goals. He found out why he’s here in the first place. To do that, he needed more powerful versions of his abilities. He needed to find the magical, godly powers of moth wings to reach new heights. I needed light to find my way out of Deepnest, a nearly pitch-black corner of the kingdom that trapped me in its laby- rinth both times I’ve played. As the player filling out his existence, I learned enemy attack patterns to fight with precision and agility.

The game’s true climax, after solving its biggest existential mystery, is extraordi- nary and fulfilling in ways few games and stories achieve. What started out as an aimless adventure ended with necessary, noble action. Team Cherry was coura- geous in leveraging the player’s fear of silence and lack of purpose, prompting us in return to pour into their knight our focus and emotion. I leave Hollow Knight having solved most of its mystery, in- cluding why Silksong is the most antici- pated game of this year. Now properly acclimated to its vision, I can begin that process anew with millions of others who already knew what I discovered several years later: Hollow Knight is a reminder of how video games can be the most re- warding way to experience a tale.

Platforms: PC, Nintendo Switch and Switch 2, PlayStation 4 and 5, Xbox One and X/S

Online: hollowknight.com

WEEKEND: MOVIES



AVA PELLOR/For The Washington Post

Dylan O'Brien, left, and James Sweeney star in Sweeney's "Twinless." The writer-director plays Dennis, who pretends to have lost a twin so he can bond at a twin bereavement group with Roman (O'Brien), whose identical brother — Rocky, also played by O'Brien — recently died.

A childhood fantasy channeled into a film

Indie filmmaker James Sweeney's 'Twinless' a darkly comedic meditation on the effects of profound loneliness

BY SONIA RAO
The Washington Post

Nineties kids were raised on twin propaganda. "Full House" and "It Takes Two" darlings Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen ruled young Hollywood. "Sister, Sister" stars Tia and Tamara Mowry led enviable lives on television. Lindsay Lohan doubled in cool factor when duplicated on screen in "The Parent Trap." All of those actresses played twins separated at birth who encounter each other later in life, completely by accident. The lesson: If you didn't already have a look-alike, maybe you just hadn't found them yet.

Growing up in Alaska, "I built this fantasy of meeting my long-lost twin," said 35-year-old indie filmmaker James Sweeney. "I think it sort of encapsulated this idea of a perfect best friend — somebody who wants to do all the things you want to do. And, you can share clothes."

Eventually, it became clear the dream was never going to come true. So Sweeney did what so many artists have done before him: He channeled his fantasy into a movie. Sort of. In "Twinless," now in select on-base theaters, the writer-director plays Dennis, an awkward Portlander who pretends to have lost a twin so he can bond at a twin bereavement group with Roman (Dylan O'Brien), whose identical brother — Rocky, also played by O'Brien — recently died. What Roman doesn't know is that Dennis not only knew Rocky before his sudden death, he played a pivotal role in the tragedy.

Flashbacks reveal that Dennis got hung up on Rocky after a one-night stand, adding a layer of creepiness to him approaching Roman at the group. There isn't any question of romance with this twin — Roman is so straight that he asks whether there is such a thing as a "gay gene" — but Dennis is still relentless in his pursuit of friendship. His desperate, often delusional behavior turns "Twinless" into a darkly comedic meditation on the effects of profound loneliness.

"I definitely would never have responded so excitedly to the concept of playing twins on its own," O'Brien said over Zoom in mid-August, seated next to Sweeney.

He was drawn to the opportunity to play these twins in particular: Rocky, an incorrigible flirt who can brighten any mood, and Roman, a dim but endearing brute grieving the brother he believed to be the "better" twin.

"I just thought the entire ride was something that, if executed right, could be really special," O'Brien added.

Working on the film allowed O'Brien and Sweeney, neither of whom has a twin, to imagine how losing one could impact a person's sense of self.

"I've always been interested in the psychology of twin identity," said Sweeney, who pored over related studies in college and even dated a twin in adulthood. "I thought it was a really interesting way to explore the concept of identity. Twin loss ... struck me as a uniquely profound kind of grief, in part because it is a splitting of oneself."

The original draft was written entirely from Dennis' point of view, Sweeney said, explaining that he switched to Dennis and Roman as dual protagonists after doing something similar with his first feature, the 2019 indie comedy "Straight Up."

Introducing the budding friendship from Roman's perspective helped develop "an understanding of why these two people are drawn to each other," Sweeney said. He needed to ground the story in something real and relatable — Roman's immense grief — before turning it on its head.

O'Brien, who made a name for himself on TV with "Teen Wolf" and in film with the "Maze Runner" franchise, physically transforms for each role in "Twinless," carrying himself with a delightfully cheeky swagger as Rocky and broadcasting inner turmoil through Roman's hunched shoulders and lumbering gait.

"For me, it was as much of a thing energetically as it was aesthetically," O'Brien said. "I wanted to genuinely

be able to focus on the spirits and energies of each of these characters [and] take advantage of what I could change physically — facial hair, hair, all the things."

The 27-day shoot, which took place in early 2024, was divided into two parts: O'Brien played Rocky before a brief break, and returned as Roman. He worked with Sweeney to carefully hone each of his portrayals. Rocky, who could have become a two-dimensional figure in lesser hands, possesses enough thorns to avoid caricature. (O'Brien is straight in real life, while Sweeney is gay.) O'Brien chose to use a different voice for Roman, speaking from the back of his throat, and Sweeney made sure that remained distinct. "You sound a little Dylan on that one," he would flag.

Though Sweeney only plays one character in the movie, he toggled between two modes as a director.

"The more I can have my visual choices be emblematic of what I'm trying to convey narratively, the easier it is for me to make those choices," he said. He shot the first act on 35-millimeter film and switched to digital when the character perspective changes to "explore this theme of authenticity versus artifice." Similarly, the film starts out using dolly shots — or tracking shots accomplished by mounting the camera to a wheeled platform — and switches to camera zooms later.

"Twinless" evolved into something quite different than Sweeney's childhood fantasy of encountering a long-lost twin, but the emotional undercurrents are similar: Dennis still finds someone who makes him feel less alone — it just happens to be someone else's twin. The filmmaker recalled a scene in which the characters are playing two truths and a lie, and Dennis noted that the trick to playing the game well is to say something that is factually untrue but spiritually honest.

"I think that's kind of how I feel about this film as a representation of my life," Sweeney said. "It's emotionally truthful, but it's in no way how I act. For the record."

"I've always been interested in the psychology of twin identity. I thought it was a really interesting way to explore the concept of identity. Twin loss ... struck me as a uniquely profound kind of grief, in part because it is a splitting of oneself."

"Twinless" writer-director-actor James Sweeney

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

A loving send-off

‘Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale’ gives loyal fans of Crawley family a satisfying measure of closure

By JOCELYN NOVECK
Associated Press

Change comes slowly to the Downton Abbey universe and its Crawley family. Just watch Robert Crawley go flat-hunting in London.

Wait, what? FLAT-HUNTING? The Earl of Grantham? Well, yes, and it’s the most amusing scene in “Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale” (a self-announcing title if there ever was one).

Just look at proud and starched Robert (Hugh Bonneville), trying to be open-minded but utterly flummoxed by this “flat” in which you cannot go “up” to bed because there is no “up.” Well, you can go “along” to bed, suggests daughter Mary (Michelle Dockery — as always the sensible center of things), trying to make it all sound manageable.

But the prospect of flat-living — rather than maintaining a mansion in London — is a thing the Crawleys must consider as they move into the 1930s, with financial and social instability always around the corner.

“Families like ours have to keep moving to survive,” says Mary, with the weight of Downton Abbey’s future itself resting on her shoulders.

A note to those coming in cold to the franchise here: Well, it’s going to be quite hard. Writer Julian Fellowes and director Simon Curtis do not engage in hand-hold-

ing when it comes to mastering the Crawley family tree or the broader family of servants that Downton fans know and love. Even those who saw the first two films — the last in 2022 — might feel the need for a refresher.

We begin in London’s West End, at a show by Noel Coward, attended by Downton inhabitants from all levels. They’re all there to watch dashing actor Guy Dexter (Dominic West), who in the last movie asked former butler Thomas Barrow to become his dresser, and more.

Meanwhile, Mary is shopping in London with sister Edith, and the importance of this scene is perhaps to remind us that the real star of the Downton universe — after that stupendous house of course — is the costumes. Mary finds a sleek red satin gown that is quite possibly the most smashing outfit we’ve seen yet.

But when she puts it on for a society ball, trouble erupts. As the family arrives, we learn that Mary’s divorce decree has come through — and this means, alas, that she will become a pariah. The newspaper screams of “divorce in high places,” and indeed, the ball’s hostess (Joely Richardson) actually kicks Mary out of the party because royalty is coming.

Soon we’re back at Downton, and there is one very big difference: No longer does Violet Crawley (Maggie Smith), with her inimitable style and those hilarious quips, rule the halls. She died in the last film —



FOCUS FEATURES/AP

From left, Laura Carmichael, Harry Hadden-Paton, Elizabeth McGovern, Hugh Bonneville and Michelle Dockery in a scene from “Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale.”

and Smith died in 2024. But the film is dedicated to her in more ways than one.

Besides Violet, almost everyone is back, and we have a few new (or newly returning) characters as well. Paul Giamatti is, happily, back from the TV show as Harold, the brother of Cora (Elizabeth McGovern, always a warm presence as Robert’s American wife).

Then there’s Simon Russell Beale as the pompous Hector, who tries to hold onto local tradition but runs up against Isobel (Penelope Wilton), and a charming Arty Froushan as Noel Coward himself. The playwright is the closest thing in the Downton world to a modern celebrity — everyone wants to be with him, no matter station nor gender, and he winds up helping Mary overcome her social shunning.

Nowhere to be seen is dashing Hugh Dancy, who played a film director (besotted with Mary) in the last movie. But the character that director anointed as a screenwriter, Joseph Molesley (Kevin

Doyle), is back, and Fellowes must have enjoyed writing this line for him: “In many ways, the writers are the stars of cinema.”

To be honest, the script veers from clever to extremely sappy, or to filler lines like “I think I’ll go get another cup.” But kudos for the moment a befuddled Robert describes the newfound phenomenon of an apartment building as “a layer cake of strangers.”

“Sometimes I feel that the past is a more comfortable place than the future,” someone says in a poignant moment. But this final movie will give loyal Downton fans what they want: a satisfying bit of closure and the sense that the future, though a bit scary, may look kindly on Downton Abbey as long as Mary is in charge. And as long as Smith’s Violet, imposing in a front-hall portrait, is looking down from above.

“Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale” is rated PG for suggestive material, smoking and some thematic elements. Running time: 123 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

Grief, loneliness lead down disturbing paths in ‘Twinless’

By JOCELYN NOVECK
Associated Press

James Sweeney never had a twin, though he wanted one. The filmmaker grew up a military brat, and says he dreamed of having a twin that would serve as a kind of built-in best friend. Alas, he was twinless.

Of course, not all twins remain or ever become best friends, which is one of the painful truths we encounter in “Twinless,” the audacious film that has resulted from Sweeney’s persistent fascination with twindom.

But Sweeney’s provocative work — in which he stars as well as writes, directs and produces — swings much wider. From the very specific vantage point of twindom, he’s made a dark comedy — with a definite emphasis on the dark — that addresses the nature of grief. What was it Shakespeare said about love, that it looks with the mind, not the eyes? Sweeney’s film argues that grief is also subjective, and that it doesn’t always follow logical paths — or even acceptable ones.

His partner in this absorbing project is a terrific Dylan O’Brien, who earns double billing as two very different twins (he won a special acting prize at Sundance this year, where the film won the U.S. dramatic audience award). One is Rocky, a gay man who is outgoing, free-wheeling, witty, self-assured. The other, Roman, is a straight man who is withdrawn, insecure, less than articulate and easily offended.

We begin with the sound of a crash, off-screen. And then a funeral. Roman is mourning his twin.

The task of emptying out Rocky’s Portland, Ore., apartment falls to Roman and his devastated mother (Lauren Graham, in a brief but searing performance), and Roman decides to stay on for a while. That’s when he happens on



Roadside Attractions

Roman (Dylan O’Brien), left, and Dennis (James Sweeney) bond over the twins they say they’ve lost in “Twinless.”

a twin bereavement group.

One of his fellow mourners is Dennis, who speaks freely of his own lost twin, Dean. Outwardly the two men would seem to share nothing. But Dennis reminds Roman of Rocky, and the two bond over shared experiences and loss, eating together and buying groceries, even road-tripping to a hockey game. You almost expect a rom-com montage where they start shopping for clothes.

Dennis tells heartwarming stories about Dean, such as the time he subbed in for him on school photo day, and nobody was the wiser. The heartwarming goes to heart-rending, though, when Dennis talks about the agony of loss.

He actually likes the pain, he says, “because if I don’t have the pain, then he’s really gone, and I’m actually alone.”

This would all be a great premise for a quirky bro-mance. But then, the opening credits run, fully 20 min-

utes in, just when we’ve forgotten to expect them. And here’s where things get complicated — for Roman and Dennis, but also for any effort to review this film. The major twists, which unfold as we rewind to where we started, are surely better left unrevealed.

Still, it should not surprise anyone that Dennis has deeper reasons for latching onto Roman, and as Sweeney’s plot unspools, we become more fascinated and horrified by the minute. Now we also meet Rocky, in flashback. In a few short scenes, we come to understand his easy appeal — and how different he is from his brother. While Rocky is quick-witted and clever, for example, Roman is slow to grasp sarcasm, and insulted by the slightest jab. O’Brien’s performance is a triumph of such detail.

There’s a third anchor here, a female character whose importance slowly grows: Marcie, the sweet-tempered receptionist at Dennis’ office (Aisling Franciosi, excellent.) Things all start crumbling when she invites Dennis to a Halloween party. Dennis brings Roman, and the two hit it off. (Sweeney makes ingenious use of a split screen to convey the differing experiences our characters have at this party.) The writing is on the wall: This is heading somewhere very messy.

That denouement is both violent — at one point, stunningly — and gentle. In the end, we’re left to ponder not only grief but loneliness, and the lengths people will go to fight it. Shakespeare had a line about that, too, referring to “the mystery of your loneliness.” In Sweeney’s disturbing but also oddly satisfying tale, that essential human condition retains its mystery.

“Twinless” is rated R for sexual content/nudity and language. Running time: 100 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

WEEKEND: MOVIES



ARLYN McADOREY, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Director Colin Hanks, producer Ryan Reynolds and John Candy’s children Jennifer and Christopher Candy pose Sept. 4 at a press conference for the documentary “John Candy: I Like Me,” prior to the film’s premiere, at the Toronto International Film Festival.

‘He just brought so much joy to people’

Actor John Candy’s life and career are celebrated in a new documentary, which premiered at TIFF

BY JADA YUAN
The Washington Post

Asked to name his favorite John Candy movie in front of some 2,500 people Sept. 4 on the opening night of the 50th Toronto International Film Festival, Ryan Reynolds immediately began speaking in different voices, like a man possessed.

“Welcome to Marathon, how may I help you?”

“You can start by wiping that smile off your rosy f—ing cheeks. Then you can give me a f—ing automobile!”

Reynolds, a proud son of Canada who produced the documentary “John Candy: I Like Me” about his Torontonion comedy hero, went on to recite lines from 1987’s “Planes, Trains and Automobiles” for nearly a minute-and-a-half straight. He

got most of them right (leaving out a couple of profanities in the quote above), or at least essentially captured the frustration of Steve Martin’s Neal Page, who’s paired off with Candy’s Del Griffith for one of the great comedy duos of all time. The instant John Hughes classic follows two strangers who get thrust into a doozy of a Midwest adventure when neither of them can get home to Chicago for Thanksgiving.

Reynolds apologized to the crowd — “It just came out!” — but added that it wouldn’t surprise his mom, in the audience, who’s heard him quoting Candy movies his entire life. He loves that script so much, “I have it tattooed into my 4-year-old daughter’s back just so I [can] look at it as she [runs] away,” he said.

SEE CANDY ON PAGE 19



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

A photograph of Second City performers including John Candy, far left. Candy was a founding member of the Toronto comedy troupe.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Candy: Friends, family pay tribute to comedy giant who died in 1994

FROM PAGE 18

A box-office hit at the time of its release, it has gained an even bigger cult following since and is so good, Reynolds added, “it would win an Oscar or be Oscar-nominated if it came out today.”

Everyone loved John Candy. That much was clear from the laughter and tears throughout the world premiere of the documentary tribute to the comedy giant, who died shockingly and devastatingly from a heart attack at just 43 years old in 1994. So many of his friends are in the film, which comes out Oct. 10 on Prime Video: Martin, Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Catherine O’Hara, Martin Short, Macaulay Culkin, director Chris Columbus and others.

An emotional Martin tells of how he met Candy on the set for “Planes, Trains and Automobiles” and thought it would be like other films where, once the cameras stopped, they’d go back to their separate lives. But as he was pulling away on the last day of the shoot, he just couldn’t imagine that being the end.

“I turn around and go back and invite him home,” Martin says.

Even the documentary’s director, Colin Hanks, seemed too overwhelmed to speak much at the premiere. He’d known Candy his whole childhood as a kind of surrogate uncle, after Candy played his dad Tom’s lothario brother in 1984’s “Splash,” the role that would make him a star. Colin remembers Candy as an adult who really listened to kids, who made him feel as if his opinions mattered.

It’s a sentiment echoed by Culkin, who was 8 when he shot “Uncle Buck” with Candy, before they were reunited on “Home Alone.” Candy, he says in the documentary, was one of the first adults to show awareness of Culkin’s father’s difficult behavior.

“It was no secret,” Culkin says. “He was already a monster. All of a sudden, the fame and the money came, and he became an infamous monster. He was already not a good guy. I think John was looking a little side-eyed, like, ‘Is everything all right over there? You doing good? Good day? Everything’s all right? Everything good at home? All right.’”

“I remember him caring when a lot of people didn’t,” Culkin continues, adding that he wanted to reconnect as a teenager, to show Candy that he was doing OK, but they never had the chance.

One of the most heartbreaking moments in a movie full of them is Candy’s dear buddy Eugene Levy, who attended the premiere, describing being a pallbearer at his funeral. As they were driving in the funeral procession, Levy realized that the city of Los Angeles had shut down the 405 for them, something that happens only when the pope or the president dies, he says. Officers stood at every exit, saluting as they drove by.

“That’s how you know you’ve really made it,” Levy says in the film with a smile, “when they shut down a freeway for you.”

Still, there were many times the theater erupted with laughter as clips from Candy’s performances played. There he was as Gus Polinski, genial polka king of the Midwest, who rescues O’Hara’s character in 1990’s “Home Alone”; as the hapless title character of 1989’s “Uncle Buck,” stuck babysitting his niece and nephew (his first movie with Culkin); and as half-man, half-dog Barf in 1987’s “Spaceballs.”

For Candy’s family, the experience of being in that room was cathartic.

“I was more concerned about everyone crying, but ... it felt so good to hear all the laughs,” Candy’s daughter, Jennifer said. “And that was our dad. He just brought so much joy to people. ... And I love it. So thank you.”

Candy was a founding member of Toronto’s famed Second City comedy troupe, alongside the likes of Levy, O’Hara, Short, Aykroyd, Dave Thomas, Joe Flaherty, Andrea Martin and Gilda Radner, and was soon in a ton of silly, often hockey-themed sketches being broadcast across Canada and America on “Second City Television” (SCTV).

After Candy’s death, it came out that he’d quietly given large sums of money to a hospital for needy children in Durango, Mexico. He’d been there on location for “Wagons East” when he died.



ARLYN McADOREY, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Producer Ryan Reynolds and director Colin Hanks arrive at the Sept. 4 premiere of “John Candy: I Like Me” in a replica prop car from the movie “Planes, Trains and Automobiles” at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Candy’s secret sauce was being an everyman who rarely played up his size for laughs. Yet he was plagued by crippling self-doubt.

He partied a lot, maybe too much, but his isn’t the tragic story of a fallen star. His heart attack, it seems, was largely genetic. One of the demons Candy wrestled with but rarely talked about was his own father’s death at 35 from a massive heart attack, just before John’s fifth birthday. After his dad, a World War II veteran and car salesman, died, his family never talked about it.

After his dad’s death, the film shows, Candy was shy — a bad student at his all-boys Catholic school who mostly liked listening to comedy albums and going to movies. His big dream wasn’t showbiz but football, until he had his entire kneecap removed due to an injury. He even tried to

“I was more concerned about everyone crying, but ... it felt so good to hear all the laughs. And that was our dad. He just brought so much joy to people.”

Jennifer Candy
John Candy’s daughter, about audience reaction to the documentary “John Candy: I Like Me”

enlist to fight in Vietnam but got rejected because of his knee and then studied journalism before getting into acting in college. He met his wife, Rosemary, when they were both working at a department store and friends set them up on a blind date. They didn’t get along initially, but, as with everyone in the world, he won her over.

March of last year marked the 30th anniversary of John’s death, which was national news at the time. His son, Chris, was then 9 and “grew up mostly without a father,” he says in the film. He can relate to how that may have led John to a childhood of being angry and upset, but also turning to comedy, because a boy without a dad “grows up looking for help,” Chris says in the documentary. John was plagued with depression and panic attacks and coped by drinking and overeating. At one point, he lost 100 pounds with a trainer, but the industry “wanted him big,” his wife says in the film.

The seed for the documentary started about seven years ago, when Reynolds and his company made a tribute reel to Candy on the 25th anniversary of his death — and immediately got an outpouring of love.

“It was shocking how many people connected to John Candy, and that was when it really just hit. We [couldn’t] believe no one had done a documentary on the guy,” Reynolds said.

The family had been approached many times, Chris Candy said in the Q&A. Reynolds and Hanks were the right team, but more motivating, Chris said, was the realization that the people who loved his dad weren’t going to be around forever. Hughes, who made numerous movies with Candy — starting with “National Lampoon’s Vacation,” in which Candy plays the security guard at Wally World — died in 2009 and was represented at the premiere by his son and granddaughter. The filmmakers also managed to get an interview with Mel Brooks, who’s 99. Candy was “such an ebullient guy, and it’s a sin you got him taken away from you,” the “Spaceballs” director says in the film.

Murray turned out to be an emotional through line of the movie.

“I can’t tell you what was right about John Candy, or what was wrong, but he was my friend,” Murray says in the film’s opening moments. “And I don’t want to cry, but when I see his face, I mean ...” He trails off.

Getting Murray, Reynolds said, was the Mount Everest of the movie, along with Aykroyd and Culkin. All three eschew interviews. No one could find Aykroyd for months. Then, one day, he called and said: “Tell you what. You come up here. I eat dinner. You spend the night. The next morning, we’ll do the interview, and you get the f— out,” Reynolds said in the Q&A.

When Reynolds finally got a call back from Murray, after leaving many messages on a voicemail that said it was for a Greek shipping company, he says Murray quizzed him about obscure comedy lore, agreed to meet, then ghosted him. Finally, he made Murray a video message at 11:30 p.m., which his 2-year-old son crashed.

“I said, ‘Tell Bill to do the interview,’” Reynolds recalls. “He looks right at the camera and goes: ‘Do the interview, Bill!’ And I said, ‘Say no to a kid like that and I don’t know what kind of monster you are,’ and just hung up.” Murray called back immediately and asked, “What can I do for J.C.?”

Reynolds said he hoped the film would be not just a tribute to Candy, but also an inspiration for kids who might now discover him.

“John had this wonderful opportunity ... which is that he really got to go out there and suck for a while,” Reynolds said. “And I think we live in this really curated society in which kids, my own kids, too — they’re terrified to suck. They’re terrified to experiment and be bad at something. Really, perfectionism is like a ... disease. And you see him going out there just fearlessly having fun and doing so without consequence or penalty. And it was just a reminder to allow that in more as we go.”

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Historic hits in mod Milan

While much of Italy’s appeal is rooted in its relaxed pace and Old World feel, Milan — the nation’s second city and financial capital — offers just the opposite. But travelers who make time for Milan find that this modern, industrious metropolis packs historic highlights as powerful as those of other Italian cities.

I’d start a first visit (well, any visit) at the heart of the city: Piazza del Duomo, which is dominated by Milan’s cathedral, the Duomo di Milano. It’s the third-largest church in Europe, after St. Peter’s in Rome and the Cathedral of Seville in Spain. To build it, the Milanese used the most expensive stone they could find: pink marble.

The facade is a commotion of Gothic features — pointed-arch windows, statues, little pinnacles and reliefs. Scholars count a thousand individual carvings — big and small — on the church exterior and another 2,000 sculptural elements inside. Once you step through the entrance, you’re

struck by its immensity. After touring the interior, you can climb the stairs — or take an elevator — to the marble-paved



Rick Steves

roof, 20 stories up, for the most memorable part of a Duomo visit. Up here, wandering through a fancy forest of spires, there’s a stunning view: On a clear day you can see all the way to the

Alps. A 15-foot-tall gilded statue of the Virgin Mary on the tallest spire overlooks it all. Back on the ground, one side of Piazza del Duomo is dominated by a grand arch — it marks the entrance to the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, built as one of the first shopping malls in the world. Today, you can linger among luxury stores such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Prada.

Though it looks like it’s built of stone, the Galleria is actually a skeleton of iron beams faced with stone and topped with glass. When it was built (between 1865



CAMERON HEWITT/Rick Steves' Europe

One of the world’s first shopping malls, Milan’s Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, still impresses today.

and 1877), it was the marvel of its day and proclaimed Milan as the most cultured city of a newly united Italian nation.

If you cut through the Galleria from the cathedral square, you’ll pop out at Piazza della Scala, home of the La Scala Opera House and Museum. Teatro alla Scala first opened its doors in 1778 and quickly established itself as one of the premier opera theaters in Europe. The stage is enormous, the acoustics are wonderful and the talent has

always been top-notch. But unless you have tickets to a performance, you’ll be limited to the adjacent museum. While the museum has an extensive collection sure to thrill opera buffs, the main reason to visit is the opportunity it offers (on most days) to peek into the actual theater.

Milan’s most famous sight, The Last Supper, is away from the city center. Leonardo’s fragile fresco survives — just barely — inside the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, centuries after it

was painted right onto the wall of what had been the church’s dining hall. Though it’s in a humidity-regulated room that strictly limits the number of visitors, most of the original paint is gone. Still, visitors come from around the world to see what’s left of this remarkable work — reservations are mandatory, and should be booked three months in advance.

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Autumn bounty includes flowers, pumpkins, chestnuts and wine

With autumn knocking at our door, it’s time to bring in the harvest and celebrate the bounty of what fields, trees and vines have yielded. Here are a handful of upcoming events offering the chance to take in both the beauty and tastes of the season.

Flower festivals in the Netherlands

Tulips may be the flower most associated with the country, but once autumn rolls around, other blossoming beauties get time in the spotlight. Sunflowers, gladiolus, chrysanthemums and dahlias in particular will be the show-stealers in a series of floral parades set to roll out in the following weeks. While each city or town’s “corso” is slightly different, they all feature flower-bedecked floats, at times towering so high they dwarf the dwellings they pass by; marching bands; and an amazing amount of community involvement.



Karen Bradbury

Lichtenvoorde: The Bloemencorso Lichtenvoorde, starting Sunday at 2 p.m., is made up of 18 large floats, along with dancers, musicians and children with much smaller floats in tow. Adult entry tickets go for 10 euros when purchased online in advance or 13 euros at the door. Youth under 16 are free. The floats also will be viewable at the exhibition grounds on Gert Reindersstraat from 6 p.m.-10 p.m. Sunday and from noon-8 p.m. Monday. Online: bloemencorso.com

Valkenswaard: It will take 2.5 million dahlias and countless hands to decorate the floats appearing in the Corso Valkenswaard, set to begin at 2:30 p.m. Sept. 21. At 10:30 a.m., the floats will be exhibited at the parade’s starting point; after the parade, the floats will remain at the market square. This year’s theme, “From Art,” challenges the float designers and builders to create a recog-



blueba.de

The world’s largest pumpkin exhibition is on display in Ludwigsburg, Germany, through Nov. 2.

nizable interpretation of a well-known painting or sculpture. Admission is free. Online: corsovalkenswaard.nl

Tiel: Tiel’s Fruitcorso features floats decorated with fruits, nuts and vegetables. Visitors can check out the parade’s 21 fabulous floats and enjoy music and live entertainment starting at 1:30 p.m. Sept. 26. Access to the site of festivities goes for 11 euros adults and is free for children under 12. Online: fruitcorso.nl/optocht2025

Other events

Wine expo in Greve in Chianti, Italy: Chianti, a dry red wine known for its high acidity and prominent tannins, is made primarily from the Sangiovese grapes grown in the heart of Tuscany. One of this beautiful region’s largest wine festivals is the Expo del Chianti Classico, a showcase for the most prestigious categories of this type of

wine. Through Sunday, this festival offers the chance to experience the taste and culture of this world-renowned region. More than 60 winemakers from throughout the Chianti Classico region come together in Greve’s Piazza Matteotti to introduce their wines. Art exhibitions, musical acts and DJ sets round out the program.

Entry to the event is free; a package of a tasting glass and seven tasting tickets goes for 20 euros. Online: epochianticlassico.com/en

All things pumpkin in Ludwigsburg, Germany: Gorgeous gourds make a feast for the eyes as well as the palate at what’s billed as the world’s largest pumpkin exhibition. The stunning castle grounds known as Blühende Barock set the stage for artful arrangements, on display through Nov. 2. “Great Cinema” provides the inspiration for this year’s display. Stands around the park offer samples of soups, pasta and other culinary treats. Several weekends feature special events including the Kürbis-Regatta, in which sailing vessels carved from huge pumpkins compete for fastest time across the pond (finals begin at noon Sept. 21); pumpkin weigh-ins (German finals at 10 a.m. Oct. 5, European finals at 1 p.m. Oct. 12); and the great pumpkin “slaughter,” when growers hack into their giant pumpkins to harvest the seeds for next year’s crops (at noon Nov. 2).

The exhibition is open daily from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Entry costs 15 euros for adults and 7 euros for those 4-14. Online: blueba.de/en

Chestnut market in Annweiler am Trifels, Germany: From Oct. 3-5, the “Keshdefescht” showcases a myriad of tasty products made from sweet chestnuts, including spreads, liqueurs, dumplings, bread, sausages and other sweet and savory treats. Vending stalls are open daily from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Entry is free. Online: suedlicheweinstrasse.de/keschdefescht#

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Supernova is smashing

Bahrain branch of London burger, fries and sundae joint brings minimalist ethos to Gulf

BY SHANNON RENFROE
Stars and Stripes

The smash burger didn't start in some coastal city. Its roots are humble, small-town America, mid-century, where tight budgets literally shaped it.

One story credits a cook at Kentucky's Dairy Cheer diner who discovered that smashing a ball of beef on a hot griddle unlocked more flavor. Others trace it back to the 1930s, when cooks stretched costly beef by smashing it thin with onions during the Great Depression.

It reminded me of when my mother would stretch our cereal the same way, cutting pricey Frosted Flakes with plain oats to make the bowls more filling. My brother and I thought it was a clever topping, never realizing it was her way of making the box last longer.

Whatever the origin of the smash burger, the method stuck: plenty of heat and a hard press, sometimes with a cook's full body weight, yielding crisp edges and a juicy center.

What began as a necessity has become a style, one with a cult-like following that's shaping global burger culture.

Supernova, born in Soho, London, is built on a diet of pure minimalism — cheeseburgers, fries and sundaes, nothing more and nothing less. In Soho, the menu is printed on the back of staff T-shirts, worn like a mantra.

Now that ethos has crossed the Gulf. Supernova has opened in Al Liwan, Bahrain, with the same stripped-down menu.

The interior reflects the philosophy. Grid-lit ceiling panels are stamped with menu items; teal booths; only ketchup and mustard bottles; and clean angles — stark, maybe even a touch sterile, but deliberate. In Bahrain, where dining rooms and even homes often lean toward opulence, the restraint feels refreshing.

My burger arrived on a simple metal tray. I peeled back the paper to reveal a patty spilling beyond the potato bun's edges. The cheese melted into the patty, clinging to every crevice. Pickles and diced raw onions cut neatly through the richness, keeping each bite sharp.

I only wished for a lighter hand with the signature "secret" sauce. Both sides of the bun are



Supernova opened its first Bahrain branch at Al Liwan, with another on the way at The Avenues Mall, carrying its smash burger roots from Soho, London, to the Gulf.



Supernova

Address: Al Liwan, Hamala 907, Bahrain
Hours: Seven days a week, 4 p.m.-midnight/Friday, 4 p.m.-1 a.m.
Prices: 2.8 (\$8) dinars per burger; 1.5 dinars for fries; 2.5 dinars for a sundae
Information: Instagram: Supernova-burger.bahrain; Phone: +973 1711 1888

Shannon Renfroe

slathered and even with two smashed patties in between, the risk of sogginess is real, especially without lettuce to buffer the steam that builds in the wrapper.

If the sauce feels decadent, you can order a version of the cheeseburger without it. For some, though, that tangy, orange-tinged sauce is the very thing that keeps them coming back.

Supernova's patties are smashed on the griddle with almost reckless force, spread absurdly thin until the edges frill into a crisp, carnivorous lace.

The beef is an 80/20 blend, the magic ratio of meat and fat that gives each patty balance. The same formula is flown from London to Bahrain, preserving the flavor of the original.

I overheard a patron ask for his burger well-done and couldn't help but grin. Supernova doesn't really do "medium" or "well." It just does smash.

The fries, golden and plentiful, don't quite reach the same



PHOTOS BY SHANNON RENFROE/Stars and Stripes

Supernova keeps it simple. Two smashed patties pressed thin with crisp, lacy edges, melted cheese and a soft potato bun, served with golden fries and little else to distract from the core of the experience. Fries have the option of being served with their Pommes Frites sauce, an herb-like ranch.



Inside Supernova Bahrain, the minimalist philosophy carries through its teal booths, grid-lit ceilings stamped with the menu and a focus on nothing but burgers, fries and sundaes.

heights. They could use more bite, maybe a double-fry or even a crinkle cut for nostalgia and crunch.

Some diners have called them greasy, and I see the point. Still, drag them through Pommes Frites sauce and they hold their own. The sauce itself reminded me of a herby tartar, but brighter and better.

Questioning whether to order dessert amid the indulgence seems absurd. The sundae is pure diner Americana in a cup — swirls of vanilla soft serve, ribbons of caramel or chocolate and a scatter of nuts for texture.

I was told the caramel was made in-house, so that's the one I went for. It was smooth and Dairy Queen-esque. No flecks of vanilla bean, so don't expect notes of Madagascan or Tahitian

vanilla. The caramel was fine, pleasant even, but it didn't spark the kind of silence you get when a dessert floors the whole table. A sprinkle of sea salt could have worked magic.

Then I remembered the Supernova mantra: simplicity. Maybe the sundae was meant to taste exactly like this, the kind of cheap soft serve you'd find at a mom-and-pop gas station on a cross-country drive.

In Bahrain, Supernova steps into a scene already warmed by Que Smash, just a 15-minute drive away. Que has built its own following, edging ahead with a chicken sandwich on the menu, a move that makes you wonder if Supernova will ever branch out.

It's hard to ignore how similar the two look. Que's lighting, counters and mirrored panels

echo Supernova almost beat for beat. Both draw from the same minimalist playbook. And yet, one has to wonder, who comes out on top? The homegrown original, or the export polished in London?

Bahrainis are already familiar with Supernova's wider family. The same founders are behind Crème, the gooey-centered New York-style cookies that first blew up in London and are now blossoming across Bahrain's malls and shopping centers.

If Crème could find a foothold here, it's no surprise its burger sibling would follow. Together, the two make a perfect pairing, and a Crème cookie crumbled into one of those sundaes would be a match made in a sugary heaven.

Globally, smash burgers keep reinventing themselves. In Dubai, they're even tucked into paratha buns. But in Bahrain, Supernova keeps it classic: a seared patty, melted cheese, a soft bun, and that sauce that pulls you back for just one more bite. On an island crowded with shawarma, grills and kebabs, it feels like a small escape into Americana, carrying even a faint whisper of In-N-Out, if only in spirit, like an Animal Style dream.

With Crème sitting steps away, Bahrain now has both sides of the family, burgers and cookies, savory and sweet. Sometimes less really is more. Sometimes the simplest sparks set off the biggest bangs. This one? A true burger supernova.

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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER H. SVAN/Stars and Stripes

Cactusland Steinfeld sells more than 1,000 varieties of cacti, succulents and other indoor and outdoor plants at its facility along Germany’s southern wine route.

More than a thousand selling points

Find the perfect cacti or succulent at Kakteenland Steinfeld, a little more than an hour outside of Kaiserslautern

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Grapevines aren’t the only plants to flourish in the abundance of sun along Germany’s southern wine route. One area in particular is known as “cactus country” because of the more than 1,000 varieties of cacti and succulents housed in a large greenhouse beyond fields of corn and sunflowers.

A visit to Kakteenland Steinfeld, about an hour and 10 minutes south of Kaiserslautern by car, feels like stepping into the desert and the tropics at the same time.

Rainbow cacti, potted plants resembling giant pineapples with long fronds, leafy carnivorous flycatchers and ficus trees are among just a few of the flora growing in the warm, climate-controlled greenhouse.

Rows upon rows of plants are arranged in alphabetical order according to their scientific names. The echnino-cactus grusonii, for example, also known as the golden barrel cactus, is hard to miss. It appears large enough to be a comfortable seat if not for its sharp spiny exterior.

I ventured into Cactusland, to use the English translation of the name, as a complete novice when it comes to members of the plant family Cactaceae, a species of flora that can thrive in dry, harsh environments. The only ones I recognized were the towering saguaro of cartoon fame and the flowering prickly pear cactus with its flat spiny pads.

What I did know is that cactus plants thrive with less moisture than seems natural, a revelation I came by first-hand when my poor Christmas cactus expired under an assault of weekly waterings.

For those looking to buy, it’s best to go to Cactusland with some prior plant knowledge or research, to help narrow one’s search. It was difficult to find English speakers among the facility’s employees, and any in-



Some of the succulents that Cactusland Steinfeld sells, including an assortment of winter-hardy plants that can weather cooler outdoor temperatures.

On the QT

Address: Wengelspfad 1, Steinfeld, Germany
Times: Monday to Friday, March through October, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.; November through February, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturday, Sunday and German holidays year-round, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Costs: Admission is free.
Food: Bistro im Kakteenland Steinfeld is a café located next to the greenhouse, with indoor and outdoor dining. Hours are 10 a.m.-6 p.m. March to October, and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. November to February.
Information: Phone: +49 6340-1299; Online: kakteenland.de

Jennifer H. Svan

formation about the plants was in German. A translation app also helps. I first looked at replacing my Christmas cactus, and found only two in stock. But the 15 euro price tag was only for the plastic pot; the plant itself was 75 euros, a hard no for me. Each of the three I ended up buying was less than 20 euros. My haul for the day included one aloe vera plant that can be used for treatment of minor burns or making tea. I selected another aloe vera variety, a nonedible succu-



This golden barrel cactus may be on display at Cactusland Steinfeld for years to come, given its hefty price tag of 4,200 euros. Most of the plants inside the facility’s greenhouse, however, are much more affordable.

lent, because I liked how it looked. Last was a small succulent commonly known as the red cap cactus, except I scooped up the lone yellow one. The aloe vera section also offers skin and food products made from the plant. In addition, the place has an extensive collection of semiprecious stones and polished minerals, sold individually and as part of jewelry. After sweating my way through the greenhouse, I cooled off at an outdoor table at the facility’s café next door with a cold beverage and ordered the flammkuchen with cactus strips, one of the entrees made with edible prickly pear cactus. Other prickly pear fare served there includes sorbet, some alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages and a salad. All told, I spent about two hours at Cactusland. People who want to add to their cactus collection or start one will likely find the place worth checking out in its own merits. For those like me, I think it would be better to make it part of a broader itinerary in the region, which has no shortage of nearby attractions.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Best on West End this fall

BY SARAH RAPPAPORT
Bloomberg

New Yorkers might argue with me, but I believe London has the best theater scene in the world. The West End is home to bold new plays and revivals of blockbuster musicals. And there are plenty of fascinating productions to book this autumn.

Bryan Cranston is teaming up again with Belgian director Ivo van Hove for a new version of the Arthur Miller classic “All My Sons.” Other Hollywood legends are making their London theater debuts. Susan Sarandon, for one, takes the stage at the Old Vic.

Beyond A-listers, there’s plenty of productions to be excited about, including a show from Nick Payne, who wrote the fantastic “Constellations.” Called “The Unbelievers,” it’s at the Royal Court Theatre.

Note that some of the shows recommended below have very limited runs, so plan your theatergoing now.

‘Not Your Superwoman’

Where: Bush Theatre
When: Through Nov. 1

“Bridgerton’s” Queen Charlotte (Golda Rosheuvel) and Marvel superhero Letitia Wright (“Black Panther”) star as mother and daughter in this coming-of-age drama.

‘Bacchae’

Where: The Olivier Theatre at the National Theatre
When: Sept. 13 through Nov. 1

All eyes will be on the National Theatre as artistic director Indhu Rubasingham kicks off her tenure as boss of the hugely influential London organization. Her first show is an adaptation of the Greek tragedy from first-time playwright Nima Taleghani.

‘Mary Page Marlowe’

Where: Old Vic
When: Sept. 23 through Nov. 1

Sarandon makes her London stage debut in the British premiere of Pulitzer- and Tony-winning playwright Tracy Letts’ epic, time-jumping drama. Homegrown talent Andrea Riseborough will star alongside Sarandon as the titular character at a younger age.

‘The Lady From the Sea’

Where: Bridge Theatre
When: Through Nov. 8

Oscar-winning actress Alicia Vikander makes her stage debut in this version of the Henrik Ibsen classic, written and directed by Simon Stone (“Yerma”). Vikander is joined by Andrew Lincoln, well known to American audiences from “The Walking Dead” and “Love, Actually.”

‘Punch’

Where: Apollo Theatre
When: Sept. 22 through Nov. 29

Prodigiously talented playwright James Graham’s powerful show about a fight outside a pub with fatal consequences transfers to the West End from the Nottingham Playhouse and Young Vic. The play itself is an emotional gut punch, with a moving message about redemption.

‘The Unbelievers’

Where: Royal Court Theatre
When: Oct. 10 through Nov. 29

Playwright Payne is back at the Royal Court with a show starring Nicola Walker as a mother whose teenage son disappears. Marianne Elliott, who worked on stellar revivals of “Company” and “Angels in America,” directs the show.



iStock

Shaftesbury Avenue in London’s West End is a hot spot.

‘The Hunger Games’

Where: Troubadour Canary Wharf Theatre
When: Oct. 20 through Feb. 15

Suzanne Collins’ wildly popular dystopian series of novels is coming to the stage, in a show penned by award-winning playwright Conor McPherson. The play will debut in a purpose-built 1,200-capacity theater, and advertisements say the audience will “feel like part of the action.” May the odds be ever in their favor.

‘All My Sons’

Where: Wyndham’s Theatre
When: Nov. 13 through March 7

Miller’s roaring critique of the American dream returns to the West End, directed by the boundary-breaking van Hove. The talented cast features Cranston (who worked with the director on “Network”), as well as Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Paapa Essiedu and Tom Glynn-Carney.



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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Resilient art form on clear display

History, industry blend brightly at Okinawa's Ryukyu Glass Village

By RYAN M. BREEDEN
Stars and Stripes

Okinawa's history describes strength, resilience and rebirth. Through a craft born out of necessity, local artists transformed past lessons into a vibrant art form seen today.

Okinawa-made glass dates back centuries and is believed to have been initially introduced through international trade in the 1600s. During the Meiji Era, from 1868 to 1912, factories began producing glass-related items and eventually produced bottles for medicine and candy, laying the foundation for its glass industry.

After World War II, despite significant devastation, glassmaking endured. Discarded soda and beer bottles from American forces were recycled and repurposed. The final products often became thick, colorful and unique. The materials used embedded air bubbles that amplified the vibrant hues of blue, green and red, marking them as one-of-a-kind souvenirs from Okinawa.

The craft is celebrated at the Ryukyu Glass Village in Itoman city, the largest handmade glass workshop on Okinawa.

Visitors can witness artisans working at 2,372-degree Fahrenheit kilns and even try their hand at creating their own unique glass souvenirs. Lively and intense artisans shape glowing molten glass into vibrant vases, cups and ornaments. The experience costs 4,400 yen, or about \$30, for both children and adults.

Beyond the interactive activities, a main building serves as an office, a nontraditional museum and a shopping center.

There is no entry fee required to meander through the labyrinth of product shelves, but there is temptation. Many products are offered from a few hundred yen to a few thousand.

Navigating to the back of the building you will find historical displays. Early examples of glass fly traps, glass medicine containers and World War II Coca-Cola bottles are featured, giving you a sense of their creative evolution.

As you explore, look for an immersive exhibit titled Cocoon, with admission at 1,000 yen. Opened in December, this space showcases three galleries dedicated to portraying Okinawa's nature through the artistry of Ryukyu glass.

Exhibits titled Beautiful Sea, Beautiful Universe and Beautiful Flowers highlight the skills of the local craftsmen with some of their products being offered for sale throughout the facility.

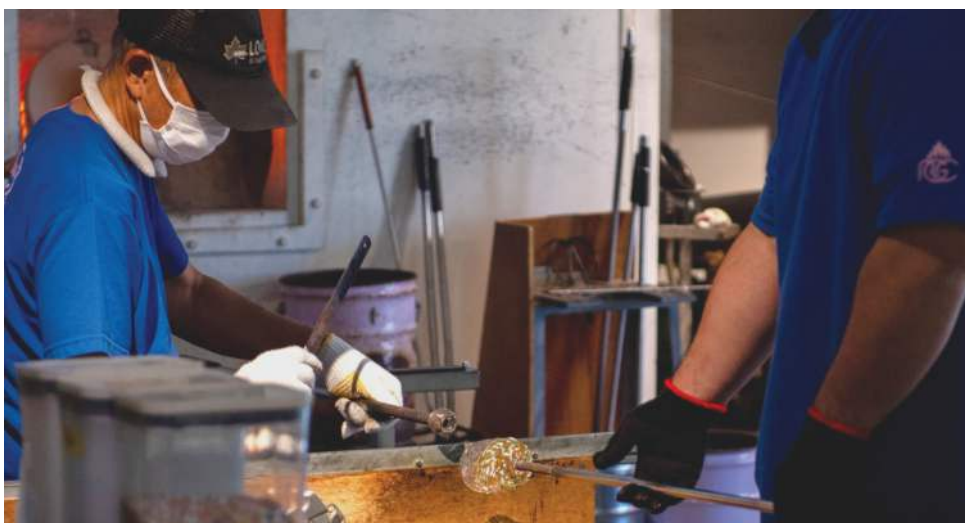
Inspired by the island's bright nature and the ingenuity of the crafting community, Ryukyu Glass Village stands as a proud symbol of Okinawa. From wartime necessity to artful expression, visiting the village offers a remarkable insight into this inspiring craft.

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PHOTOS BY RYAN M. BREEDEN/Stars and Stripes

Above: Glass flowers are displayed Aug. 13 in a three-gallery exhibit titled Cocoon at Ryukyu Glass Village on Okinawa.



On the QT

Directions: GPS Coordinates: N 26.0974210, E 127.6773451. From Naha International Airport, drive 30 minutes south on Route 331.

Times: Open daily, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Costs: Admission to Ryukyu Glass Village is free; 1,000 yen to visit the Cocoon exhibit.

Parking: Free; 100 available spaces.

Food: The facility hosts one café and one on-site restaurant.

Information: Phone: 098-997-4784; Online: ryukyu-glass.co.jp

Ryan M. Breedon

Left: A glass craftsman cuts the handle from a glass cup at Ryukyu Glass Village. Visitors can catch artisans at work.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Large portions, samurai charm

Ichcho restaurant chain offers big menu of Japanese dishes at affordable prices

BY JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

Ichcho, a chain of samurai house-style restaurants with locations in Saitama, Gunma, Tochigi, Ibaraki and Nagano prefecture, serves Japanese cuisine with Western and Chinese influences.

One Saitama location is set in a spacious building on about a half-acre lot with an expansive parking area. The entrance features manicured trees and a stone walkway leading to the dining area.

During a recent dinner visit with family and friends, the wait time was relatively short, though it may vary depending on the day.

The menu spans more than 50 pages, including a section for children. Prices are modest given the portion sizes and décor.

One meal set included a thick-sliced steak for 2,409 yen (about \$16.80), served with thick-cut fries, rice, coleslaw, corn, miso soup and small dishes of Japanese vegetables. The steak was tender and well-seasoned, and the coleslaw left me wanting more.



Ichcho

Location: This Japanese chain has restaurants in Saitama, Gunma, Tochigi, Ibaraki and Nagano prefectures.
Hours: Vary by location.
Prices: Expect to pay between 1,000 yen and 3,000 yen, including tax, for most meal sets.
Dress: Casual
Information: www.ichcho.co.jp

Juan King

Another choice, a 6-ounce burger set without bread, cost 1,529 yen and came with the same accompaniments. Other diners at the table ordered udon, tonkatsu and soba sets, all under 1,600 yen.

The drink selection includes sodas, soda floats and alcoholic beverages.

Desserts are substantial. One featured sliced bananas over a mound of whipped cream, with vanilla chiffon cake and ice cream beneath. While the



PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

The steak meal from Ichcho, a chain that offers samurai-style dining in Japan, is served with thick-cut fries, rice, coleslaw, corn, miso soup and small dishes of Japanese vegetables.



A vanilla chiffon cake and ice cream dessert shows Ichcho's abundant sweet menu portions.

whipped cream was abundant, the dessert was satisfying. A green tea chiffon cake with ice cream proved equally appealing.

The restaurant seats 346 guests, with some locations ac-



A moist, green tea chiffon cake with green tea ice cream from Ichcho.

commodating even more. Large parties are encouraged to make reservations. Shoes must be removed to enter the sunken floor seating in private rooms, which offer ample space.

Some rooms can be converted into an izakaya, or Japanese pub, for banquets and other gatherings.

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How to transform frozen pizza from merely blah to brilliant

BY BECKY KRYSTAL
The Washington Post

The premise behind frozen pizza is hard to resist: a pie at your fingertips, ready whenever you want it. But that premise doesn't always live up to its promise.

Part of that can be chalked up to ingredients and mass production, says Michael Friedman, chef-owner of the Washington, D.C.-area pizzeria chain All-Purpose. "You get out what you put in."

That being said, Friedman recognizes not only the nostalgic appeal of frozen pizza, but also its convenience. And even if you can't always control the quality of the pie (consult our rankings to pick the best!), there are ways to plus it up. Here are our top tips to nudge frozen pizza even closer to your favorite delivery and make the overall baking experience even better.

Use the right tools for the job

One of the best things about frozen pizza is the low bar for entry. All you need is an oven (or toaster oven). Over the course of testing many pies, though, I found that a few items were helpful to have on hand, and you probably already have them. Although you can certainly use your hands, or the included cardboard round, to transfer the pizza to the oven, I preferred setting the pies on a round metal pizza pan and using that to slide them onto the rack. A pizza peel, rimless cookie sheet or overturned sheet pan can serve the same purpose. When the pizzas were done, I employed a pair of tongs to grab and slide them back onto whatever equipment I used to put them in. And be-



LAUREN BULBIN/The Washington Post

A scattering of fresh arugula can upgrade a frozen pizza.

cause many brands recommend baking directly on the rack, if you're worried about cheese dripping and burning on the bottom of the oven (it happened to us), set a sheet pan on the rack below the pizza to contain the mess.

Give your oven time to preheat

I say it all the time, but it bears repeating here: Your oven is probably not heated to the proper temperature when the chime goes off. Not sure? Use an oven thermometer to verify. If you don't wait long enough, in all likelihood, you will end up with pale, soggy and underbaked pizza, which, in our experience, frozen pies are already prone to, at least when following the package instructions.

(More on that later.) I know this seems counterintuitive — after all, the idea of a frozen pizza is to get it on your table fast — but if you want the best results, give your oven a few extra minutes to get hot, or at least be prepared to add more time at the end.

Add your own toppings and finishes

Although there are plenty of frozen pizzas sold with toppings, using a plain cheese as a base lets you customize it just as you would your favorite delivery. Want to put on the good pepperoni that curls into those delightful little cups? Go for it. Friedman suggests throwing it on the pie about halfway through the bake, which is a good strategy for most of your standard quick-cooking toppings, including thinly sliced mushrooms, onions or peppers.

Don't forget about those finishing touches as well. "Hot honey is good on any kind of meat pizza," Stafford says. Use store-bought or make your own. For pies without that kind of grease baked in, Stafford recommends a drizzle of good extra-virgin olive oil. Lemon zest is her secret subtle trick. "It's that thing people can't guess," she says. "They're like: 'What is that? It's so good.'"

Arugula is another way to add brightness. "You just need a little to make it look better" — and, let's face it, frozen pies can often use that kind of zhuzhing up.

Friedman says you can't go wrong with a garnish of fresh basil, with or without a shower of grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or pecorino Romano cheese.

But, as he says, you do you: Buy what you like and top it how you want, "as long as you're enjoying pizza."

WEEKEND: BOOK REVIEWS

Timely book recounts heroes, villains of Revolutionary Army

By Joseph Ditzler
Stars and Stripes

The book “Washington’s Lieutenants: Major Versus Brigadier Generals in the Revolutionary War” sets expectations with its callback to the three-volume classic Civil War study, Douglas Southall Freeman’s “Lee’s Lieutenants: A Study in Command.”

Author Douglas M. Branson spares us the added weight. His single volume comes in at 189 pages, minus the notes and index. He establishes his theme and gets to it quickly; that is, that many brigadier generals in the Continental Army were “tall trees,” selflessly devoted to duty, while their superiors in the next higher rank were marked by “bent trees,” incompetent martinets, cowards or thieves.

Branson — a University of Pittsburgh professor emeritus specializing in corporate law — writes convincingly while he explores the dichotomy between the ranks of hard-fighting brigadier generals and dissolute, often conniving major generals. “Washington’s Lieutenants” is available this month from Stackpole Books.

The exemplar brigadiers mostly stand out for their battlefield élan and resilience, while the major generals represent the worst examples of blustering egotism and

embarrassing failure. The brigadiers often pay with their lives for their heroism while their higher-ranking colleagues live to grift another day.

The upper echelon of George Washington’s army, by contrast, are commissioned major generals by a Congress that overestimated experience in European armies, elevated favorites or “conspired” with like-minded officers and politicians to remove Washington from overall command.

The major disappointments include Horatio Gates, the “hero of Saratoga,” who kept to his farmhouse headquarters in the rear while more able subordinates Benedict Arnold and Daniel Morgan won the fight.

Elevated afterward to command the Southern Army by a nearsighted Continental Congress, Gates disgraced himself by fleeing 180 miles before the smoke had even cleared in Camden, S.C., not stopping for three days before reaching Hillsborough, N.C.

And yet, Gates remained with the army, sidelined, until the war’s end.

Branson devotes two to four chapters each to 11 generals of the Continental Army — seven major generals and four brigadier generals — to make his point. Some are well-known names to anyone

with a cursory knowledge of the Revolutionary War; others are relatively obscure in terms of popular history.

Nearly one-quarter of the 58 brigadier generals died in combat or from combat-related causes, Branson writes.

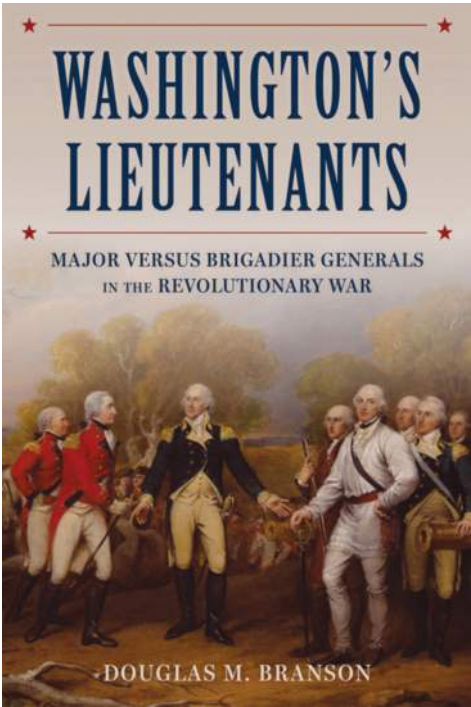
Hugh Mercer, a Scottish émigré and Pennsylvania militia captain, befriended Virginia militia Col. George Washington during the French and Indian War.

Appointed a brigadier general by the Continental Congress in June 1776, Mercer’s service was short-lived, though he distinguished himself at Trenton and at Princeton, where he was mortally wounded by British bayonets.

Branson’s biographical catalog also revives Maj. Gen. Thomas Mifflin, who served as president of the Continental Congress and the first governor of Pennsylvania following adoption of the federal Constitution in 1787.

But Mifflin first abdicated his responsibility as the army’s quartermaster general during the Valley Forge winter, causing untold suffering and hardship, and then complained when his rival Nathaniel Greene was named to replace him.

Later, Mifflin deployed his habit for political machination, in league with Gates and Maj. Gen. Thomas Conway, to undermine the general-in-chief’s authority.



Washington ignored him, and deftly defused the “Conway cabal.”

“Washington’s Lieutenants” reminds readers of the danger inherent in political influence in military affairs and the precedents Washington set by navigating these challenges.

“Washington’s Lieutenants” is a timely arrival. Next year is the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, but this year marks the anniversary of the beginning of the War for Independence.

Branson resurrects forgotten names from the war whose deeds inspire reflection.

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Race and America’s past, through the eyes of an eminent historian

By Brandon Tensley
Special to The Washington Post

These are fraught times for U.S. history — certain chapters of it, anyway.

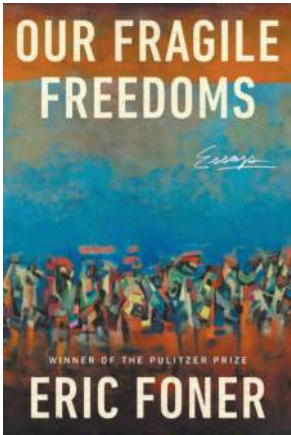
President Donald Trump recently claimed on his social media platform that the Smithsonian Institution, which includes the National Museum of African American History and Culture, is “woke” and “out of control.” That’s in part because, as he put it, the Smithsonian focuses too much on “how bad slavery was” and “how unaccomplished the downtrodden have been,” and fails to shine a light on “success,” “brightness” and “the future.”

Trump’s allegations followed an executive order, “Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History,” that he signed in March. The order seems to direct the Smithsonian to soften its language on the legacy of racism in the United States.

Into this struggle over the past comes “Our Fragile Freedoms,” the latest book by Eric Foner, an emeritus professor at Columbia University who’s seen by some as the godfather of Reconstruction studies. Maybe more than any other scholar in the field, Foner has, over the past half a century, helped to shape the country’s understanding of slavery and its afterlives, publishing numerous essays and books that meticulously explore the ebb and flow of the fight for Black equality.

“Our Fragile Freedoms” is a collection of 57 of Foner’s previously published book reviews and opinion essays, organized into six sections that interrogate subjects from slavery to recent battles over classroom textbooks. In marshaling these writings now, in a political environment rife with pointed historical elisions, Foner allows readers to observe, again and again, what it looks like to engage in historical analysis that’s thorough and accessible, to unblinkingly examine the brutal parts of our past.

The book is an object lesson in how understanding evolves, allowing us to witness how Foner deepens his



thinking over time without having to rebut or reevaluate old claims.

In his 1999 review for the Nation of James W. Loewen’s “Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong,” Foner argues that “what is not memorialized tells us as much about a society’s sense of the past as what is.” In Fort Mill, S.C., for instance, there’s a marker commemorating the “faithful slaves” of the Confederacy, “but one would be

hard pressed to find monuments anywhere in the country to slave rebels like Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner,” Foner laments, leaning into the firm and pedagogical but avuncular tone that characterizes much of his writing.

Toward the end of the review, Foner asks, “Why, one wonders, has our understanding of history changed so rapidly, but its public presentation remained so static?” It’s not a rhetorical question. Foner offers an answer that feels no less urgent or germane more than 25 years later, as federal agencies scrub Black history from their websites and the Trump administration applauds the planned reinstallation of two Confederate memorials that had been removed in 2020 and 2023. “Ultimately,” Foner writes, “public monuments are built by those with sufficient power to determine which parts of history are worth commemorating, and what vision of history ought to be conveyed.”

It’s enriching to see Foner expand on this argument in a later essay, a review of Anne C. Bailey’s “The Weeping Time: Memory and the Largest Slave Auction in American History” that appeared in the London Review of

Books in 2018. Foner exposes some of the inconsistencies that define the monuments debate by providing international context. “Many Americans who oppose taking down statues of Confederate leaders applauded when Muscovites upended the statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky, a founder of the Soviet secret police,” Foner writes, “and when U.S. troops toppled the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad.”

In conversation with Bailey’s work, he argues that this cognitive dissonance has led to a culture of commemoration in the South, especially, that is “entirely one-dimensional” — attentive to ideas of Southern greatness but largely silent on “the experience of slavery.”

Elsewhere, Foner demonstrates how little-known historical events can have a major impact on the U.S. in the 21st century. Take his review in 2008 of two books on the Colfax massacre, one of the most gruesome episodes of racist violence to occur during Reconstruction. On Easter Sunday in 1873, a White mob in Colfax, the seat of Grant Parish, La., killed as many as 150 Black Americans following a controversial gubernatorial election the previous year. In 1876, however, the U.S. Supreme Court tossed out the convictions of the handful of men who had received them, deciding that the federal government didn’t have the authority to prosecute them.

Foner notes how that moment influenced the high court more than a century later, when Chief Justice William Rehnquist cited it in 2000 in a decision weakening parts of the Violence Against Women Act. Using the Reconstruction-era case as precedent, Rehnquist argued that Congress doesn’t have the power to allow victims of gender-based violence to sue in federal court.

“Whether we realize it or not,” Foner explains, “Reconstruction and its overthrow remain part of our lives today.” He encourages readers to think beyond the idea that historical events are isolated incidents and to reflect on how they can influence later developments.

WEEKEND: BOOK REVIEW

Reconstructing his meltdown era

Charlie Sheen autobiography tells actor's perspective on wild public exploits during his drug-addled decades

BY STEPHANIE MERRY
The Washington Post

When asked, most people will claim that the greatest feeling they've ever experienced is something like their wedding day or the birth of their children, maybe even a heroic deed. Charlie Sheen is not one of those people.

"Sorry kids, sorry wives," he writes in "The Book of Sheen," a memoir that's not as biblical as it sounds. His personal nirvana came in 1992, when the actor took his first hit off a crack pipe while in bed with Sandy, "a lovely young lady" Sheen had once dated. "Sandy and that drug rewired my frontal cortex into light-speed oneness times two," he writes. He immediately understood the stakes: Either he had to swear off this euphoria or go all-in and let it kill him. He swore off it. Briefly.

Such a 180 is a main theme of the book, and Sheen preempts any finger-wagging by admitting it early and often. "At some point, everything's negotiable," he writes.

The memoir is a curious amalgam: at first, a touching family history that lionizes his A-list father, Martin Sheen; then a starry-eyed chronicle of shooting to fame after craving the adulation that his older brother, Emilio Estevez, had found in Hollywood; and, finally, an addiction memoir.

In that way, "The Book of Sheen" will no doubt draw comparisons to the autobiography Matthew Perry published in 2022, a year before he died of a drug overdose. But if Perry revealed himself to be a sad clown, hiding his torment behind punch lines, Sheen is a different kind of stereotype. The actor, now 60, perfectly embodies the role of charismatic addict, a person who wields his easy charm to score his next fix. In the book, Sheen writes that he's been sober since 2017. So what is it he seeks? The evidence appears to point to a second (third? fourth?) chance at making it in show business.

His memoir release coincides with a Netflix documentary and a massive press tour rehashing, in part, what happened 14 years ago, when Sheen had a multiplatform meltdown after getting fired from "Two and a Half Men." Rather than shrink from the ignominy, he launched a press tour and a stage tour and discovered the magic of Twitter, spreading the message far and wide that he had "tiger blood" and "Adonis DNA." His catchphrase — "Winning!" — ironically became the perfect sarcastic response to any epic fail.

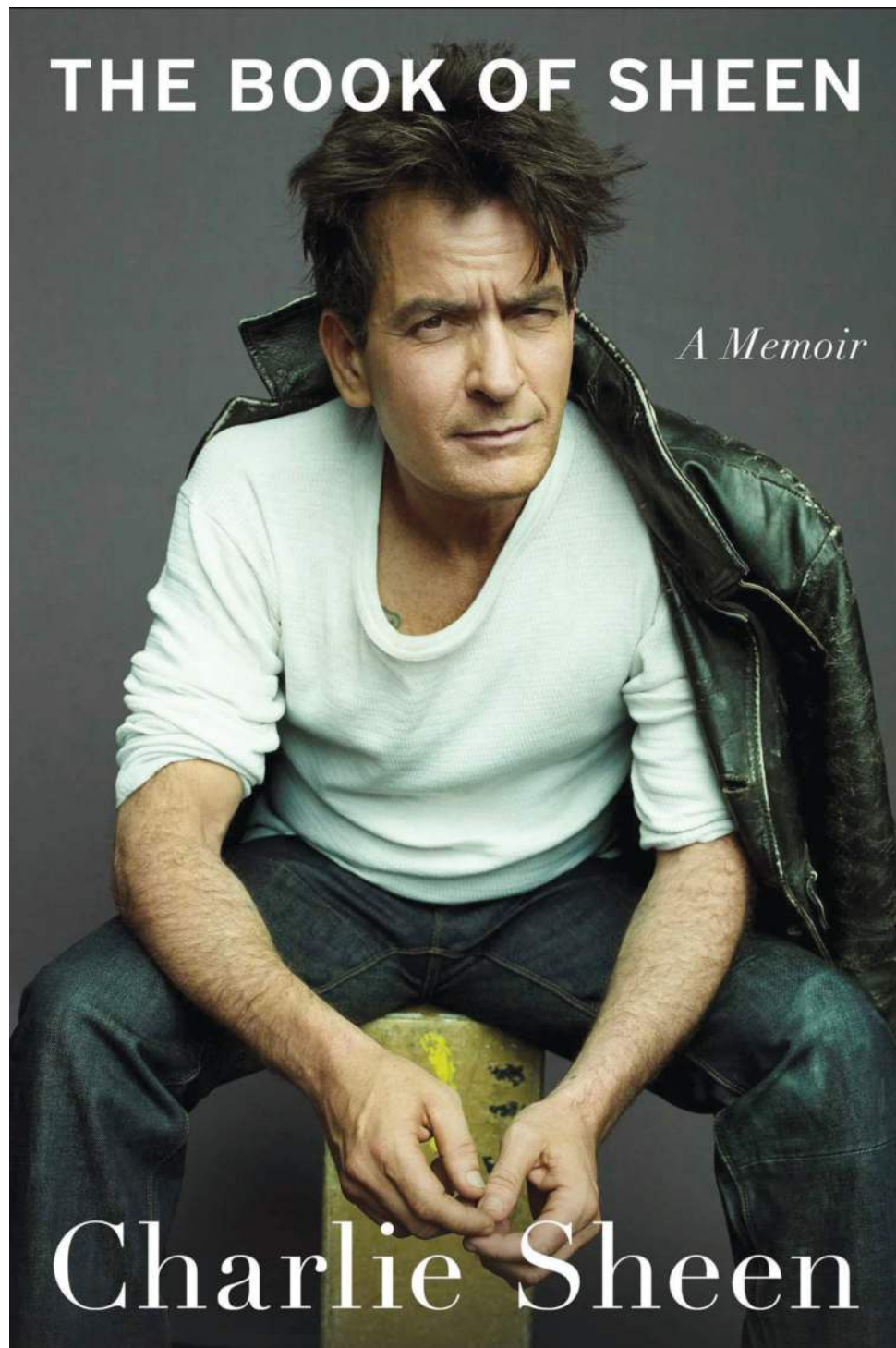
How did all that happen? Sheen writes that he had sworn off crack and booze by then, but he was still slathering on testosterone cream "in mind-altering gobs." As is the case through much of the book, the

actor is laid-back about how readers might process this information. "Not making excuses or asking for a pass," he writes, "just putting it out there as a detail that may have been confused with a laundry list of other potential suspects."

He also draws attention to the hangers-on who, rather than telling him to step away from the spotlight, encouraged him to self-immolate onstage every night during a nationwide tour called "My Violent Torpedo of Truth/Defeat Is Not An Option." "I do have to own the fact that it does take two to tango," he writes, "though in that situation it actually felt more like two thousand." Still, he appears to bear few grudges. (One conspicuous exception is the one he harbors against "classless bully" O.J. Simpson, who becomes a running joke in the book for the evil glee he took in besting young Charlie at ping-pong.)

The women in Sheen's orbit, especially, can do no wrong. The drug-dealing nurse who introduced him to his first recreational intravenous drug? "A lovely gal." The girlfriend to whom Sheen had to pay \$200,000 after an altercation that, the actor claims, she started? "I really dug that girl." The doctor who slapped his stomach and called him "fatso," sending him straight to a "lipo doctor"? "She was wonderful."

If Sheen grants forgiveness easily, he also extends it to himself. He doesn't appear to be drowning in regrets. He spends a fair amount of time examining a moral dilemma he had about whether to take the lead role in "The Karate Kid" (he'd been offered the part, but had already signed on to get eaten by a grizzly in a slasher flick) and pats himself on the back for making the honorable choice. He spends less energy unpacking why he wasn't present for his first child's birth in 1984. "After a



Simon & Schuster

In "The Book of Sheen," Charlie holds few grudges — other than against O.J. Simpson.

goodly amount of soul-searching, I came around a bit later," he shrugs.

If there's one past action that still seems to bother him, it might be testifying against "Hollywood Madam" Heidi Fleiss during her trial for tax evasion in the 1990s. Fleiss had facilitated many blissful nights for Sheen, and he seems to lament losing what he calls "the greatest arrangement ever," and the fact that he and Fleiss haven't spoken since.

Given how readily Sheen shares some details from his past, it's easy to lose sight of what's left unwritten. Sheen's first fiancée, Kelly Preston, who went on to marry John Travolta and died in 2020, gets roughly a sentence. And there's no mention of the strange incident with a gun that occurred shortly before their breakup. Sheen similarly sheds little light on how his family reacted to his "tiger blood" rants, beyond the parenthetical aside that his father "was overseas with Emilio, promoting a film." That movie, "The Way," was directed by Estevez and starred Martin Sheen as a father who channels his grief into a trek along the Camino de Santiago. The juxtaposition between that wholesome project and whatever Charlie Sheen was up to couldn't have been starker at the time.

Since going public with his HIV diag-

nosis in 2015, Sheen has been dogged by rumors that he has had sex with men. He does cop to that in the book, though the admission is buried within an extended metaphor involving a dinner menu, with women on one side and guys on the other. "I finally said [screw it], and flipped it over to see what all the fuss was about," he writes. "They had to close down the whole restaurant for a very private party. When I poured bacchanalian exhilaration on top of Bananas Foster and hit purée on the Eros blender, the 'other side of the menu' was catering the event."

Such zaniness only adds to the entertainment value of a book that unfolds as a series of absurd stories laced with self-effacing humor. Sheen is a good hang (despite his insistence on using "kool," "dood" and a frequently deployed expletive uniquely spelled with two Ks), and he has the friend roster to prove it: Slash, Nicolas Cage, Mira Sorvino, Alan Ruck, C. Thomas Howell, Reggie Jackson, the yoga guru Bikram Choudhury. Anyone who's been acquainted with an addict knows what these people have likely been through — watching Sheen spiral and rebound, wondering if they should cut him off, then getting drawn back in.

In the end, on the page as in life, it's hard to say no to Charlie Sheen.

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

‘Swag II’ a boon for Bieber fans

By MARIA SHERMAN
Associated Press

If it wasn’t clear to you before, it should be now. Justin Bieber is doing whatever he wants.

The 31-year-old has surprised listeners with a second new album in 2025 — “Swag II” follows July’s “Swag.” Both arrived shortly after mysterious billboards teasing the records cropped up in major cities. The new album, his eighth, is an obvious companion piece, not only in name, but also in sound, theme and zeal. Liken it to Taylor Swift’s “The Tortured Poets Department” double album drop — this 23-track album is for his diehard loyalists. (Or 44 tracks, if listened to with “Swag,” a combined run time of two hours and 11 minutes.)



Justin Bieber

Swag II
Def Jam Recordings/UMGvia

YouTube account created by his mom to share with his friends. His performances were ambitious — Ne-Yo’s “So Sick” and Aretha Franklin’s “Respect” among them — and charismatic, eventually catching the eye of Usher, Scooter Braun, and then the world. On “Swag,” Bieber pulled from those soulful influences, experimenting in the process. Slow-burn, alternative R&B-pop has always been a sweet spot; and on the introspective album, he reunited with those sounds, progressed by some future-seeking collaborators like the guitarist Mk.gee on “Daisies” and the rising R&B singer Dijon on the Prince-esque “Devotion.”

Both reappear on “Swag II,” as do rappers Lil B and Australian singer Eddie Benjamin. There are three new voices as well: Afrobeats star Tems, rapper Hurricane Chris and the English singer Bakar. Notably absent are the self-referential skits of the first release with the comedian Druski.

And like the first, there are religious ruminations (most directly, in the nearly 8-minute-long coda “Story of God,” in which Bieber tells the story of Adam and Eve) and odes to his wife (“Better Man,” “Mother in You”). In one, the hooky “Love Song,” he sings to Hailey Bieber with an accidental Sara Bareilles recollection: “I wanna write you a love song / I wanna write you a good one you can’t stop singing to me.”

In that regard, there’s a kind of lightness to “Swag II” — likely because Bieber spends less time considering how he is depicted in the media (think “Therapy Session” and the paparazzi recording that introduces “Butterflies” on “Swag”), and, instead, goes deeper into his relationships. There’s a reason the “Swag II” album cover is baby pink and “Swag” was jet black.

Some songs are so lo-fi as to feel unfinished, like demos released to function as interludes or raw evocations of vulnerability (“Dotted Line,” in particular). Others have obvious delights, from the joyful trap hi-hats of “Poppin’ My S—” to “Petting Zoo,” which recalls his beloved 2013 album “Journals.” Bieber ornaments “Eye Candy” with Michael Jackson-informed inflections, which succeeds — particularly in advance of the next song, “Don’t Wanna” featuring Bakar, with its MJ-like production.

Across 23 — or 44 — songs, those who sift will find gold. They’ll also hear a lot of love.

On repeat: “Love Song”

Skip it: “Dotted Line”

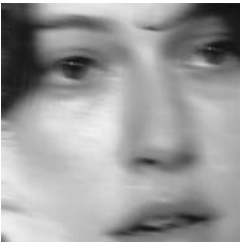
For fans of: “Swag,” the Rhode skincare brand



Justin Bieber
AP

King Princess

Girl Violence
(section1)



It’s impossible to hear King Princess groan “I’m a loser” on this ambitious third album and not think of Beck singing the same line in his canonical slacker anthem released more than three decades ago.

Although “Alone Again” is more of an angsty breakup song than an ode to sloth, the evocation of Beck’s “Loser” is fitting for the 26-year-old born Mikaela Straus. In both Straus’ guitar-driven pop music and her public persona, the singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist exemplifies an offhanded irreverence that artists who aren’t men rarely afford.

Unlike her previous album, “Hold On Baby,” which veered into a solemnity so full of ballads that it sometimes felt in conflict with Straus’ playfulness and snark, “Girl Violence” is a return to form. (Her 2018 debut EP, “Make My Bed,” artfully balances sincerity with sass.)

“I’m sorry my love / You’re (expletive) insane,” she sneers on the album’s ambient opening title track.

In “Jaime,” Straus seeks to play coy and appear unflappable toward the object of her desire. That concerted effort eventually belies a desperation.

“You’re just a fly in my glass,” Straus sings coolly at the beginning of the track. But by the end, she surrenders — accompanied by a cacophony of shoe-gaze-y synths, guitars, percussion and a Mellotron. “I’ve been secretly wishing you’d date me / Despite all the times you were wack / If you told me I’m cool, I’d collapse.”

That sonic and lyrical contrast exists throughout “Girl Violence.” Scoffs mask tears. Tenderness glistens beneath declarations of violence. “You prep my despair / You know I like it,” she croons on “Girls,” a torch song about self-destructive queer lust. Sultry instrumentation and doo-wop-esque background vocals evoke both melancholic longing and excitement.

Even as Straus sings about heartbreak and insecurity, the album remains mostly tonally upbeat. “Everybody wants me / Just ask your man, babe,” she taunts on “Cry Cry Cry” over punchy drums and her warm electric guitar.

However, a couple songs struggle to find their place on this record. “Origin Story” and “Say What You Will” come to mind. Those moments would have fit better on Straus’ mostly moody, midtempo first album.

That Straus is a bona fide rock star is more apparent when she plays live than on her restrained recorded pop songs. But she occasionally shows off her virtuosic skill on her records, like with the crunchy guitar solo at the end of the otherwise laid-back “I Feel Pretty.”

That oscillation — between gritty and pretty — is a defining theme of “Girl Violence.”

On repeat: “Get Your Heart Broken”
Skip it: “Origin Story”

For fans of: Maggie Rogers, St. Vincent, dirtbag feminism, trolling the internet with Christine Baranski

— Krysta Fauria
Associated Press

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Q&A

Discovering a new dynamic

Big Thief reinvents itself as a trio before unleashing 'Double Infinity'

BY ANNA FURMAN
Associated Press

When asked where she lives, Big Thief lead vocalist Adrienne Lenker will tell you “the forests.”

The Grammy-nominated writer drifts between the Northeast, Minnesota and Texas, like a folk-rock musician of another era.

But as the band was splintering last year, she hunkered down with them in upstate New York. Bassist Max Oleartchik left, and Big Thief needed to imagine their shared future as a trio. The band members are cryptic, even now, about the split, citing “interpersonal reasons” and sidestepping speculation that’s circulated online.

“Let me be incomprehensible,” Lenker croons on the new track “Incomprehensible,” as if in response. Her bandmates are easier to pin down: guitarist Buck Meek lives in the Topanga Canyon area of Los Angeles County, and drummer James Krivchenia lives in Brooklyn, N.Y.

For the album “Double Infinity,” Lenker brought in a list of over a hundred songs to whittle down to nine tracks. The resulting sound is as spirited and big-hearted as the band’s early days, but thrums with new voices, experimental flourishes and even a zither. Throughout, Lenker grounds floaty, rapturous verses with her signature, warm vocals and pithy aphorisms, like an oracle who transmutes pain into wisdom.

“We dream our dreams together / Even without laying in the same bed,” Lenker sings on “Los Angeles,” a track that some will interpret to be about her relationship with Meek. The bandmates were once married; after they separated, Meek took a break from touring. Then Lenker came out. Since they’ve reunited in the band, the two regard each other as “deep friends.”

The group talked to The Associated Press about how they

became a trio, worked with new collaborators and reimagined their sound on “Double Infinity,” which was released Sept. 5.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Associated Press: You started making this album in isolation and then brought in collaborators. Why open the creation process to other artists?

Krivchenia: After trying it in isolation in the trio for a little bit, we realized what the music, the songs, are asking for is something we can’t imagine or control — live, crackling, you know, a big group of people. The spirit of the music was like, “Why not open the windows?” Like, invite friends and collaborators and these legends that we all admire and put everyone in a room and see how it sounds.

Are there growing pains in that?

Lenker: Between changing shapes to a trio and going through the grief of parting ways with our bandmate of 10 years, it brought us into a space of looking at our friendships — like, you know, between me, Buck and James — and just like spring cleaning, like going into all the dusty corners.

The song “Incomprehensible”



ANDY KROPA, INVISION/AP

From left: Adrienne Lenker, Buck Meek and James Krivchenia of the band Big Thief pose Sept. 2. The group has found new life as a trio after bassist Max Oleartchik left last year.

grapples with aging. What did you want to explore?

Lenker: So much wisdom and so much deep, true, actual beauty is found in nature everywhere. The older something is — not the less beautiful — the more grand, often. Like big, old trees or rivers and mountains.

There’s just a general exhaustion I feel inside as I go through the battle of, like, learning how to actually see myself, see the beauty and meet myself. Well, “should I use this product?” And “should I go to this and have this thing done?”

(The lyric) “Let gravity be my sculptor and the wind do my hair,” is about the desire to be free and let go of these fears of how I appear.

Krivchenia: There’s this beautiful acceptance of the mystery of, “Can I just, like, exist without sort of analysis?” I crave that feeling ... of just wanting to exist without the judgmental self.

Meek: I really resonate with that song because I feel ageless when I’m at play — playing music or playing in water. Playing

music is a really vulnerable process, like seeing yourself in the mirror of a creative process.

Can you talk about becoming a trio?

Krivchenia: It was kind of like a breakup. It felt like we were losing a partner. Or at least in my experience of that feeling of separating with someone where there’s so much love, but you also know you need to go on a different path. It took us a lot of time.

Lenker: It was just, like, a natural progression that needed to happen, similar to when you have a romantic partner and you need to part ways because neither of you are able to be your fullest in that container.

Being a three piece, we had to re-find ourselves and allow it all to break apart and die. Part of the grief that I think we were collectively feeling in that breakup was like, “It’ll never be like this again.” It was 10 years of living, eating, breathing, sleeping, crying, playing, mourning together. We’ll never have that back: when we literally all lived on the road together, when none

of us had apartments. We went through everything together and the only people who saw it happen was us.

Adrienne and Buck, what’s it like to sing about love, sex and each other’s romantic relationships on stage?

Lenker: I think it’s a gift. It’s a testament to the love and friendship that’s at the core of our relationship, that it was just big enough to exist and carry and hold true into this new space and this new shape. We’re kindred spirits, and I think that we’ve probably known each other through many lifetimes, but we had this iteration of our relationship for three years that was romantic and then it turned into a friendship.

Meek: That’s beautifully said. It’s a testament to the power of music as a vessel for love, real love, and its ability to transmute pain and ego and fear and resentments. It’s also this system of accountability to show up for, almost like it’s a kid or something we’re co-parenting through the shifting form of our relationship.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Q&A

Giving audiences ‘something to root for’

‘The Paper’ creators discuss ‘The Office’ spinoff about the struggling news industry

BY YVONNE VILLARREAL
Los Angeles Times

The journey to spin off the U.S. version of “The Office” has, until now, been long and slow.

While the unconventional workplace comedy about a humdrum band of paper company employees, adapted from a beloved British series of the same name, famously got off to a sluggish start on NBC with a low-rated six-episode first season, it became a rare case study of how a risky gamble can become a pop culture phenomenon and one of the most popular sitcoms in TV history. Talks of expanding “The Office” universe began as early as Season 3, when another office branch was introduced. “Parks and Recreation” was initially conceived as a spinoff but morphed into a stand-alone series. Another centered on socially awkward Dwight Schrute (Rainn Wilson) would get dropped. The series eventually ended its nine-season run in 2013 with no offshoot. But it still managed to have an afterlife without one, as fans continued to watch it in syndication or on streaming platforms.

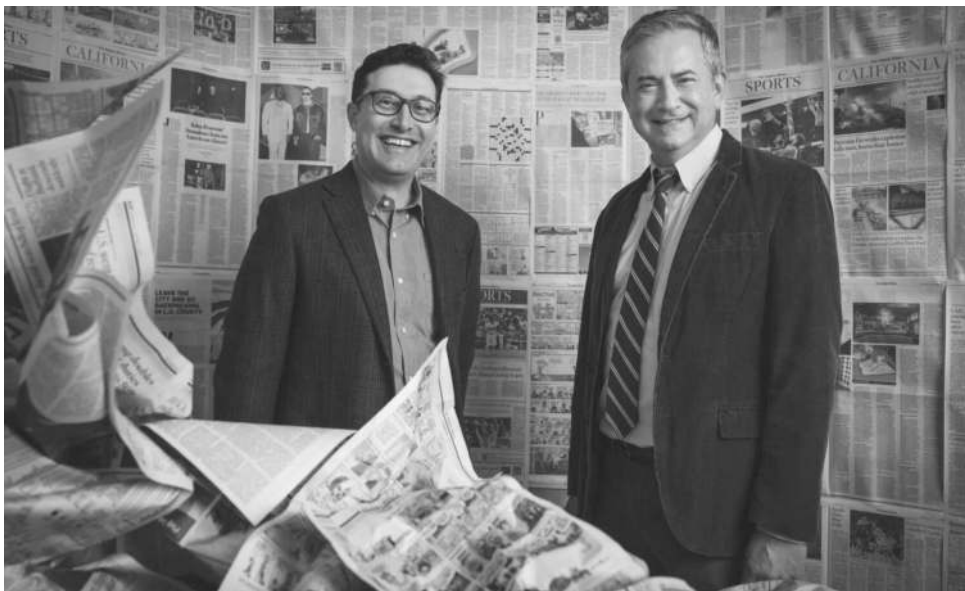
Once “The Office” began making headlines in 2020 for being the most streamed show in America, Greg Daniels, who captained the U.S. adaptation and was initially concerned about tarnishing its legacy with offshoots, was coming around to the idea that it was safely insulated enough to withstand any attempt to find a way to build out its kooky world.

Finally, more than a decade after “The Office” went off the air, Peacock is hoping the spinoff series “The Paper” can recycle some of that show’s success while finding its own path.

This series shifts its focus to the staff at the Toledo Truth Teller, a struggling local newspaper in Ohio, which is being filmed by the same documentary crew that followed bumbling boss Michael Scott (Steve Carell) and his Scranton, Pa.-based Dunder Mifflin employees. (It’s a believable documentary subject when you consider the U.S. has lost more than one-third of its newspapers since 2005.) Daniels created the series with Michael Koman (“Nathan For You,” “How to With John Wilson”).

All 10 episodes of the first season were released Sept. 4 on Peacock, and the show has been picked up for a second season. Daniels and Koman visited The Times this month — and spoke in follow-up video calls — to discuss the comedy potential of a beleaguered industry, why Oscar is the obvious choice to be the crossover character in the spinoff and whether they plan to reference the president’s comments about the press. These are edited excerpts from the conversation:

Los Angeles Times: The crisis facing local journalism doesn’t feel like an obvious backdrop for comedy — and if you’re in it, it’s more of a can’t-help-but-laugh-to-keep-from-crying vibe. How did



JASON ARMOND, LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

“The Paper” co-creators and showrunners Michael Koman, left, and Greg Daniels pose Aug. 17 at The Los Angeles Times offices in El Segundo, Calif.

you arrive at a newsroom as your backdrop, and what was the pitch?

Daniels: You wouldn’t think that selling stationary was a particularly hilarious or glamorous place to set a show. I think that there are some intentional differences with this show, and in the sense that we didn’t want to repeat aspects of “The Office.” For me, I was incredibly protective of the original show and the cast. I just waited a long time to do something like this. The original “Office” cast was very supportive by the time it came about. Since it’s a documentary, if you’re going to really commit to that device, you have to think all the time about [how] there’s really camerapeople in the room; they’re trying to cover something; they wouldn’t be there to just cover what they thought was a funny workplace. They’re there to cover an actual story. And the hollowing out of local newspapers is an interesting story that you could imagine a documentary crew from PBS being like, “Oh, this is a good story.” Of course, since it’s a comedy show, the stuff that’s happening in the background is really the point of the show — all the funny interactions with people as they try to do stuff. Another way that we wanted it to be different was the whole interaction between Michael Scott and his staff — he was not a very inspirational boss, and Ned Sampson, played by Domhnall Gleeson, comes in and he does manage to inspire the people working there. And the question is more: Is he biting off way more than he can chew and his staff can chew? Or should they be right and believing in him?

Koman: I just think reality always makes the best backdrop. And it’s good if your characters are facing a challenge and you have something to root for.

How did you arrive at former Dunder Mifflin accountant Oscar Martinez (Oscar Núñez) being the connecting character between the two shows?

Daniels: When you look at the finale of “The Office,” everybody was going off in their own direction that had a lot of, in my view, meaningful wrap-up of their story. Jim and Pam were moving to Boston with

Darrell; Toby was in England. But Oscar didn’t really have a big arc. He was pretty much Oscar the whole way through, and it didn’t feel like it was going to undo anything with “The Office” to keep Oscar involved.

Koman: It made sense, just on a business level, that if one company was acquired by another, that some people would move over into that company. He was the one person who, I think, would have stayed.

Daniels: He was maybe the most self-possessed. He had the most dignity, I think, of most of the characters. The idea that the crew has found him again just seemed appropriate. He did run for elective office at the end of “The Office,” so I feel like he is susceptible to being inspired and do something for his community, so he seems like a person who could buy into what Ned is selling.

Koman: Also, he has kind of a cosmopolitan personality. The city is, like, a third larger than Scranton.

Greg, you gave us one of the great will-they/won’t-they relationships in TV history with Jim and Pam. There are a couple of office romances brewing on “The Paper.” Is there a specific challenge with crafting a slow burn in the streaming era? How did you want to approach things this time around?

Daniels: You need to have stakes in stories. If you’re going to be very realistic and relatable, the stakes in people’s stories are mostly romantic because most people don’t battle aliens to save the world or whatever. So, the highest stakes a normal person usually has is who they’re going to marry or who they’re seeing, or what drama they’re in in their personal lives. There’s a column the New York Times does about people who are getting married, how-they-met kind of thing, which I love, and you realize that there’s hundreds and hundreds of stories of how people meet. It’s not all Sam and Diane or Pam and Jim. My aim would be to not have the audience be like, “Who’s the next Pam and Jim? Is that Pam and Jim?” That’s their relationship. Those two actors were bril-

liant. You can’t replicate it, but it doesn’t mean that other characters aren’t going to be romantically interested in each other.

We had a sense, at least through Kelly Kapoor and her pop culture references, that “The Office” took place in our shared reality, but it didn’t directly comment on real-world matters. But considering the show’s setting and Ned’s idealism about the profession, with President Donald Trump’s ongoing remarks about the press, can you see a day where those remarks or ideas are more directly referenced in some form? Or do you want to stay clear of that?

Daniels: I think there’s so many voices that [are] constantly talking about that, just from a comedy standpoint; I’m very tired of it. There’s also so many opinions that are so strong. My inclination is to do the fundamentals — it’s a character comedy. These are characters. They’re in a world of journalism [and it] has a lot of bumping between human beings and ethics, and to tell those stories is valuable. No matter what side you’re on, you can look at it and, hopefully, if there’s truth in what’s being presented, you can take something valuable away.

Koman: It’s important to think of this as a local paper. Their struggle is to credibly tell local stories, which is what I think the city needs, more than anything — a voice to just tell people what’s going on. Beyond that, I think the way that a culture will seep into a show like this — you should always have a sense of reality and that this is taking place in the present. I think of their minds as being focused on: How can we be a good news source for Toledo?

The impulse when you hear about a spinoff or a reboot is to compare and to see who fits into what archetypes. Tell me about the types of characters you wanted to fill out in this newsroom.

Daniels: We tried to avoid that. What’s the point of doing something where everybody can go, “Oh, that’s the new Dwight”? They’re working in journalism and they have a very romantic, idealistic boss. He’s extremely interested in getting to the bottom of stories and being super rigorous and ethical, but he’s come in and replaced the temporary managing editor, Esmeralda, played by Sabrina Impacciatore, who has a very different view. She doesn’t really drill down that hard. She’s more about getting eyeballs.

Koman: What makes newspapers different than other businesses or other jobs is that people do arrive with a sense of enthusiasm for what they’re going to do. It seemed important that many of these people could have started their jobs like this, but now we’re meeting them at a point where that’s been tamped down enormously. Morale is low. In terms of who this group of people was, you could feel like that’s been dampened enormously and somebody new can come in who, either out of naivete or just optimism, thinks that he can revive it.

Daniels: That quality of morale being low is very “Office”-like. The tone is intended to be similar without having the characters be similar.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



NETFLIX/AP

Suranne Jones, left, plays British Prime Minister Abigail Dalton and Julie Delpy, right, French President Vivienne Toussaint, in the thriller miniseries “Hostage.”

Stepping into the pants of politicians

‘Hostage’ actors Jones, Delpy discuss their roles in the new Netflix miniseries, how they relate to their characters

BY HILARY FOX
Associated Press

Only a few people know what it’s like to stand outside 10 Downing Street and address the world’s media.

Suranne Jones and Julie Delpy aren’t politicians, but they got that opportunity playing rival stateswomen in the thriller miniseries “Hostage.” No. 10 is where the British prime minister lives and works, and it’s at the heart of Matt Charman’s new show, now on Netflix.

During a tense Anglo-French summit, Jones powerdresses as Prime Minister Abigail Dalton, while Delpy wears the red lipstick of the pristinely presented French President Vivienne Toussaint. In the show, which also stars Ashley Thomas, Corey Mylchreest and Lucian Msa-mati, both women wrestle with power and their personal lives when Dalton’s husband is kidnapped and Toussaint is threatened with a career-ruining scandal.

“The speeches is the hardest thing to do in the show,” says Delpy, who stood at a podium on the set of an impressive re-creation of Downing Street. “I had the same anxiety as if I was doing it for real.”

Jones also had to address the House of Commons, with everyone shouting at her. It’s a common sight in British politics, with politicians yelling and making noise over the top of their rivals to drown them out in Parliament.

Once everyone started braying at her, Jones “couldn’t remember anything” she was saying. Then they’d retake it without the extras shouting, which threw her after she’d got used to all the noise.

And words are weapons in this thriller, as negotiations veer between solidarity and betrayal.

“Every word is being scrutinized, like if you use a term instead of another, it’s going to be judged by the press. And I mean, it happens a little bit in our business, but nothing compared to a politician,” Delpy adds.

Delpy and Jones sat down with The Associated Press to talk about politicians and power pants. Remarks have been edited for clarity and brevity:

Associated Press: How do you think France will feel about you being president?

Delpy: I think they might get upset, I don’t know, at my representation — no, I’m joking — of a French president with a sex scandal and all that. I don’t know, French are not very big on judging sex scandals with people. I don’t think it works in France like it works everywhere else. ... Like, they don’t care when a president has an affair. It’s more the politics.

These aren’t specific politicians, but you did research and speak to female politicians. What did you learn?

Jones: I wanted to talk to loads of women that were in it and from lots of different parties as well. So some on the phone, some were in person. I interviewed a couple of people high in power. We went to the Commons, watched the PMQs (Prime Minister’s Questions), felt the atmosphere, walked the halls, talked to the speaker. And it was all, it was all so ... to be in the world that I know nothing about. I’ve been invited as a creative or a celebrity, but to actually talk to people about the balance and the cost of what it takes and what it does to your kids ... that was really helpful.

Delpy: I’ve listened to a lot of politicians about their life, about what it’s been like after they were in power and stuff and the pressure and stuff, but I didn’t want to inspire myself on someone specific, so there’s no reference. It’s like, “Oh, she’s like the blah blah blah or she’s like so.” I made her different than some French women politician that would be the obvious persons to be inspired by.

These characters are in power and they are holding on to it. How do you use your own power in your life?

Jones: I feel like I sometimes put power pants on, do you know what I mean? Because actually I also quite like

to hide away. So I like the duality of power, which Abigail doesn’t have that choice, really. But, so, I like to go, “Right, today. ... I’m going to use it for good.” Or I need it as energy, so I have power pants, but I like to take them on and off.

Can I establish, when you say pants — do you mean English pants (underwear) or American pants (trousers)?

Jones: Big knickers. Yeah, power knickers, what about you? You got any power pants?

Delpy: No, I don’t know. It’s funny. I was thinking of a joke I made years ago about, like, how when women are directors, they have to wear fatigues, not, like, literal[ly], you know. If you go direct a movie wearing a dress, people don’t take you as seriously. But it’s kind of a joke on, you know, the power thing.

Jones: But it’s the same thing, isn’t it?

Delpy: Yeah, and I think I’ve noticed that ... if you give a vibe that’s more in charge, I think people have a certain respect.

So you both, like your characters, put a lot of thought into what you are wearing?

Jones: What you’re wearing emotionally that day, what you’re giving out, what you’re putting on. ... And wearing the heels to make yourself taller, wearing the shoulders to not feminize yourself in that historically masculine situation. So yeah, all of that comes into play.

Delpy: Toussaint, for me, it was important that she was really pristine all the time. And we talk about the white coat, that she has never put lipstick on a white coat. I would put lipstick on my white coat in 10 seconds. But she’s, like, really the kind of person they will never be, you know, she’ll never be walking like this (folds over her lapel) into a room...

Jones: With a lapel up! Julie on the other hand, definitely.

Delpy: And I’ll step in a hole and fall.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



Jannelliz Barragan, front, wears a weighted vest during an MB360 workout class at the Life Time health club in New York on Aug. 13, 2024.

AP

Resisting the hype

Weighing the pros, cons of wearing a weighted vest

By Kenya Hunter
Associated Press

In the fitness class Jessie Syfko created for a nationwide gym chain, exercisers wear weighted vests that add a challenge to their workouts.

“People start to realize how good it feels to work just a little bit harder and a little bit smarter” without actually changing what they’re doing, said Syfko, senior vice president for Life Time gyms.

Weighted vests are increasingly showing up in fitness classes and on jogging tracks, touted by social media influencers as a way to keep bones healthy, improve performance and even accelerate weight loss. They are exactly what they sound like — vests that add resistance to the torso through pockets with removable weights.

But there’s a lack of robust research on their benefits, experts say, so it’s unclear how much of the hype is justified. And some people, such as seniors or those who are pregnant, should be cautious about using them.

Potential benefits

When you think about how exercise works, the idea that a weighted vest will help you meet fitness goals like weight loss, muscle growth or preventing bone loss might make sense on the surface. Adding weight to the vest adds resistance to your everyday activities without changing up your patterns.

The vests may, in fact, offer benefits for healthy adults, experts say — although no one should expect transformative or instant results.

Jeff Monaco, a certified strength coach who teaches medical fitness at the University of Texas, Austin, said while you may not lose a lot more calories during a weighted vest exercise, resistance from the vest may result in better sports performance over time.

“There are a lot of studies looking at (the weighted vest) from a speed perspective in different athletics, like soccer, with

changing direction, agility and speed and so forth,” he said.

You’ll start to see those benefits by adding about 10% of your body weight to the vest, he said. If you weigh 150 pounds, for example, that would mean adding a total of 15 pounds to the vest.

But the research outside of sports isn’t as clear. One 2020 study from Wake Forest University School of Medicine in North Carolina found that adults between 60 and 85 years old who wore weighted vests at times during the day when they were most active lost about the same amount of weight as those who didn’t wear them. They also lost the same amount of bone density, which happens as we age but can be slowed by building muscle.

How to use weighted vests safely

Experts urge people to use weighted vests safely. It’s best to start out by adding between 5 to 10% of your body weight. Wearing a vest that’s too heavy can put unnecessary strain on your joints, back and hips. That extra load can throw off your posture, lead to poor form or even result in stress fractures over time.

Some people should consult with a doctor before they throw on a vest, said Dr. Elizabeth Gardner, a team physician for athletes at Yale University. They include people who are pregnant, suffer from heart and breathing conditions or have back or neck injuries.

You’ll have to use the muscles in your abdomen to use a weighted vest effectively, Gardner said, and this can be tougher for those already managing back pain.

Before starting to use a vest, Monaco said it’s always helpful to get guidance from someone who has experience with them, “just to make sure that your movements are good, your form is good, that you have enough muscular upper body, muscular strength and endurance to support that during your movements.”

But as long as you use it correctly, he said, a weighted vest can be “a good tool to have in your toolbox.”

Study: Warming planet affecting consumption of sugar

By Seth Borenstein
Associated Press

Global warming in the United States is amping up the country’s sweet tooth, a new study found.

When the temperature rises, Americans drink lots more sugary beverages and eat slightly more frozen desserts. It amounts to more than 100 million pounds of added sugar consumed in a year, compared to 15 years earlier, according to researchers in the U.S. and United Kingdom writing in Monday’s Nature Climate Change.

“Climate change is shaping what you eat and how you eat, and that might have a bad effect on your health,” said study co-author Duo Chan, a climate scientist at the University of Southampton.

“People tend to take in more sweetened beverages as the temperature is getting higher and higher,” Chan said. “Obviously under a warming climate, that would cause you to drink more or take in more sugar. And that is going to be a severe problem when it comes to health.”

A little added sugar every day adds up

By tracking weather conditions and consumer purchases, the researchers found that sugar consumption rose as temperatures moved between 54 and 86 degrees Fahrenheit. And the warmer it got, the more sugar was consumed, until appetites began to lessen when it grew warmer than 86 degrees.

The daily difference from higher temperatures doesn’t amount to even a single candy bar for the average person. But it adds up over time and has a big effect, said University of California, San Francisco, endocrinology professor Dr. Robert Lustig, a specialist in pediatrics and obesity who wasn’t part of the study.

Lustig wrote in an email that among poorer Americans, just one added can of sugary soft drink per day increases diabetes risk by 29% — and temperature-related thirst plays a big part in America’s obesity epidemic.

The United States’ average annual temperature has gone up about 2.2 degrees since 1895, according to the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

To chart the impact on sugar consumption, researchers compared it to the American Heart Association recommendations: limiting daily intake to 36 grams for men and 25 grams for women.

The team then compared wind, precipitation and humidity records to the detailed purchase records of 40,000 to 60,000 American households from 2004 to 2019, not using any data after the pandemic hit. Then they looked at the nutritional information of the items bought. That allowed them to eliminate other factors to make a causal link and come up with a calculation for how much extra sugar is consumed per person per degree, said lead author Pan He, an environmental scientist at Cardiff University.

Researcher He said she started thinking about the study when she noticed that people in the U.S. tend to grab sugary soda when they are thirsty: “From a perspective of nutrition science or environmental science, that could be a problem,” she said.

WEEKEND: FAMILY



FABIAN MOSELE/AP

Artificial intelligence-generated animation of Italian Brain Rot characters created by visual artist Fabian Mosele.

Deciphering tween trends

‘Italian Brain Rot’ about unwinding, escaping pressures of self-optimization

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE
Associated Press

In the first half of 2025, she racked up more than 55 million views on TikTok and 4 million likes, mostly from tweens glued to their cellphones. Not bad for an artificial intelligence-generated cartoon ballerina with a cappuccino teacup for a head. Her name is Ballerina Cappuccina. Her smiling, girlish face is accompanied by a deep, computer-generated male voice singing in Italian — or at least *some* Italian. The rest is gibberish.

She is one of the most prominent characters in the internet phenomenon known as “Italian Brain Rot,” a series of memes that exploded in popularity this year, consisting of unrealistic AI-generated animal-object hybrids with absurdist, pseudo-Italian narration.

The trend has baffled parents, to the delight of young people experiencing the thrill of a new, fleeting cultural signifier that is illegible to older generations.

Experts and fans alike say the trend is worth paying attention to, and tells us something about the youngest generation of tweens.

A nonsensical, AI-generated realm

The first Italian brain-rot character was Tralalero Tralala, a shark with blue Nike sneakers on his elongated fins. Early Tralalero Tralala videos were scored with a curse-laden Italian song that sounds like a crude nursery rhyme.

Other characters soon emerged: Bombardiro Crocodilo, a crocodile-headed military airplane; Lirilì Larilà, an elephant with a cactus body and slippers; and Armadillo Crocodillo, an armadillo inside a coconut, to name a few.

Content creators around the world have created entire storylines told through intentionally ridiculous songs. These videos have proven so popular that they have launched catchphrases that have entered mainstream culture for Generation Alpha, which describes anyone born between 2010 and 2025.

Fabian Mosele, 26, calls themselves an “Italian brain-rot connoisseur.” An Italian animator who lives in Germany and works with AI by trade, Mosele created their first Italian brain-rot content in March. Shortly after, Mosele’s video of Italian brain-rot characters at an underground rave garnered about a million views overnight, they said. It has since topped 70 million.

Even as the hysteria over the absurdist subgenre has slowed, Mosele said the characters have transcended the digital realm and become an indelible part of pop culture.

“It feels so ephemeral,” Mosele said, “but it also feels so real.”

This summer, one of the most popular games on Roblox, the free online platform that has approximately 111 million monthly users, was called “Steal a Brainrot.” The goal of the game, as the title would suggest, is to steal brain-rot characters from other players.

The rise of brain rot

Italian brain rot didn’t go viral in a vacuum. “Brain rot,” the 2024 Oxford University Press word of the year, is defined as the numbing of an intellectual state resulting from the “overconsumption of trivial or unchallenging material.”

It can also be used to describe the brain-rotting content itself.

Lots of content falls into that category. Consider videos of the game “Subway Surfer” split-screened next to full episodes of television shows, or “Skibidi Toilet,” an animated series featuring toilets with human heads popping out of their bowls.

Those not chronically online might instinctively recoil at the term brain rot, with its vaguely gory connotations, especially as concern about the potential harms of social media for adolescents mounts.

When brain rot was crowned word of the year, Oxford Languages President Casper Grathwohl said the term speaks to “one of the perceived dangers of virtual life, and how we are using our free time.”

Emilie Owens, 33, a children’s media researcher, agreed that endless scrolling poses dangers for young people. But she said that the concern about brain rot is misguided.

It’s normal to “view the thing the newest generation is doing with fear and suspicion,” she said, pointing to how past generations have had similar concerns about the detrimental effects of comic books, television and even novels at one time.

Concerns about brain rot — that it is unproductive and pointless — actually reveal a great deal about their appeal, Owens said. Brain rot is an acute rejection of the intense pressures on young people to self-optimize.

“It’s very normal for everyone to need to switch their brains off now and again,” she said.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



What do we mean by ‘American cuisine’?

“Baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet ... they go together, in the good ol’ USA!” was a familiar car commercial jingle when I was a kid. It featured iconic scenes from small-town America, like aproned grandmothers rolling out pie crust, boys sliding into dusty first base, dogs slathered in mustard and a sporty yellow 1975 Chevy Vega.

I ethnocentrically believed that Americans had invented these treasures. Eventually, I grew up and gained global perspective. While living overseas as a military spouse, I began to doubt the origins of many things I believed to be quintessentially American.

Take the hot dog, for example. Also known as wieners or frankfurters, it doesn’t take a food expert to figure out that these simple sausages originated in Germany. Frankfurters were brought over to the U.S. by German immigrants in the mid-1800s, and were initially sold from street carts in New York City. There is, however, evidence that at least the hot dog bun was invented around 1870 by Brooklyn baker Charles Feltman, who sold hand-sliced buns and hot dogs by the thousands in Coney Island. Hamburgers also have their origins in Germany, even if you top them with “American” cheese, which was invented in Switzerland.

While stationed in England, I met a neighbor who glued herself to her telly for days on end watching cricket matches that looked a lot like baseball, except with squished bats and dapper sweaters. Baseball originates from that 18th century English game.

As for apple pie, the fruit didn’t even grow in America until apple seeds and saplings were brought over and planted by French Jesuits and European colonists. Even then, the sour apples produced by those trees were only used for hard cider. The English and Dutch had been making apple pies centuries earlier.

While stationed overseas, there were times that I wanted to treat my local friends to foods from my home country, but I didn’t understand, with so many supposed American dishes originating elsewhere, “What is American cuisine, anyway?”

I was disappointed to find out that, although American children would arguably starve without macaroni and cheese, the dish does not originate in the U.S. On the contrary, pasta with cheese dates back to 160 B.C. in ancient Rome! “Roman Macaroni” made its way to France, Great Britain and eventually America, when colonists called it vermicelli and it became a favorite of Thomas Jefferson.

British friends asked me to buy peanut butter for them at the commissary while we were stationed in England, but I discovered that the Argentinian legumes were brought to colonial America by West African slaves who were fed peanuts by their European captors. Who knew the beloved PB&J had sordid foreign origins?

Despite these disappointments, I was happy to find out that the first bowls of chili were served along the Texas/Mexico border. And clam chowder was born when Native Americans convinced European colonists that clams should be used for more than hog feed.

If you find yourself needing to bring an American dish to an overseas gathering, there are two authentic American delicacies that will impress foreign friends.

Lucky for Americans, brownies were first introduced at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893 by wealthy socialite Bertha Palmer, and in 1938, Ruth Wakefield first baked chocolate chip cookies for her Massachusetts Toll House Restaurant, later selling her rights to the original recipe to Nestle for a reported dollar.

Americans can’t claim fame for the many foods originating in other countries that have been mistakenly associated with our country, but when you bring brownies and chocolate chip cookies to the party, no one really cares.

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa’s book, “The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com.” Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

A MAN OF CHARACTER
BY DANNY J. ROONEY / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Danny J. Rooney is a musical-theater writer in New York City. His credits as a composer/lyricist include “The Game Boy,” “A Smalltown Christmas” and “GLUE: A Pony Tale.” Last year he stumbled on The Times’s article “How to Make a Crossword” and dived headfirst into constructing. This is his first one for The Times. — W.S.

- ACROSS
- 1 Maximum extent, in an idiom

5 “Suitable, I guess”

11 Small storage unit

15 “___ News Central” (daily program)

18 Sea adventure novel by Herman Melville

19 Rump

20 Sounds of amazement

21 Spoils

22 “Don’t flick that cigarette over here!”

24 “Incredible! This mosquito net didn’t let in even one bug!”

26 Greatest potential accomplishment, metaphorically

27 Non-free-range farm fixture

29 Container weight

30 Pick up at school

31 Actor Pascal

32 Kiss

34 Celestial sphere

35 Went from 0 to 60, say

37 Nipsey Russell’s role in 1978’s “The Wiz”

40 “___ America (And So Can You!)” (Stephen Colbert best seller)

42 Device for cutting bangs?

45 More in need of a sticky roller

47 Zealous

48 Guide for writing a perfect letter

49 Adorn

50 Some skin care products

52 “Dear Lord! His Majesty’s beard is out of control!”

55 Comics cry of dismay

58 ___ code

59 Tiny and scurrying, perhaps

63 “Just dropped off some of your newly buffed knight’s protection!”

71 Green gemstone

72 Brand of bubbly, informally

73 ___ de vie

74 “Can you offer me anything bigger than skiffs, dinghies and pontoons?”

82 Composure under pressure

85 Firmly planted

86 Sizable wine orders

90 Zest

91 Hero’s partner in myth

93 Real ladies’ man

94 Bit of work

95 It’s always getting into hot water

96 Theatrical constructions

97 Unburden

98 Computer shortcuts

100 Muse of love poetry

103 “You can’t win ___,”

105 Writer ___ Stanley Gardner

106 “Is that a certainty?”

109 Unruly, as a beard

111 Secret agent first introduced in 1953

113 Classic 111-Across portrayer, whose iconic accent is suggested by the answers to the italicized clues

115 Langston Hughes poem

116 Aston Martin, e.g.

117 Charm

118 Member of a watery quintet

119 Adriatique, e.g.

120 School attended by both 111-Across and his creator

121 Debate-ending reply

122 Figs. most people have memorized

25 Lots and lots

28 Certain URL ending

31 A pop

33 Favorite drink of 111-Across

35 What wine or citrus adds to a sauce

36 Hairstyle helpers

38 Allergic reaction

39 Company originally named Blue Ribbon Sports

41 E.R. V.I.P.s

43 High school subj.

44 Base figure, for short

45 Bank security feature

46 Perfect match

47 It’s right on a square

49 Port on the Adriatic

51 Airing

53 Shout of triumph

54 ___-El (Superman’s birth name)

55 Relative of an adder

56 “Evita” role for Antonio Banderas

57 ___ royale (cocktail)

60 Indignation

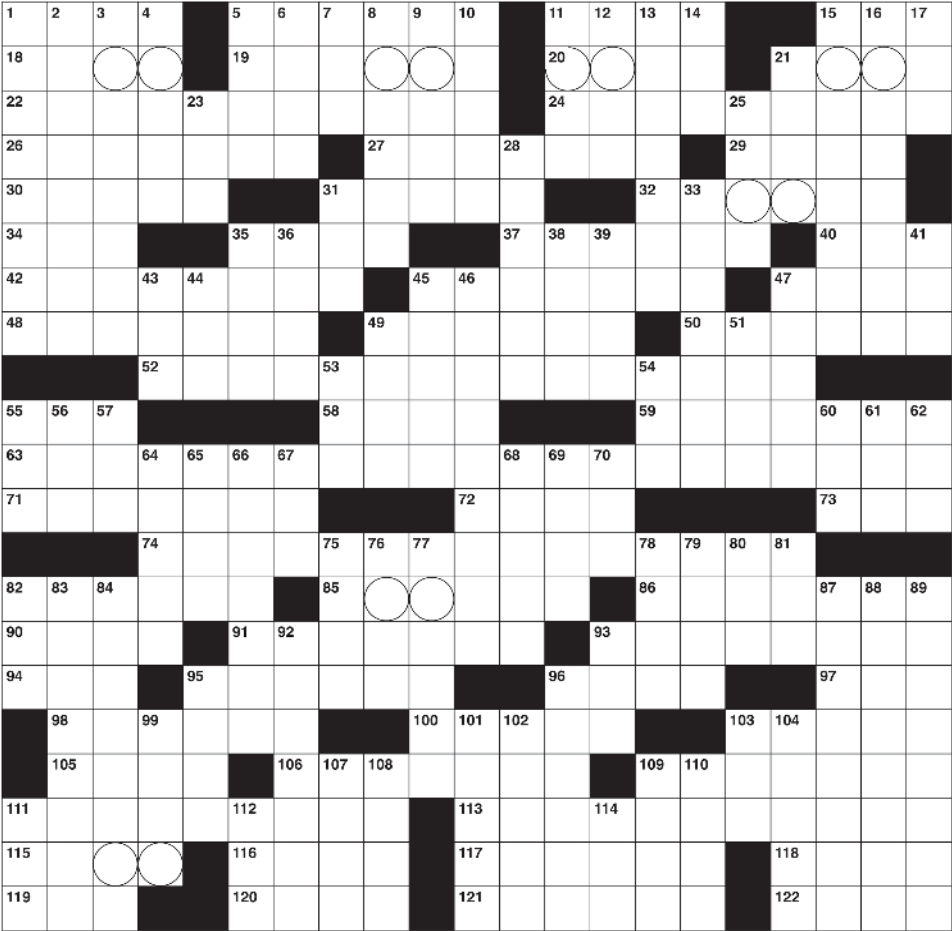
61 New Zealand parrot that can solve logic puzzles

62 End of an academic address

64 Williamson who played Merlin in “Excalibur”

65 Biblical kingdom near the Dead Sea

66 Feature of this puzzle’s circled squares that, when connected by a single line, visually represents 111-Across



- 67 Stitching on a Cardinal’s cap
- 68 Mid-Atlantic state capital
- 69 A good one might generate good karma
- 70 J.F.K. prediction
- 75 Far from bright
- 76 University in New Rochelle, N.Y.
- 77 Obergefell v. ___, milestone case for marriage equality
- 78 Improvise à la Ella Fitzgerald
- 79 Avocado variety
- 80 Portfolio holding, for short
- 81 Give a bad review
- 82 Imitate
- 83 Spread throughout
- 84 Greaves and cuisses, but not gauntlets and helmets
- 87 Those who hunt and gather
- 88 Feature of many a gloating movie villain
- 89 “Alas, it is true”
- 92 Grounder to second, often
- 93 Corp. bigwig
- 95 ___ leches cake
- 96 Beau
- 99 Late jazz singer ___ Laine
- 101 Sly schemes
- 102 Paris’s Dôme de Paris, e.g.
- 103 Sea eagle
- 104 Zebra features that mirror their body stripes
- 107 “You’re ___ something”
- 108 Japanese noodle
- 109 Many a get-rich-quick offer
- 110 Heart
- 111 Beam on a bottle
- 112 Modern pet name
- 114 Platform for Super Mario Bros., for short

GUNSTON STREET



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

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



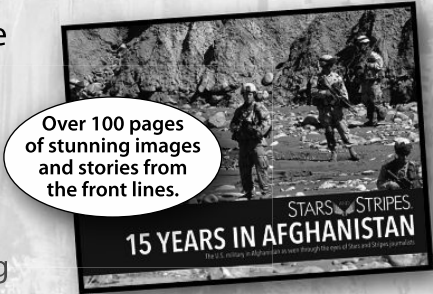
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MILITARY

Daughter reclaims father's Army baseball legacy

Riley's Challenge tournament returns to French field

BY MATT WAGNER
Stars and Stripes

Reconnecting with a long-lost father through baseball is much more than Hollywood script material for 70-year-old Oregon native Elizabeth Riley.

Her "Field of Dreams" moments played out far from Iowa's cornstalks, in a Loire Valley town about 90 miles southwest of Paris.

They happened during a tournament named after her dad, a U.S. Army officer killed in 1958 while heading to a deployment in Lebanon. The games in the town of Olivet took place on forgotten baseball fields on a French military base.

The youngest of Capt. James D. Riley's three children, Elizabeth was only 3 when he died and didn't attend his funeral. Last year, the U.S. Military WarDogs, an organization of 12 ballclubs near U.S. military installations, gave her a chance to make up for that absence.

They presented her with an American flag before one of the games at the Riley's Challenge tournament.

"It was like I was finally present at my father's funeral," Riley said, calling the experience "unbelievably emotional and important."

Riley's Challenge returns Saturday at the home field of the Olivet Red Castors, a French club that sponsored a 2021 tournament before making it a commemorative event.

Elizabeth Riley will attend again this year, with a new addition to the slate. On Friday, a 3.6-mile walk will take her and the other participants past the site of the road crash that claimed her father's life, a place she's never visited.

"The fact that my father was honored, that somehow ... I'm not going to say a sacrifice was worth it," Elizabeth said. "All I can say about this is that it was extremely important for me to honor my father, that he not be forgotten."

Digging for diamonds

Olivet's memorial tournament is the result of a quest to rediscover the former youth baseball complex called Riley Fields, which disappeared in the late 1960s.

The Riley family moved to the area in 1956, when James was assigned to Coligny Caserne in nearby Orleans. It was the headquarters of Com Z, or Communication Zone, which supplied materiel for U.S. forces in Europe.

James Riley immersed himself in the youth baseball scene and



U.S. Military WarDogs

Members of the U.S. Military WarDogs pose with their trophies from the 2024 Riley's Challenge baseball tournament in Olivet, France, beside a player from the host Olivet Red Castors.



COURTESY OF ELIZABETH RILEY

U.S. Army Capt. James D. Riley poses with his wife, Barbara, in this undated photo.

became a champion of Little League there. He helped coach the squad that won the 1958 Little League Army European championship in Wiesbaden, Germany.

Not long after that triumph, tragedy struck.

Early on July 17, 1958, a bus full of GIs left Orleans for an air base and deployment to Lebanon during a political crisis.

The bus collided with a truck on National Road 20 at Belle Croix in Olivet, killing Riley and three other soldiers. His widow, Barbara, returned with her children to Oregon, where her husband was buried.

Back in France, the American military community honored Riley by dedicating four baseball diamonds in his memory.

Riley Fields opened May 30, 1959, with more than 600 people in attendance at the U.S. base in Olivet known as Maison Fort.

Three fields were for Little Leaguers ages 12 and under. The other was for Babe Ruth League ballplayers ages 13 to 18.

Elizabeth Riley said thousands of military children played there until 1967, when U.S. forces left France after President Charles de

Gaulle withdrew from NATO.

A few years after her father's death, she found a letter and photo in her mother's desk that described the field complex. As an adult, she began searching for the location.

"I just never forgot that that place existed," she said.

But decades of searching, including a visit to Orleans and a query to the secretary of the Army, proved fruitless. Even moving to France 30 years ago on a University of California fellowship didn't help. She now lives in the southern French city of Montpellier.

The breakthrough came in 2021 when she contacted a Facebook group for former students of Orleans American High School and met Greg Lynch, 80.

Their fathers had served in the Orleans region at the same time, and Lynch had babysat Elizabeth and her brother Patrick while playing catch or checkers with James, the eldest of the three Riley children.

Stories from group members and a 1963 aerial view of Maison Fort sent by a man in Germany helped her pinpoint the fields' location. The problem: they were on an active French army base.

Riley turned to Gilles Heccan, a retired French air force officer researching U.S. military history in Orleans for a book. He knew the officer in charge, went on the base and found the fields on Oct. 16, 2021.

Thirteen days later, Riley got permission to visit. Vegetation had overtaken the diamonds. A backstop propped up a French training wall, and the dugouts were marked only by moss-covered concrete blocks.

A bronze plaque once placed at the fields was gone, so Riley asked to commission a new marble one

with American and French flags etched into it.

She organized a group trip for former players and students to attend a rededication on May 8, 2022. She played a recording of Frank Sinatra's "There Used to be a Ballpark."

Lynch's daughter Sharon, 56, joined him and watched as former players identified where the pitcher's mound, batter's box and home plate had once been.

"There was not a dry eye on that field," she said. "It was so powerful. It was haunting. I think it was miraculous they were able to find this piece of land, and the French were so incredibly accommodating and helpful to Elizabeth."

Play ball once again

Riley thought that would be the end, but it turned out the Americans weren't the only ones moved by the flood of memories.

The Red Castors held a tournament in fall 2021. After Riley Fields' rededication, the team named the event in honor of the U.S. officer, said adult team manager Pierrick Pasella.

"We thought it was pretty cool to be invited to that event in 2022," the eight-year club member said. "We got Elizabeth Riley on board with that idea, trying to make that legacy alive again one time every year."

The first Riley's Challenge had five teams. The Red Castors share Riley's story and explain the tournament's purpose, Pasella said. Normally, someone from the family throws out the first pitch.

Teams now await invitations each year, and Pasella credits Elizabeth Riley as the driving force.

"I've never seen someone at that age — respectfully, of course — do so much stuff," Pasella said. "She's everywhere when it comes to the Challenge."

Riley strengthened the tribute by bringing in the WarDogs for last year's tournament. Their mission of championing veterans' causes, like promoting awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder, resonates with her.

The WarDogs also raise funds to provide service dogs for veterans and hold ceremonies to honor Gold Star families.

"To me, it made sense to invite them to come to this baseball tournament because of what they do," she said. "It's that trauma that we lived through that the WarDogs are now addressing."

Besides a dozen local teams at U.S. military bases, the WarDogs field a national squad that tours the United States each summer playing collegiate, all-star and alumni teams.

Current service members, veterans and some family members make up the rosters, said Josh Combs, a 21-year Air Force veteran and the team's chief operating officer.

Riley won a grant from the U.S. Embassy to cover part of the costs for 2024, while the organization and the players themselves funded the rest.

The WarDogs won the 2024 Riley's Challenge title by defeating six other teams, but what struck them most was the French reception.

"We went into it excited to go play some international baseball, have a good time, see a part of the world most of us hadn't, and our French hosts absolutely blew everything out of the water," Combs said. "I joke often that they treated us like rock stars."

Outside the competition, the WarDogs ran a two-hour baseball clinic for about 25 children from Olivet. They also staged a home run derby that delighted the crowd, complete with a French A400 plane flyover.

Riley hopes to expand the tournament by inviting a Japanese team, since her father's military career included time in Japan.

She's also reached out to the Kaiserslautern Bears, based in the German city that hosts the largest overseas U.S. military community.

The WarDogs and Red Castors have bonded over the experience and will renew that connection this weekend. Three other French teams will join them in vying for the championship.

Financial constraints could prevent the American team from joining future editions of Riley's Challenge, but everyone involved is sure of one thing: It's here to stay.

"Whether the WarDogs are there or not, whether it's all French, it doesn't matter — the Challenge is going to be awesome," Combs said. "It's stood up in honor of an incredible person."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Head of megachurch indicted while in prison

NY NEW YORK — The longtime head of a Mexican megachurch who is serving more than 16 years in a California prison for sexually abusing young followers has been charged with racketeering conspiracy and sex trafficking for allegedly victimizing members of the church for decades, authorities said Wednesday.

A federal grand jury in New York returned the indictment alleging that Naason Joaquin Garcia, 56, and five others exploited the church for decades to enable the systemic sexual abuse of children and women for the sexual gratification of Garcia and his father, who died in 2014.

Garcia was taken into federal custody early Wednesday in Chino, Calif., where he is serving a more than 16-year sentence after pleading guilty in 2022 to two state counts.

Garcia is the head of La Luz del Mundo (The Light of the World), which claims to have 5 million followers worldwide. Believers consider him to be the “apostle” of Jesus Christ.

Police arrest boy with 23 guns over school threats

WA TACOMA — A 13-year-old boy described by police as obsessed with school shooters was arrested on multiple firearms possession charges and causing a threat after they say they found social media posts about intentions to kill and seized 23 guns and ammunition from his home.

The boy pleaded not guilty to a total of five charges, four of them felonies, in juvenile court on Monday.

Firearms were mounted on walls and handguns were found unsecured throughout the home, sheriff’s Deputy Carly Cappelto said in a news release Monday.

“Several pieces of evidence from the suspect’s bedroom indicated he was obsessed with past school shooters and imitated similar behaviors with photos and inscriptions throughout his room,” she said. Loaded magazines with school shooter writings on them were removed.

The boy’s parents said their son had no intention of harming anyone.

Zoox launches robotaxi service in Sin City

NV LAS VEGAS — Amazon’s Zoox on Wednesday launched its robotaxi service in Las Vegas, offering free rides through parts of the entertainment mecca for anyone willing to gamble on the safety of a driverless vehicle.

The Las Vegas debut of Zoox’s long-planned ride-hailing service reflects the Amazon-owned robotaxi maker’s confidence in the safety of its boxy vehicles after two years of testing them in the city.

The robotaxis initially were only



GODOFREDO A. VASQUEZ/AP

Landmark trail run

A person runs on a trail in the Presidio as the Golden Gate Bridge is seen in the background, Monday, in San Francisco.

available to employees in Las Vegas before gradually expanding to friends and family members. Now, anyone with the Zoox app will be able to request a ride to five designated locations, including Resorts World, the Luxor hotel and the New York-New York hotel. The longest distance the Zoox robotaxis will travel is about three miles while carrying up to four passengers.

All rides will be provided for free for at least the first few months. Once it begins charging for rides in Las Vegas, Zoox says its prices will be comparable to Uber and Lyft.

Clash over college class content leads to removals

TX COLLEGE STATION — A professor at Texas A&M University was fired and others were removed from their positions after a video surfaced in which a student confronted the instructor over her teaching of issues related to gender identity in a class on children’s literature.

The firing of Melissa McCoul, a senior lecturer in the English department with over a decade of teaching experience, came after political pressure from Republican lawmakers, including Gov. Greg Abbott, who had called for her termination.

The incident prompted Glenn Hegar, the chancellor of the Texas A&M University System, to order an audit of courses at all 12 schools in the system.

In an email, McCoul referred all questions to her attorney, Amanda Reichek. Reichek said in a statement that McCoul has appealed her

termination and “is exploring further legal action.”

Texas A&M University President Mark A. Welsh III said in a statement Tuesday he directed the campus provost to fire McCoul after learning the instructor had continued teaching content in a children’s literature course “that did not align with any reasonable expectation of standard curriculum for the course.”

In her statement, Reichek pushed back on Welsh’s claims that McCoul’s teaching did not match the course description.

Welsh also ordered the removal of the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the head of the English Department from their administrative positions.

The controversy began on Monday after Republican state Rep. Brian Harrison posted a video, audio recordings and other materials on a thread on the social media site X. Harrison called for the professor and Welsh to be fired for “DEI and LGBTQ indoctrination.”

Lawmakers advance plan to redraw House districts

MO JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri’s Republican-led House turned aside Democratic objections Tuesday and passed a plan backed by President Donald Trump to redraw the state’s congressional districts so that Republicans could win an additional seat in the closely divided chamber.

The rare mid-decade redistricting plan, which now heads to the state Senate, is aimed at bolstering

Republicans’ national prospects in next year’s U.S. House elections, where Democrats need to gain just three seats to take control. By reshaping a Democratic-held Kansas City district, Republicans could win seven of Missouri’s eight congressional seats.

Missouri’s effort comes after a similar move by Republican-led Texas and a counter-offensive in Democratic-led California, which still needs voter approval. Other states could follow with their own revisions in what’s emerging as a national redistricting battle.

Prosecutor: More raids to follow one at snack plant

NY ALBANY — Fifty-seven people in the country illegally were detained after a raid on an upstate New York snack bar plant last week, according to a federal prosecutor who warned Tuesday that employers can expect more large-scale workplace enforcement actions.

John Sarcone, acting U.S. Attorney for northern New York, said five of the people detained after the raid Thursday in rural Cato were criminally charged for illegally re-entering the United States. The other 52 were detained pending deportation proceedings.

The advocacy group Rural and Migrant Ministry has said most of the people detained at the Nutrition Bar Confectioners plant were from Guatemala. It happened the same day immigration authorities detained 475 people at a manufacturing site in Georgia where Korean automaker Hyundai makes elec-

tric vehicles.

“We will aggressively pursue criminal investigations against those who violate our laws by employing non-citizens without authorization. There will be consequences. The bad old days of turning a blind eye are over,” Sarcone said.

Factory owners said last week that their employees had legal documentation and that they did not know why they were raided.

Democrat defeats vet in US House special election

VA FAIRFAX — Democrat James Walkinshaw, a politician with experience working on Capitol Hill, has won a special election to be the next U.S. House representative of the Virginia district home to the state’s most populous county.

Walkinshaw’s victory in Virginia’s 11th Congressional District helps Democrats winnow Republicans’ narrow majority in the House.

Walkinshaw, who has served on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors since 2020, defeated Republican Stewart Whitson, an Army veteran and former FBI agent.

Tuesday’s special election was set to fill the seat of Rep. Gerry Connolly, who died of esophageal cancer in May.

Walkinshaw previously served as Connolly’s chief of staff for more than a decade and had received the representative’s endorsement before his passing.

From wire reports

WHERE HEROES SHOP

Honorably Discharged Veterans can use their lifelong benefit at shopmyexchange.com. Service-connected disabled Veterans and Department of Defense and Coast Guard civilians with Common Access Cards can shop in-store tax-free!



LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE BENEFITS
[SHOPMYEXCHANGE.COM/VETS](https://shopmyexchange.com/vets)

The Exchange is a Department of Defense Organization



Bizarro



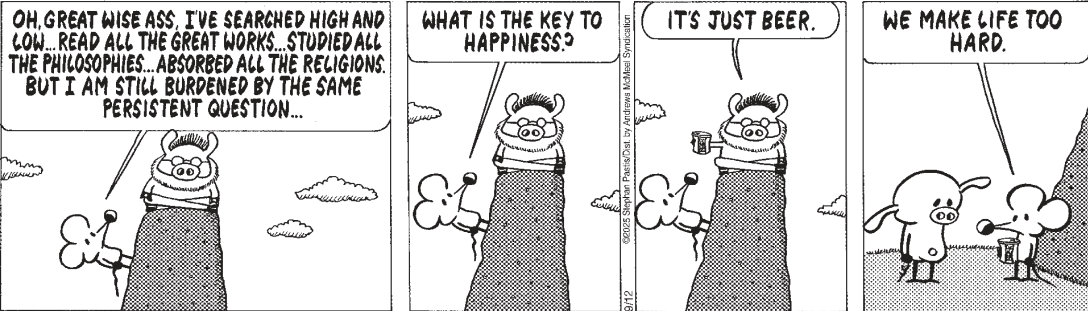
Loose Parts



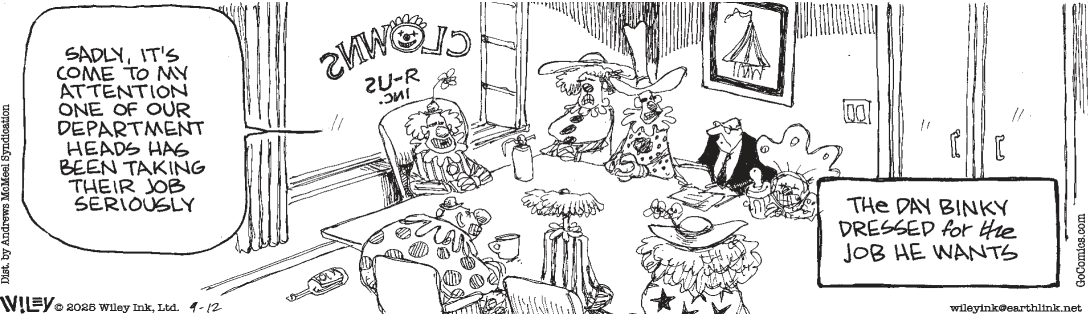
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



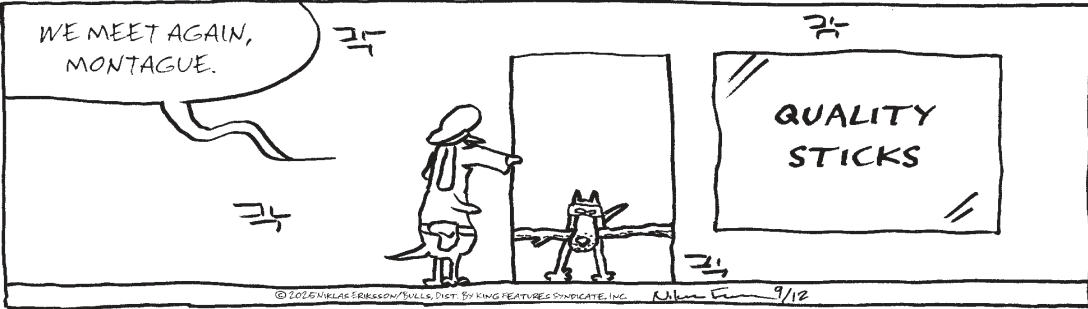
Non Sequitur



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
				27	28			29	30			
31	32	33						34				
35					36		37					
38					39	40			41	42	43	44
				45				46		47		
48	49	50	51							52		
53						54				55		
56						57				58		

- ACROSS
- 55 \$ dispenser
- 56 Explorer on Mars
- 57 Trio after Q
- 58 Bashful
- 24 NFL's Manning
- 25 Calendar abbr.
- 26 "Sheesh!"
- 28 Equal (Pref.)
- 30 Weaponize
- 31 Lawyers' org.
- 32 — Lancelot
- 33 Boot camp VIP
- 36 Tennis star
- 37 Glorifies
- 40 Traffic light
- 42 Gold-loving king
- 43 River part
- 44 "Delish!"
- 45 Bickering
- 46 Spruced up
- 48 Old map letters
- 49 — Jima
- 50 Apply cream
- 51 Moody rock
- 23 The ones here
- 21 Largest
- 17 Onion relative
- 11 Female rabbit
- 10 Finale
- 9 Cato's 502
- 8 Surprised cries
- 7 Manitoba tribe
- 6 Fall sign
- 5 Finish
- 4 Feedbag fill
- 3 Expensive violin
- 2 Mary's sister
- 1 No-frills
- 14 Heavysset
- 15 "Diamonds"
- 16 Where wine
- 12 USN bigwig
- 7 Encrypted
- 4 Wise bird
- 1 "Don't —
- 13 "Entourage" role
- 18 Addams cousin
- 19 Binge
- 20 Swank
- 22 Dubai's country,
- 23 Sports group
- 27 Patch target
- 29 Coffee-flavored
- 31 Ninnies
- 34 Royal authority
- 35 Bunion site
- 37 Ambulance
- 38 Prado display
- 39 Upper limit
- 41 TV trophy
- 45 Capital of Jordan
- 47 Debtor's letters
- 48 Item next
- 52 Scat syllable
- 53 Sage
- 54 JFK info

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

9-12 CRYPTOQUIP

RZUCB BQGUUCQ PWD NDLCV

SZUJNKMS SZUCV YWZY GVC

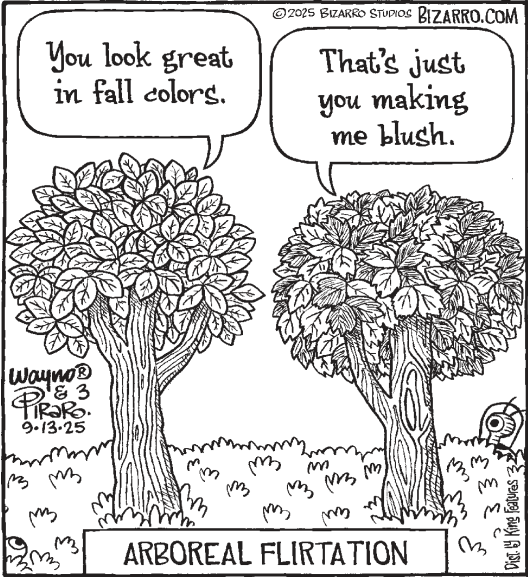
FZQBV PKYW RKLC QDPV ZMB

FDNGUMV: JKMSD VYZQQ.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL PROBABLY BE THE PREFERRED DRINK OF AGGRESSIVE INDIVIDUALS? BRUTE BEER.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals G

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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

ACROSS

- 1 Patch target
4 Employer
8 Valentine border
12 "Kinda" suffix
13 Diamond
Head locale
14 Borodin's
"Prince —"
15 SSW opposite
16 Physics bit
17 Reporter's
quest
18 Into two
equal parts
21 DDE's opponent
22 Illustrations
23 "— de Lune"
26 Monk's title
27 June honoree
30 Place for a
wreath
31 Lad
32 Chromosome
part
33 Pitcher Maglie
34 Wooden pin
35 Cello bow
application
36 Expert
37 Small battery
38 Hoedown
instrument
45 Byron or
Tennyson
46 Trenches
47 Tic-tac-toe loser
48 Novelist Rice
49 Peter Fonda role
50 Orange Muppet

- 51 Go by
52 Dweeb
53 Roswell
visitors

- 24 Mauna
25 "You've got
mail" ISP
26 Boating
hazard
27 — Moines
28 Blackbird
29 Comfy family
room
31 Quick trip for
a six-pack
32 Incite
34 Agt.'s cut
35 Elevated
36 Peaks of Peru
37 Pursuing
38 Applaud
39 Actress Chaplin
40 Coffee vessels
41 Christmas
42 Take a nap
43 Booty
44 Alimony
recipients

DOWN

- 1 Peel
2 "Money —
object"
3 "That was close!"
4 Straw hat
5 Solemn promises
6 Pump, e.g.
7 Recap
8 Swiss chocolate
brand
9 Mellowed
10 Monk's hood
11 Gaelic
19 "Queen
of Katwe"
director Mira
20 Writer Levin
23 LP successors

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

9-13

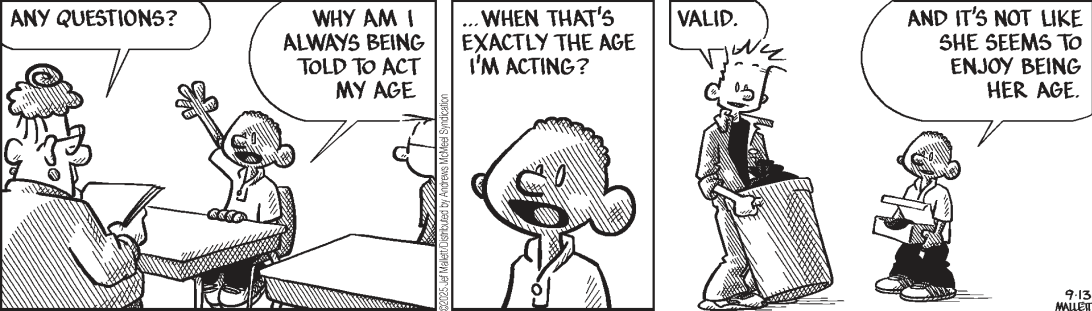
CRYPTOQUIP

HR BGOTSVO ZSYIV IHJK DS TK
B AYQQKAARYI PKBI-KADBDK
VKEKISCKP, DMKO MBEK DS
JGSZ ISDA.

Yesterday's **Cryptoquip**: FAMED DRUMMER
WHO LOVES GAMBLING GAMES THAT USE
CARDS WITH FIVE ROWS AND COLUMNS:
BINGO STARR.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals Y

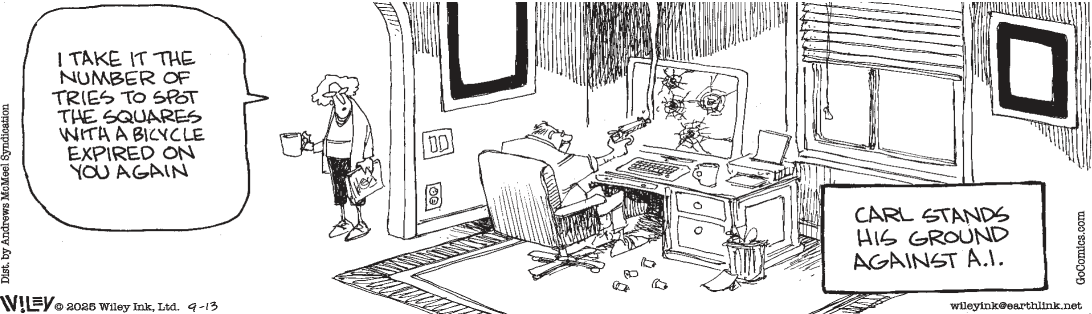
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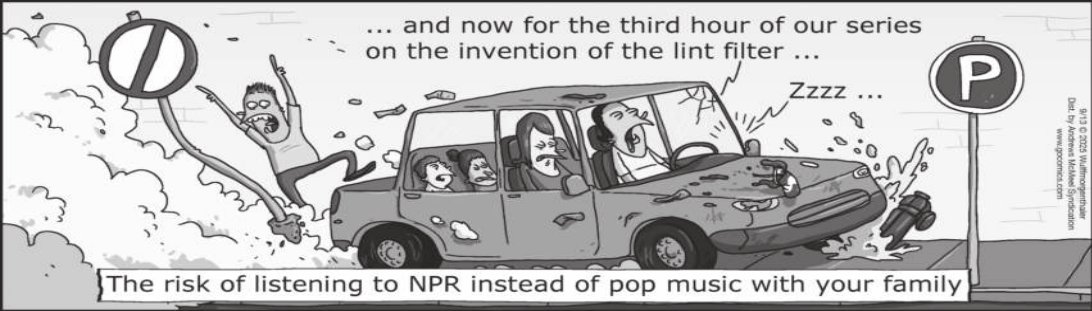
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey





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Jacqueline Smith

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OPINION

Kirk’s killing likely not the end of political violence

BY ANITA CHABRIA
Los Angeles Times
Over the next few days, we are going to hear politicians, commentators and others remind us that political violence is never OK, and never the answer.

That is true.
There is no room in a healthy democracy, or a moral society, for killings based on vengeance or beliefs — political, religious, whatever.
But the sad reality is that our democracy is not healthy, and violence is a symptom of that. Not the make-believe, cities-overrun violence that has led to the military in our streets, but real, targeted political violence that has crept into society with increasing frequency.

Our decline did not begin with the horrific slaying Wednesday of Charlie Kirk, a 31-year-old father and conservative media superstar, and it will not end with it. We are in a moment of struggle, with two competing views for where our country should go and what it should be. Only one can win, and both sides believe it is a battle worth fighting.

So be it. Fights in democracy are nothing new and nothing wrong.
We can blame the heated political rhetoric of either side for violence, as many already are, but words are not bullets and strong democracies can withstand even the ugliest of speeches, the most hateful of positions.

The painful and hard specter of more violence to come has less to do with far-right or far-left than extreme fringe in either political direction. Occasionally it’s ideological, but more often it isn’t MAGA, communist or socialist so much as confusion and rage cloaking itself in political convenience. Violence comes where trust in the system is decimated, and where hope is ground to dust.

These are the places where we find the isolated, the disenfranchised, the red-pilled or the blue-pilled — however you see it — and anyone else, who is pushed by the stress and anger of this moment, finds

themselves believing violence or even murder is a solution, maybe the only solution.
These are not mainstream people. Like all killers, they live outside the rules of society and likely would have found their way beyond our boundaries with or without politics. But politics found them, and provided what may have seemed like clarity in a maelstrom of anything but.
In the past few years, we have seen people such as this make two attempts on President Donald Trump’s life. One of those was a 20-year-old student, Michael Thomas Crooks, still almost a kid, whose motives will likely never be known.
A few months ago, we saw a political massacre in Minnesota aimed at Democratic lawmakers. Minnesota House Speaker Emerita Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark, were killed by the same attacker who shot state Sen. John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette, and attempted to shoot their daughter Hope. Authorities found a hit list of 45 targets in his possession.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro’s home was firebombed this year. Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer faced a somewhat bumbling kidnapping plot in 2020. In 2017, a shooter hit four people at a Congressional Baseball Game practice, including then-U.S. House Majority Whip Steve Scalise and U.S. Capitol Police officer Crystal Griner.
Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s San Francisco home was broken into in 2022 and her husband, Paul, was attacked by a hammer-wielding assailant with a unicorn costume in his backpack.
Despite the fact that these instances of violence have been aimed at both Democrats and Republicans, we live under a Republican government at the moment, one that holds unprecedented power.
Already, that power structure is calling not for calm or justice, but retribution.
“We’ve got trans shooters. You’ve got riots in L.A. They are at war with us, whether we want to accept it or not. They are at war with us,” said Fox News commentator Jesse Watters shortly after Kirk was shot.

“What are we going to do about it? How much political violence are we going to tolerate? And that’s the question we’re just going to have to ask ourselves.”
On that last bit, I agree with Watters. We do need to ask ourselves how much political violence we are going to tolerate.
The internet is buzzing with a quote from Kirk on gun violence: “I think it’s worth it. I think it’s worth to have a cost of, unfortunately, some gun deaths every single year so that we can have the Second Amendment to protect our other God-given rights.”
Like Kirk, I think some things are worth ugly prices. I don’t think guns are one of them, but I do think democracy is.
We can’t allow political violence to be the reason we curb democracy. Even if that violence continues, we must find ways to fight it that preserve the constitutional values that make America exceptional.
“It is extremely important to caution U.S. policymakers in this heated environment to act responsibly and not use the specter of political violence as an excuse to suppress nonviolent movements, curb freedoms of assembly and expression, encourage retaliation, or otherwise close civic spaces,” a trio of Brookings Institution researchers wrote as part of their “Monitoring the pillars of democracy” series.
“Weaponizing calls for stability and peace in response to political violence is a real threat in democratic and nondemocratic countries globally.”
The slaying of Charlie Kirk is reprehensible, and his family and friends have suffered a loss I can’t imagine. Condolences don’t cover it.
But the legacy of his death, and of political violence, can’t be crackdowns — because if we do that, we forever damage the country we all claim to love.
If we take anything away from this tragic day, let it be a commitment to democracy, and America, in all her chaotic and flawed glory.

Anita Chabria is a California columnist for the Los Angeles Times, based in Sacramento.

Russia probing NATO’s resolve. How will US respond?

A Washington Post editorial
Russia’s provocation in Poland this week represents a serious threat to the stability of the NATO alliance, and it is only the latest insult Vladimir Putin has directed at President Donald Trump in recent weeks. What will Trump do to restore his, and America’s, credibility?

Early reports indicate that 19 Gerbera drones flew into Polish airspace on Tuesday night. These were relatively cheap and simple weapons, distinct from the armed variants pounding Ukrainian cities in recent weeks. Russia and its client state Belarus are issuing predictable denials and obfuscation. Yet make no mistake: The operation was meant as a test of NATO unity.
This comes as Putin is derailing Trump’s attempts to make peace in Ukraine. Last month’s summit in Anchorage, Alaska, was supposed to lead to Putin meeting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was willing to face his adversary. Trump then said he would pick a side in two weeks’ time. That deadline

passed last Friday. First lady Melania Trump pleaded with Putin to spare the children of Ukraine by ending the war. Putin responded by targeting Kyiv with one of the largest barrages of the war. Everyone knows who is at fault for the lack of progress on peace.
On Wednesday, Trump posted glibly, “What’s with Russia violating Poland’s airspace with drones? Here we go!” That won’t be enough to stop the Russian president, who understands how ambiguities drive wedges into alliances. A security guarantee such as NATO’s Article 5 is ultimately just a promise written on paper. An incursion that unnerves one ally but prompts another to wave it off as insignificant sows further doubts about what will happen if Russia escalates.
President Joe Biden and his team deterred themselves from being sufficiently aggressive because they were so afraid of provoking Russia, but they wisely warned that the United States would defend “every inch” of NATO territory. The West might help Ukrainians kill invading Russians in

Ukraine, the thinking went, but that did not mean NATO was at war with Russia. Putin and his lackeys generally played by those rules, threatening vague consequences to NATO but mostly fighting inside Ukrainian territory. With this gambit, however, Putin is testing whether Trump stands behind Biden’s “every inch” warning.
When it came to Iran, Trump admirably enforced his deadline and took action against the regime’s nuclear program, but he hasn’t shown the same decisiveness against Putin. There are plenty of actions he can take short of war. Don’t expect Trump to deploy more troops to Europe, but he could move additional battalions and equipment already on the Continent into Poland as a show of support. NATO might even declare that it is ready to shoot down drones over Ukrainian airspace if they appear to be heading for the territory of any member country.
Trump has made “peace through strength” his motto. Ambiguity in the face of aggression telegraphs nothing but weakness — and only invites further war.

SCOREBOARD/MLB

DEALS

Wednesday’s transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball American League

ATHLETICS — Recalled RHP Mitch Spence from Las Vegas (PCL). Optioned RHP Scott McGough to Las Vegas.

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Sent C Gary Sanchez to Norfolk (IL) on a rehab assignment.

BOSTON RED SOX — Recalled LHP Kyle Harrison from Worcester (IL). Optioned LHP Chris Murphy to Worcester.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Recalled RHP Sean Burke from Charlotte (IL). Designated RHP Dan Altavilla for assignment. Reinstated INF Miguel Vargas from the 10-day IL. Optioned INF Bryan Ramos to Charlotte.

DETROIT TIGERS — Sent RHP Paul Sewald to Toledo (IL) on a rehab assignment.

HOUSTON ASTROS — Placed RHP Luis Garcia on the 15-day IL. Recalled RHP Nick Hernandez from Sugar Land (PCL).

National League

ATLANTA BRAVES — Sent RHP John Brebbia outright to Gwinnett (IL).

CHICAGO CUBS — Reinstated RHP Jameison Taillon from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Ethan Roberts to Iowa (IL).

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Reinstated 2B Tommy Edman from the 10-day IL. Optioned CF Justin Dean to Oklahoma City (PCL). Released RHP Matt Sauer.

MIAMI MARLINS — Sent 3B Graham Pauley to Jacksonville (IL) on a rehab assignment.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Sent 3B Nolan Arenado and LHP John King to Springfield (TL) on rehab assignments.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

SACRAMENTO KINGS — Waived G Terence Davis.

TORONTO RAPTORS — Waived G Tyreke Key.

Women’s National Basketball Association

DALLAS WINGS — Released G Christyn Williams and re-signed her to a rest-of-season hardship contract.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed WR Simi Fehoko to the active roster from the practice squad. Placed S Joey Blount on injured reserve. Signed LB Channing Tindall to the practice squad.

BUFFALO BILLS — Signed DT Phidarian Mathis to the practice squad.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Signed DE K.J. Henry to the practice squad.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed WR Christian Watson to a one-year contract extension.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Placed TE Cade Stover on injured reserve. Signed TE Harrison Bryant from the practice squad to the active roster. Signed OT Jaylon Thomas to the practice squad.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Released LB Cole Christiansen from the practice squad. Signed WR Hal Presley to the practice squad.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Released WR Jalen Reagor from their practice squad with an injury settlement.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Released QB Hunter Dekkers from the practice squad. Signed LB Fadil Diggs to the practice squad.

NEW YORK JETS — Released WR Xavier Gipson. Signed WR Isaiah Williams to the active roster.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed DT Jacob Sykes to the practice squad. Released CB Eli Ricks from the practice squad. Released RB Montrell Johnson from the practice squad. Signed OL Jake Majors to the practice squad.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Placed LB Malik Harrison on injured reserve. Placed QB Skylar Thompson on injured reserve. Signed DB Jabrill Peppers to a contract. Signed DB James Pierre to the practice squad. Signed QB Logan Woodside to the practice squad.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Signed K Eddy Pineiro to the active roster.

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Signed P Mitch Wishnowsky to the practice squad. Released TE Lawrence Cager from the practice squad.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

FLORIDA PANTHERS — Signed D Ben Harpur and C/RW Tyler Motte to professional tryout agreement contracts.

MONTREAL CANADIENS — Signed G Kevin Mandolese to a professional tryout agreement contract.

AUTO RACING

NASCAR Cup Series

Schedule/winner

Sept. 7 — Enjoy Illinois 300 (Denny Hamlin)

Sept. 13 — Bass Pro Shops Night Race, Bristol, Tenn.

Sept. 21 — NASCAR Cup Series Playoff Race at New Hampshire, Loudon, N.H.

Sept. 28 — Hollywood Casino 400, Kansas City, Kan.

Oct. 5 — Bank of America ROVAL 400, Concord, N.C.

Oct. 12 — South Point 400, Las Vegas

Oct. 19 — YellaWood 500, Talladega, Ala.

Oct. 26 — Xfinity 500, Ridgeway, Va.

Nov. 2 — NASCAR Cup Series Championship, Avondale, Ariz.

PRO SOCCER

MLS						
Eastern Conference						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Philadelphia	17	6	6	57	49	26
Cincinnati	16	9	4	52	42	36
Charlotte FC	16	11	2	50	48	40
Nashville	15	9	5	50	49	33
Orlando City	13	7	8	47	54	40
Inter Miami CF	13	5	7	46	54	40
Columbus	12	6	10	46	43	39
NYC FC	13	9	5	44	38	32
Chicago	12	10	6	42	53	50
New York	11	11	7	40	42	38
New England	8	14	7	31	38	43
Atlanta	5	12	11	26	32	49
Toronto FC	5	13	10	25	28	35
CF Montréal	5	15	9	24	29	51
D.C. United	5	15	9	24	26	54

Western Conference						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Diego FC	17	7	5	56	54	34
Minn. United	14	6	9	51	48	32
Vancouver	14	6	7	49	47	31
Seattle	12	7	8	44	48	38
LAFC	11	7	8	41	45	33
Austin FC	11	9	8	41	31	34
Portland	10	9	9	39	36	38
Colorado	10	13	6	36	38	48
San Jose	9	12	8	35	53	51
Houston	8	12	9	33	38	47
Real Salt Lake	9	14	4	31	28	36
FC Dallas	7	11	10	31	40	48
Sporting KC	7	16	6	27	44	59
St Louis City	5	17	7	22	34	51
LA Galaxy	4	16	8	20	33	56

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

Saturday’s games

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

Tuesday’s game

Seattle at Miami

Wednesday’s games

Columbus at New York City FC
Los Angeles FC at Real Salt Lake

Saturday, Sept. 20

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

NWSL						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Kansas City	16	2	1	49	38	10
Washington	10	4	5	35	31	25
San Diego	8	5	6	30	28	22
Portland	8	6	5	29	28	22
Orlando	8	7	4	28	24	20
Gotham FC	7	6	6	27	25	17
Seattle	7	6	6	27	25	23
Louisville	7	7	5	26	25	30
Houston	6	8	5	23	24	38
Angel City	6	8	5	23	25	31
North Carolina	5	7	7	22	24	29
Bay FC	4	10	5	17	21	29
Chicago	2	9	8	14	24	38
Utah Royals FC	2	11	6	12	15	33

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

Friday’s game

Gotham FC at San Diego

Saturday’s games

Angel City at North Carolina
Bay FC at Orlando
Washington at Kansas City

Sunday’s games

Portland at Chicago
Houston at Utah Royals FC
Louisville at Seattle

Thursday, Sept. 18

Washington at Angel City

Friday, Sept. 19

North Carolina at Orlando
Chicago at Houston
Louisville at Utah Royals FC

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Schedule

Thursday, Sept. 11
SOUTH

NC State (2-0) at Wake Forest (2-0)

Friday, Sept. 12
EAST

Colgate (0-2) at Syracuse (1-1)

MIDWEST

Indiana St. (2-0) at Indiana (2-0)

SOUTHWEST

Colorado (1-1) at Houston (2-0)

FAR WEST

Kansas St. (1-2) at Arizona (2-0)
New Mexico (1-1) at UCLA (0-2)

Saturday, Sept. 13
EAST

Towson (2-0) at Maryland (2-0)
Oklahoma (2-0) at Temple (2-0)
Lehigh (2-0) at Duquesne (1-1)
Sacred Heart (1-1) at LIU Brooklyn (1-1)
St. Francis (Pa.) (0-2) at CCSU (1-1)
Howard (1-1) vs. Morehouse (0-0) at East Rutherford, N.J.

Lafayette (1-1) at Georgetown (2-0)
Marist (1-1) at Wagner (0-2)
Rhode Island (2-0) at Holy Cross (0-2)
Bowie St. (0-0) at Delaware St. (1-1)
Uconn (1-1) at Delaware (1-1)
Norfolk St. (1-1) at Rutgers (2-0)
Pittsburgh (2-0) at West Virginia (1-1)
Villanova (1-0) at Penn St. (2-0)
Fordham (0-2) at Stony Brook (0-2)
VMI (1-1) at Bucknell (1-1)
Stonehill (0-2) at Maine (0-2), 6 p.m.
West Liberty (0-0) at Robert Morris (0-2)
Bentley (0-0) at Bryant (1-1)
E. Kentucky (1-1) at Marshall (0-2)
New Haven (0-2) at Albany (NY) (0-2)

SOUTH

Memphis (2-0) at Troy (1-1)
William & Mary (1-1) at Virginia (1-1)
Wisconsin (2-0) at Alabama (1-1)
Clemson (1-1) at Georgia Tech (2-0)
South Alabama (1-1) at Auburn (2-0)
Davidson (0-2) at Tennessee Tech (2-0)
Elon (1-1) at W. Carolina (0-2)
Tuskegee (0-0) at Jackson St. (1-1)
Georgia (2-0) at Tennessee (2-0)
Richmond (1-1) at North Carolina (1-1)
Furman (1-1) at Campbell (0-2)
Lindenwood (Mo.) (0-2) at Charleston Southern (0-2)
South Florida (2-0) at Miami (2-0)
Alabama A&M (1-1) at Tennessee St. (1-1)
Miles (0-0) at Alabama St. (1-1)
FAU (1-1) at FIU (1-1), 6 p.m.
Fayetteville St. (0-0) at NC Central (1-2)
Bethune-Cookman (0-2) at SC State (1-1)
ETSU (1-1) at West Georgia (2-0)
Monmouth (NJ) (2-0) at Charlotte (0-2)
Merrimack (1-1) at Kennesaw St. (0-2)
Stetson (1-1) at Chattanooga (0-2)
Wofford (0-2) at Mercer (0-1)
Alcorn St. (0-2) at Mississippi St. (2-0)
Appalachian St. (2-0) at Southern Miss. (1-1)
Morehead St. (1-1) at Austin Peay (1-1)
Albany St. (Ga.) (0-0) at Florida A&M (0-2)
Old Dominion (1-1) at Virginia Tech (0-2)
Arkansas (2-0) at Mississippi (2-0)
Hampton (1-1) at NC A&T (0-2)
MVSU (0-2) at SE Louisiana (1-1)

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA				
Eastern Conference				
	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Atlanta	30	14	.682	—
x-New York	26	17	.605	3½
x-Indiana	24	20	.545	6
Washington	16	28	.364	14
Connecticut	11	33	.250	19
Chicago	10	33	.233	19½
Western Conference				
	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Minnesota	33	10	.767	—
x-Las Vegas	29	14	.674	4
x-Phoenix	27	16	.628	6
x-Golden State	23	20	.535	10
x-Seattle	23	21	.523	10½
Los Angeles	21	22	.488	12
Dallas	9	34	.209	24

x-clinched playoff spot

Tuesday’s games

New York 75, Washington 66
Indiana 83, Minnesota 72
Los Angeles 88, Phoenix 83
Seattle 74, Golden State 73
Las Vegas 92, Chicago 61

Wednesday’s game

Atlanta 88, Connecticut 72

Thursday’s games

Golden State at Minnesota
New York at Chicago
Phoenix at Dallas
Las Vegas at Los Angeles

Friday’s games

No games scheduled.

Saturday’s games

No games scheduled.

Erskine (0-0) at Presbyterian (2-0)
Kentucky St. (0-0) at Grambling St. (1-1)
S. Illinois (1-1) at UT Martin (0-2)
Jacksonville St. (1-1) at Georgia South-ern (0-2)
Murray St. (0-2) at Georgia St. (0-2)
The Citadel (1-1) at Gardner-Webb (1-1)
Northeastern St. (0-0) at North Alabama (0-2)
Weber St. (0-2) at McNeese St. (1-1)
Florida (1-1) at LSU (2-0)
E. Michigan (0-2) at Kentucky (1-1)
East Carolina (1-1) at Coastal Carolina (1-1)
New Mexico St. (2-0) at Louisiana Tech (1-1)
Vanderbilt (2-0) at South Carolina (2-0)
Duke (1-1) at Tulane (2-0)
Akron (0-2) at UAB (1-1)

MIDWEST

Oregon (2-0) at Northwestern (1-1)
Houston Christian (1-1) at Nebraska (2-0)
Cent. Michigan (1-1) at Michigan (1-1)
Buffalo (1-1) at Kent St. (1-1)
St. Thomas (Minn.) (1-1) at N. Michigan (0-0)
Butler (1-1) at Hanover (0-0)
New Hampshire (2-0) at Ball St. (0-2)
N. Colorado (1-1) at South Dakota (0-2)
Illinois St. (1-1) at E. Illinois (1-1)
Northwestern St. (1-1) at Cincinnati (1-1)
Southern Cal (2-0) at Purdue (2-0)
Morgan St. (0-2) at Toledo (1-1)
SMU (1-1) at Missouri St. (1-1)
Youngstown St. (2-0) at Michigan St. (2-0)
SE Missouri (1-1) at N. Dakota St. (2-0)
Louisiana-Lafayette (1-1) at Missouri (2-0)
E. Washington (0-2) at N. Iowa (1-1)
Liberty (1-1) at Bowling Green (1-1)
Ohio (1-1) at Ohio St. (2-0)
W. Michigan (0-2) at Illinois (2-0)
Drake (1-0) at S. Dakota St. (2-0)
Valparaiso (1-1) at W. Illinois (0-2)
Texas A&M (2-0) at Notre Dame (0-1)
Umass (0-2) at Iowa (1-1)

SOUTHWEST

Samford (0-2) at Baylor (1-1)
Washington St. (2-0) at North Texas (2-0)
Incarnate Word (1-1) at UTSA (0-2)
Oregon St. (0-2) at Texas Tech (2-0)
Iowa St. (3-0) at Arkansas St. (1-1)
UTEP (1-1) at Texas (1-1), 4:15 p.m.
Lamar (1-1) at Texas Southern (0-2)
Prairie View (1-1) at Rice (1-1)
Tarleton St. (3-0) at Cent. Arkansas (1-1)
Lincoln University (CA) (0-0) at Ark.-Pine Bluff (0-2)
Navy (2-0) at Tulsa (1-1)
Sul Ross State (0-1) at Stephen F. Austin (0-2)
Abilene Christian (1-1) at TCU (1-0)

FAR WEST

North Dakota (1-1) at Montana (1-0)
San Diego (1-1) at Montana St. (0-2)
Utah Tech (0-2) at Idaho (1-1)
Middle Tennessee (0-2) at Nevada (1-1)
W. Oregon (0-0) at Cal Poly (1-1)
Utah (2-0) at Wyoming (2-0)
N. Arizona (1-1) at S. Utah (1-1)
Mercyhurst (1-1) at Sacramento St. (0-2)
Air Force (1-0) at Utah St. (1-1)
Southern U. (1-2) at Fresno St. (2-1)
Minnesota (2-0) at California (2-0)
Boston College (1-1) at Stanford (0-2)
Texas State (2-0) at Arizona St. (1-1)
Portland St. (0-3) at Hawaii (2-1)

AP SPORTLIGHT

Sept. 12

1979 — Carl Yastrzemski reaches 3,000 career hits off New York Yankees pitcher Jim Beattie.

1984 — New York Mets pitcher Dwight Gooden sets the rookie single-season strike-out record at 251.

1995 — The Harlem Globetrotters’ 24-year, 8,829-game winning streak is stopped. It ends in a 91-85 loss to a team led by basketball great Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who scores 34 points in a competitive, unscripted game in Vienna, Austria.

2004 — Roger Federer becomes the first man since 1988 to win three majors in a year, thoroughly outclassing Lleyton Hewitt 6-0, 7-6 (3), 6-0 to add the U.S. Open title to those he took at the Australian Open and Wimbledon.

2005 — Mark Messier announces on ESPN radio that he will retire from the NHL.

2010 — Houston running back Arian Foster rushes for a franchise-record 231 yards and three touchdowns in the Texans’ 34-24 victory over the Indianapolis Colts. Foster is the first player in NFL history to rush for at least 200 yards and three touchdowns for an opening weekend.

2011 — Tom Brady passes for a team-record 517 yards and four touchdowns, including a 99-yarder to Wes Welker, and the New England Patriots beat the Miami Dolphins 38-24.

2014 — Diana Taurasi and Candice Dupree score 24 points each and the Phoenix Mercury, playing without star center Brittney Griner, beat the Chicago Sky 87-82 to complete a three-game sweep of the WNBA Finals for their third championship.

2015 — Kent State dominates Delaware State in the Golden Flashes’ home opener, 45-13, but it’s overshadowed by a single point-after kick in the second quarter by April Goss. Goss, a four-year member of the Kent State team and a former high school soccer player, becomes the second female to score in a Division I game in NCAA history. Katie Hnida kicked a pair of extra points for New Mexico in 2003.

2015 — David Ortiz homers twice to become the 27th player in major league history to reach 500 home runs as the Boston Red Sox beat the Tampa Bay Rays 10-4.



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Yankees reliever Luke Weaver gave up three runs in the ninth inning of an 11-1 loss to the Detroit Tigers on Wednesday in New York.

Yankees bullpen implodes

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A battered bullpen has come down to this for the Yankees: outfielder Austin Slater was their most effective reliever against the Tigers on Wednesday night.

For only the third time in its century-plus history, New York has lost consecutive games by 10 or more runs. Its bullpen allowed nine earned runs for the second day in a row in an 11-1 rout by Detroit that followed a 12-2 wipeout in the series opener.

“These last two nights have obviously been rough,” manager Aaron Boone said.

Mark Leiter Jr., Camilo Doval, Tim Hill and Luke Weaver all gave up runs as Riley Greene, Kerry Carpenter and Colt Keith each hit a two-run homer.

The Yankees’ bullpen has a 5.37 ERA since the All-Star break, raising it to 4.54 for the season — up from 3.62 on last year’s American League champions and on track to be the team’s highest since 1995.

“We’ve played good teams. We can’t get away with as much mistakes against teams like that,” catcher Austin Wells said. “We’ve put ourselves in holes. I think we’re at our best when we’re getting ahead.”

New York’s previous back-to-back losses by at least 10 runs were on the road, at the Chicago White Sox and St. Louis Browns on Sept. 26 and 28, 1908, and at the California Angels on Aug. 27-28, 1988.

“Look, this is two days,” Boone said. “The bullpen has been closing out some really important games for us of late that’s let us go on a pretty good run. These are two nights in a row where we haven’t got it done, but we’re also behind and chasing a little bit.”

AUTO RACING/TRACK & FIELD

Toyota speed wows in NASCAR playoffs

BY NATE RYAN
Associated Press

When Toyota entered NASCAR's premier series in 2007, the manufacturer was concerned more about making races than winning 200 of them.

In its first year, Toyota drivers suffered through nearly 100 failed qualifying attempts — but the lack of speed didn't dissuade Joe Gibbs Racing from signing with the auto-maker for the 2008 season despite its drivers' concerns.

"Certainly, I was worried when we switched over," JGR driver Denny Hamlin said Sunday after winning at World Wide Technology Raceway to make Toyota the fourth manufacturer to reach the 200-victory mark in Cup. "Obviously, it was a big leap of faith by everyone at Joe Gibbs Racing. The drivers were kind of like an innocent bystander. We were going to live and die by those decisions that JGR made. It turned out to be the best partnership that they could imagine."

Two races into the 2025 NASCAR Cup Series playoffs, Toyota's blazing pace in trying to end a six-year championship drought has emerged as a prevailing storyline.

After Toyota swept the top four and took six of the top seven spots in the playoff opener at Darlington Raceway, Hamlin and teammate Chase Briscoe claimed the top two spots at the 1.25-mile oval outside St. Louis commonly



CONNOR HAMILTON/AP

Denny Hamlin leads the field into Turn 3 during a NASCAR Cup Series race at World Wide Technology Raceway on Sept. 7 in Madison, Ill. Hamlin won with an average speed of 98.262 miles per hour.

known as Gateway.

Toyota's Camrys have led 515 of 607 laps in the playoffs, and their all-around performance has left defending series champion Joey Logano marveling at the gap with Ford and Chevrolet.

"They're ridiculously fast," Logano said when asked about Toyota after his No. 22 Ford took fifth at Gateway. "They've got a lot of grip, and they've got a lot of horse-

power. We've got a lot of work to do to catch up. We've got to be absolutely perfect in every category to contend, and we need them to make mistakes, which they do. We have the potential to do it, it's just going to be really challenging."

Logano has won two of the past three titles for Team Penske by winning the season finale at Phoenix, a track that is similar in size and shape to Gateway.

After failing to lead a lap at Phoenix in his past two Championship 4 appearances in 2020-21, Hamlin is hopeful of being a factor again after leading a race-high 75 of 240 laps at Gateway.

"I remember showing up to the championship race in 2021 knowing we had no shot, that we weren't good on the short tracks," he said. "I do feel like our cars are good right now. This is a track that you

can draw some connections to Phoenix, the distance and the banking. You just never know. The Penske cars have come out of nowhere the last few years when you didn't think they had the speed. They just showed up one week and, poof, they had it.

"You just never know in this sport. It ebbs and it flows."

Toyota Racing Development president Tyler Gibbs is also cautiously optimistic about the consistency across the manufacturer's nine-car lineup. Though Joe Gibbs Racing is Toyota's winningest organization with 166 victories (56 apiece by Hamlin and Kyle Busch, who won the most recent title for JGR and Toyota in 2019), 23XI Racing won the Brickyard 400 with Bubba Wallace (who has five top-10 finishes in seven races), and Legacy Motor Club has three top fives in the past three races.

"The tracks have suited us well and our drivers well," Gibbs said. "I think execution is going to be what wins races in the playoffs and is going to win the championship at Phoenix. The cars are so close, and that execution can take all that away. We're just going to keep our heads down and keep preparing the way we have. The work that the teams have done is incredible. We had some stumbles at the beginning of the year, and we worked really hard to eliminate those and be ready for the playoffs."

Push: Richardson, Kipyegon again at center of attention in women's races

FROM PAGE 48
they've raced this year.

Richardson now underdog

As always, all eyes in the women's 100 will be on Sha'Carri Richardson, though she is a longshot to repeat as world champion.

The favorite is Richardson's training partner, Melissa Jefferson-Wooden, who is undefeated at 100 meters this year, has the season-best time of 10.65 seconds and recently beat Richardson by .32 at a race in Brussels.

Olympic champion Julien Alfred is also a contender.

Richardson made headlines at nationals when news emerged of her arrest on a domestic violence charge for an argument that escalated at the Seattle airport with her boyfriend, Christian Coleman.

Coleman did not pursue the case and Richardson expressed her remorse on social media. Meanwhile, in a year plagued by injury, she failed to qualify for the

200 meters, where she won a bronze medal at worlds in 2023.

Keeping the Faith

Virtually every time Faith Kipyegon steps on the track, she's aiming to set a record, or make history, or both.

In June, the Kenyan fell six seconds short in her much-hyped Nike-backed attempt to become the first woman to break the 4-minute barrier in the mile.

But less than two weeks later, she came back and broke her own record (for the second time) in the 1,500 meters — the metric mile — finishing in 3 minutes, 48.68 seconds at the Prefontaine Classic.

"It's a mindset," Kipyegon said. "If you have it set in your mind that, I want to achieve this goal and do this, then it's all about the mind. And also the preparation and the vision."

Kipyegon is eligible to defend her title in both the 1,500 and 5,000 meters in Tokyo. She has not

raced at a distance longer than 3,000 meters this year.

Jumping for money

Since first breaking the pole vault world record in 2020, Mondo Duplantis has surpassed his own mark 12 times, each time by a scant centimeter.

When he breaks it at major events, such as world championships, Duplantis earns a \$100,000 bonus from World Athletics, in addition to incentives from his shoe company Puma.

It gives him no reason to shoot higher than .01 over his previous mark, and when he set his latest mark — 6.29 meters at a meet last month in Budapest — Puma sent out a cheeky tweet: "Please give us a rest."

It's a method of "micro-breaking" shared by the best pole vaulter of a previous generation, Sergei Bubka, who broke his own record 13 times in the 1980s and '90s, with most of those marks only one



OMAR HAVANA/AP

Melissa Jefferson-Wooden, of the U.S., beat Sha'Carri Richardson, also of the U.S., and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, of Jamaica, in the women's 100-meter race at a meet in Brussels on Aug. 22.

centimeter higher than the last.

Heat is on

The heat is stifling in Tokyo this week, and the forecast calls for more of the same.

In a move World Athletics insists will help, even though lows each day are forecast for the upper 70s (around 25 Celsius), organizers moved the race walks (Saturday) and marathons (Sunday and Monday) up by 30 minutes to start at 7:30 a.m. local time.

It is the latest in a lingering string of weather-related issues

for this sport:

■ When the Olympics were in Tokyo four years ago, organizers moved both marathons 700 miles north to Sapporo, where it was cooler.

■ In 2019 with the world championships in Doha, Qatar, the starting gun went off at midnight for the marathons.

■ This year, worlds were pushed to the tail-end of the track calendar in hopes of the weather being less stifling in Tokyo in September than in August. No such luck.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



Georgia quarterback Gunner Stockton passes against Austin Peay on Sept. 6 in Athens, Ga. Stockton hopes to complete more throws down the field this week against Tennessee.

Georgia, Stockton search for explosive pass plays

BY CHARLES ODUM
Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. — Georgia’s lackluster offense in a win over Austin Peay failed to generate momentum for quarterback Gunner Stockton as he now prepares for his first true road game in the No. 6 Bulldogs’ visit to No. 15 Tennessee on Saturday.

Stockton appeared tentative on some throws as Georgia led by only 11 points at halftime in its 28-6 win over the FCS team. The Bulldogs (2-0) fell two spots in the AP Top 25 following the sluggish effort in their final warmup for their Southeastern Conference opener against the Volunteers.

“We’ve got to find ways to be explosive,” coach Kirby Smart said. “You’ve got to be able to throw the ball down the field and take shots and that’s probably the toughest thing I’m most disappointed in.”

Smart said Stockton has displayed the necessary ability to make explosive throws in practice but has been limited to shorter throws by the defensive schemes of Marshall and Austin Peay.

“It’s more about how people are playing us right now,” Smart said. “It’s been two weeks in a row that there’s just a ton of cushion. ... If they want to play like that, you’ve got to take what they give you.”

Stockton recognized the offensive performance against Austin



No.6 Georgia at No. 15 Tennessee
AFN-Sports
9:30 a.m. Saturday CET
4:30 p.m. Sunday JKT

Peay “wasn’t our standard of how we’re supposed to play. We need to get back to work.”

Added Stockton: “You definitely want to be explosive.”

Asked what is the identity of the Georgia offense, Stockton said, “I think our identity is we can run the ball and taking our shots and being able to throw the ball.”

The Bulldogs’ chances for improved production would increase if right tackle Earnest Greene III (back) and right guard Juan Gaston (knee, ankle) return from injuries. Smart said Monday he was “hopeful to get them back.”

Smart called Stockton “a warrior” after the junior passed for two touchdowns and ran for two scores in the Bulldogs’ 45-7 win over Marshall to open the season. Even so, Smart said the next step for Stockton is to play with more confidence, and that will be needed against the Vols, who rolled to a

72-17 rout of East Tennessee State last week.

“That’s what we came here for and that’s why we enjoy playing in the SEC,” Stockton said of the test against Tennessee. “We’re excited to get started and grateful for the opportunity.”

Stockton has completed 40 of 58 passes for 458 yards with two touchdowns and no interceptions. He had only one career start entering the season after taking over in the College Football Playoff following Carson Beck’s season-ending elbow surgery. Stockton won the full-time job following Beck’s transfer to Miami.

“He’s played really well,” Tennessee coach Josh Heupel said of Stockton. “You look at him this year, he’s taken great care of the football, he’s been accurate with it, he’s got the ability to be extremely mobile and extend and create plays on his own.”

Heupel said Stockton and a balanced running game led by Nate Frazier makes for a “huge test for us defensively.”

“You have to do a great job of applying pressure but still bottling them up inside of the pocket, not letting them get outside of it,” Heupel said.

“If they choose, he certainly can be a part of the quarterback run game as well. ... We’ve got to be at our best.”

Irish plan to let QB Carr loose against Texas A&M

BY CURT RALLO
Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — No. 6 Notre Dame played it safe with a new starting quarterback on the road in its season-opening loss at then-No. 10 Miami.

It may have cost coach Marcus Freeman more than a victory. He also acknowledged losing some sleep. So with the Fighting Irish back on their own turf following a bye week, Freeman is ready to make a change — giving CJ Carr a longer leash against No. 16 Texas A&M on Saturday.

“I think we were very intentional about trying to protect the first-time starter early in the game, right?” Freeman said. “I was vocal about giving him easy reads, easy throws. Let’s not just tell him to bomb the ball down the field every play, because he’ll do that if we allow him to. CJ will throw the ball down the field every single play.”

Carr certainly has the arm strength to succeed, and the stat line from his first start — 19-for-30 with 221 yards, two touchdown passes, one TD run and one interception — was solid, not spectacular. But he did rally the Irish (0-1) from a 21-7 third-quarter deficit, played well enough to become the first Notre Dame quarterback to throw a TD pass and run for a score in his first career start since Brandon Wim-bush in 2017, and after another week of practice appears to have earned



No. 16 Texas A&M at No. 8 Notre Dame
AFN-Sports
1:30 a.m. Sunday CET
8:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

player.”

If Freeman could pinpoint one sequence in which Carr proved himself, it might be his 65-yard completion to Eli Rairdon that set up Notre Dame at the Miami 10-yard line in the fourth quarter. Carr rushed for 3 yards on the next play, then raced 7 yards to the end zone to tie the score at 24 with 3:21 to play.

Receiver Jaden Greathouse praised Carr’s leadership as well, noting the key to Notre Dame’s aerial attack is timing and chemistry.

“You get a lot of different things during the game, some things you do expect, some things you don’t expect,” Greathouse said. “And so, you know, every game is an adjustment, and you just kind of have to take it how it comes. CJ can handle that quickly. He just has kind of a knack for feeling out where we’re going to be and where we kind of want the ball, where we’re kind of expecting the ball. That helps us a lot with our run after the catch and things like that.”

The key, he believes, is running crisper routes and getting better ball placement than they had at Miami, facets that will improve in time.

Running the ball better would help, too. If the Irish need to use Carr’s legs to open up running lanes against Texas A&M, Freeman says he won’t hesitate to give the kid a chance. After all, Carr has only made one start and everyone in the program understands this offense is still a work in progress.



Notre Dame QB CJ Carr celebrates scoring a touchdown during the second half against Miami on Aug. 31 in Miami Gardens, Fla.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Miami, USF QBs on hot streaks ahead of match

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — Miami quarterback Carson Beck hasn't thrown an interception since November, which obviously means he's been fairly accurate tossing the football.

Now, consider South Florida quarterback Byrum Brown, who hasn't thrown an interception since November — that is, November 2023.

There are many ways to dissect a suddenly bigger-than-many-might-have-expected matchup Saturday between the No. 5 Hurricanes and the No. 18 Bulls — a pair of teams off to 2-0 starts — but the way the quarterbacks excel is probably atop the list. Brown has gone 240 passes without an interception while Beck has gone 185 going back to his days at Georgia last season.

"I don't think either of us are really worried about stats," Beck said. "I know him. I've trained with him before. I mean, he's a good kid. He's obviously had a lot of success this year, so, again, hopefully he does well the rest of the year. I'm rooting for him. But this game, hopefully our defense comes in and attacks him."

If Miami's defense can't find a way to slow Brown down, it could be trouble.

USF was the nation's only team

to face AP-ranked teams in Week 1 and Week 2 — and the Bulls won both, running past then-No. 25 Boise State 34-7 to begin the season and then going to then-No. 13 Florida last week and winning 18-16.

The test just gets tougher this week for the Bulls.

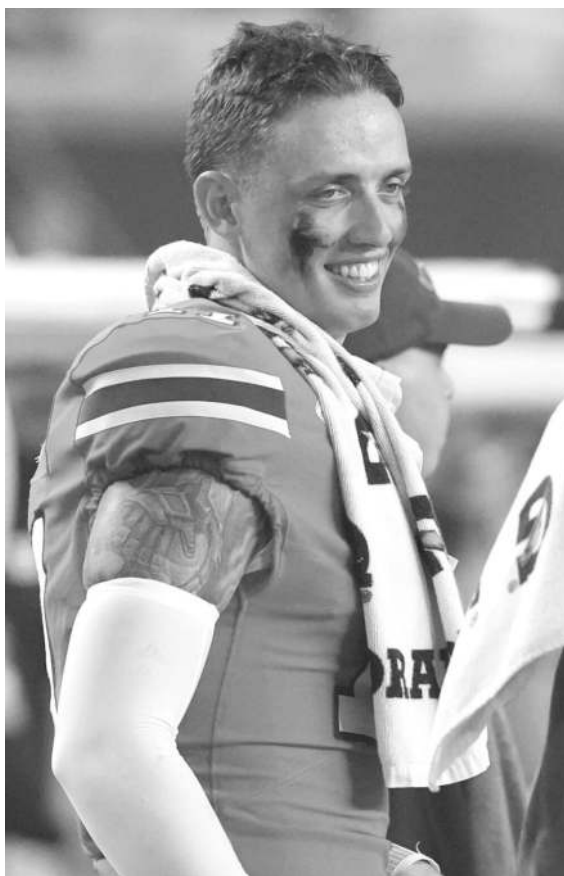
They'll become the first program since 2020, when Arkansas and Missouri both did it in the COVID-ravaged season, to open against three consecutive AP-ranked opponents. The last team to do it in a non-COVID year was the Hurricanes in 2009; Miami actually opened with four consecutive ranked foes that year. And the last team to open 3-0 against three ranked teams was the Hurricanes in 1987.

"I give our kids a ton of credit for taking the coaching," USF coach Alex Golesh said. "They've been really, really easy to coach. They're really, really engaged right now and then more than anything, I think I give a lot of credit to our leadership on our team."

The series

Miami leads the Bulls 6-1 in the all-time series and is coming off a 50-15 win in Tampa last fall.

USF led that game 15-14 late in the first half; the Hurricanes outscored the Bulls 36-0 in the final 32 minutes.



LYNNE SLADKY, LEFT, AND JOHN RAOUX/AP

Miami quarterback Carson Beck, left, watches from the sideline during last week's rout of Bethune-Cookman. South Florida quarterback Byrum Brown, right, celebrates after defeating Florida.

USF — a team with 33 seniors — remembers that and Miami knows it'll be a motivating factor. The Hurricanes also know they have to find a way to counter that.

"I think any time you step on the field for a game, it better mean more to you than it does to the other side," Miami coach Mario Cristobal said.

Bulls' defense

USF's defense has given up two touchdowns through two games, and both were set up by short fields.

Boise State's lone touchdown was on a 38-yard drive after the Bulls turned the ball over on downs; Florida's lone touchdown came on a 20-yard drive set up by

what essentially was a 55-yard punt return — 40 on the actual return, 15 more on an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

Against the state

The Hurricanes have won five consecutive games against in-state opponents, all by at least 20 points. Miami hasn't won six in a row against Sunshine State foes since a stretch spanning October 2008 through September 2010.

Since 2000, the Hurricanes are 33-17 against other FBS-level programs from the state of Florida — the best record among Sunshine State schools in that span.

Versus 'Big 3'

USF's win over Florida was his-

toric in the sense that the Bulls now have victories over Florida State, Miami and the Gators.

Among the newer FBS programs in the state — USF, Florida Atlantic, FIU and UCF — the Bulls are the first to beat each of the "Big 3" programs in Florida.

No turnovers

Through two games, neither Miami nor USF has committed a turnover.

It's the second straight year the Bulls made it through their first two contests without a giveaway — but the Hurricanes, going back to their first national title season in 1983, had never posted a zero-turnover, two-game start until now.

Oregon begins Big Ten title defense at Northwestern

By ANDREW SELIGMAN
Associated Press

No. 4 Oregon couldn't really ask for two more lopsided wins to start the season. Now, it's time for the Big Ten championship defense to kick into gear.

The Ducks (2-0) will try to build on a dominant start when they visit Northwestern (1-1) in a nationally televised conference opener for both teams Saturday.

"We expect everyone's best, and that's really what we want because that's how we'll get our best," coach Dan Lanning said. "Part of being the best version of you is it takes a challenge, right? And you want a challenge from the teams that you get to play."

Oregon went 9-0 in Big Ten play in its first year in the conference and beat Penn State in the league championship game. The Ducks finished 13-1 overall, losing to league rival Ohio State in the Rose



LYDIA ELY/AP

Oregon running back Jordon Davison (0) is congratulated by teammates after his touchdown during the second half against Oklahoma State on Saturday in Eugene, Ore.

Bowl after beating the Buckeyes by a point earlier in the season.

Oregon routed Montana State and Oklahoma State by a combined 128-16 to open the season.

The Ducks have scored 50 or more points in back-to-back games for the first time since 2018. They racked up 631 yards in total offense last week in a 69-3 romp and



No. 4 Oregon (2-0)
at Northwestern (1-1)
AFN-Sports
6 p.m. Saturday CET
1 a.m. Sunday JKT

handed Oklahoma State its most lopsided beating since 1907.

Northwestern bounced back from a season-opening loss at Tulane by shredding FCS member Western Illinois 42-7. The Wildcats had 526 yards in their biggest margin of victory since a 43-3 win against Maryland in 2020.

Despite the lopsided scores the first two weeks, Lanning sees

room to improve.

"We grade ourselves a little bit different," he said. "You know, so in the first game I think we graded out 73% of guys doing their job, executing at a high rate. We expect that to be higher than that. This past game, we were at 72%, so we actually went the wrong direction there."

New quarterback Preston Stone threw for 245 yards and his first three touchdowns this season after struggling in the opener. But the competition is obviously making a massive jump.

"This is exciting," coach David Braun said. "This is why you play in the Big Ten. 'Big Noon Kickoff' coming to campus, the students are back. ... The lakefront needs to be packed with purple. We need to create a homefield advantage. It may be a smaller venue, but it still can be an incredible advantage for the 'Cats.'"

NFL

Stafford ready to lead Rams again

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Even after missing nearly a month of training camp and sitting out the preseason, Matthew Stafford had zero trouble getting up to his old tricks in the Los Angeles Rams' season opener.

Stafford also pulled out a couple of new tricks that showed he's still growing in his 17th NFL season.

The 37-year-old quarterback pulled off his latest no-look pass during the Rams' 14-9 victory over Houston, hitting Puka Nacua for a 25-yard gain after misdirecting the Texans' defense to clear space for his receiver down the seam.

With instincts honed over a long career, Stafford said he made the decision "in the moment" to try the audacious throw.

"I never know if anybody will notice any of the little stuff, but that's part of it," Stafford said Wednesday. "(Running back) Kyren (Williams) was excited on that one. He came up to me afterwards and said, 'How do you do that?' Which is cool. But no, it's fun. Obviously, caught the snap, wasn't thinking it, and then just in the moment, (made) a play."

The pass not only led to a key first down, but demonstrated Stafford is still sharp and competitive after spending much of the past two months working through an aggravated disk in his back. The lingering injury had many observers questioning whether the Rams could contend for a playoff berth without a healthy Stafford, even while the quarterback said he was healthy and ready to play.



Los Angeles Rams QB Matthew Stafford was his usual self in the season opener despite sitting out almost all of the preseason.

Stafford's facility with no-look passes is part of his lore, particularly after he famously hit Cooper Kupp in the fourth quarter of the Rams' Super Bowl 56 victory with a pass that inspires YouTube breakdowns with hyperbolic titles like: "Best Throw Ever?"

But earlier in that same fourth quarter, Stafford broke new ground when he hit Davante Adams for a 24-yard completion in

which Stafford perfectly feathered a ball to the back shoulder of his new teammate, who alertly broke stride to haul it in.

It was a throw and catch that looked just like a vintage hookup between Adams and Aaron Rodgers when the two were teammates with the Green Bay Packers — and even Stafford knew it.

"I know he's really good at that kind of stuff just from playing

against him and watching him torment my team back in the day," said Stafford, who quarterbacked the Packers' NFC North rivals in Detroit for 12 years. "So yeah, I know he's got that. I've played a long time. He's played a long time. I understand that's an opportunity."

Stafford said he and Adams haven't had much time to work on those intricate, high-level connections in practices due to Stafford's back injury, but they're building chemistry every day.

Coach Sean McVay dialed up the play, but he said Stafford figured out how to make it work in tight coverage from star defensive back Derek Stingley.

"Look at when he lets that go, and that's against one of the premier corners in this league," McVay said, noting Stafford released the ball before Adams had even looked back at his quarterback.

Stafford went 21-for-29 for 245 yards with one touchdown and no interceptions against Houston's elite defense. He was sacked three times — twice on the same drive in the fourth quarter that started with his back-shoulder throw to Adams — and hit six times, but he emerged from his first game action since January in good shape.

The Rams are on the road for the next two weeks with big tests for Stafford. Los Angeles visits pass rusher Jeffery Simmons and the Tennessee Titans on Sunday, followed by a trip to face the defending champion Philadelphia Eagles, who beat the Rams twice last season.



**Cleveland Browns (0-1)
at Baltimore Ravens (0-1)**
AFN-Sports2
7 p.m. Sunday CET
2 a.m. Monday JKT



**Carolina Panthers (0-1)
at Arizona Cardinals (1-0)**
AFN-Atlantic
10 p.m. Sunday CET
5 a.m. Monday JKT



**Denver Broncos (1-0) at
Indianapolis Colts (1-0)**
AFN-Sports2
10 p.m. Sunday CET
5 a.m. Monday JKT



**Philadelphia Eagles (1-0)
at Kansas City Chiefs (0-1)**
AFN-Sports
10:25 p.m. Sunday CET
5:25 a.m. Monday JKT

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Scoreboard

American Conference							
East							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Buffalo	1	0	0	1.000	41	40	
Miami	0	1	0	.000	8	33	
N.Y. Jets	0	1	0	.000	32	34	
New England	0	1	0	.000	13	20	
South							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Indianapolis	1	0	0	1.000	33	8	
Jacksonville	1	0	0	1.000	26	10	
Houston	0	1	0	.000	9	14	
Tennessee	0	1	0	.000	12	20	
North							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Cincinnati	1	0	0	1.000	17	16	
Pittsburgh	1	0	0	1.000	34	32	
Baltimore	0	1	0	.000	40	41	
Cleveland	0	1	0	.000	16	17	
West							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Denver	1	0	0	1.000	20	12	
L.A. Chargers	1	0	0	1.000	27	21	
Las Vegas	1	0	0	1.000	20	13	
Kansas City	0	1	0	.000	21	27	
National Conference							
East							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Philadelphia	1	0	0	1.000	24	20	
Washington	1	0	0	1.000	21	6	
Dallas	0	1	0	.000	20	24	
N.Y. Giants	0	1	0	.000	6	21	
South							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Tampa Bay	1	0	0	1.000	23	20	
Atlanta	0	1	0	.000	20	23	
Carolina	0	1	0	.000	10	26	
New Orleans	0	1	0	.000	13	20	
North							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Green Bay	1	0	0	1.000	27	13	
Minnesota	1	0	0	1.000	27	24	
Chicago	0	1	0	.000	24	27	
Detroit	0	1	0	.000	13	27	
West							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Arizona	1	0	0	1.000	20	13	
L.A. Rams	1	0	0	1.000	14	9	
San Francisco	1	0	0	1.000	17	13	
Seattle	0	1	0	.000	13	17	

Thursday's game	
Washington	at Green Bay
Sunday's games	
Buffalo	at N.Y. Jets
Chicago	at Detroit
Cleveland	at Baltimore
Jacksonville	at Cincinnati
L.A. Rams	at Tennessee
N.Y. Giants	at Dallas
New England	at Miami
San Francisco	at New Orleans
Seattle	at Pittsburgh
Carolina	at Arizona
Denver	at Indianapolis
Philadelphia	at Kansas City
Atlanta	at Minnesota
Monday's games	
Tampa Bay	at Houston
L.A. Chargers	at Las Vegas
Thursday, Sept. 18	
Miami	at Buffalo
Sunday, Sept. 21	
Atlanta	at Carolina
Cincinnati	at Minnesota
Green Bay	at Cleveland
Houston	at Jacksonville
Indianapolis	at Tennessee
L.A. Rams	at Philadelphia
Las Vegas	at Washington
N.Y. Jets	at Tampa Bay
Pittsburgh	at New England
Denver	at L.A. Chargers
New Orleans	at Seattle
Arizona	at San Francisco
Dallas	at Chicago
Kansas City	at N.Y. Giants
Monday, Sept. 22	
Detroit	at Baltimore

Calendar	
Sept. 28	— Minnesota Vikings vs. Pittsburgh Steelers at Croke Park (Dublin)
Oct. 5	— Minnesota Vikings vs. Cleveland Browns at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium (London)
Oct. 12	— Denver Broncos vs. New York Jets at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium (London)
Oct. 19	— Los Angeles Rams vs. Jacksonville Jaguars at Wembley Stadium (London)

Falcons offense needs more balance

BY CHARLES ODUM
Associated Press

FLOWERY BRANCH, Ga. — Atlanta is hoping to generate better support for quarterback Michael Penix Jr. in Sunday night's game at Minnesota after their running game was shut down in their opening loss to Tampa Bay. Penix passed for 298 yards and one touchdown, completing 27 of 42 passes, while also running for a score in the 23-20 loss to the Buccaneers.

Penix had too little help as the Falcons rushed for only 69 yards and Younghoe Koo's crucial last-second missed field goal prevented the game for going to overtime. Atlanta (1-0) signed former Vikings kicker Parker Romo to its practice squad to compete with Koo and is hoping for better offensive balance against Minnesota.



Falcons running back Bijan Robinson scores a touchdown during the first half against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Sept. 7 in Atlanta.



Atlanta Falcons (0-1)
at Minnesota Vikings (1-0)
AFN-Sports
2:15 a.m. Monday CET
9:15 a.m. Monday JKT

"Mike played really well," Falcons offensive coordinator Zac Robinson said Wednesday. "We've got to play better around Mike."

Penix, the 2024 first-round pick, is entering his first full season as the starter after taking over for Kirk Cousins in the last three games of his rookie season. "To see Mike put the team on his back in different situations is just like watching him at Washington," Robinson said, adding Penix

"kind of thrives in those moments."

Bijan Robinson rushed for only 24 yards on 12 carries. Robinson scored on a 50-yard catch and had six receptions for 100 yards. Robinson ranked third in the NFL with 1,456 yards rushing in 2024 and isn't accustomed to the meager rushing totals. Tyler Allgeier ran for 24 yards on 10 carries.

"That's the thing we pride ourselves on is the run game so the

performance we had the last game, that's like unacceptable," Robinson said Wednesday. "That's the driving force for everything. It opens up the play-action pass, it helps Mike, it helps the receivers, it helps everything."

Robinson said the offense has adjusted this week after Tampa Bay "came out in a look we hadn't seen so our playbook got shorter. ... That first-game look was something we hadn't seen and prepared for. We prepared for something

totally different that they'd been used to doing. For us, it wasn't about effort or anything like that. We were just outmatched in the game. Now this week we know what to study and to prepare for."

Atlanta coach Raheem Morris didn't blame the poor running production on new starting right tackle Elijah Wilkinson, who moved up after Kaleb McGary was lost for the season with a lower left leg injury late in the preseason.

The Falcons preferred to run behind McGary and right guard Chris Lindstrom in 2024, so the poor performance by the running game in the opener is an ominous sign for the offense.

"We didn't play well up front," Morris said. "It's not Elijah Wilkinson. We didn't play well as a group. To say that would be not fair to Elijah Wilkinson."

Even Oliver can't cover Bills' defensive deficiencies

BY JOHN WAWROW
Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Buffalo Bills defensive tackle Ed Oliver would have preferred to ease back into practice Wednesday, three days after playing a game-changing role in a grueling — and stunning — come-from-behind season-opening win.

Coach Sean McDermott had other ideas in reminding his defense how its performance in a 41-40 victory over the Baltimore Ravens wasn't acceptable.



Buffalo Bills (1-0)
at New York Jets (0-1)
AFN-Atlantic
7 p.m. Sunday CET
2 a.m. Monday JKT



Buffalo Bills defensive tackle Ed Oliver warms up before a game against the Baltimore Ravens in Orchard Park, N.Y., on Sept. 7.

"Yeah, full pads on a Wednesday after a game where we had to play all 60 minutes is a little challenging," Oliver said with a sigh after pulling off strips of thick black tape from his hands.

"It's trying mentally to get yourself back right. And you're still kind of hurting," the seventh-year player added. "But you put on full pads and you go out there and you compete, because that's who we are."

As five-time defending AFC East champions, Buffalo has a set standard.

And as impactful as Oliver was forcing Derrick Henry's fumble in opening the door for the Bills rallying from a 15-point deficit over the final four minutes, the defense fell short of the overall mark.

McDermott praised Oliver for

his outing, which included a sack and wrapping up Henry for a loss, by saying his presence was felt on the sideline. McDermott couldn't say the same for the rest of the defense, which has much to correct in traveling to play the New York Jets on Sunday.

"We've got to make sure that this week really needs to be hard for us as a team even though you win the game," McDermott said, before adding it's too early in the season to make excuses. "We got to buckle down."

Though Buffalo's defense stopped Baltimore on its final three possessions with two three-and-outs and Henry's fumble, the unit struggled in allowing the Ravens to score on seven of their first eight drives. Baltimore finished with 433 yards of offense and became the NFL's first team to lose

when scoring 40 points and topping 235 yards rushing.

The outcome came down to reigning NFL MVP Josh Allen overseeing the comeback with a 22-point fourth-quarter rally capped by Matt Prater's 32-yard field goal as time expired.

"Look, the most important stat is the W," defensive coordinator Bobby Babich said, in noting there were some bright spots such as limiting the Ravens to two field

goals and a touchdown on three drives inside the Bills' 20.

"But all the stuff in between that you're talking about it's unacceptable," he added. "And our players know that."

McDermott pinned the blame on various issues from youth, poor positioning and lack of fundamentals. It was also an outing in which Buffalo was too often being stiff-armed out of the way by Henry, who gained 169 yards and scored twice.

SPORTS



Back in action
Rams QB Stafford in regular form after missing all of preseason » **NFL, Page 46**

TRACK & FIELD



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

Kenny Bednarek pushes Noah Lyles after Lyles won the men's 200-meter final at the U.S. Championships in Eugene, Ore., on Aug. 3. They'll meet again at worlds in Tokyo.

When push comes to shove

Lyles, Bednarek expected back for rematch at worlds to continue rivalry

By EDDIE PELLs
Associated Press

TOKYO — With a message-sending staredown, then the two-handed shove that followed, then the trash talk that came after that, Noah Lyles and Kenny Bednarek set the stage for what could be the best legit sprint rivalry track has seen in decades.

Their next showdown: track and field world championships in Tokyo.

Whether it was merely a dose of WWE-like bluster or there's really something gnawing at two of the

world's best sprinters, the mix-up after Lyles' 200-meter win at last month's U.S. championships delivered a ready-made storyline for a sport that struggles to capture the world's imagination the way it did in the Usain Bolt era and before.

Worlds start Saturday when track unfolds its big tent in Tokyo for the first time since the COVID-tinged 2021 Olympics.

The highlight could very well be the Sept. 19 showdown expected in the 200-meter final between Lyles, the three-time defending world champion at that distance,

and Bednarek, who has beaten a less-than-100% Lyles in the race at the last two Olympics.

Since that shove, Bednarek has said he and Lyles have discussed things behind closed doors and "everything is sorted."

But this quote from Bednarek, the 26-year-old, two-time Olympic silver medalist, just minutes after the race, has been reheated and rehashed aplenty since their tiff on Aug. 4:

"Unsportsmanlike (expletive) and I don't deal with that," he said. "It's a respect factor. He's fresh.

Last time we lined it up, I beat him, that's all I can say. Next time we line up, I'm going to win. That's all that matters."

Lyles and Bednarek are also among the favorites in the 100 meters, where Lyles is both the defending world and Olympic champion. Also in the mix in both races is Botswana's Letsile Tebogo, the 200-meter Olympic champion who labeled Lyles as "arrogant" after beating him in Paris.

"For me, I choose off the spotlight and then just my legs do the talking," Tebogo said this week

during an appearance as a global ambassador for a World Athletics kids program.

Jamaica's Kishane Thompson, who lost to Lyles by a scant .005 seconds at the Paris Games last year, is very much in the mix for this one, as well. He won in August — the only time he, Lyles and Bednarek were on the track together this year — and has the world's best time of 2025 at 9.75 seconds.

Another Jamaican, Oblique Seville, has beaten Lyles both times

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