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PHOTOS BY ALFONSO LIVRIERI/U.S. Marine Corps

Marine Corps Sgt. Robert Thagon, with Multi-Domain Task Unit, II Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group, participates in small, unmanned aircraft system integration training as part of Exercise Freezing Winds 2025 in Korpo, Finland, in December.

High North necessities

New Marine unit puts intelligence, cyberwarfare capabilities to the test in Arctic

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

A new U.S. Marine Corps unit designed to fight in shadowy gray zones is getting its first real test in the Arctic, where NATO is honing its response to potential aggression in the High North.

The Corps' new Multi-Domain Task Unit brings specialized intelligence and cyberwarfare capabilities to the alliance's new Arctic Sentry mission focused on increased allied vigilance in the region, Marine Forces Europe and Africa said in a statement Thursday.

Maj. Gen. Daniel Shipley, commander of



Marine Corps Sgt. Anthony Block sets up a PRC-160 RT during a small, unmanned aircraft system integration training.

MARFOREUR/AF, said the debut of the unit in the ongoing exercise Cold Response in Norway centers on giving commanders advanced capabilities and necessary information before a conflict starts.

"It's about creating a force that can act decisively at a moment's notice, and much of that happens in the information environment," Shipley said.

Ranging from signals intelligence and reconnaissance to cyberdefense and joint targeting powers, the unit's capabilities can supplement and enhance those of other NATO forces

SEE ARCTIC ON PAGE 5

IRAN WAR

US targets missile sites along Strait of Hormuz

By LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

U.S. forces are targeting anti-ship cruise missiles along the Iranian coast as President Donald Trump seeks to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a vital commercial sea lane that Tehran closed in retaliation for joint American-Israeli attacks.

Multiple 5,000-pound deep penetrator munitions were used to go after hardened Iranian missile sites on the coastline along the strait, U.S. Central Command said Tuesday.

The anti-ship cruise missiles housed in those sites presented a risk to international shipping, CENTCOM said. Iran is using the missiles, along with drones and naval mines, to threaten the passage of oil tankers through the key waterway.

The U.S. has struck more than 7,000 targets in Operation Epic Fury, which began Feb. 28, including more than 100 Iranian vessels, according to CENTCOM.

The command did not answer questions about the type of deep penetrator munition. CNN reported that it was the GBU-72 Advanced 5K Penetrator, which was first used in 2021 on a range in Florida.

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Iran vows more revenge as Trump hints at war's end
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BUSINESS/WEATHER

Ring cameras now can tell if fire threatens neighborhood

The San Diego Union-Tribune
SAN DIEGO — With San Diego County under a heat advisory and fire season approaching, Ring is launching a new feature that lets neighbors and first responders share real-time wildfire information through the company's app, the company announced Tuesday.

The new feature is called Fire Watch. Built into the Ring app, the integration combines the wildfire intelligence of Watch Duty — a nonprofit dedicated to accelerating emergency information —

with on-the-ground perspectives from Ring camera owners.

The combined data works to bring real-time information to fast-moving fires.

The integration will alert homeowners if a fire breaks out nearby. It also gives users the option to share live photos and videos with neighbors and first responders during a fire.

For customers with a Ring Protect subscription — \$19.99 per month, up from the basic subscription of \$4.99 per month —

outdoor cameras will automatically begin analyzing video for visual signs of smoke or flames.

The additional alert will help residents “quickly assess the situation and take action,” the company said.

Fire Watch has already been deployed on several dozen fires and over a thousand homes, the company said in a news release.

Fire Watch will alert users when a fire is close, offering the option to share live footage with neighbors and first responders.

EXCHANGE RATES

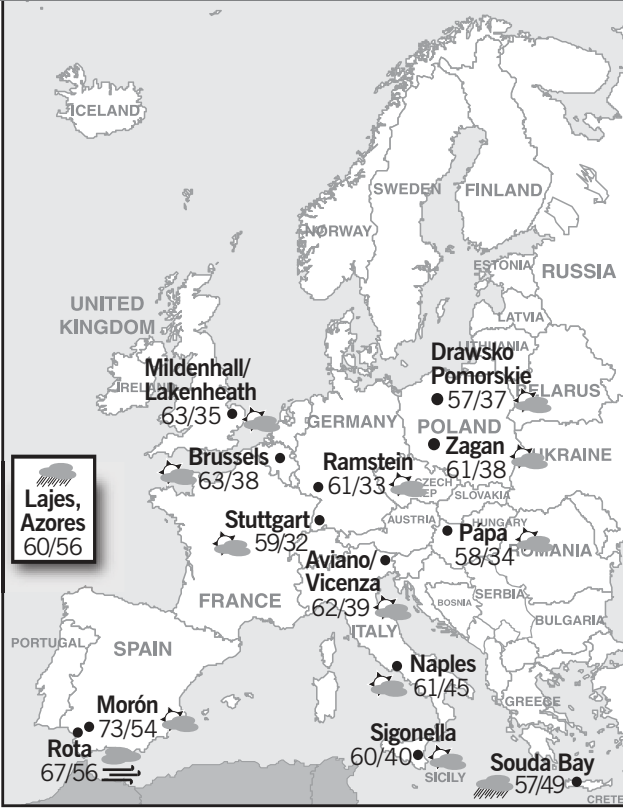
Military rates												
Euro costs (March 19)	0.85	Switzerland (Franc)	0.7879									
British pound (March 19)	\$1.30	Thailand (Baht)	32.624									
Japanese yen (March 19)	155.00	Turkey (NewLira)	44.2148									
South Korean won (March 19)	1449.00											
Commercial rates												
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3752	(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.) INTEREST RATES <table><tr><td>Prime rate</td><td>6.75</td></tr><tr><td>Interest Rates Discount rate</td><td>3.75</td></tr><tr><td>Federal funds market rate</td><td>3.62</td></tr><tr><td>3-month bill</td><td>3.69</td></tr><tr><td>30-year bond</td><td>4.84</td></tr></table>	Prime rate	6.75	Interest Rates Discount rate	3.75	Federal funds market rate	3.62	3-month bill	3.69	30-year bond	4.84
Prime rate	6.75											
Interest Rates Discount rate	3.75											
Federal funds market rate	3.62											
3-month bill	3.69											
30-year bond	4.84											
Britain (Pound)	1.3325											
Canada (Dollar)	1.3711											
China (Yuan)	6.8863											
Denmark (Krone)	6.4883											
Egypt (Pound)	52.3563											
Euro	0.8683											
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8364											
Hungary (Forint)	340.306											
Israel (Shekel)	3.0955											
Japan (Yen)	159.47											
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3061											
Norway (Krone)	9.5613											
Philippines (Peso)	59.874											
Poland (Zloty)	3.7070											
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7501											
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2797											
South Korea (Won)	1500.73											

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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MILITARY



AUSTIN GILLAM/U.S. Marine Corps

Marines test a Mobile User Objective System radio aboard the USS Anchorage in 2022.

Junior Marine’s antenna design keeps costs low, troops connected

By LYDIA GORDON
Stars and Stripes

A cost-saving innovation that is cutting repair expenses and eliminating monthslong supply delays didn’t come from a major Marine Corps program office. It started with a junior enlisted Marine.

Lance Cpl. Eirick Schule, an engineer equipment operator, was only a week into his assignment at the II Marine Expeditionary Force’s Innovation Campus in Camp Lejeune, N.C., when he was presented with a recurring problem.

The fiberglass antenna masts used in a satellite communications system were quickly wearing out because of extended use and exposure to the elements, the service said in a statement last week.

The masts help extend the range of the antenna on the Marine Corps’ Mobile User Objective System, a device similar to a cell-phone.

More than 100 3D-printed antenna masts have been produced since Schule developed the design, saving more than \$600,000 and over 60 years in cumulative wait time, the Marine Corps said.

“I went to a joint exercise in April 2025, and we looked at how many of these pieces were broken across the Marine Corps, and it



MAKAYLA ELIZALDE/U.S. Marine Corps

A Mobile User Objective System replacement antenna mast created by Lance Cpl. Eirick Schule sits on a table at Camp Lejeune, N.C., on Feb. 12.

was over \$1 million worth,” Chief Warrant Officer 3 Matthew Pine, leader of the Innovation Campus, said in the statement.

Schule realized that the problem didn’t require replacing the entire device. Instead, a 3D-printed component could restore it to full functionality.

With the component that Schule began developing in April 2025, repair costs were reduced to about \$10 and production takes less than

half a day, according to the release.

Before that time, the Marine Corps had spent more than \$5,600 to replace an entire antenna assembly and faced wait times of up to seven months for delivery.

One of the few obstacles Schule ran into during development was ensuring that the parts could withstand operational use. However, the masts held up for the entirety of a monthlong field exercise to test their durability, according to the statement.

“Being in an environment where I could apply my hobby felt nice,” Schule said.

Forty of the 3D masts have been sent to units around Camp Lejeune, and an additional 67 having made their way to units at Camp Pendleton in California, the statement said.

Additive manufacturing has become an increasingly common solution across the military services, with units using 3D printing to produce replacement parts.

The Army in particular has expanded its use of the technology, notably its Transforming in Contact initiative, which has enabled soldiers at the unit level to produce 3D-printed products such as small drones and components for repairs.

VA analyzing old disability benefit surveys for fraud

By LINDA F. HERSEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it will analyze 1 million old disability benefits questionnaires dating to 2010 to identify possible signs of fraud in future claims.

The VA has plans to deploy a “data collection tool,” which is under development, to look for patterns of fraud in prior DBQs. The information will be used only to inform decision-making in detecting problems going forward, the agency said.

“This tool is forward-looking only. VA will not use the tool to revisit previously finalized and processed DBQs,” VA Press Secretary Peter Kasperowicz said Monday.

The tool, which is expected to be introduced in fiscal 2026, will only be used by VA staff to flag suspected fraud in newly submitted DBQs.

DBQs are medical forms that private doctors fill out to document service-connected medical conditions.

Kasperowicz said the larger goal is to target unaccredited commercial businesses that prey on veterans — and not individual veterans themselves seeking benefits for service-connected injuries and illnesses.

“This initiative will not change how VA evaluates or decides claims. No veteran’s claim or benefit will be reduced or denied because of this effort,” Kasperowicz said.

He said the new safeguard is being developed in collaboration with VA’s Office of Inspector General, which released a fraud alert in 2023 related to DBQs.

Kasperowicz said the initiative will help to protect veterans from predatory companies that submit fraudulent DBQs.

The tool, for example, will flag DBQs that have similar boilerplate language or were prepared

by a doctor located more than 100 miles from a veteran’s home.

A cottage industry of for-profit businesses has grown alongside the demand for veterans disability benefits.

Many are not accredited by the VA and charge exorbitant fees, according to lawmakers.

About 30% of all veterans have a service-connected disability that qualifies them for benefits, a rate that has doubled since 2008.

Disabled American Veterans and other nonprofit advocacy groups offer assistance from claims officers who will process a veteran’s claim for free.

Many for-profit companies base charges on the amount of compensation they can win for veterans.

Kasperowicz also said Monday the tool will not use artificial intelligence but assist VA staff who process claims.

“[The tool] relies on manual data entry and analysis to help identify patterns that may help VA identify when organized fraud rings are posing as legitimate medical providers and preying on veterans — for example, by excessively charging them,” Kasperowicz said.

James W. Smith, a deputy executive director at the Veterans Benefits Administration, had testified at a House Veterans’ Affairs subcommittee hearing that the “VA had developed a power BI tool that should be ready this year that is going to be able to analyze a little over a million DBQs that have been scanned going back to 2010.”

He was responding to a question from Rep. Morgan Luttrell, R-Texas, on whether the VA was using a language model to conduct the fraud checks or “whether a human is still doing this.”

Power BI tools offer integrated artificial intelligence features within Microsoft Power Platform. The cloud-based platform enables systems to publish reports, create dashboards and collaborate with teams.

1 dead, 1 injured after shooting at Air Force base in NM

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

One person was killed and another injured in a shooting Tuesday evening at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, the service said.

The installation was placed on lockdown after the shooting was reported, according to a statement emailed that evening by Capt. Daniel Barnhorst, base spokesman.

The lockdown was lifted after security personnel arrived around

5:30 p.m. and determined the scene was safe, the statement said.

Barnhorst said one person died and another was injured.

He declined to comment on reports that the shooting occurred at the base shopette, saying the inci-

dent remains under investigation with no further details available.

The shopette was closed until further notice, according to a post that evening on Holloman’s official Facebook page.

Holloman is home to the 49th

Wing, where F-16 Fighting Falcon and MQ-9 Reaper drone pilots are trained, according to the base website. The installation is about 12 miles southwest of Alamogordo and roughly 200 miles south of Albuquerque.

MILITARY

Nonprofit expands free legal aid for victims

By ROSE THAYER
Stars and Stripes

A nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting and advocating for military-connected survivors of sexual assault added more capacity to its free legal support services hoping it will no longer have to turn away anyone in need. Protect Our Defenders announced on Monday a partnership with Volare, an organization that provides trauma-informed advocacy, therapy and legal services to

crime victims. Nancy Parrish, CEO and founder of Protect Our Defenders, said that an increase in demand for legal help over the past 15 months had forced the organization to turn away about 25% of people requesting it. This partnership should expand capacity threefold, she said. “It will achieve something we’ve been trying to do for over a decade now, and that is to ensure that no victim is ever turned

away,” she said. While the Defense Department’s data showed sexual assaults in the military dropped by about 4% in 2024, research from Brown University found that the actual number of assaults could be two to four times higher because of a fear of reporting. Because of this, researchers estimated that one in four women will experience sexual assault during their military careers. Its recent increase in demand

for legal help could stem from several factors, including a federal hiring freeze that has slowed some reforms meant to provide more resources for victims, Parrish said. Meanwhile, the Army’s court system has seen two of its largest sexual misconduct cases in recent years, both of which involved a doctor abusing dozens of patients. Maj. Michael Stockin was convicted in 2025 of 41 charges of abusive sexual contact at Joint Base

Lewis-McChord, Wash. The Army filed charges last year against Maj. Blaine McGraw, a former OB-GYN at Fort Hood, Texas, that involve video recording 44 women without their consent. He is awaiting court-martial. “Our services are going to do what it can to fill the gap because no survivor should walk through this process alone, and they must have legal representation at the beginning of the case,” Parrish said.



ALEX WILSON/Stars and Stripes

A small group protests the Iran war outside Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, on Tuesday.

Festivals affected by tightened security at US bases in Japan

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Three U.S. military bases in Japan have canceled or restricted attendance at their spring festivals amid heightened security measures, scaling back events that typically draw tens of thousands of local visitors. Annual festivals at naval bases in Yokosuka and Sasebo were canceled outright, while the spring open house at U.S. Army Japan’s headquarters near Tokyo will be limited this year to people who already have base access. The changes follow stricter security measures imposed earlier this month by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, including increased identification checks and vehicle inspections at base entry points, due to threats linked to the war against Iran by the United States and Israel that began Feb. 28. Yokosuka, home of the U.S. 7th Fleet, announced March 6 that it was canceling its annual Spring Festival scheduled for March 21.

Last year’s event drew more than 55,000 people, more than double the base’s population of about 27,000. In a Facebook post, the base apologized “for the inconvenience and hardship that this abrupt cancellation may cause.” Public opposition in Yokosuka to the Iran war appears limited. A small, five-day protest began Monday outside the base’s main gate, with about a dozen participants from a local denuclearization group joining on Tuesday. Sasebo Naval Base, home of the Navy’s amphibious ready group, including the amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli, also canceled its Fleet Friendship Day scheduled for April 18. The Tripoli, homeported at Sasebo, and roughly 2,500 members of the Okinawa-based 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, are among the U.S. forces being dispatched to the Middle East, multiple news outlets reported March 13. Representatives from Yokosuka

and Sasebo referred questions to Navy Region Japan. Spokeswoman Zoe Stagg said the decision to cancel events came after careful consideration but declined to say whether the Middle East conflict was a factor. “Open base events on our U.S. Navy installations are an incredible opportunity to celebrate our partnership with our hosts and local communities,” she wrote in an email Tuesday. “Each community event is important to us, and we will continue to evaluate the schedule for future events.” At Camp Zama, the Army’s annual Cherry Blossom Festival remains scheduled for March 28 but will be limited to those with base access and their guests, according to a Facebook post. Other spring festivals at U.S. bases in Japan, including events on Okinawa, remained scheduled as of Wednesday afternoon.

Stars and Stripes reporters Brian McElhiney, Janiqua Robinson and Seth Robson contributed to this report.

Hiroshima survivor who advocated for US victims dies at 88

By HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A Japanese atomic bomb survivor who spent decades researching American prisoners of war killed in the Hiroshima attack has died at age 88. Shigeaki Mori devoted nearly 50 years to uncovering the stories of 12 Americans who died in the atomic bombing carried out by the U.S. Army Air Forces on Aug. 6, 1945.

Mori gained international attention in 2016 when then-President Barack Obama embraced him at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. Obama was the first sitting U.S. president to visit the site, which honors about 140,000 people killed in the world’s first atomic bombing. Mori died Saturday afternoon at a Hiroshima hospital, according to Japanese media reports and the editors of the web-based English translation of Mori’s book, “A Secret History of U.S. Servicemembers Who Died in the Atomic Bomb.” He was 8 years old and about 1½ miles from the blast’s hypocenter when the atomic bomb, dubbed Little Boy, was dropped from the B-29 Superfortress Enola Gay and detonated over the city. Mori recalled walking on a bridge, being blown away by the blast and landing in the water without injuries or burns. He later found out that everyone else on the bridge had died. Mori was amazed at his luck, since he was exposed to a large amount of radiation, fallout in the form of black rain and also drank water contaminated with radiation, he told Stars and Stripes in 2015. Decades after the war, Mori began investigating the fate of American airmen captured after their aircraft crashed near Hiroshima. He discovered that several were being held at a Japanese military



JANIQUA ROBINSON/Stars and Stripes

Hiroshima atomic bombing survivor Shigeaki Mori speaks to reporters on the 80th anniversary of the Lonesome Lady B-24 bomber crash in Ikachi, Japan, on July 28.

police headquarters in the city when the bomb fell. Through years of research, Mori reviewed documents and interviewed witnesses to piece together the events leading to their deaths. He later contacted family members, some of whom had not known what had happened to their relatives. Mori also worked to ensure the Americans were recognized among the bombing’s victims. He built a memorial for them at his own expense, helped secure their inclusion in the registry of atomic bomb victims at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and arranged for their portraits to be displayed there. “When I first learned of the American victims, I realized that none of them had been officially recognized as a victim of the atomic bomb. It was shocking to me,” Mori told Stars and Stripes in 2015. He said he wanted to shed light on those Americans who were killed in the bombing just like the other victims. “Unless someone speaks for them, their sacrifices would be thrown into darkness,” he said.

MILITARY

‘Smorgasbord of danger’ in laundry

Fire aboard Ford reportedly took more than 30 hours to extinguish

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — A potent mixture of flammable materials, equipment pushed beyond its limits and human error could be behind a fire last week aboard the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, according to a shipping expert.

“It’s just a smorgasbord of danger all put together,” said Sal Mercogliano, an adjunct professor at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.

The Ford, along with nearly 4,500 personnel, is operating in the Red Sea in support of Operation Epic Fury, the ongoing joint American and Israeli military campaign against Iran.

The carrier left Norfolk, Va., in late June for a then-routine deployment to Europe that unexpectedly included duty in the Caribbean Sea and the Middle East.

That extended time at sea also could have been a factor in the March 12 fire in the main laundry areas, Mercogliano said.

“Equipment that normally would be serviced and taken down may be running at levels past when they need to run,” Mercogliano said. “Anytime you go past normal operating hours, the chances of mechanical and human error increase.”

Three sailors aboard the ship were injured as a result of the fire, which the Navy said was fully contained the same day.

None of the injuries were life-threatening, and two of the sailors have since returned to duty, while the third remains in stable condition after being flown off the ship for treatment.

It’s not clear how the fire started, and the Navy has released few details. The fire did not impact the ship’s propulsion plant, and Ford remains fully operational, the Navy said at the time.

The cause of the Ford fire is under investigation, a U.S. military official said Tuesday.

“As it is being investigated, the ship’s forces are inspecting and overhauling affected spaces,” said the official, who spoke on condi-

tion of anonymity because of they were not authorized to speak publicly.

The official didn’t say whether crew living quarters had been affected. But there are indications the fire may have displaced hundreds of sailors, potentially destroying bedding and personal possessions.

On Tuesday, the Navy Exchange said it had liquidated its inventory of black boots available for sale at several bases in Europe in support of Ford.

The New York Times reported this week that more than 600 sailors and crew members had been uprooted by the fire, sleeping on the floor and on tables. It took more than 30 hours to fully extinguish the fire, according to the NYT report.

Also on Tuesday, USNI News reported that Ford would soon leave the Red Sea to undergo repairs at U.S. Naval Support Activity Souda Bay on the Greek island of Crete, citing an unnamed senior U.S. official.

Military officials contacted by Stars and Stripes would not say whether Ford would depart the Middle East, citing operational security.

Shipboard laundry and dry-cleaning facilities on aircraft carriers are vast areas situated in the lower deck areas of vessels.

They house industrial washers capable of extracting dirt, grease and other gunk from fabric and powerful dryers that can churn out as much as 100 pounds of clean uniforms and other items per cycle for thousands of personnel.

The facilities also include presses, irons and other equipment and piles of clothing, bedding and other items in various stages of laundering.

They require huge amounts of electricity and generate significant heat, requiring ample air conditioning to keep sailors and equipment cool.

Electrical problems and delayed maintenance of equipment, including uncleaned lint filters in laundry areas, are among the chief causes of fires on ships, said



ALEXIS FOWLER/U.S. Navy

A sailor checks dryer vents in a laundry room aboard the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, in November. Three sailors were injured as a result of a fire that started in the ship’s laundry room last week, according to the Navy.

a Navy sailor not authorized to comment publicly and who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Those fires most commonly happen in mechanical spaces, laundry areas and berthings, where high temperatures and combustible materials are factors, the sailor said.

If Ford’s firefighters, known as damage controlmen, couldn’t immediately put out the fire, they would have sealed the area to isolate the blaze, Mercogliano and the sailor said.

That method takes time for flames and heat to subside.

It’s also why any adjacent compartments, such as a berthing area, would have been evacuated, Mercogliano said, adding that smoke and heat damage may also have affected adjacent compartments.

Mercogliano compared the length of time it may have taken to completely extinguish the fire on Ford and ensure there were no hot spots to that of a similar event in August aboard the USS New Orleans near Okinawa, Japan.

In that case, it took 12 hours before a fire aboard the amphibious transport dock ship was fully extinguished. Two sailors were slightly injured.

Ensuring that a fire is fully extinguished, inspecting affected areas and making sure there is no chance of a reflash isn’t an easy, quick process and can take hours, the sailor said.

Indications that the Ford fire was limited to the main laundry areas and potentially a berthing space are signs that damage controlmen and sailors quickly responded defensively to the fire.

In the aftermath of serious ship fires, such as the one on the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard in July 2020, the Navy has redoubled its focus on firefighting and training, Mercogliano noted.

That focus is front of mind for all service members who train daily with the mindset that fighting ship fires is every sailor’s responsibility, the sailor said.

“It’s not something that can be put on the back burner,” they said.

USS Nimitz retirement delayed

Stars and Stripes

The scheduled retirement of the USS Nimitz will be delayed, and the Navy’s oldest aircraft carrier will serve about 10 months longer than planned.

The Nimitz will remain active through March 2027, the Navy confirmed. It had been scheduled to begin the decommissioning process this year. Breaking Defense first reported the extension.

Extending the Nimitz’s service will allow the Navy to maintain a minimum of 11 active aircraft carriers, as mandated by Congress. The USS John F. Kennedy, the Navy’s next Ford-class aircraft carrier, is scheduled to be delivered and officially commissioned in March 2027.

The Pentagon released details in an announcement Friday, stating that a contract was issued to Huntington Ingalls Inc. in Newport News, Va., “for advance planning and long-lead-time material procurement to prepare and make ready for the accomplishment of the inactivation and defueling of USS Nimitz.”

Work “is expected to be completed by March 2027.”

The Nimitz departed its Bremerton, Wash., homeport for the final time on March 7 for military exercises.

“Nimitz is deploying to the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility this spring as part of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet’s Southern Seas 2026 deployment,” Lt. Cmdr. Peter Pagano, a spokesman for the carrier, said in a March 8 email sent from aboard the ship.

The Nimitz, which is shifting its homeport from Kitsap to Naval Station Norfolk, Va., had returned to Bremerton in December from what was expected to be its final deployment.

During that deployment, the ship’s Carrier Air Wing 17 took part in strikes against ISIS targets in Somalia.

Overall, squadrons embarked on the Nimitz completed more than 8,500 aircraft sorties, while its jets, reconnaissance planes, and helicopters logged approximately 17,000 flight hours.

Arctic: Multi-domain teams gather intelligence, disrupt adversaries

FROM PAGE 1

in the region, the statement said.

Maneuvering in what’s termed the gray zone has been an area of focus for the U.S. and allied militaries in countering Russia, which often uses tactics such as cyberattacks, disinformation and sabotage to gain an advantage without

triggering a full-scale conflict.

The incorporation of the high-tech Marine unit in Arctic drills shows how the alliance is preparing for a potential fast-moving crisis in the increasingly strategic High North.

In February, NATO launched its Arctic Sentry mission to bolster

its presence amid concerns about Russian and Chinese activity in the region.

Cold Response, hosted by Norway, is operating in conjunction with the broader the NATO effort.

Both the Marine Corps and the Army have been focused on developing multidomain teams in re-

cent years. Such units specialize in gathering intelligence and disrupting adversaries in ways that help commanders see the shape of the battlefield before fighting even begins.

Should a crisis escalate, the Marine unit is designed to integrate directly with a larger Marine Air-

Ground Task Force, MARFOR-REUR/AF said.

Its presence at Cold Response marks “a milestone” for the Marine Corps modernization efforts, the statement said, adding that it enhances the service’s ability to field forces capable of winning in the gray zone.

MIDEAST

Iran says gas field hit; Trump hints at war end

BY KATERYNA KADABASHY,
 HADRIANA LOWENKRON
 AND SHERIF TAREK
Bloomberg News

Iran said the United States and Israel struck its giant South Pars gas field in the Persian Gulf, the latest attack on energy assets in the regionwide conflict.

Oil prices jumped after Iranian state TV reported the airstrike, which raised fears of further risks to global crude and gas supplies. Gulf producers have significantly reduced output during the 19-day war, particularly due to the effective shuttering of the Strait of Hormuz.

If confirmed, the assault would mark the first time the U.S. and Israel have targeted Iran's upstream oil and gas facilities since starting the war on Feb. 28. The Islamic Republic has responded with strikes on Israel and Arab states, upending financial and energy markets.

President Donald Trump — who has repeatedly complained about a lack of interest from erstwhile allies in joining the war or helping to secure Hormuz — said on social media early Wednesday that perhaps countries other than the U.S. should take responsibility for the critical waterway, which separates Iran from Oman.

"I wonder what would happen if we 'finished off' what's left of the Iranian Terror State, and let the Countries that use it, we don't, be responsible for the so called 'Straight?'" he said.

Iran launched fresh waves of missiles and drones at the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait after confirming the assassination of its security chief, Ali



GETTY IMAGES/TNS

Iranians set fire to flags of the United States and Israel as they gather to commemorate those killed from the Dena naval vessel, at Enghelab Square on Tuesday in Tehran, Iran.

Larijani. It also struck Tel Aviv, killing two people. Israel and the U.S. maintained their bombardment of Iran.

European gas futures pared some losses after the South Pars news. Brent futures rose as much as 1.8% to trade briefly above \$105 a barrel.

Iran's military vowed to avenge the death of Larijani as well as that of Gholamreza Soleimani, the head of the Basij paramilitary unit, which maintains internal security in Iran. Israel said Iranian Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib has also been killed.

The U.S. said it dropped 5,000-pound bunker-buster munitions

on Iranian missile sites near the Strait of Hormuz late Tuesday. That's part of Trump's efforts to reopen the vital waterway to commercial vessels.

Iran, meanwhile, has been moving its own oil through the strait at close to prewar levels. Crude loadings at Kharg Island also appear to continue undisturbed, despite U.S. strikes on the export hub.

"We need to design new arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz and the way ships pass through it in the future," Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told Al Jazeera. The rules should "guarantee that safe passage through the strait takes place under specific

conditions."

Trump again said the U.S. would soon be ready to end the war.

"If we left right now, it would take them 10 years to rebuild," Trump said at the White House on Tuesday. "We're not ready to leave yet. But we'll be leaving in the near future."

Trump threatened to expand strikes on Kharg Island after weekend attacks on military installations there. The president has abandoned efforts to recruit partners from Europe and Asia to help reopen Hormuz with naval escorts. That was after most countries showed reluctance or flat-out refused to join such a mission,

which military analysts say would be risky without a ceasefire.

In Iran, a strike hit an area at the Bushehr nuclear power plant, according to Russia's state atomic firm Rosatom, which operates the facility. No Rosatom employees were injured, and about 480 Russian citizens remain at the plant, Chief Executive Officer Alexey Likhachev said, according to Russia's Tass news agency.

In parallel with the war in Iran, Israel has stepped up an offensive in Lebanon, where it's fighting the Tehran-backed Hezbollah militant group. Israeli strikes in the country have killed more than 900 people, according to the Lebanese government.

That brings the war's death toll to more than 4,000, with more than three quarters of the fatalities in Iran. Dozens of others were killed in the rest of the Middle East, while the U.S. has lost 13 military personnel.

Anwar Gargash, a top adviser to UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, said Iran miscalculated by firing upon Arab states in the Gulf. The attacks will drive them closer to Israel and the U.S., while demonstrating why the region can't accept Iranian nuclear and missile programs, Gargash said.

He signaled the UAE may be willing to help secure the Hormuz Strait.

U.S. gasoline prices have soared in recent weeks, rising to around \$3.79 a gallon, according to the American Automobile Association. That's the highest level since October 2023 and is piling pressure on the administration ahead of the November midterm elections.

Ex-presidents deny claim one of them regretted not attacking Iran

BY DAVE GOLDINER
New York Daily News

All four living former presidents have denied President Donald Trump's claim that one of them admitted regretting not attacking Iran while in the White House.

Spokespeople for Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Joe Biden all said the leaders have not spoken to Trump about the ongoing conflict, let alone told him that they wish they would have started any war against Tehran or killed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Trump first dropped the chatty bombshell Monday at a press event during a lunch for board members of the Kennedy Center.

"I've spoken to a certain president ... a past president, former president. He said: 'I wish I did it. I

wish I did,' " Trump said.

Trump repeated the claim later during another White House event.

Asked to elaborate on which ex-president he was referring to, Trump said it wasn't Bush. When asked if it was Clinton, Trump said: "I don't want to say."

Trump said he didn't want to reveal the identity of the former commander-in-chief to avoid embarrassing him.

"I don't want to get into who. I don't want to get him into trouble," Trump said.

Then he mused that the information might actually burnish the person's legacy, which seems highly unlikely especially given that polls say that Trump's war is unpopular with the American public.

"You know, it's interesting. And

maybe he'd be proud," Trump said about the former president. "And I could even ask him that: 'Would you like me to reveal your name?'"

The "he said, they said" spat came as a new report said Trump has spurned negotiations with Iran and has declined to embrace Pentagon options to deescalate the war.

NBC News says the U.S. military presents Trump with options for off-ramps to the nearly three-week-old war with Tehran in his daily briefing.

Trump last week demanded the "unconditional surrender" or Iran said the war will "end soon" while his defense secretary told CBS it was "only just the beginning." Asked how he would know when the war was won, Trump said: "When I feel it in my bones."

Trump to pay his respects to 6 service members killed in crash in the Middle East

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is set to pay his respects on Wednesday at a Delaware military base when the remains of six U.S. service members killed in the crash of a refueling aircraft are returned to their families.

It will be the second time since launching the war on Iran on Feb. 28 that the Republican president will attend the solemn military ritual known as a dignified transfer, which he once described as the "toughest thing" he has had to do while serving as commander in chief.

All six crew members of a KC-135 Air Force refueling aircraft were killed last week in a plane crash over friendly territory in western Iraq while supporting

operations against Iran.

The crash brought the U.S. death toll in Operation Epic Fury to at least 13 service members.

The crash killed three people assigned to the 6th Air Refueling Wing at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida: Maj. John A. "Alex" Klinner, 33, who served in Birmingham, Ala.; Capt. Ariana Savino, 31, of Covington, Wash.; and Tech. Sgt. Ashley Pruitt, 34, of Bardonia, Ky.

The three others were assigned to the 121st Air Refueling Wing at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base in Columbus, Ohio: Capt. Seth Koval, 38, a resident of Stoutsville, Ohio, who was from Mooresville, Ind.; Capt. Curtis Angst, 30, who lived in Columbus; and Master Sgt. Tyler Simmons, 28, of Columbus.

MIDEAST

Gabbard deflects on prewar advice for Trump

Intel director tells Dem lawmakers she ‘won’t divulge internal conversations’

By ERIC TUCKER,
DAVID KLEPPER
AND STEPHEN GROVES
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic senators pressed the government’s top intelligence official at annual worldwide threats hearings Wednesday about the war with Iran, including whether she had advised President Donald Trump that Tehran was likely to block the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial passageway for oil and gas from the Persian Gulf, if attacked.

Tulsi Gabbard, the director of national intelligence, repeatedly deflected questions about the intelligence she had offered the Republican president. That exasperated Democrats who tried to use a rare public forum to extract answers about the widening conflict in the Middle East.

She sidestepped when asked by Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, whether she had advised Trump that Iran would attack Gulf nations and shut down the strait if the country was targeted by U.S. strikes.

“I have not and won’t divulge internal conversations. I will say that those of us within the intelligence community continue to provide the president with all of the best objective intelligence available to inform his decisions,” she said.

Trump has urged allies to help safeguard the waterway and ease a chokepoint on the region’s oil exports. He complained on Tuesday that NATO and most other American allies have rejected his calls.

The annual congressional hearings involving the most senior intelligence officials are taking place at a time of scrutiny over the

U.S. military campaign in the Middle East and heightened concerns about terrorism at home after recent attacks at a Michigan synagogue and Virginia university.

The focus was on the war, and among the issues expected to be raised was reporting that outdated intelligence likely led to the U.S. firing a missile that hit an elementary school in Iran and killed more than 165 people. The outdated targeting data was reported to have come from the Defense Intelligence Agency, whose director, Lt. Gen. James H. Adams, was to testify. The White House says the strike is under investigation.

The hearings, which continue in Thursday in the House, are also likely to delve into the administration’s internal debate over the war, given the resignation this week of Joe Kent as director of the National Counterterrorism Center. Kent said Tuesday he could not “in good conscience” back the war and did not agree that Iran posed an imminent threat to the United States.

Hours later, Gabbard, whose office oversaw Kent’s work, wrote on social media that it was up to Trump to decide whether Iran posed a threat. She did not mention her own views of the strikes and asserted at the outset of the hearing that she intended to deliver the perspectives of the intelligence agencies, as opposed to her own viewpoints.

Trump has sought to distance himself from Kent. CIA Director John Ratcliffe tried to do the same Wednesday when he was asked whether intelligence supported Kent’s assessment that Iran was not an imminent threat.

“The intelligence reflects the contrary,” Ratcliffe said.

Apart from Iran, Gabbard was



JOSE LUIS MAGANA/AP

Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, center, testifies during the Senate Committee on Intelligence hearings to examine worldwide threats, on Capitol Hill, on Wednesday.

pressed on her presence at an FBI search in January of an election hub in Fulton County, Ga., where agents seized voter data from the 2020 presidential election. Her appearance at a domestic law enforcement operation raised eyebrows given that Gabbard’s office is meant to focus squarely on foreign threats.

Warner said it was “an organized effort to misuse her national security powers to interfere in domestic politics and potentially provide a pretext for the president’s unconstitutional efforts to seize control of the upcoming elections.”

Gabbard responded that she was present for the search at the

request of the president but did not participate. But she continued to tangle with Warner, who at one point told her: “If you want to ask the questions, you should have stayed in Congress.”

Also under scrutiny is Kash Patel’s leadership of the FBI. He was making his first public appearance on Capitol Hill since video surfaced last month showing him partying with members of the U.S. men’s hockey team after their gold medal win at the Winter Olympics.

Patel has fired dozens of agents in his first year on the job, raising concerns about an exodus of national security experience at a time when the United States is confronting an elevated terrorism

threat.

This month alone, a gunman wearing clothes with an Iranian flag design and the words “Property of Allah” killed two people at a Texas bar; two men who authorities say were inspired by Islamic State were arrested on charges of bringing homemade powerful explosives to a protest outside the New York City mayoral mansion; a man with a past terrorism conviction opened fire inside an Old Dominion University classroom in Virginia; and a Lebanese-born man in Michigan drove his car into a synagogue.

The FBI has said that it is working continuously to protect the country.

Sites: Trump says a US ground invasion wouldn’t repeat Vietnam

FROM PAGE 1

The military developed the 5,000-pound bomb for both fighters and bombers “to overcome hardened, deeply buried target challenges,” the Air Force said in a statement after its first release.

The test run validated that an existing “smart” bomb guidance tail kit for the Joint Direct Attack Munition could be used to control and navigate the GBU-72, the service said.

In the past week, Trump has vowed to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

He sought to lean on European

countries for help, saying the future of NATO will be “very bad” if they don’t back his efforts.

But allies have expressed reluctance to get involved in the war the U.S. launched alongside Israel. That prompted a Truth Social post in which Trump said the U.S. no longer wants or needs the help of NATO countries, Japan, Australia and South Korea.

On Tuesday, Trump also said that he’s not afraid that a ground invasion of Iran would be a repeat of the Vietnam War and that the U.S. is not ready to leave Iran now but will do so “in the very near future.”

Turkish base that hosts US troops gets Patriot air defense battery

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

A Patriot air defense system is being deployed to a strategic Turkish air base used by U.S. forces, as allies continue to bolster their defenses in the wake of Iranian airstrikes against NATO member Turkey.

The Patriot system, drawn from NATO Allied Air Command at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, is being stationed at Incirlik Air Base alongside an existing Spanish Patriot system, state news agency Anadolu reported Wednesday.

It cited Rear Adm. Zeki Akturk, a

Turkish defense ministry spokesman, who gave a news briefing at the base. Incirlik is near the major city of Adana and sits close to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

The move comes one week after NATO sent another Patriot unit to Malatya province, which hosts a critical NATO radar that is manned by U.S. troops. The radar is part of the alliance’s integrated air defense system.

Since the start of the U.S.-Israeli military campaign against Iran on Feb. 28, at least three missiles have been directed at Turkey, all of which were intercepted by allied

air defenses.

NATO hasn’t indicated which units have been deployed to support air defense efforts in Turkey, but several allied countries possess the Patriot system.

The U.S. has a Patriot unit in Baumholder, Germany, that over the years has mobilized for air defense missions in support of allies in places such as Poland and Turkey. NATO’s missile defense system incorporates a range of capabilities, bringing together U.S. Aegis Ashore sites in Romania and Poland as well as U.S. Navy destroyers out of Rota, Spain.

Mullin put on spot in stormy DHS hearing

By Dave Goldiner
New York Daily News

Sen. Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., faced harsh questioning about the partial government shutdown that has roiled air travel and President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown at his confirmation hearing to be Department of Homeland Security secretary.

The former mixed martial arts fighter vowed to take a less partisan and confrontational approach to the job than predecessor Kristi Noem, even as both parties traded barbs.

“My goal in six months is that we’re not in the lead story every single day,” Mullin said in his opening statement.



MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP

Sen. Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., testifies at Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs hearing, Wednesday, on Capitol Hill.

that led to the killings of two U.S. citizens by immigration agents in Minneapolis.

Democrats have refused to fund all of DHS without significant reforms to the immigration crackdown, including mandating that agents stop wearing masks and identify themselves, and calling for independent probes of alleged misconduct, especially the killings of Minneapolis protesters Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti in January.

Mullin apologized for accusing Pretti in the days after the shooting of plotting to attack federal agents and said he wouldn’t prejudice investigations into future alleged misconduct.

He also said agents should get warrants from judges before entering private homes or businesses, unless they are actively pursuing suspects, a concession that would mark a significant shift from current policy.

Trump and his Republican allies have refused to budge and won’t accept Democrats’ offer to fund the rest of DHS, which would permit TSA agents to be paid and end the growing air travel crisis, while talks continue about ICE and Border Patrol.

Mullin is a Trump loyalist and an immigration hardliner but has forged good relationships across the political aisle during his 13 years in Congress, which should help him win at least a few Democratic votes for his expected confirmation.

Approval of Trump’s immigration approach is down dramatically with most Americans saying Trump has “gone too far.”



WIN McNAMEE, GETTY IMAGES/TNS

U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi testifies before the House Judiciary Committee in the Rayburn House Office Building on Feb. 11, in Washington, D.C.

Bondi ordered by House panel to testify on Epstein investigation

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The House Oversight Committee ordered U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi to appear for a deposition on the U.S. Justice Department’s handling of the investigation and release of files related to sex trafficking by disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein.

The panel’s Republican chairman, James Comer of Kentucky, said in a letter to Bondi that the committee was reviewing her “possible mismanagement” of the investigation.

Epstein, who pleaded guilty in 2008 to soliciting a child for prostitution, died in jail in 2019 awaiting trial on federal sex-trafficking charges. His former girlfriend,

British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell, was convicted of sex trafficking in 2021 and is serving a 20-year prison sentence.

According to Comer’s letter, the committee also is interested in “the ways in which Mr. Epstein and Ms. Maxwell sought to curry favor and exercise influence to protect their illegal activities” and “potential violations of ethics rules related to elected officials.”

The deposition is scheduled for April 14, according to Comer’s letter.

The department said the subpoena “is completely unnecessary.”

“Lawmakers have been invited to view the unredacted files for themselves at the Department of

Justice, and the Attorney General has always made herself available to speak directly with members of Congress,” the department said in a statement.

Bondi “continues to have calls and meetings with members of Congress on the Epstein Files Transparency Act,” according to the statement.

Bondi and Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche will provide members of the committee a private briefing on Wednesday, Comer said.

Comer said the committee may use the results of the deposition in federal efforts to combat sex trafficking and to reform the use of non-prosecution and plea agreements.

Chicago lieutenant governor wins Dem nomination for US Senate

Chicago Tribune

Two-term Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton of Chicago defeated a pair of experienced members of Congress in Tuesday’s Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate seat long held by retiring Sen. Dick Durbin.

The Associated Press called the race for Stratton just before 9:40 p.m., a short time after five-term U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi of Schaumburg and seven-term Rep. Robin Kelly of Lynwood conceded. Stratton will face former Illinois Republican Party Chair Don Tracy of Springfield in November.

With 90% of the estimated vote tallied in the race for Illinois’ first open Senate seat in 16 years, Stratton had 40% of the vote to 33.2% for

Krishnamoorthi and 18.2% for Kelly, with the remaining votes divided among seven other candidates.

Stratton’s victory also marked a major win for Gov. JB Pritzker, who in 2018 chose the then-freshman state representative to be his running mate. The decisive win on Tuesday demonstrated the billionaire governor’s broader political influence as he seeks a third term in November and considers a potential 2028 presidential bid.

Pritzker, unopposed in the pri-

mary race for governor, contributed at least \$5 million to an ostensibly independent super political action committee, Illinois Future, which reported spending roughly \$12.2 million to boost Stratton’s campaign.

“Tonight we showed what’s possible when you listen to the people and give the people what they want,” Stratton said in a victory speech shortly after 10 p.m. at her election night party at CineCity Studios Chicago on the Near West Side.

Stratton thanked her family, her opponents in the primary race and Illinois voters, promising to be a “fighter” in Washington for all voters, “no matter who you cast your ballot for.”



Stratton

NATION

Pentagon official unaware of plans to invade Cuba

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Department of Defense official on Tuesday referred to Cuba as a “significant threat” but said he was not aware of plans to strike the country as lawmakers readied a resolution barring military intervention in Cuba without congressional approval.

The comments from Joseph Humire, the acting assistant secretary for defense for homeland defense and Americas security affairs, came a day after President Donald Trump raised the possibility of “taking” Cuba while speaking to reporters at the White House.

“I mean, whether I free it, take it — I think I could do anything I want with it, if you want to know the truth,” Trump said Monday, when asked to clarify his statement.

Trump’s remarks raised concerns among some members of the House Armed Services Committee on Tuesday that the military could take action similar to the January raid carried out in Venezuela, which seized the country’s leader, Nicolás Maduro, after he refused American demands to step down.

“I would have to say the president of the United States seems to think that he can do what he wants not with one, but two or maybe more countries that fall directly under the very definition of regime change and intervention,” said Rep. Herb Conaway Jr., D-N.J., a former Air Force officer.

Humire, in testimony to the committee, described Cuba as one of the U.S.’ “strongest intelligence adversaries” and said it was involved in “pretty much every threat” from the Western Hemisphere, pointing to its alignment with criminal groups, work

with external state actors and security presence in Venezuela.

“They not just have penetrated our government, they penetrated other governments, partner governments throughout Latin America and the Caribbean,” Humire said.

But he said he was not familiar with any plans to invade Cuba, deferring to the White House “on those decisions.”

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, whose family immigrated from Cuba in the 1950s, said last month that the “status quo” of the Communist-ruled island was “unacceptable” and needed to change. The U.S.

has imposed an oil blockade on Cuba since the capture of Maduro and is engaged in negotiations with the country as it grapples with a crippling energy crisis.

In the Senate, Democrats worried about the administration’s military moves abroad are moving to force a vote on a war powers resolution that would prevent the U.S. from attacking Cuba without congressional authorization.

The measure, introduced Thursday, is the latest attempt by lawmakers to reassert Congress’ role in decisions about war.

“The president’s saber rattling toward Cuba makes clear where his sights are next,” said Sen. Adam Schiff, of California, one of the resolution’s sponsors.

“Congress must make its voice heard, or we risk involvement in another risky war of choice and losing our constitutionally granted authorities forever.”

The measure could receive a vote by the end of the month.



Humire



JIM WATSON, AFP, GETTY IMAGES/TNS

From right, seated: Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks as Vice President JD Vance and President Donald Trump look on in the Oval Office on Tuesday. Rubio addressed U.S.-Cuba relations.

Rubio: Cuba moves not enough, it needs ‘new people’ in charge

BY NORA GÁMEZ TORRES
Miami Herald

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Tuesday that measures announced by Cuba on Monday to allow Cubans living abroad to own private businesses on the island are not “dramatic enough” to fix the country’s dire economic problems and that the country needs “new people” in charge.

“Cuba has an economy that doesn’t work, and a political and governmental system that can’t fix it, so they have to change dramatically. What they announced yesterday is not dramatic enough. It’s not going to fix it, so they’ve got some big decisions to make over there,” he told reporters at the White House at the beginning of a meeting with Ireland’s prime minister.

In response to another question, Rubio insisted that Cuba’s economy does not work and has survived thanks to subsidies, first from the Soviet Union and later from Venezuela.

“They don’t get subsidies anymore, so they are in a lot of trouble, and the people there don’t know how to fix it, so they have to get new people in charge,” he said.

Rubio’s comments are the clearest indication yet that the Trump administration, which is in talks with Cuba, does not view the announced changes as sufficient for the United States to ease pressure on the communist island. Rubio suggested last month that Cuba could reform its economy as a first step to ease U.S. pressure, adding that the U.S. is not expecting Cuba to change overnight.

President Donald Trump cut off most oil supplies to the island in an attempt to pressure Cuban leaders to negotiate changes to the country’s 6-decade-old communist system. Trump has recently mused about a “friendly takeover of Cuba,” a country he has described as a “failing” nation ready to “fall.” On Monday, he said he thought he would have the “honor of taking Cuba.”

“I think I can do anything I want” with Cuba, he added.

After finally admitting that the countries are indeed in talks, the Cuban government announced on Monday new measures allowing Cubans in Miami and elsewhere to invest in and own private businesses on the island, confirming the Herald’s earlier reporting.

In an interview with NBC News, the country’s deputy prime minister, Oscar Pérez-Oliva Fraga, said those investments could go into sectors previously off-limits to Cuba’s private sector, including the country’s crumbling infrastructure. Perez-Oliva, who also serves as the country’s minister of foreign trade and investment, said Cuba was also “open to having a fluid commercial relationship with U.S. companies” and “also with Cubans residing in the United States and their descendants.”

But he let slip the limited scope of the economic opening when he stated it could be put in place without significant changes to Cuban law.

Asked whether he supported easing the trade embargo if Cuba cooperates more with the United States, Rubio declined to discuss what the administration would do, but added: “Suffice it to say the embargo is tied to political change on the island, the embargo is codified,” he said in reference to the 1996 Helms-Burton law that requires a democratically elected government be in place before the president can lift the trade embargo.

Senate begins what might become long debate on SAVE America Act

BY SAVANNAH BEHRMANN
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Tuesday afternoon voted to begin what could become a long and extended debate on the SAVE America Act, the GOP’s marquee voter ID and election overhaul bill, following increased pressure from President Donald Trump and his allies on Capitol Hill.

But the debate is not the same thing as a “talking filibuster,”

something many on the Hill and in the White House have been pushing for, and few believe the floor time will lead to passage of the legislation. That leaves all eyes on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue for the president’s response.

The chamber voted 51-48 to move onto the bill; since it was raised as a message from the House, it only needed a simple majority to get on the floor. The legislation requires proof of citizenship

to register to vote and photo ID at the polls.

Now is when the math problem for Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., truly begins. Ending debate on the legislation would require 60 votes, and with a 53-47 majority and no Democrats in favor — none voted Tuesday to begin debate — that becomes a herculean hurdle to overcome.

“The SAVE America Act will be the subject of Senate considera-

tion for the foreseeable future,” Thune told reporters on Tuesday. “We are having a wholesome debate on the floor of the United States Senate.”

What exactly the debate will look like, and how long it goes, remains in question. Aides have stressed the conversation will be “member driven,” though there is already speculation about overnight sessions and rare weekend action.

Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., said his “vision of this thing would literally be a dozen amendments, maybe two dozen, over the course of a number of weeks where we just really flesh out this issue.”

Democrats are ready to play ball if so, senators said on Tuesday.

“If MAGA Republicans want to bog down the Senate over a debate on voter suppression, Democrats are ready,” Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said.

NATION

Colo. to weigh ban on trans student athletes

The Denver Post

DENVER — Colorado voters this November will be asked to weigh a proposed ban on transgender youth and adults from competing on interscholastic or intramural sports teams that don't align with their sex assigned at birth.

Protect Kids Colorado, the advocacy group backing the initiative, submitted nearly 169,000 signatures to petition the measure onto the ballot. The measure needed about 125,000 to qualify. The Colorado Secretary of State's Office validated the petitions Monday.

The ballot measure seeks to define males and females based on their biological reproductive systems, and prohibit them from competing on K-12 and college sports teams that don't comport with their sex assigned at birth. The measure would need a simple majority of votes this November to become law in 2027.

Earlier this month, Protect Kids Colorado secured a spot on the ballot for a measure to require life sentences for people convict-

ed of child sex trafficking.

The group has also submitted signatures for a ballot measure that would prohibit gender-affirming surgery for transgender children and minors younger than 18. The Secretary of State's Office has not yet ruled on that measure.

"What we have accomplished together is only the beginning," Erin Lee, executive director of Protect Kids Colorado, said in a statement. "More than 3,000 Coloradans from every walk of life, collecting more than half a million signatures, stepped forward with their time, talent and treasure because protecting children is not a partisan issue; it's a moral one. Two qualified, one more to go!"

The proposed ban on transgender youth competing on teams that match their gender identity immediately drew outcry from Rocky Mountain Equality, an LGBTQ+ rights organization. Mardi Moore, the group's chief executive officer, said the measure "is not rooted in Colorado values," and that the legislature has shot down similar measures.

"This is an attack on Colorado families modeled after national extremist efforts. Coloradans believe in fairness, freedom, and the right of every person to live their lives," Moore said in a statement. "We will work tirelessly between now and November to make sure voters understand exactly what this effort is about. It's about bullying little kids and taking opportunities away from a handful of people."

The Colorado High School Activities Association for years has recognized the right of transgender athletes to play on sports teams that match their gender identities. Following a lawsuit, however, the organization agreed last year not to penalize school districts with transgender athlete bans.

In January, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in a case challenging the legality of bans on transgender girls and women playing school sports in Idaho and West Virginia.

The justices appeared likely to allow states to enact such prohibitions.



OLMSTED FALLS CITY SCHOOLS/AP

This image made from a surveillance camera shows a suspected meteor falling through the sky in Olmsted Falls, Ohio, on Tuesday.

Meteor seen in Ohio caused blasts heard as far as New York

New Haven Register, Conn.

A fiery asteroid that broke up in the skies of Ohio Tuesday morning caused explosions heard as far as New York and Virginia, officials say.

In a release, the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration said eyewitnesses in Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, the District of Columbia and the Canadian province of Ontario filed reports to the American Meteor Society of a very bright daylight fireball seen at about 9 a.m. Tuesday.

NASA said the meteor was also detected by the Geostationary Lightning Mapper on a satellite and several cameras in the region. They said an analysis of all currently available data places first visibility of the meteor at an altitude of 50 miles above Lake Erie, off the beaches of Lorain in north-

ern Ohio.

The space rock flew east at about 40,000 mph, NASA said, adding the fireball formed around an asteroid that was about 6 feet in diameter and weighed seven tons. They said it traveled over 34 miles through the upper atmosphere before fragmenting 30 miles over Valley City, north of Medina, in Ohio.

NASA said the fragments then continued on to the south, producing meteorites in the vicinity of Medina County, Ohio.

The asteroid unleashed an energy of 250 tons of TNT when it fragmented, NASA said, which caused a pressure wave that spread through the ground. That wave caused booms and explosive noises heard by the public, and may have caused houses to shake north of Medina, officials said.

NASA did not mention if the asteroid was reported to be seen or heard in Connecticut.

Shooting at Ga. VA clinic leaves gunman dead, employee injured

Associated Press

JASPER, Ga. — There was a shooting Tuesday at a Department of Veterans Affairs clinic in a small town at the foot of the Blue Ridge mountains in Georgia, and the gunman was shot and killed, police said.

A Veterans Affairs employee was taken by helicopter to a hospital after the gunfire Tuesday afternoon, VA spokesman Peter Kasperowicz said.

Jasper police responded to the scene around 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, the city said in a statement. Outside the VA clinic, the officers confronted the gunman, who was shot and killed, authorities said.

The gunman was from the Jasper area, Jasper Police Chief Matt Dawkins told reporters at the scene. But details about him were not immediately released.

"We don't know what led up to it," Dawkins said.

Jimmy Mooney was shopping at a nearby Goodwill store when he heard gunfire.

"We heard the gunshots going off," he said. "There was probably 17 of us inside the Goodwill that was shopping, and, they had come and told us to get in the back of the store and during that time we could see the officers running down the hill. Gunshots started going off."

The Jasper police chief said the Federal Bureau of Investigation

will be investigating the shooting along with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

When asked about the suspect's background, a Pickens County sheriff's spokesman said he did not know whether he had a military background.

The clinic will remain closed for the rest of the week, Kasperowicz said.

"VA is rescheduling appointments as necessary and ensuring Veterans and staff have access to counseling and chaplain services in the wake of this tragic event," he said in an email.

The VA's Office of Inspector General will assist local authorities in the investigation, he added.

Winds, blizzards, triple-digit heat brings chaos across the US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — From a surprising heat wave in California to blizzards burying parts of the Midwest and storms rolling into the East Coast, chaotic weather on Monday put more than half the nation's population in the path of extreme conditions.

Airport delays and cancellations piled up in some of the nation's largest airports, with more than 4,700 canceled across the U.S., and many schools closed early in the mid-Atlantic states, where high winds were in the forecast.

Torrential rains flooded homes and washed out roads in Hawaii

while dry and windy conditions were charging the largest wildfire in Nebraska's history.

In Washington, the House and Senate postponed votes, and federal agencies told workers to go home early. But by late afternoon, the expected rough weather had failed to develop and a tornado

watch expired.

The private weather service AccuWeather calculated that more than 200 million people were under threat Monday of some kind of dangerous weather.

The storm system that dropped snow by the foot in the Midwest, causing whiteout conditions, bar-

reled toward the East Coast, dropping heavy rain, threatening high winds and prompting multiple tornado warnings.

Citing extreme winter weather, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer declared Tuesday a state of emergency in seven counties and a statewide energy emergency.

NATION



DAVID JACKSON/AP

Defendant Kouri Richins, left, accused of poisoning her husband in March 2022, listens to closing arguments in Third District Court, Monday in Park City, Utah.

Author of children’s book about grief convicted of killing husband

Associated Press

PARK CITY, Utah — Kouri Richins, a Utah real estate agent who self-published a children’s book about coping with grief after her husband’s death, was found guilty of aggravated murder in his killing for slipping five times the lethal dose of fentanyl into a cocktail he consumed.

It took jurors just under three hours Monday to convict Richins of murder and other felony charges in the March 2022 death of Eric Richins at the couple’s home outside the affluent ski town of Park City.

Kouri Richins, 35, stared at the floor and took deep breaths as guilty verdicts were read on charges of forgery, fraudulently claiming insurance benefits after his death and attempted murder for trying to poison her husband

weeks earlier on Valentine’s Day with a fentanyl-laced sandwich that made him black out.

Prosecutors say Richins was \$4.5 million in debt, planning a future with another man and falsely believed she would inherit her husband’s estate worth over \$4 million when he died.

She had opened numerous life insurance policies on her husband without his knowledge, prosecutors alleged.

Richins was accused of having an affair with Robert Josh Grossman. Jurors were shown messages in which she fantasized about leaving her husband, gaining millions in a divorce and marrying Grossman.

Richins’ lawyers have said Eric Richins was addicted to painkillers and had asked his wife to procure opioids for him, despite body

camera footage showing Kouri Richins telling police that her husband had no history of illicit drug use.

Shortly before her arrest in May 2023, Richins self-published a children’s book about grief to help her sons process the loss of their father. It’s an illustrated storybook about a father with angel wings watching over his young son after his death.

Though she has denied the allegations against her, Richins didn’t testify at her trial, nor did she call any witnesses in her defense.

She faces a sentence of 25 years to life in prison on her conviction for aggravated murder. Sentencing is scheduled for May 13.

Richins is also charged with 26 other money-related criminal counts in a separate case that hasn’t yet gone to trial.

Trump attacks Newsom for having dyslexia

By GAVIN J. QUINTON AND TARYN LUNA
Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — President Trump has once again mocked Gov. Gavin Newsom’s dyslexia as “disqualifying” for leadership, marking at least the fourth time in a week that the president has targeted the California Democrat for being open about his diagnosis.

In remarks Monday in the Oval Office, Trump said Newsom was “dumb” and should never be allowed to be president because he has “admitted that he has learning disabilities, dyslexia.”

“That’s how crazy it’s gotten with a low-IQ person,” Trump said. “Honestly, I’m all for people with learning disabilities but not for my president. ... And I know it’s highly controversial to say such a horrible thing.”

But in the course of his needling, Trump mistakenly elevated his political rival to the rank of commander in chief — repeatedly referring to Newsom as “the president of the United States.” Newsom took the opportunity to turn the tables on the president.

“I, GAVIN C. NEWSOM, AM OFFICIALLY PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (THANK YOU DONALD!)” he wrote on X.

The clash is the latest in a storied contest of chest-beating between Trump and Newsom, who have made sport of bad-mouthing one another across campaign rallies, interviews and social media.

The president has frequently cast Newsom as a symbol of the liberal governance he opposes, while the governor has leaned into the confrontations, often using them to elevate his national profile and position himself as a leading Democratic counterweight. His sparring with the president appears to be part of an aggressive strategy to amplify his own messaging as he weighs a potential run for president in 2028.



Newsom

“To every kid with a learning disability: don’t let anyone — not even the President of the United States — bully you,” Newsom wrote on X. “Dyslexia isn’t a weakness. It’s your strength.”

The insults first materialized after a video went viral of Newsom speaking at a book tour appearance with Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens during which he discussed his struggle with the learning disability. Since then, the president has repeatedly poked at the vulnerability.

Dyslexia affects as much as 20% of the population, according to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity. Despite affecting a such a wide portion of the population, the condition is widely misunderstood, according to dyslexia researcher Dr. Helen Taylor of the University of Cambridge.

Allegations against Cesar Chavez rock labor movement

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Cesar Chavez, the iconic labor leader, is accused of sexually assaulting two underaged girls in the 1970s as well as fellow farmworker leader Dolores Huerta in the 1960s, according to an investigation from The New York Times.

The newspaper interviewed two women who said they were sexually abused by Chavez — one repeatedly — when they were children.

“Both women have struggled with depression, panic attacks and substance abuse in the years since. They maintained their silence for decades, fearing speaking out would tarnish Mr. Chavez’s legacy, but decided in recent

months, after being approached by reporters, that their stories also counted,” the paper reported.

Huerta told the paper she was raped by Chavez in 1966.

“Mr. Chavez drove her out to a secluded grape field in Delano, Calif., parked and forced her to have sex inside the vehicle. She said she chose not to report the assault to the police because of their hostility toward the movement, and she feared that no one within the union would believe her,” the paper reported.

In an Instagram post, Huerta said for the last 60 years she’s kept this secret because, “I believed that exposing the truth would hurt the farmworker movement I have spent my entire life fighting for.”

Huerta said she experienced two separate sexual encounters with Chavez. The first time she was, “manipulated and pressured into having sex with him,” she said, and felt she couldn’t say anything because he was her boss and the leader of the movement.

Huerta became pregnant from both sexual encounters and later arranged for the children to be raised by other families.

The New York Times’ investigation found Chavez fathered four children out of wedlock with three women and that there had been



Chavez

“whispers within the movement” for decades about his conduct.

The paper reported that a handful of Chavez’s relatives and former farmworker leaders have been aware of allegations of sexual misconduct for years but found no evidence that they made any efforts to investigate the accusations against him or acknowledge the victims.

The revelations come a day after the United Farm Workers said it would not participate in celebrations of Chavez due to “troubling allegations” against him.

Tuesday morning, the Cesar Chavez Foundation said in a statement that it had “become aware of disturbing allegations that Cesar Chavez engaged in inappropriate

sexual behavior with women and minors during his time as President of the United Farm Workers of America.”

The foundation said it was working with leaders in the farmworker movement to be responsive to these allegations and support the people who might have been harmed.

Chavez is a towering national figure credited with organizing and raising the lives of migrant farmworkers in California and beyond and giving voice to the struggles of Mexican Americans.

The Navy’s dry cargo ship USNS Cesar Chavez bears his name.

But Chavez’s legacy became increasingly tarnished as the years went on.

WORLD

Takaichi says Trump visit will be ‘extremely difficult’ after ship spat

BY ALASTAIR GALE AND SAKURA MURAKAMI
Bloomberg News
 Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi warned she’s facing an “extremely difficult” meeting with Donald Trump, after the U.S. president criticized Japan for rebuffing his demand for warships to help secure the Strait of Hormuz.
 Takaichi’s first trip to Washington on Thursday since winning a sweeping mandate had been viewed by Tokyo as an opportunity to showcase the strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance, despite challenges over trade. Perhaps more importantly, it was seen as a chance to gain the president’s ear before his meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.
 Instead, a showdown over Iran is dominating the agenda. Trump’s call for Japan and other U.S. allies to send battleships into the Middle East handed Takaichi a nearly impossible request — then on Tuesday, Trump angrily withdrew that request, after a lack of support. While most of his ire appeared reserved for NATO allies, he also named Japan in a social media post declaring the U.S. didn’t “NEED THE HELP OF ANYONE!”
 Further complicating Takaichi’s trip, Trump has postponed his visit to Beijing because of the Iran war.
 Takaichi said in parliament on Wednesday that she expects to have “an extremely difficult” visit, but will do her best to protect Ja-

pan’s national interests. Earlier in the day, she pledged to handle the ship issue by explaining what Japan is legally able to do—and what it can’t.
 “I intend to convey these points clearly and I’m sure the U.S. side understands these laws given our history,” she said.
 World leaders from the U.K. to South Korea, who responded with chilly caution to his warship request, will be watching for how Takaichi manages the fallout, marking a key test of her leadership on the world stage.
 “Takaichi is a no-win situation heading to Washington,” said Tobias Harris, founder of Japan Foresight LLC, a political risk advisory. “Trump wants allies to step up — and she has the bad luck of being one of the first allies to meet with him in person since the start of the war.”
 Adding to the tensions, Japan is facing Trump’s tariff campaign. That includes new global investigations by the U.S. designed to impose duties on imports from countries deemed to have unfair trade practices, which are poised to replace levies struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court.
 Trump has displayed a willingness for publicly confronting leaders who defy him, most famously in an Oval Office showdown with

Ukraine’s Volodymyr Zelenskyy. While Takaichi arrives on far firmer footing he’s also harbored a grudge against Japan for decades for its perceived dependence on the U.S. military.
 Takaichi has so far avoided expressing support for the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran. Part of that calculation is potentially far-reaching economic consequences because of Japan’s reliance on oil from the Middle East and its historical ties to Tehran. Japan’s tight constitutional limits on deploying its military overseas also make it hard for Takaichi to consent to the dispatch.
 “Takaichi is being squeezed between the legal limits of Japan’s security framework and the political expectations of President Trump,” said Kenichi Doi, a senior research fellow at the Institute of Geoeconomics in Tokyo.
 Trump has recently praised Takaichi’s desire to build-up Japan’s military strength as a bulwark against China, however, and some political analysts see the president’s change of strategy over the Strait of Hormuz as clearing the way for a more productive summit.
 “It takes some pressure off of the summit and allows the two leaders to engage a broader set of topics and have a discussion about Iran without focusing on a very specific demand from Trump,” said Jacob Stokes, a senior fellow and deputy director of the Indo-Pacific Security Program at the Center for a New American Security.



Takaichi



LISA MAREE WILLIAMS, GETTY IMAGES/TNS
 A koala in native bushland in Parndana, Australia, in 2020.

Australia sees likely genetic comeback in koala population

BY KARL HILLE
The Baltimore Sun
 Cute but cantankerous, koalas are making a surprising recovery from a genetic bottleneck, with their once most-threatened populations now displaying a surprising diversity.
 “It still looks like they’re in bad shape, but if you dig further, we’re actually finding that there’s recovery from the bottleneck,” study co-author Collin Ahrens, an evolutionary biologist at the independent research company Cesar Australia, told Scientific American.
 Geneticists theorize that once populations dip below the bottleneck level, inbreeding and fatal mutations lead to an inevitable extinction, according to the University of California, Berkeley’s Understanding Evolution website. The theory doesn’t rule out rebounds, but the koala now ranks among a few species observed es-
 caping a genetic bottleneck, in this case caused by overhunting that peaked 100 years ago.
 Australian researchers sampled DNA from 418 koalas in 27 populations across three states to measure their genetic diversity. They found a surprise in Victoria, where koala populations have grown so much that the government is trying to limit their numbers. In 1920, scientists estimated only 500 to 1,000 koalas remained in Victoria, whereas today nearly half a million live in the state.
 That population growth allows opportunities for helpful mutations to take hold and proliferate, and for the limited genes in the population to regroup in different ways across new generations. Not only did they find higher genetic diversity than other populations once thought to be more stable, but they found new, rare variants and fewer harmful mutations.

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Welcome to Issue 11

Your Secret Weapon: Why AI Changes Everything for Military Spouses

When we set out to create this AI guide, we weren't chasing a trend. We were answering a need we see every single day in our community: Military spouse entrepreneurs trying to do the work of five people while navigating a lifestyle that demands constant adaptation.

The military spouse entrepreneurship journey is unlike any other. It seems like just as you've built momentum, PCS orders arrive. Just as you've established client relationships, deployment changes everything. Just as you've found your rhythm, the mental load threatens to overwhelm you completely.

The military spouses who are thriving aren't working harder than everyone else. They're working smarter. They've found ways to leverage tools and systems that enhance their capacity without increasing their hours or their stress.

For military spouse entrepreneurs, AI isn't just a productivity hack. It's a lifeline.

When you wear all the hats in your business—while also managing a household, supporting a service member, and preparing for the next transition—you need tools that work as hard as you do.

AI can draft client emails during school pickup, analyze business data during bedtime routines, and help rebuild your marketing strategy while you're still unpacking from the last PCS. It gives you back the one resource you can never get more of—time.

But more than that, AI helps you see what you can't see on your own. It spots patterns, identifies triggers you've been missing, and reveals business insights that get lost in the chaos of military life.

The articles in this guide have been written by military spouses who are using AI in their own businesses and lives. These aren't theoretical applications, but real strategies from entrepreneurs who understand what

it means to run a business between duty stations and pivot when deployment disrupts your plans.

You'll find practical applications across every aspect of entrepreneurship: managing operations without losing the human touch; rebuilding faster after every move; maintaining your authentic voice as a speaker; streamlining event development; and incorporating AI into daily self-care practices that fit into five-minute windows.

This isn't about replacing human connection with technology. It's about using technology strategically so you can show up fully in the moments and relationships that matter most.

You don't need to implement every thing at once or become an AI expert. Simply find one or two applications

that could make your life measurably easier and start there.

Military spouse entrepreneurship is hard enough without trying to do everything manually. This guide is our gift to you—a compilation of hard-won wisdom about how to work smarter, not just harder, so you can build businesses that thrive despite the chaos.

Welcome to the AI Guide for Military Spouse Entrepreneurs. We're so glad you're here.

Moni Jefferson
CEO/Founder of the Association of Military Spouse Entrepreneurs®

Moni Jefferson | CEO & Founder of the Association of Military Spouse Entrepreneurs®
Photo Courtesy of AMSE®

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The Entrepreneurs Leading the Way:

Our Chapter Leaders' Impact on Military Spouse Business Owners



Heather Jones



Annette Hammond



Stephani Shepherd

AMSE®
Reading time: 6 minutes

Behind every thriving local community of military spouse entrepreneurs stands a chapter leader who intimately understands the journey, because they're living it too.

Our Association of Military Spouse Entrepreneur chapter leaders aren't hired staff or corporate representatives. They're military spouse entrepreneurs themselves, actively building and scaling their own businesses while simultaneously creating spaces for others to do the same. They're the founder juggling client calls between school pickup and dinner prep. The creative director managing projects across time zones during a

spouse's deployment. The consultant who's rebuilt her network in four different states in five years.

And they've chosen to pour their limited time and energy into something bigger than their own businesses: supporting fellow military spouse entrepreneurs in their local communities.

What Makes Chapter Leaders Effective

Chapter leaders operate from lived experience, not theory. They know what it feels like to have a thriving business disrupted by PCS orders. They've navigated local networking groups that don't understand why you can't commit to a year-long committee when you might move in six months. They've felt the weight of being the new

person over and over again, rebuilding professional credibility and personal connections from scratch.

This deep understanding shapes everything they create. Chapter leaders are connectors, educators, cheerleaders, and problem-solvers. Most importantly, they're bridge-builders who create pathways between isolated entrepreneurs and supportive communities, turning what could be a lonely journey into one marked by encouragement, collaboration, and shared success.

Meet Three Chapter Leaders Making It Happen

Stephani Shepard — DC Metro Chapter Leader

When the DC Metro chapter lost its leader, Stephani stepped up and has been leading since May 2025. As a multi-hyphenate entrepreneur with her brand Great Life is a Must, she understands meaningful connection.

Her biggest lesson? "Community doesn't just happen. Everyone claims to want community, but not everyone is willing to put in the work to build it. Even when attendance

is small, trust and momentum grow; and that is how community is built."

Heather Jones — Huntsville Chapter Leader

Heather started the Huntsville, Alabama chapter in June 2024 because she wanted to connect face-to-face with other military spouse business owners and discovered no organization existed yet. So she launched one herself.

Her pitch to those who haven't joined? "I can't think of a single reason not to join. It's a free membership and one of the most valuable ones you will ever find. The membership comes with a built-in community of people who see you in your challenges and want to raise you up."

Annette Hammond — San Antonio Chapter Leader

Annette is launching the San Antonio chapter in April 2026. As the owner of Nita's Pampered Vacations, she serves clients as both a travel agent and consultant, tailoring dream vacations while removing travel planning stress.

Her advice? "Step out on faith and watch your inner being exceed with growth in your personal circles and learning."

The Ripple Effect

The impact of chapter leaders extends far beyond the entrepreneurs they support directly. When they help one military spouse build a successful portable business, that entrepreneur goes on to hire other military spouses, contribute to local economies at every duty station, and model what's possible for the community.

Chapter leaders like Stephani, Heather, and Annette are changing the narrative around military spouse entrepreneurship—from isolated struggle to supported journey, from surviving to thriving.

Our chapter leaders are entrepreneurs who have chosen to lead. And in doing so, they're transforming what's possible for military spouse business owners everywhere.

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Save the Date: More Than a Milspouse Summit Returns to Arlington, Texas

By **Moni Jefferson** |
CEO/Founder of AMSE®
Reading time:
5 minutes



Mark your calendars for October 7 – 9, 2026, because the More Than a Milspouse Summit is coming to Arlington, Texas, and it's the event military spouse entrepreneurs won't want to miss. This three-day gathering promises to be more than just another conference. It will be a transformative experience designed specifically for spouses building businesses while navigating military life. Arlington offers the perfect backdrop for this empowering event, with its central location making it accessible for spouses stationed across the country. The summit

venue provides modern facilities, ample networking space, and that welcoming southern hospitality that immediately makes attendees feel at home. What sets this summit apart is its understanding of the military spouse experience. Sessions are crafted by entrepreneurs who have made the PCS journey, survived deployment cycles, and built thriving businesses despite constant change. Attendees will hear from keynote speakers who have turned military life challenges into competitive advantages, workshop leaders sharing actionable strategies, and panelists offering insight on the highs and lows of spouse entrepreneurship. Beyond the learning sessions, the summit creates space for the connections that

truly matter. Coffee breaks become brainstorming sessions. Lunch tables transform into mastermind groups. Evening socials forge friendships that last across duty stations. Many past attendees cite these informal connections as equally valuable as the formal programming. Whether you are launching your first business venture or scaling an established enterprise, stationed stateside or preparing for an overseas move, the More Than a Milspouse Summit offers something for every military spouse entrepreneur. It's three days to invest in business growth, personal development, and community building. Registration details will be announced soon. Start making plans now—this is one summit that delivers returns long after returning home.

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AI FOR BUSINESS OPERATIONS & GROWTH



Photo Courtesy of AMSE®

Inside My Workflow as a One-Woman Publishing Team

By Kera Sanchez | Founder & Editor MILSPO Social Co.
Reading time: 7 minutes



Do you ever get that millennial urge to start a magazine? I'm convinced mine came straight from all the early-2000s rom-coms I grew up on—where every protagonist had a dream job at a glossy fashion magazine, complete with launch parties, a fashion closet, and breezy assignments like "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days."

That itch finally got scratched when I launched not one but two niche publications:

- **Get Griefy:** Helping people rediscover joy and community after loss
- **MILSPO Social Co. Magazine:** Highlighting and uplifting women-founded, military-affiliated brands and movements

What I've learned along the way is this: *influencing is out.* Today, the most effective way to build a brand is to join a cooperative movement—one that elevates your mission and connects you with other small businesses who share your values and vision. When purpose-driven entrepreneurs come together, resources grow, opportunities

multiply, and even solopreneurs get to sit at tables that once felt out of reach.

Niche publications create that exact sense of community, without sacrificing autonomy. And just like Jenna Rink realized in "13 Going on 30," big-box magazines often miss the heart and connection that smaller publications deliver in abundance.

But here's the part those rom-com protagonists never had to deal with: we're not operating with million-dollar Condé Nast budgets. Many of us are running editorial, design, marketing, and operations completely solo. And this is where my secret weapon comes in—the tool that still gets side-eyed far too often: **AI.**

I don't believe AI should run your business. But I absolutely believe it can help you juggle more, execute faster, and work like a full team—if you use it intentionally. Here's exactly how I do that:

1. Editing: Your Built-In Co-Editor (Who Never Misses a Deadline)

Professional editors can cost \$25+ per hour, and while they're incredible, many small publications simply can't swing that consistently.

I have zero shame in saying that every article, email, caption, and feature runs through AI for clarity, flow, tone, and consistency.

I ask it to:

- Keep my brand voice intact
- Elevate readability
- Suggest on-brand phrasing
- Help maintain stylistic cohesiveness across issues

It's like having a second set of eyes—only faster.

2. Photo Generation: Filling the Gaps Big Budgets Usually Cover

Do I dream of offering full professional photoshoots for every feature? Absolutely. Is it realistic? Absolutely not.

Enter image generation. With tools like Nano Banana Plus, I can create visuals that match my aesthetic and concept perfectly; whether that's editorial, whimsical, feminine, modern, or brand-specific.

My rules of thumb:

- I don't use AI to create fake people meant to represent real contributors.
- I do use it for scene-based imagery, conceptual illustrations, or minor tweaks (like adjusting a hairstyle or swapping a blouse) when a photo has been overused.

It helps me maintain visual quality without burning through the budget.

3. Brainstorming: A Creative Jumpstart When You're On Deadline

I believe in authentic content, so I don't batch months of posts ahead of time. I write what feels aligned that day.

But some days? The creative well is dry.

On those days, I ask AI for:

- Niche-specific holidays or observances
- Trending topics in my niche
- Audience pain points
- Content prompts that help spark my own ideas

It's not writing for me—it's giving me the starter log to ignite what I already want to say.

4. "When in Doubt, Ask GPT": A Lifeline for Solopreneurs

Running two publications solo means I constantly run into things I've never done before—from formatting quirks to tech fixes to workflow setups. AI has become my "how do I...?" hotline.

You can get step-by-step instructions on nearly anything, saving hours of trial, error, and frustration. Time saved = impact multiplied.

5. AI Isn't Replacing Creativity—It's Expanding Capacity

We live in a digital era where everything around us is touched by technology, yet somehow AI is still stigmatized. My take? **The benefits far outweigh the fears.**

AI allows me to:

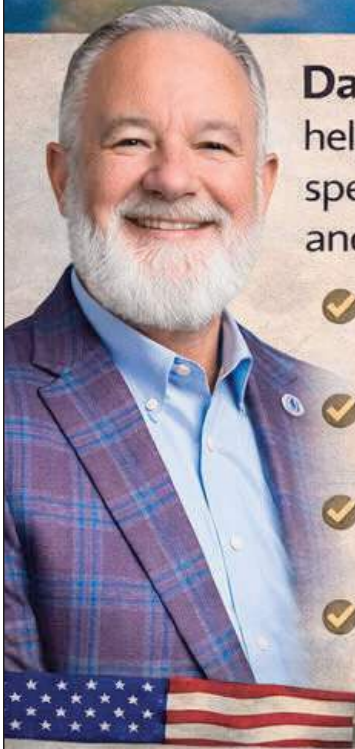
- Produce higher-quality content
- Maintain consistency
- Run two magazines on a fraction of a traditional budget
- Connect hundreds of people with their audiences every single day

I may not be dancing to "Thriller" in a silk slip dress at every issue launch, but I am living my millennial rom-com dream—signing every email as editor-in-chief and building community-driven publications that make an impact.

And truthfully? I couldn't do it at this scale without AI.

ACTION ITEM: Read AMSE® Feature in MILSPO Social Co. magazine.

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Julie Eshelman | Founder Building Military Families Network
Photo Courtesy of AMSE®

Streamline Your Operations, Reclaim Your Focus

By **Michelle Hughes** | Owner
Michelle Hughes LLC
Reading time: 7 minutes



Most military spouse entrepreneurs don't actually run small businesses, they run entire departments alone.

You're the CEO, operations manager, social media manager and customer service representative. Even if you have a contractor or two helping, you're still the one holding it all together.

The real exhaustion isn't always the workload. It's the constant thinking:

- What needs to be done next?
- Did I respond to that client?
- What's due this week?
- Did I forget a step in my process again?

That constant overwhelm creates decision fatigue long before physical burnout shows up. Many military spouse business owners don't need more motivation or another strategy, they need cognitive space.

This is where AI tools can change how your business runs. Not by replacing you, but by giving you back your time and allowing you to save your brainpower for decisions that truly matter.

Stop Re-Deciding the Same Things Every Day

Solo and small team businesses often live in reaction mode. Each email, client request, or project requires fresh decisions because nothing is standardized yet. AI helps you convert repeated thinking into repeatable systems.

Instead of writing a new response every time, you can prompt: *"Create a reusable client response template for scheduling changes. Turn*

my onboarding process into a checklist I can reuse each time."

If you already have this created then you can take it one step further and ask ChatGPT to draft a standard operating procedure (SOP) for how you want your virtual assistant to handle your inbox. AI helps you start putting systems in place so when you bring on your first team member, you are already setting them up for success.

Think about what you do everyday and ask how this can be automated or turned into a simplified process. The goal isn't always automation, sometimes it's freeing up mental bandwidth.

Turning Thoughts Into Workflow

Most entrepreneurs know roughly how they run projects but haven't had time to map the steps clearly. That lack of structure is where deadlines slip and stress levels increase.

AI can translate your natural process into a workflow with tools like Asana, ClickUp, or Monday.com.

You can prompt: *"I start with a discovery call, then prep, then draft, then review, then client approval."*

AI can turn that into:

- Task sequences
- Dependencies
- Due date spacing
- Responsibility assignments
- Review checkpoints

Instead of managing every step in your head, your project management system now holds the process for you.

If you don't know where to start, think about your current workflow and where you lose

time or what costs you the most mental capacity. Then put that into AI and allow it to take the burden off your shoulders.

Building Templates That Work While You Rest

Many small business owners spend emotional energy on communication trying to sound professional while moving quickly between responsibilities.

AI can help you build a template library of things like:

- Onboarding emails
- Follow-ups
- Boundary setting
- Revision policies
- Late deliverable responses

You still personalize them. But you no longer start from scratch.

If you use Google Workspace, Gemini can help rewrite your message directly inside Gmail. You can also create email templates within Gmail. Over time, you'll develop a library of responses for common questions or concerns from clients or customers.

Automations That Catch Problems Early

AI also helps you think like an operations manager, even if you've never held that title. AI can help automate your important tasks within your chosen project management tool.

For example, if deadlines keep sneaking up on you, you can prompt: *"Help me design a system so I know two days before a project is due if something is off track."*

From there you can build automations such as:

- PM tool reminder notifications
- Gmail follow-up nudges using Gemini
- Internal check-in triggers
- Status labels for projects at risk

Instead of discovering problems at the deadline, you discover them while they're fixable. That alone can lower business anxiety while improving the quality and efficiency of your client experience.

Email and Calendar Support Without a Team

Gemini inside Gmail can summarize long threads, draft replies, and surface action items you might otherwise reread multiple times.

That doesn't just save minutes, it prevents mental context switching.

You move from constantly rereading to quickly deciding. Small businesses rarely have assistants filtering communication. AI becomes a lightweight version of one.

Why This Matters for Military Spouses

Our businesses live inside unpredictable lives. PCS moves, school schedules, retirement transitions, and command changes bring constant shifts. Having systems you can rely on brings peace in the middle of that uncertainty.

For military spouse entrepreneurs, that shift matters. When your brain isn't occupied tracking every step, you can focus on serving clients, growing strategically, and protecting your energy for the parts of life that matter most.

Trading Smarter: 5 Data-Driven Moves That Power My Day Trades

By Janelle Quinn |
3Five Wealth
Reading time: 6 minutes



I didn't grow up talking about stocks, charts, or investing at the dinner table. My foundation came from structure, discipline, and responsibility, values shaped by a 20-year career in the United States Air Force. Long before I placed a trade, I learned how to plan, assess risk, follow a process, and make decisions under pressure. Those skills didn't disappear when I retired from the uniform. They followed me straight into the market.

I've been investing and day trading for years, long before artificial intelligence became a buzzword. Back then, learning meant long nights reading Motley Fool articles, scanning Yahoo Finance, digging through earnings transcripts, and learning the hard way through trial and error. The charts themselves weren't difficult, but access to real time data, side by side comparisons, and centralized tools took time and patience. If you wanted clarity, you opened more tabs and hoped you didn't miss something important.

Fast forward to today, the landscape has changed completely.

We now live in a world overflowing with data. For new investors and traders, that can feel overwhelming. I still believe deeply in free education from trusted professionals. Charles Schwab's Trader Talks remains one of my favorite resources. I have also added a powerful assistant to my toolbox, artificial intelligence.

Yes, I use ChatGPT. And yes, I named mine Benji, because I like to keep things light, and I am still motivated by those Benjamins.

AI has not replaced my strategy, discipline, or accountability. It has not changed the fact that I follow rules, manage risk, and accept losses as part of the process. What it has done is help me work smarter, move faster, and cut through the noise. Here are five practical ways I use AI in my day trading, and how you can begin using it without feeling intimidated.

1. Understanding Market and Sector Strength Without the Headache

My trading style leans heavily on technical analysis. I focus on price action, trends, and indicators that show strength or weakness. Fundamentals still matter; they provide context, but they are not my primary decision makers.

Instead of manually scanning dozens of charts, I use AI to help summarize what I am already seeing. I will ask it to identify which

sectors are showing strength in the S&P 500 or NASDAQ, or to explain macro events that might be influencing sector rotation.

AI does not tell me what to trade. It helps me understand why money may be flowing in certain directions so I can confirm those insights on my charts.

Action Step:
Ask AI to summarize current sector performance and explain potential reasons for rotation. Then confirm what you see using your own charts.

2. Reviewing a Watchlist in Seconds

Watchlists are essential, but reviewing one stock at a time can be time-consuming. AI helps me quickly organize information when time matters.

I can paste in a watchlist and ask which stocks pay dividends, which sectors they belong to, or which ones align better with short term trading versus long term investing. This is especially helpful when I am shifting between roles as a trader and investor.

Action Step:
Upload your watchlist and ask AI to flag dividends, sector exposure, or risk factors.

3. Breaking Down Earnings and News Without the Noise

Earnings season can feel like information overload. Headlines move fast, and not all news matters to price.

When I see an earnings-related article or press release, I will use AI to summarize the key points, highlight what analysts are focused on, and compare the headlines with the actual financials. This helps me understand whether the market reaction is driven by sentiment, guidance, or expectations, not just numbers.

AI does not predict price movement. It helps me prepare for scenarios, so I am not reacting emotionally when the market opens.

Action Step:
Ask AI what appears to be driving the market's reaction and what matters most for price movement.

4. Comparing Companies Like a Pro

Sometimes price action makes more sense when you understand the competition.

I will use AI to compare companies like Pepsi and Coca-Cola, or Chipotle and McDonald's, not to pick a winner, but to understand

positioning. AI helps summarize business models, growth strategies, and recent performance so I can better interpret relative strength on my charts.

Action Step:
Ask AI to compare two companies in the same industry and explain their current market positioning.

5. Researching Trading Platforms With Confidence

There are many platforms available, and not all are created equally. I use AI to compare tools, understand pros and cons, and stay informed, especially when newer traders ask for guidance.

As a long time Thinkorswim user, this helps me speak from both experience and research.

Action Step:
Ask AI to compare trading platforms based on your experience level and trading style.

Final Thoughts

AI is not a shortcut. It will not replace discipline. And it will not manage risks for you.

But when used wisely, it is an incredible assistant, one that helps you think clearly, stay informed, and make decisions with confidence.

Just like in the military, success in trading comes down to preparation, process, and accountability. You do not have to do this alone.

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You're Still the Boss of Your Inbox

By Selena Conmackie |
Founder Hauoli-Socially
Inspired
Reading time: 7 minutes



How to Set Up a Simple Email System That Works (Without a Marketing Degree)

If you've ever stared at a blank email draft, unsure of what to send, you aren't alone.

When I first started building an email list, I didn't understand what purpose it served in my business. I knew everyone else was sending emails, so I assumed I should too—but no one really explained the *why* part.

That's where AI can help—but only if we frame it correctly.

AI isn't here to replace your voice or decide what you say to your audience. Think of it like a junior assistant: great at organizing thoughts and helping you get unstuck, but never the one with the final say. You always get the last word.

If you're brand new to using AI, start by telling it a little about your business—what you sell, who you serve, and what you're trying to do. Think of it like onboarding a new assistant before asking for help.

Give Your Email One Job

A beginner email system doesn't need to do everything. It needs to do **one job well**.

That job is simple: keep you organized and intentional about what you're sharing.

When you track the content of the emails, patterns emerge. You start to notice what you talk about often, what you never mention, and which offers or ideas get ignored.

AI Hot Tip:
After briefly explaining your business and audience, ask AI: *"Help me define the single purpose of my email list based on what I sell and share."*

Clarity comes before consistency. Once you know *why* you're emailing, everything else gets easier.

Let AI Help You Organize—Not Decide

This is where AI really shines: organizing ideas, outlining thoughts, and giving you something to react to.

What it should never do is decide what gets sent.

AI Hot Tip:
Use AI to organize your thoughts, then ask: *"Does this sound like me?"*

If the answer is no, don't send it. Keep talking it through until it does.

AI can help you think, but discernment stays human.

Build a "Good Enough" Email Setup

You don't need a perfectly branded system to start. You do need a few basics covered.

A minimum viable email setup includes:

- A simple, readable layout
 - A clear ending
 - Links that actually point somewhere useful (Your website, your socials, or a next step someone can take if they want to learn more about you)
- This isn't about perfection—it's about being findable.
- AI Hot Tip:**
Ask AI to review your email and say: *"What is missing if someone wants to learn more about me?"*
- Sometimes it's not the writing that needs work—it's the direction.

A Quick Note About Email Platforms (So You Don't Get Stuck Here)

Choosing an email platform often feels like a bigger decision than it needs to be.

If you're just starting, many platforms offer free plans that are more than enough to test things out. Many platforms offer free plans that let you send emails and build confidence as you get started.

What matters more than the platform is this: your email list is yours.

If you outgrow a tool, you can move your list as your business evolves. Whether you start free and later switch platforms, the audience you've built goes with you. That flexibility is what makes email such a powerful long-term asset—especially when life and business are constantly changing.

Hit Send Before You Feel Ready

If you're waiting to feel confident before sending an email, you'll be waiting a long time. Confidence doesn't come first. Feedback does.

AI Hot Tip:
Before sending, ask AI: *"Is this clear, kind, and aligned with my goals?"*

Start With Intention, Not a Draft

Before you write your next email, pause.

Before opening a blank document, list everything you could talk about:

- Your offers
- Your services
- Your content
- Your stories
- The value you want to share

AI Hot Tip:
Ask AI to help you make a list of things that could be beneficial to add to your emails.

Seeing it all in one place turns email from a guessing game into part of your planning process. Once you know what you could talk about, deciding when and how becomes much easier.

That's when email stops feeling heavy and starts working with you.

From Vision to Virtual: Event Planning That Moves With Military Life

By Reyna Worthy | Founder
The Desk of a Navy Wife
Reading Time: 7 minutes



For many military spouse entrepreneurs, whether you're new or seasoned, you know that ideas don't always come during long, uninterrupted workdays. They often come between school drop-offs, client emails, deployments, PCS planning and sleepless nights. That's exactly where the vision for the *Empowerment Leads: A Military Spouse Summit*™ was born for me, not in a conference room or surfing through the web, but in real-life conversations and experiences.

As a busy mom of two, a new business owner, and a full-time government contractor, the idea of creating a multi-day virtual summit felt both exciting and a little overwhelming. The vision was clear: to build a space where military spouses could openly discuss work, military life, and balance, and I knew I had to bring this vision to life and protect it all at once. The challenge was execution that was built around realistic time blocks, as I knew I had limited hours in a day, my energy was already stretched, and perfection wasn't an option, no matter how much I tried to strive for it. That's where AI became a game-changer for me, and I know it can be beneficial for other entrepreneurs as well.

Using AI to Launch and Run an Event: Process, Program, and Practical Tips

When launching the *Empowerment Leads: A Military Spouse Summit*™, AI wasn't just a helpful tool; it became part of my operational workflow. As a military spouse entrepreneur balancing limited time and constant transitions, I needed structure, speed, and clarity.

1. Process: Turning a Vision Into an Executable Plan

AI helped me move from idea to implementation in structured steps:

- **Step One: Define the Event Framework.** I used AI to outline: the event positioning, target audience pain points, and core transformation for attendees.
- **Step Two: Build the Program Flow.** Instead of manually mapping two full days, I prompted AI to: Draft a two-day agenda with timed sessions, suggest logical energy flow (high-impact sessions in the morning, connection blocks mid-day, reflective sessions to close), and identify transition moments to avoid fatigue. This gave me a starting structure I could refine based on speaker availability and community needs.
- **Step Three: Operational Checklist Creation.** AI-generated:
 - A 90-day launch timeline
 - Weekly promotional milestones that I could plug into my calendar
 - Speaker onboarding workflow and templates
 - Email automation sequence outline

- Post-event follow-up plan
- What would normally take hours of staring at a blank screen became clear action steps in 20-minute focused work blocks.

2. Program Development: Designing the Experience

AI also supported program design by helping me draft speaker briefing documents as an outline, so I could make sure I was not missing anything when needing to get the timelines. Instead of guessing what participants might need, I used AI to pressure-test the experience:

- "Where might attendees disengage?"
- "What questions would deepen the connection?"
- "How do we end day one with momentum?"

This elevated the attendee journey from informational to transformational.

3. Content Without Burnout: A Sustainable Workflow

A summit requires significant content, and I needed to ensure that this workflow would work from the inside out, starting with speaker outreach and confirmation emails. When it came time to share with the community about the summit, I used AI to help with social captions. I even used AI to help me brainstorm my session by practicing what I planned to share to see if the flow was just right. AI helped me draft the first versions quickly. I then refined them to ensure they reflected my lived experience and the authenticity of my brand.

The key was this: AI-created structure. I provided a voice.

This reduced decision fatigue has allowed my energy to stay focused on what matters most to me, connection and community impact.

Practical Tips for Using AI to Launch Your Event

1. Use AI for structure, not final copy.
2. Ask for timelines and checklists before asking for marketing copy.
3. Break tasks into prompts (agenda, onboarding, promotion, surveys).
4. Always edit for tone and lived experience.
5. Use AI in short work sprints to maximize efficiency.

AI did not replace strategy. It accelerated execution. For military spouse entrepreneurs navigating limited time, shifting schedules, and high responsibility, that acceleration is powerful.

Supporting Strategy While Wearing Multiple Hats

Balancing entrepreneurship alongside a government contracting role means there's little room for inefficiency. So I relied on AI to help streamline planning by organiz-

ing timelines, clarifying deliverables, and keeping ideas from living only in my head. I have a habit of thinking about it and jotting it down, and then trying to remember all of my notes; that's where AI came in.

From outlining attendee guides to preparing my hosting script and recap communications, AI functioned like a behind-the-scenes operations assistant, one that didn't require onboarding, didn't need context explained repeatedly, and could step in exactly when I had capacity to work.

For example, I used AI to draft structured learning guides for each session, including key takeaways, reflection questions, and action prompts aligned with the speaker's topic. Instead of scrambling after sessions to "capture value," I built companion materials in advance that will reinforce learning and extend engagement beyond the live event.

When it came to hosting, AI helped me prepare opening scripts that clearly set expectations and tone. It also streamlined post-event communication by helping draft templates of recap emails that will summarize major insights, highlight sponsor recognition, and include next-step calls to action. I will then personalize these with real-time reflections and community feedback. The most impactful part wasn't just speed; it was adaptability.

For military spouses juggling career aspirations, family leadership, and community service, that flexibility isn't just helpful, it's essential.

Sustainable Growth With a Personal Connection

One common fear around AI is that it removes authenticity. In reality, it did the opposite for me. I was able to reduce administrative strain and financial burden because I did not need to pay someone with money I did not have. This left me with more room to be present with speakers I knew would make this event meaningful, future attendees who need and seek the support, and community members I could build with.

AI will not lead and does not lead this summit; the mission will, and that is what I am so happy and excited about. The technology I used simply supported the process, which will allow the human elements, shared experiences, honest conversations, and real-time engagement to shine, and that is where my heart is.

Lessons for Military Spouse Entrepreneurs

The experience of building the *Empowerment Leads: A Military Spouse Summit*™ reinforced several key lessons for me as a newer entrepreneur, and I believe it will help others with their goals at any stage:

- **AI is a tool, not a shortcut.** It supports strategy but doesn't replace purpose or values.
- **Progress beats perfection.** AI helps move ideas forward when time is limited.
- **Your voice still matters.** Use AI to enhance, not erase, lived experience.

- **Working smarter protects sustainability.** Burnout doesn't serve YOU, families, businesses, or communities.

From Vision to Virtual On Military Spouse Terms

For military spouses building businesses in the margins of military life, know that AI offers something powerful: permission to work smarter without sacrificing authenticity. It allows vision to move forward, even when life feels chaotic, and we all know how chaotic it can be.

The *Empowerment Leads: A Military Spouse Summit*™ didn't come together because everything was perfectly aligned, not even a little bit. It came together because tools and resources were used intentionally, capacity was honored, and support—both human and technological—was embraced.

For military spouse entrepreneurs navigating growth, scaling, or even just feeling like they are in survival mode, AI isn't about doing more. It's about making what already matters easier to carry.

And sometimes, that makes all the difference.

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AI FOR BUSINESS OPERATIONS & GROWTH



Rachel Garrison and Laura Early
Photo Courtesy of AMSE®

Managing and Scaling *Without Losing the Human Touch*

**By Laura Early | CXO/Founder
WISE Advise & Assist Team**
Reading time: 8 minutes



Military spouse entrepreneurs excel at building businesses on the move. They scale teams across time zones, lead through change, and build systems that withstand relocations, deployments, and shifting family needs. With AI becoming increasingly common in business, many owners ask: How do we use it wisely without losing the human element?

At its best, AI is not a replacement for people, but a support system that helps leaders create clarity, consistency, and capacity for growth. I use AI to outline projects or generate ideas as a jumping-off point, and to assess the pros and cons of different options. It's like a business bestie in your pocket.

Military spouse business owners operate in settings that require flexibility, structure, and trust. Remote teams and well-documented processes are necessities, not trends. This systems-driven mindset matches responsible AI use. Businesses that value process, communication, and accountability can better integrate AI to enhance, not disrupt, team operations.

What AI Is and What It Is Not

Business owners must understand AI's limits. It cannot replace people, lead teams, build trust, or make value-based decisions; but it can reduce friction in handling drafts, organizing information, and supporting repetitive or time-consuming tasks.

Leaders who use AI well are deliberate, not fearful. They ensure technology serves the business, not controls it.

When used intentionally, AI can support many operational functions that keep a growing business running smoothly. Business owners often use AI to:

- Draft standard operating procedures (SOPs) and internal documentation
- Create first drafts of job descriptions, onboarding guides, and training plans
- Prepare meeting agendas, summaries, and follow-up action items
- Support managers with performance review frameworks and coaching prompts
- Clarify communication before it reaches clients or team members

I recently used AI to do a comparison chart of working at our organization versus other jobs. It was helpful for organizing the data and highlighting small benefits I hadn't considered. AI provides a starting point. Human expertise and review are always crucial to the final result.

As AI becomes part of daily operations, clear boundaries are critical. Policies, contracts, and guardrails are essential and must be put in place early before problems arise.

Every team using AI should have written guidance that outlines:

- Which AI tools are approved
- Appropriate and inappropriate use cases
- Required human review before work is finalized
- Confidentiality and data protection standards

Contracts should reflect expectations, including ownership of work and transparency in AI use. One rule is universal: AI platforms are open-source tools. Never enter confi-

dential client information, employee data, financials, or proprietary systems. Always disclose AI use to clients early.

AI can create polished, confident output—even when wrong. Human oversight is essential.

Every piece of AI-assisted work must be reviewed, verified, and edited by a human. If a business owner or team member signs their name on something, it should reflect their expertise and standards. At scale, this commitment to quality and accountability protects both the business and the people it serves.

AI is only as useful as its instructions. Vague prompts yield vague results, while clear prompts create usable drafts. Learning to prompt well is now a leadership skill that saves time, improves outcomes, and reduces frustration.

A Smart Starting Point for Military Spouse Business Owners

For those looking to integrate AI responsibly a simple, systems-based approach works best:

1. Choose one area of the business—such as documentation, planning, or internal communication
2. Create a simple AI usage policy, even as a one-page guide
3. Train the team on what AI can support and what it should never touch
4. Require human review and accountability every time
5. Small, intentional steps lead to sustainable scale

Remember, AI itself does not scale businesses; leaders do. When used thoughtfully, AI gives entrepreneurs more time to focus on strategy, culture, and people. Ultimately, the businesses that succeed long-term will not be the ones that automate the fastest, but those that pair innovation with integrity, using technology to support people, not replace them.

AI is the future. We can't and shouldn't avoid using it in business. Learn about it, test it thoughtfully, and develop policies that fit your organization.

This week also marks a personal milestone for me. As this issue releases, WISE celebrates ten years in business.

Ten years of building systems that survive PCS moves. Ten years of leading remote teams across time zones. Ten years of scaling without sacrificing culture.

Long before AI became part of the conversation, we learned that growth only works when it is grounded in clarity, documentation, trust, and shared standards. Technology evolves. Tools change. But the commitment to protecting people while pursuing progress remains constant.

If there is one lesson ten years of business has reinforced, it is this: sustainable scale is not built on shortcuts. It is built on thoughtful systems, strong communication, and leaders who take responsibility for how innovation impacts their teams.

AI is simply the newest tool in that journey. As military spouse entrepreneurs, we have always adapted. The goal is not to resist change, nor to chase it blindly. The goal is to lead it wisely.

Finding Your Unique Voice as a Speaker in a Digital World



Andrea McNamara Singaas | Founder Tyne Group
Photo Courtesy of AMSE®

By **Vimbo Watson** | Speaker & Educational Consultant
Reading time: 10 minutes



There is a growing tension between business owners using AI as a tool and that same tool beginning to blur the lines between authenticity and automation. As a military spouse and small business owner, I understand the pressure to use every tool available while still protecting the heart and integrity of one's work. Anything that can make the job quicker while maintaining a high quality of output is generally embraced with open arms—and for good reason.

Military spouses are often solopreneurs, meaning we're doing all or many of the roles that keep our businesses moving forward. On any given day, that can look like switching from school pickup to client emails to content creation without ever changing seats. We don't have the luxury of a marketing department, a writing team, or an executive assistant. It's just us, making it work with whatever resources we can access.

The Authenticity Problem

However, if you've ever scrolled on social media and seen a post that was so perfectly polished it felt a little hollow—almost robotic—you've probably encountered AI-generated content that missed the mark. It has become so common that audiences are now actively trying to spot what feels *real* versus what feels manufactured. People can sense when something is off, even if they can't articulate exactly why.

This leads to an important question for speakers and content creators: When is it okay to use AI, and when does it start to dilute the very voice you're trying to amplify?

The answer often becomes obvious in the response—or lack thereof. AI-generated content can sound impressive on the surface but leave readers feeling oddly unmoved. It checks all the technical boxes while missing the emotional resonance that creates genuine connection. For speakers especially, this disconnect can be devastating. Our entire value proposition rests on our ability to connect authentically with an audience, to share lived experience in ways that create understanding and inspire action.

AI as a Strategic Partner, Not a Replacement

As a military spouse using my voice for advocacy, education, and community impact, I've learned that AI can absolutely be used as a tool that helps refine a speaker's voice—when approached intentionally. AI

works best when it supports your thinking, not when it tries to replace your lived experience or perspective.

Think of AI as a skilled assistant, not a ghostwriter. It can help sharpen your writing as you develop transcripts, problem solve faster when you're stuck, and brainstorm more efficiently when you're exploring new angles. This kind of support is especially helpful when creative ideas surface late at night after a long day of juggling family and work, and you need to capture and organize them before they disappear.

When used properly—as a tool that amplifies rather than replaces—AI can enhance your speaking and even open doors in your professional speaking journey. The key is maintaining clear boundaries about what you're asking it to do.

Three Practical Ways Speakers Can Use AI Intentionally

1. Refining Your Voice and Message

Many military spouse speakers are interested in several topics but unsure how they connect to a cohesive message. Instead of asking AI to write an entire speech (which will inevitably sound generic), use it as a thinking partner to explore where your interests and expertise intersect.

Try a brain dump approach. Voice record or type out everything you're passionate about—wellness, leadership, resilience, advocacy, military life, entrepreneurship, whatever comes to mind. Then ask AI to help you identify themes and connections. This process helps untangle your ideas and creates a clearer starting point for building a new talk that's authentically yours.

This is particularly useful when you're trying to combine seemingly separate themes—like wellness, leadership, and military life—into a single compelling message that feels integrated rather than forced.

2. Clarifying Without Losing Meaning

AI can assist once your writing process has already begun and you've created a draft in your own words. There may be a phrase or concept that feels important but comes out overly complicated or unclear. AI can help trim and clarify language without stripping it of meaning or personality.

Clear communication matters deeply in speaking. Your message can only resonate if people truly understand what you're saying. This becomes even more important when speaking to diverse audiences with different levels of familiarity with your topic. A military spouse speaking about deployment resilience to a civilian corporate audience, for example, needs to make military-specific

concepts accessible without dumbing them down.

Ask AI to help you identify jargon, simplify complex sentences, or suggest clearer ways to express an idea. But remember to always review its suggestions through the lens of "Does this still sound like me?"

3. Expanding Your Reach Strategically

Once your message is clear and accessible, AI can help take it to a wider audience. AI can function as a strategic assistant, helping speakers identify where their voice might be needed most. It can recommend outreach ideas based on your topic and target audience, assist with crafting pitches to organizations and conferences, and even create a realistic, multi-month outreach plan based on your available time and capacity.

For military spouses who move often and need to rebuild professional networks every few years, this kind of structured approach can be a game-changer. Instead of starting from scratch with every PCS, you can use AI to quickly research speaking opportunities in your new location, identify relevant organizations, and develop tailored outreach strategies.

The Non-Negotiables: What AI Cannot Do

Here's what AI cannot and should not do for speakers:

- **It cannot replace your lived experience.** The stories that make you compelling as a speaker—the deployment that changed your perspective, the PCS that taught you resilience, the moment you realized your voice mattered—these belong to you alone. No algorithm can replicate the authenticity of experience.
- **It cannot capture your unique perspective.** Two military spouses can go through similar experiences and come away with completely different insights. Your particular lens, shaped by your values, background, and journey, is irreplaceable.
- **It cannot create genuine connection.** Audiences connect with vulnerability, specificity, and truth. They connect with the speaker who shares the messy middle, not just the polished outcome. AI can help you articulate your message more clearly, but it cannot manufacture the emotional resonance that comes from shared humanity.

Using AI Without Losing Yourself

The goal is not perfection, but clarity, connection, and reach—without losing your

humanity in the process. AI should support your process, never replace your voice.

Before using AI for any speaking-related task, ask yourself: "Am I using this to help me think more clearly, or am I asking it to think for me?" The former builds your capacity as a speaker. The latter diminishes it.

Your lived experience, especially within the military community, is something no algorithm can ever replicate. That experience, combined with your unique perspective and voice, is precisely what makes you valuable as a speaker. Protect it fiercely, even as you use technology strategically to amplify your message and expand your impact.

AI is a tool. You are the speaker. Never confuse the two.



ARE YOU READY TO BUILD A BUSINESS THAT LASTS BEYOND THE MILITARY CHAPTER?

SCAN TO START YOUR LEGACY PATH



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Using Chatbots to Grow Your Social Media Presence

AMSE®
Reading time: 7 minutes



Military spouse entrepreneurs face a unique social media challenge: Building engaged audiences while managing the unpredictability of military life. Deployments happen, TDY orders arrive, family emergencies emerge, and suddenly the consistent posting schedule that algorithms reward becomes impossible to maintain. Meanwhile, potential customers slide into DMs expecting immediate responses that may come hours—or days—too late.

The gap between social media's demand for constant engagement and a military spouse's available bandwidth kills business growth potential. Followers unfollow when content disappears. Leads go cold when messages sit unanswered. Sales opportunities evaporate when response times lag. Traditional advice to "just be more consistent" ignores the reality that consistency isn't always possible in a military family.

AI-powered chatbots, particularly platforms like ManyChat, are revolutionizing how military spouse entrepreneurs manage social media without being chained to their phones. These tools automate responses, create interactive experiences that grow audiences, nurture relationships, and convert followers into customers.

The transformation happens through conversation automation. Instead of hoping followers read a static post, chatbots engage them directly through personalized messages. A follower comments with a specific keyword, and the bot instantly delivers requested information, collects contact details, or guides them toward a purchase, all without human intervention. The interaction feels personal because it responds to their specific action, yet it scales infinitely.

Lead generation becomes dramatically more efficient. Traditional social media requires followers to leave the platform, visit a website, and fill out forms. This is where customers are lost. Chatbots capture leads directly within Instagram or Facebook Messenger, reducing friction and dramatically increasing conversion rates. For military spouses who can't constantly monitor landing pages or manually follow up, this automation

means leads get captured and nurtured even during chaotic periods.

The segmentation capabilities matter tremendously for targeted marketing. Chatbots can tag followers based on their interests, interactions, and purchases, then deliver customized content to each segment. A military spouse running a fitness coaching business can automatically send different workout tips to beginners versus advanced clients, different nutrition advice to those who mentioned specific dietary needs, and different product recommendations based on previous purchases.

Engagement rates soar because chatbots make followers feel heard immediately. In an era where people expect instant gratification, a bot that responds within seconds beats a thoughtful manual response that comes three hours later. Followers who receive immediate value from interactions become more invested in the relationship and more likely to buy.

Action Items:

Set Up ManyChat Foundation: Create a free ManyChat account and connect it to your Instagram and Facebook business pages. Complete the basic tutorial to understand flows, triggers, and automation sequences. Start with their templates rather than building from scratch.

Create a Welcome Sequence: Design an automated greeting that triggers when someone sends their first message. Introduce yourself, ask what they're interested in, and provide immediate value like a free resource, discount code, or helpful tip relevant to your business.

Build Keyword Triggers: Identify three to five common questions followers ask (pricing, services, availability, how to start, etc.). Create automated responses triggered by keywords in comments or DMs. Use ManyChat's "Comment Guard" to automatically DM anyone who comments specific words on posts.

Design a Lead Magnet Flow: Create a simple automation offering a free resource (checklist, guide, template, video training) in exchange for email addresses. Promote this with Instagram posts saying "Comment GUIDE for my free resource" and let ManyChat handle delivery and contact collection.

Implement Story Engagement: Use ManyChat's Instagram Story integration to add interactive elements. Create polls, quizzes, or "swipe up" equivalents that feed into automated sequences based on responses. Track which story types generate the most engagement.

Set Up Abandoned Cart Recovery: If selling products or services, create sequences that follow up with people who showed interest but didn't purchase. Use ManyChat to send gentle reminders, answer objections, or offer limited-time incentives to close sales.

Segment Your Audience: Create tags within ManyChat based on follower interests, purchase history, or engagement level. Build separate content sequences for each segment so messages feel personally relevant rather than generic broadcasts.

Integrate with Email Marketing: Connect ManyChat to your email platform (Mailchimp, ConvertKit, etc.) so leads captured through social media automatically sync to email lists. This creates multiple

touchpoints and backup communication channels before PCS moves.

Schedule Broadcast Messages: Use ManyChat to send periodic updates, tips, or offers directly to subscribers' Messenger inboxes. These messages have dramatically higher open rates than email, making them perfect for time-sensitive announcements or promotions.

Analyze and Optimize: Review ManyChat analytics weekly to see which automated flows convert best, where people drop off, and which triggers generate the most engagement. Continuously refine messaging based on real data rather than assumptions.

For military spouse entrepreneurs, chatbot automation isn't about being impersonal—it's about being impossibly present. The chatbot becomes the always available team member who never needs to move, never gets overwhelmed, and never lets a potential customer slip away unanswered. Social media growth stops depending on perfect circumstances and starts happening automatically, regardless of what military life throws at the business owner.

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AI FOR PERSONAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

AI as Your Coach: Helpful, But Not Human

By Andrea McNamara
Singsaas | Founder The
Tyne Group
Reading time: 7 minutes



Artificial intelligence is impacting every corner of the world. Embracing technology that saves time and money is a wise move for everyone, but especially for small business owners and entrepreneurs.

For military spouses building a business, immediate support that provides a high degree of value with zero judgment is essential. AI can serve as a business coach, leadership strategist, or on-call thinking partner. Any experienced coach should acknowledge that AI is powerful. When used well, it can bring focus, reflection, and structure to thinking. This helps entrepreneurs process ideas before stepping into a coaching conversation.

However, there is a clear line between a tool and a coach. AI can reflect thoughts, but it will not challenge them.

Here are two effective ways entrepreneurs can use AI as a coaching tool, what to watch for, and when to know it is time to hire a professional to support business growth.

Using AI for Reflection and Clarity

When entrepreneurs are juggling multiple responsibilities, slowing down long enough to make sense of competing ideas can be difficult. AI can be used to organize thinking

and surface connections that might otherwise be missed. It serves as a useful partner for clarifying goals, exploring decisions, or uncovering patterns in how someone is working or leading.

Examples of prompts include:

- “You’re my business coach, ask me five coaching-style questions to help me clarify my business vision.”
- “What questions would a great coach ask to challenge fear around raising prices?”
- “Summarize what I said into key insights and blind spots.”

AI can help entrepreneurs find language for what they are feeling and thinking. Seeing thoughts clearly can be the first step toward action.

Using AI to Pressure-Test Thinking and Explore Options

Another powerful way AI can be used is as a thinking partner when entrepreneurs are stuck between choices or circling the same decision. Rather than generating more ideas, AI can help leaders see the implications of the ideas they already have. Pressure-testing assumptions, exploring trade-offs, and widening perspectives is especially useful when emotions are high and objectivity is low.

Examples of prompts include:

- “Help me identify the risks and opportunities of this decision from a leadership perspective.”

- “If this path is chosen, what are the likely second- and third-order consequences?”
- “What would a neutral advisor challenge in this situation?”

AI can slow decisions down just enough to bring clarity. It can surface blind spots, reframe trade-offs, and encourage thinking beyond immediate wins or fears.

What AI cannot do is determine which option aligns with values, leadership identity, or the future someone is trying to build. It can analyze, but it cannot understand the intricacies of a business or long-term professional growth goals. That is where a human coach matters.

Where AI Falls Short

AI can offer insight, but it cannot offer empathy. A skilled coach listens for what is not said and reads between the lines. Coaches notice non-verbal cues, patterns that repeat over time, and subtle shifts in tone that signal hesitation, defensiveness, or uncertainty across the span of an engagement.

AI cannot read the pause after someone says, “I’m fine,” or hear the frustration underneath, “I just need to try harder.” It can help with strategy, but when conversations turn to belief, fear, identity, or real change, a human coach is essential.

A coach does more than help with planning. They help clients grow, expand self-awareness, and align priorities with the professional path they are trying to build. Most im-

portantly, a professional coach holds clients accountable to the person they say they want to be with discernment and compassion no AI-powered platform can replicate.

The Best of Both Worlds

When used together, AI and coaching can complement each other in meaningful ways. AI provides speed, accessibility, and structure. Coaching provides depth, perspective, and transformation.

AI can act as a reflection partner, helping entrepreneurs clarify ideas and prepare for action. A coach becomes a growth partner, helping clients challenge patterns, navigate discomfort, and turn insight into sustained change.

AI is effective for organizing thoughts. A professional coach helps shift mindset and ways of thinking to expand self-awareness and the realm of possibility.

The Bottom Line: The Power Is in Using Both

AI offers speed, while coaching offers depth. Used together, they can accelerate growth.

AI is best used for on-call clarity and organization. A human coach is most valuable for the big, uncomfortable, and consequential conversations that move a business forward. AI is an incredible ally for entrepreneurs who want to think, plan, and reflect more effectively, but it is not a replacement for real connection or accountability a professional coach provides.

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AI FOR PERSONAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

From Deployment to Digital: Leverage AI to Build, Grow, and Thrive in Business

By Mandolyne Harris |
Owner Pensacola X
Reading time: 8 minutes

Military spouses are no strangers to adaptability. They navigate PCS moves, deployment cycles, unpredictable schedules, and the constant reinvention required to hold families and futures together. It's a unique strength, one that I—CEO of Pensacola X, publisher, author, and seasoned real estate professional—understand deeply as a military mom, entrepreneur, and creative leader on the Gulf Coast.

The biggest challenge military spouse entrepreneurs face isn't ambition—it's time. There were seasons in my life where everything had to fit between school drop-offs, moving boxes, career changes, and prayers whispered during deployments. AI changed everything for me. It allowed me to scale without burning out.

I spent years trying to find employment options that fit the demands of military life, earned certifications, changed careers repeatedly, and took on any role that allowed me to work from home or to generate a second income during deployments and relocations. This journey included real estate, massage therapy, candle-making, hospitality, sales, retail, and more. Each role represented a new attempt to create stability for my family in a lifestyle filled with uncertainty.

I wasn't afraid to try anything, like many military spouses, I kept reinventing myself—learning new skills, starting over, and searching for something that could move with me instead of against me.

That relentless determination eventually led to digital entrepreneurship and the creation of Pensacola X, where AI became the unexpected turning point in transforming my ideas into scalable platforms.

Below are some insights for military spouses ready to embrace AI, work smarter, and build

businesses that move with their lifestyle—not against it.

1. Automate Before You Accumulate

Military spouses often juggle roles as caregivers, household managers, and sometimes the only parent at home. Automate the repetitive before it overwhelms you.

AI tools can streamline:

- **Social media posting** (Buffer, Later, Meta Suite)
- **Customer service** (AI chat widgets)
- **Emails and follow-ups** (Zapier, Mailchimp AI)
- **Content creation** (ChatGPT, Claude, Jasper)

When my son deployed overseas, automation saved my business. AI became my silent employee.

Tip: Assign AI one task per week until your digital routine runs without you.

2. Turn PCS Moves Into Digital Momentum

Frequent military relocations can feel like setbacks, but try to reframe them as opportunities.

Before Pensacola X grew into a thriving media company, I used AI-driven tools like Canva AI and ChatGPT to:

- Build landing pages quickly after moves
- Write SEO blogs targeted to new local markets
- Generate graphics, flyers, and promotional materials overnight

AI allows you to rebuild faster than you can unpack. Every PCS can become a relaunch instead of a restart.

Tip: Use AI to create a "PCS Business Reset

Kit"—a set of templates, automations, and branded content that travels with you.

3. Scale With a Digital Footprint, Not a Physical One

As a real estate referral professional, I know how location can limit opportunity. But with AI, I teach spouses to build businesses that aren't tied to a single zip code.

Ideal AI-powered, PCS-proof businesses include:

- Content creation
- Virtual assistance
- Freelance design
- Digital products
- Publishing
- Affiliate marketing
- Coaching and consulting

Your business should be as mobile as your military life. AI gives you digital legs.

Tip: Use AI to research keywords, competitors, and customer behavior in your new city before you even arrive.

4. Let AI Help You Find Your Voice—and Protect Your Energy

Burnout hits military spouses harder because their mental load is heavier due to health challenges, caregiving, and constant career reinvention.

I used to pour from an empty cup. AI didn't just help my business—it protected my peace.

AI can:

- Reduce decision fatigue
- Draft content when you're exhausted
- Offer creative ideas during emotionally drained seasons

- Organize schedules during deployment chaos

Tip: Treat AI like a partner, not a replacement. You remain the heart; AI is the hands.

5. Build Community, Not Just a Brand

Pensacola X was built on connection—uplifting local businesses, military families, and entrepreneurs across the Gulf Coast.

AI amplifies community impact when used thoughtfully:

- AI can help analyze audience needs
- Personalize messages at scale
- Improve accessibility
- Strengthen local visibility through SEO

Military spouses are experts at building community. AI just multiplies your reach.

Tip: Use AI to create supportive groups, newsletters, and platforms that connect spouses wherever they are stationed.

Military spouses possess resilience, discipline, creativity, and courage—qualities that AI cannot replicate but can amplify. The next generation of thriving military spouse entrepreneurs will be those who learn to pair their inner strength with intelligent tools.

You've already mastered the hardest part—adaptation. AI simply gives you the power to turn every challenge into momentum and every transition into opportunity.

In a world where life changes with every set of orders, AI offers stability, scalability, and sustainability. And for military spouses ready to build their future, it may just be the most powerful force multiplier they've ever had.

The vision board has officially become a blueprint.



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AI FOR PERSONAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT



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The Art of Reinvention: Rebuilding Faster After Every PCS

By Darla Bishop | Founder
FinanSis LLC
Read time: 5 minutes



Military life is built on transition. New duty stations, new communities, new routines, and sometimes, new versions of ourselves. For many military spouse entrepreneurs, every PCS can feel like pressing the reset button on a business they’ve worked hard to build. But AI has become an unexpected teammate in navigating reinvention with more ease, clarity, and confidence.

I gave my AI assistant a name because treating technology like a quiet coworker helps me remember one truth: I do not have to rebuild my business alone every time the military uproots my life. AI has become the helper that sorts the chaos, accelerates the research, and provides a starting place when everything feels brand new.

My approach is not about replacing the human touch. It is about working smarter, not harder, during seasons when time, energy, and community support are in flux. Over time, these personal strategies became a framework I now share with other entrepreneurs navigating transition and growth. Below are the strategies I use and recommend to military spouse entrepreneurs facing change of their own.

Bottom Line Up Front: AI Is Not the Hero. You Are.

For military spouse entrepreneurs, AI is not replacing grit, resilience, or ingenuity. It simply creates more space to think, rest, and rebuild with intention.

1. Start Every PCS With a “Re-Introduction Packet” Powered by AI

After years of moving across states and continents I realized I needed a consistent way to reintroduce myself whenever I landed at a new duty station. Instead of starting from scratch with long emails or blank pages, I use AI to quickly create a refreshed:

- Short professional bio
- Elevator pitch
- Introductory outreach email templates

- LinkedIn posts announcing my arrival in a new city

This simple stack of materials helps to reconnect with existing contacts and build new ones quickly, without overthinking every message.

Tip for spouses: Ask AI to help you draft an updated “Hello, I’m new here” message you can personalize and reuse. For example: “Help me write a short professional introduction for a military spouse entrepreneur relocating to San Antonio who works in consulting.” This reduces the emotional friction of introducing yourself again and helps you sound consistent and confident wherever you land.

2. Use AI as a Research Partner for Local Opportunities

One of the hardest parts of military life is figuring out where to plug in. Every community has different networks, local organizations, grant opportunities, and small business resources. Instead of manually combing through dozens of websites, use AI to:

- Surface possible grant opportunities for small businesses in the region
- Identify local entrepreneurship hubs and co-working spaces
- Find state-specific licensing rules or compliance issues
- Gather local economic or demographic data to shape business outreach

The goal is not for AI to provide perfect answers, but to offer direction so she can quickly follow up with the right people and institutions.

Tip for spouses: Ask AI to generate a list of “10 places to connect as a business owner in X city” or “What small business grants are available in Y state?” Use the results as a starting point, then verify details and build real human relationships.

3. Rebuild Systems Faster by Letting AI Handle the Blank Page

Transition seasons create decision fatigue. There are boxes everywhere, kids adjusting to new schools, and a business that still

needs attention. Keep momentum by letting AI reduce the mental load.

Use AI to help:

- Outline content for the next 30 days
- Map a launch timeline after a move
- Simplify complex financial information for clients
- Generate templates for repeat tasks such as onboarding or follow-ups

Once an outline exists, I add my expertise, voice, and lived experience. AI simply helps bypass the “Where do I even start?” moment that often accompanies PCS transitions.

Tip for spouses: When you feel overwhelmed, let AI build the first draft. Whether it is a business plan, a welcome email, or a project outline, you remain the expert. AI just hands you the starting line.

4. Let AI Help You Steady the Basics

When life gets uprooted, most military spouses are not trying to optimize their finances. They are trying to stay afloat. You can use AI in these moments as a quick check-in tool, not a full financial planning exercise.

Instead of building complex projections, ask AI to help quickly answer a few ground-ing questions:

- What income is already expected over the next month or two?
- Which expenses are non-negotiable right now?
- Where there is flexibility if things feel tight?
- What are some ways to reuse existing work to bring in income without start-ing something new?

AI acts as a sounding board that helps to see the situation more clearly when everything feels noisy and uncertain.

Tip for spouses: Ask AI one simple ques-tion to start, such as: “Help me look at my current income and expenses so I can feel steady over the next 60 days.” The goal is not perfection. It is peace of mind and a clear next step.

5. Use AI to Protect Creativity When Everything Changes

Military life demands creativity and AI has become one way to keep that creative spark alive. You can use it to brainstorm workshop titles, refine marketing ideas, and explore new business concepts that make sense for each location.

AI helps you think expansively at a time when life can feel constricted.

Tip for spouses: Use AI as a low-pressure space to brainstorm ideas, map possibilities, and get unstuck without judgment. Let it be a place where your next chapter begins.

With the right systems, every move can become an opportunity to expand impact rather than lose momentum. AI just helps carry the load.

ACTION ITEM: Owning Up Podcast
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AI FOR PERSONAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

You Can't See Your Own Patterns. AI Can.

By Nyaima Smith-Taylor | Founder Influence Alchemy
Reading time: 9 minutes

Think about the last time you analyzed someone you know. How clearly you could see their patterns, their habits, the reasons behind their behavior—sometimes even before they could see it themselves.

Now turn that lens on yourself. Oftentimes, we're blind to our own patterns in a way we never are to anyone else's. It's not a character flaw—it's neuroscience. We're simply too close to ourselves to maintain the objectivity needed for clear self-observation. But what if you had a tool that could see what you can't?

For military spouse entrepreneurs juggling businesses, PCS moves, deployments, and the relentless mental load, the ability to see ourselves clearly often gets lost in the chaos. We're so busy managing everyone else's needs and keeping all the plates spinning that our own patterns—the helpful ones and the destructive ones—operate invisibly in the background.

What if five minutes a day could change that?

A Practice Built for the Military Spouse Life

Military spouse entrepreneurs face two critical problems:

- 1. No time for elaborate self-care routines
- 2. Little to no ability to see their own patterns clearly enough to course-correct before burnout hits

The five-minute recenter solves the first, AI solves the second. Together, they create something neither can do alone.

Most self-care advice wasn't built for this life. One-hour meditations don't account for the 4 a.m. wake up before a deployment send off, the solo parenting stretches that last months, or the mental load of running a business that has to flex and adapt with every PCS. The constant recalibration required of military spouses doesn't leave room for elaborate wellness routines that demand perfect conditions and uninterrupted time.

Military spouse entrepreneurs don't need another thing on the to-do list. They need something quick, consistent and powerful enough to actually work.

The Five-Minute Recenter

I developed this practice after recognizing I'd stopped taking care of myself entirely. Skipping meals, working well beyond mid-

night, not moving my body, and neglecting my most important relationships. The warning signs were all there, but I couldn't see them clearly enough to change course. I needed a system to catch myself before I spiraled and something simple enough to maintain even during the hardest seasons.

What emerged was a framework designed for sustainability: Ground. Release. Rise. Only five minutes daily—no apps required, no perfect conditions necessary, no special equipment. Plus a weekly pattern check powered by AI to help you see what's actually happening beneath the surface.

Research supports this approach too. Studies show that consistency matters more than duration when building sustainable practices. Even five minutes of daily mindfulness can meaningfully reduce stress, improve focus, and increase emotional regulation. The key is showing up regularly, not perfectly.

And once you've built the daily habit? That's when AI earns its place as your pattern-spotting partner.

Ground (One minute)

Inhale through your nose for four counts. Exhale through your mouth for four counts. Repeat three times. Place your hand on your heart, if that feels right.

Then ask yourself: "How am I feeling right now?" Not how you think you should feel or how you wish you felt. How you actually feel in this moment.

No need to fix it or need to explain it; just notice it.

Release (Two minutes)

Brain dump time. Speak into your phone's voice notes or write without stopping—whichever feels more natural. The point is to physically let this out of your body and mind.

No complete sentences required, editing, or planning what to say next. Just release. Everything pulling at your attention—the unfinished tasks, the worries, the frustrations, the fleeting thoughts—gets a moment of acknowledgment. This isn't journaling for posterity. This is clearing mental space.

Rise (Two minutes)

Choose one word or a short phrase for the energy you want to create and carry into today.

Examples: "Today I experience deep gratitude." "I step into the energy of calm confidence." "I remain joyful no matter what."

This can be turned into an affirmation, a concept popularized by Vishen Lakhiani of Mindvalley. Instead of making a declaration



Kera Sanchez | Founder MilSpo Social Co
Photo Courtesy of AMSE®

statement, you ask a question: "Why does [your word] come so naturally to me today?" This subtle shift engages your brain differently, prompting it to search for evidence rather than resist a claim.

Then, optionally, name one small thing you're grateful for. Keep it truthful and grounded. Can't find something? Start simple: your breath, the air in the room, a tree outside, the coffee in your hand.

This Ground, Release, Rise structure removes decision fatigue. Show up, follow the steps, and let the ritual do its work. If five minutes feels like too much on a particularly overwhelming day, do one minute. Do thirty seconds. Consistency beats duration every single time.

Boosting Your Results with AI

Here's where AI becomes your pattern-spotting partner.

Throughout the week, put your daily reflections into an AI tool like ChatGPT or Claude. At the end of the week, ask a simple question: "What patterns do you notice in my energy, stress triggers, or recurring thoughts this week?"

What you might get back:

- "You mention feeling behind in four of five entries, usually connected to work tasks bleeding into evening hours. You also note feeling strongest and most focused on days you mention morning movement or getting outside."

Now you have something concrete to work with. Evening work bleeding over into family time? That's a boundary to set. Strong correlation with morning movement? That's a non-negotiable to protect. The AI isn't telling you what to do—it's showing you what you're already experiencing but can't see from inside the pattern.

It's important to note: AI isn't a therapist, and it shouldn't replace professional mental health support if you need it. But it is a mirror that helps you see what you'd otherwise miss. It spots the threads you can't connect when you're living inside the chaos.

Use these insights to adjust one thing before the pattern becomes an entrenched habit or a serious problem.

Make It Yours

This practice is a starting framework, not a rigid prescription. Adapt it, shorten it, expand the parts that resonate and skip the parts that don't. The goal isn't perfection, it's presence.

What I've learned through my own practice is this: The days I skip this are often the days I need it most. The days when everything feels urgent and there's no time are exactly when five minutes of grounding would make the biggest difference.

One word. One breath. One honest moment with yourself. That's enough to shift a day. And sometimes, that's enough to shift everything.

Meet Your New Household COO:

How I Use AI to Run Life With Less Stress

By Michelle Stone | Founder Stone Technology & Operations LLC
Reading time: 6 minutes



Military spouse entrepreneurs are no strangers to complexity. Between running a business, managing a household, navigating deployments, and adapting to frequent change, daily life often requires constant decision-making and mental tracking. While conversations around AI often focus on business growth or content creation, its most powerful use may be much closer to home.

AI can function as a household Chief Operating Officer (COO), a behind-the-scenes support system that helps manage logistics, reduce mental load, and create calm structure in everyday life.

The Hidden Operations Problem at Home

Before integrating AI into my household systems, I found that the most exhausting part of her day was not the work itself. It was remembering everything. Meal planning, school schedules, appointments, travel prep, and daily routines lived in my head. Even with solid business systems in place, home life felt reactive.

The realization came when I recognized that my household lacked what every healthy business has: documented processes, planning support, and a central place for decisions to land. AI became the solution, not as a replacement for responsibility, but as a support layer that reduced friction.

AI as a Household COO

I began using AI the way a COO functions inside a business: anticipating needs, organizing information, and creating structure.

Some of the most impactful uses included:

- Weekly planning support:** AI helped map out the week by combining school schedules, extracurriculars, work commitments, and personal time into one clear plan.
- Meal planning and grocery coordination:** By prompting AI with dietary needs, budget parameters, and time constraints, meal plans became predictable and repeatable. Grocery lists were generated automatically, eliminating daily decision-making.
- Family logistics documentation:** AI was used to create simple reference documents for routines, emergency contacts, and recurring household tasks. This made it easier to delegate and ensured continuity during travel or transitions.

ments for routines, emergency contacts, and recurring household tasks. This made it easier to delegate and ensured continuity during travel or transitions.

- Mental load reduction:** Reminders, checklists, and planning prompts created space to focus on what mattered most.

Over time, the household ran more smoothly, not because more was being done, but because fewer decisions were required each day.

Why This Matters for Military Spouse Entrepreneurs

Military spouse entrepreneurs often operate with limited support and unpredictable circumstances. Business growth without personal infrastructure can quickly lead to burnout.

Using AI as a Household COO offers three key benefits:

- Stability during change:** PCS moves, deployments, and schedule disruptions become easier to manage when systems already exist.
- Energy preservation:** Reducing your mental load frees up capacity for more family time, professional creativity, and rest.
- Aligned priorities:** When home operations are calm, business decisions can be made with clarity instead of urgency.

AMSE MILITARY SPOUSE
ENTREPRENEUR
Impact Report



Impact Report



Taylor Griffith | Founder Growing with Griffith
Photo Courtesy of AMSE®

This approach reframes productivity. Success is not measured by how much is handled personally, but by how well systems support the whole life.

Getting Started Without Overcomplicating It

This does not require advanced technical skills. The entry point is simple: Identify one area of friction and use AI to support it.

A few starter prompts include:

- “Create a realistic weekly schedule that balances work hours, school drop-offs, meals, errands, and personal time. Assume limited energy in the evenings and prioritize calm mornings.”
- “Create a five-day dinner plan for a busy family of four. Meals should take 30 minutes or less, use overlapping ingredients, and avoid complex prep. Then generate a categorized grocery list.”

- “Help me create a simple household operations guide that includes morning routines, weekly chores, emergency contacts, and important recurring dates. Keep it clear and easy to update.”
- “Ask me five clarifying questions to help identify what is creating the most stress in my household right now, then suggest one system or routine to simplify it.”

A Smarter Way Forward

AI does not replace human judgment, intuition, or connection. Used intentionally, it becomes a steady operational partner that supports both business and family life.

For military spouse entrepreneurs navigating complex seasons, treating AI as a household COO can be a quiet but powerful shift. It creates structure where there was stress and clarity where there was overwhelm.

Working smarter is not about doing more; it is about building systems that carry the weight, so life and business can move forward together.



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AI FOR HOME OFFICE & PRODUCTIVITY

Design Your Dream Home Office:

AI Tools to Plan, Organize, and Optimize Your Space

By Kera Sanchez | Founder MILSPO Social Co.
Reading time: 8 minutes



Military spouse entrepreneurs rarely get the luxury of choosing their workspace. Whether it's base housing with limited square footage, a rental that prohibits modifications, or temporary lodging during a PCS, the office often ends up being a corner of the dining room or a converted closet. Yet workspace design profoundly impacts productivity, and waiting for the perfect space means never getting started.

The challenge isn't just physical constraints, but the mental energy required to envision possibilities. After spending a day managing business tasks, military life logistics, and family responsibilities, sitting down to plan an optimal workspace feels impossible. This is precisely where AI tools shine. They eliminate the creative burden while maximizing whatever space is available.

Traditional interior design services are expensive and location-dependent, impractical for families who'll move in eighteen months. AI design tools streamline professional-quality space planning, offering customized solutions based on specific dimensions, lighting conditions, and functional needs. The result is a workspace tailored to how the entrepreneur actually works, not generic Pinterest inspiration.

Lighting makes or breaks a home office, especially for video calls with clients or content creation. AI tools can analyze photos of a space and recommend optimal desk placement for natural light, suggest artificial lighting solutions for windowless rooms, and even predict how lighting will look at different times of day. For military spouses working across time zones, this becomes crucial.

Organization systems need to accommodate both business needs and military lifestyle realities. The filing system must be logical enough to navigate after a move, storage solutions must fit in various housing configurations, and everything must be flexible enough to adapt when square footage shrinks or expands with each PCS.

Acoustic considerations often get overlooked until the first client call gets interrupted by barking dogs, practicing instruments, or neighbor noise through thin walls. AI can analyze room acoustics and suggest cost-effective soundproofing solutions appropriate for rental spaces where permanent modifications aren't allowed.

The ergonomics of a workspace impact long-term health and daily productivity. AI tools can evaluate desk height, chair positioning, monitor placement, and keyboard angles to provide specific recommendations to prevent the neck pain, back problems, and repetitive strain.

Color psychology and visual environment affect focus and creativity in measurable ways. AI design assistants can suggest color schemes that promote concentration for accounting work, creativity for content creation, or calm for client consultations.

Action Items:

Map Your Space Digitally: Use Roomstyler, Planner 5D, or IKEA's AI-powered Place app to create a 3D model of your workspace. Upload room photos to HomeStyler AI for instant design suggestions based on actual dimensions and existing features.

Optimize Layout with AI: Input your work requirements into Floorplanner or Room Planner AI and let algorithms suggest optimal furniture arrangements. Use Foyr Neo's AI feature to generate multiple layout options you can compare side-by-side.



Lauren Wittenberg Weiner | Founder Lone Pine Advisors
Photo Courtesy of AMSE®

Test Lighting Solutions: Upload workspace photos to Lux AI or use smartphone apps like myLightCalc to analyze current lighting. Get AI recommendations for bulb temperature, lamp placement, and solutions for video call lighting using Lume Cube's setup guides.

Design Storage Systems: Use ChatGPT or Claude to describe your business supplies and available space, then ask for customized organization system recommendations. Input dimensions into Modsy for AI-generated storage solutions that fit specific military housing configurations.

Evaluate Ergonomics: Use DESKVIEW or similar AI posture analysis apps with your smartphone camera to assess desk setup. Input your height and work style into Ergo-Plus calculators for personalized equipment recommendations that prevent strain.

Soundproof Strategically: Describe your noise challenges to AI assistants like ChatGPT, which can suggest portable soundproofing solutions appropriate for rentals. Use Niosh Sound Level Meter app to measure actual decibel levels and identify problem areas.

Choose Colors Wisely: Input your work type and personal preferences into Colormind or Colors AI to generate psychologically optimized color palettes. Use Sherwin-Williams' ColorSnap Visualizer with AI to preview paint colors in your space before purchasing.

Create a Portable Kit: Ask AI tools to design a "rapid deployment office" that fits in two boxes for quick setup during PCS moves. Use Sortly with AI photo recognition to catalog and track all office items across relocations.

Budget Intelligently: Feed your space requirements and budget constraints into ChatGPT or Claude for prioritized shopping lists. Use AI price comparison tools like ShopSavvy to find best deals on recommended items at your current duty station.

The dream home office for a military spouse entrepreneur isn't about granite countertops or custom built-ins—it's about a workspace that functions beautifully within current constraints while adapting to future unknowns. AI design tools make professional-quality space planning accessible, affordable, and achievable in an afternoon rather than weeks. The result is a workspace that enhances productivity today and packs efficiently for tomorrow, wherever military life leads next.

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AI FOR HOME OFFICE & PRODUCTIVITY

Recording Studio-Quality Podcasts from Anywhere: AI Tools That Travel with You

AMSE®
Reading time: 9 minutes



Military spouse entrepreneurs are increasingly turning to podcasting as a powerful way to build authority, connect with audiences, and grow businesses that transcend geographic boundaries. A podcast travels seamlessly from duty station to duty station, reaches clients globally, and establishes expertise in ways written content simply can't. Yet traditional podcast production—with expensive equipment, complicated software, and technical learning curves—has kept many military spouses on the sidelines.

The barrier isn't passion or expertise, but logistics. How does someone record professional-quality audio when living in base housing with paper-thin walls? How do they coordinate guest interviews across multiple time zones while managing family schedules? These challenges have made podcasting feel inaccessible to the very entrepreneurs who could benefit most from its flexibility.

AI-powered recording platforms like Riverside are eliminating these obstacles entirely. Unlike traditional recording setups requiring microphones, mixing boards, and audio engineering knowledge, these tools deliver studio-quality results through nothing more than a web browser. AI handles the technical complexity while the host focuses on creating compelling content and building meaningful connections with guests.

The remote recording capability proves invaluable for military spouse podcasters. Whether the host is stationed in Stuttgart or Seoul, guests can join from anywhere with internet access, and the platform captures each person's audio and video locally in the highest quality. No more garbled Zoom recordings or asking guests to navigate complicated software installations. The barrier to securing high-profile guests drops dramatically when participation requires simply clicking a link.

Audio quality consistency matters for audience retention and professional credibility.

Traditional recording methods produce varying results depending on the room, equipment, and technical setup. AI-powered platforms automatically compensate for less-than-ideal recording conditions, suppressing background noise, balancing audio levels, and ensuring every episode sounds polished regardless of whether it was recorded in a dedicated studio or a kitchen with kids playing in the next room.

The time savings compound quickly. Traditional podcast editing consumes hours per episode. AI tools now automate much of this process, generating transcripts for show notes, identifying highlight clips for social media, and even suggesting edit points where conversations dragged. For military spouses juggling business operations and family responsibilities, reclaiming these hours is the difference between podcasting being sustainable or impossible.

Content repurposing becomes effortless when AI handles the heavy lifting. A single podcast episode recorded on Riverside can automatically generate video clips for Instagram and YouTube, transcripts for blog posts, and quote graphics for Pinterest—all with minimal manual effort. This multiplication of content from one recording session maximizes return on the time investment.

Action Items:

Create Your Riverside Account: Sign up for Riverside.fm and complete the initial setup. Start with the free trial to test features before committing. Complete the platform tutorial to understand recording, editing, and export capabilities specific to your needs.

Optimize Your Recording Environment: Use Riverside's built-in audio check feature before your first recording. Position yourself near a window for natural light if recording video. Use ChatGPT or Claude to get tips for improving sound quality in your specific housing situation without permanent modifications.

Design Your Show Format: Plan your podcast structure using AI assistance. Ask ChatGPT to generate episode templates, intro/outro scripts, and question frameworks for guest interviews. Create a Notion or ClickUp

template that streamlines episode planning for consistent production.

Schedule Guest Interviews Seamlessly: Use Riverside's Calendly integration or set up your own scheduling system that accounts for time zone differences. Create email templates using AI writing tools for guest outreach, confirmation, and pre-interview preparation that establishes professionalism.

Master the Recording Interface: Record a practice episode with a friend or family member to familiarize yourself with Riverside's controls. Test the separate audio/video track recording, screen sharing for tutorials, and live switching features if planning multi-camera setups.

Leverage AI Transcription: Enable Riverside's automatic transcription feature to generate searchable text of every episode. Use these transcripts with ChatGPT or Claude to create show notes, pull compelling quotes, identify key timestamps, and generate social media captions in minutes instead of hours.

Create Social Media Assets: Use Riverside's built-in clip creation tool to identify the most engaging 30 – 90 second segments that will perform best.

Automate Episode Publishing: Connect Riverside to podcast hosting platforms like Buzzsprout, Transistor, or Libsyn for automatic episode uploads. Set up distribution to Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and other directories so each episode reaches all platforms simultaneously without manual uploading.

Batch Record When Possible: During stable periods between PCS moves or deployments, record multiple episodes in single sessions. Riverside's cloud storage keeps everything accessible regardless of which computer or location you're working from later.

Repurpose Strategically: Feed Riverside transcripts into tools like Descript or Opus-Clip AI to automatically generate blog posts, email newsletter content, LinkedIn articles, and quote graphics. Transform one 30-minute recording into two to three weeks of multi-platform content.

Build a Mobile Setup: Invest in a simple USB microphone (like Blue Yeti Nano) and basic

ring light that pack easily for PCS moves. Riverside works on tablets and smartphones, creating a complete portable podcast studio that fits in a carry-on bag.

For military spouse entrepreneurs, podcasting through AI-powered platforms represents freedom from geographic constraints and technical barriers. The podcast becomes the rare business asset that not only survives but thrives amid military life's constant changes—a voice that reaches audiences worldwide while the business owner navigates the unique challenges of serving those who serve.

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Setting Up a Plug-and-Play Office System for Every PCS

AMSE®

Reading time: 5 minutes

The average military family moves every two to three years. For military spouse entrepreneurs, each relocation means dismantling a carefully constructed workspace and rebuilding it from scratch—unless they've designed a system that travels. The difference between businesses that survive PCS moves and those that don't often comes down to one factor: portability.

Traditional office setups are location-dependent. They rely on local vendors, physical filing systems, installed software, and community connections that evaporate the moment orders arrive. Smart military spouse entrepreneurs are flipping this model entirely, building businesses that exist primarily in the cloud with AI tools that work identically whether logging in from California, Korea, or somewhere in between.

The plug-and-play office concept means that within hours of internet access at a new duty station, the entire business infrastructure is operational. No waiting for new business cards, no transferring files from old computers, no rebuilding contact lists, and no explaining to clients why everything has changed. The business simply continues as if the move never happened.

AI technology makes this possible in ways that weren't feasible even five years ago. Cloud-based tools with AI capabilities handle everything from client communications to financial management, all accessible through a simple login.

Physical minimalism becomes a strategic advantage. When the entire business can run from a laptop, smartphone, and portable monitor, setup time at a new location drops from weeks to minutes. There's no heavy equipment to ship, no dedicated office space required, and no waiting for furniture delivery before resuming client work.

Security and continuity matter tremendously during transitions. AI-powered backup systems ensure no data gets lost in transit, no client information disappears, and no financial records go missing. Everything exists in multiple secure locations simultaneously, immune to the chaos of moving trucks and misplaced boxes.

The psychological benefit shouldn't be underestimated. Knowing that the business infrastructure is location-proof reduces the anxiety that typically accompanies PCS orders. Instead of dreading the disruption, military spouse entrepreneurs can focus on the opportunities a new location might bring: new clients, new markets, new partnerships.

This approach also creates unexpected flexibility for the military lifestyle. When a service member gets last-minute TDY orders or a family emergency requires quick travel, a portable business system means working from anywhere becomes genuinely possible, not just theoretically feasible.

Action Items:

Migrate to Cloud Storage: Transfer all business files to Google Workspace, Microsoft 365, or Dropbox Business. Use AI-powered organization tools like Dropbox Dash to automatically tag and categorize files for instant retrieval anywhere.

Establish Virtual Communication Hub: Set up a business phone system through OpenPhone or Google Voice that keeps the same number across moves. Implement Slack or Microsoft Teams with AI assistants for internal communications and client collaboration.

Centralize Client Management: Move all client data into a cloud CRM like HubSpot, Pipedrive, or Salesforce Starter. Enable AI features for automatic contact updates, interaction logging, and follow-up reminders that work regardless of location.

Digitize Financial Operations: Switch to cloud accounting platforms like QuickBooks Online or Xero with AI bank feed matching and automated expense categorization. Add Expensify or Dext for AI-powered receipt scanning that works from any device.

Create Standard Operating Procedures: Use Scribe or Tango to create automated documentation of every business process with screenshots. Store in Notion, ClickUp, or Airtable with AI search capabilities for instant access to protocols.

Build a Virtual Vendor Network: Replace location-specific vendors with AI-powered alternatives: Canva for design work, Fiverr Business for freelance help, PrintFul or Printify for product fulfillment that ships from anywhere.

Automate Marketing Systems: Set up evergreen content pipelines using Buffer, Hootsuite, or Later with AI content suggestions. Create email sequences in Mailchimp or ConvertKit with AI optimization that nurtures leads without manual intervention.

Invest in Portable Hardware: Acquire a lightweight laptop with strong battery life, noise-canceling headphones for calls in temporary spaces, and a portable monitor. Use cloud-based AI transcription like Otter.ai instead of physical recording equipment.

Test the System: Before the next PCS, spend one full workday operating only from a coffee shop using just laptop and phone. Identify any dependencies on location-specific resources and eliminate them with cloud alternatives.

The military lifestyle will always involve movement and uncertainty. But business success no longer requires roots planted deeply in one location. With AI-powered cloud systems, military spouse entrepreneurs can build enterprises that are simultaneously stable and mobile which is a combination that once seemed impossible but now defines the future of military spouse entrepreneurship. The office doesn't need a new address at each duty station because the office exists everywhere and nowhere, ready to work within moments of logging in.

The 15-Minute Morning Reset: AI Routines That Keep Your Workspace Productive

AMSE®

Reading time: 5 minutes

Military spouse entrepreneurs face mornings that range from chaotic to catastrophic. A service member leaves for a pre-dawn PT session, kids need lunches packed, the dog needs walking, and somewhere in that madness, a business needs to run. The idea of a leisurely two hour morning routine feels laughable. What's needed is maximum business impact in minimum time.

Enter the 15-minute morning reset: a strategic sequence of AI-powered tasks that transform a workspace from overnight clutter to productivity powerhouse before the first client call. This isn't about perfection; it's about creating enough order and clarity to tackle the day's revenue generating work without drowning in administrative chaos.

The magic happens when AI handles the tasks that typically consume the first hour of a workday. Instead of manually sorting through emails, checking social media metrics, reviewing yesterday's incomplete tasks, and figuring out today's priorities, entrepreneurs can delegate these mental loads to tools designed specifically for this purpose.

Most military spouse business owners operate in survival mode, responding to whatever screams loudest rather than working strategically. The 15-minute reset shifts this dynamic. By automating the assessment and organization phase, entrepreneurs reclaim control over their schedules instead of letting chaos dictate their days.

The psychology matters as much as the productivity. Starting the day with a clear workspace, organized task list, and responsive communication systems creates mental space for creative problem-solving and strategic thinking. When the workspace feels under control, the business owner feels capable of tackling bigger challenges—landing that new contract, developing a new service offering, or finally implementing that marketing strategy.

This approach proves particularly valuable during high-stress military life phases. During deployments, TDYs, or reintegration periods when emotional bandwidth is limited, having automated morning systems means the business continues functioning even when the owner's mental energy is depleted. The routine becomes a stabilizing force when everything else feels uncertain.

The beauty of AI morning routines is their adaptability. They work whether logging

in from a home office in North Carolina, a kitchen table in Germany, or a coffee shop during a cross-country PCS move. The location changes, but the productivity framework remains constant.

Action Items:

Email Triage (Three minutes): Use SaneBox or Gmail's AI filters to automatically sort overnight emails into priority folders. Review AI-generated summaries from tools like Superhuman or use ChatGPT to draft quick responses to routine inquiries.

Task Prioritization (Two minutes): Open Motion, Reclaim.ai, or Todoist with AI task scheduling to review auto-generated daily priorities. Let AI identify which tasks absolutely must happen today versus what can wait.

Social Media Quick Check (Two minutes): Use Metricool or Hootsuite Analytics to review AI-generated performance reports from yesterday's posts. Let Later or Buffer suggest optimal posting times for today's pre-scheduled content.

Calendar Optimization (Two minutes): Let Clockwise or Reclaim.ai automatically reorganize today's calendar, creating focus time blocks around meetings. Use Calendly's AI features to manage any scheduling conflicts that emerged overnight.

Workspace Organization (Two minutes): Use Notion AI or ClickUp's AI assistant to quickly scan project boards and flag anything requiring immediate attention. Let the AI summarize progress on ongoing projects.

Content Pipeline Check (Two minutes): Review what's scheduled across platforms using CoSchedule or ContentCal. Use AI writing assistants like Jasper or Copy.ai to quickly fill any content gaps for the week ahead.

Quick Win Identification (Two minutes): Ask ChatGPT or Claude to analyze your task list and identify the highest-impact activity for the day. Use voice-to-text AI like Otter.ai to capture any brilliant ideas that emerged during the morning chaos.

The 15-minute morning reset isn't about doing everything—it's about ensuring nothing critical gets missed while maintaining forward momentum. For military spouses balancing unpredictable family demands with business ambitions, these quick investments create structure without rigidity, productivity without burnout.

AI FOR HOME OFFICE & PRODUCTIVITY

The Assistant You Didn't Know You Needed: Automating Your Administrative Tasks

AMSE®

Reading time: 5 minutes



For military spouse entrepreneurs, time is the most precious commodity. Between managing PCS moves, supporting a service member, and building a business that can thrive anywhere, administrative tasks often pile up like unwashed laundry after field training. Enter artificial intelligence—not as a futuristic concept, but as a practical solution that's available right now.

Many military spouse business owners are drowning in the daily grind of invoicing, email management, social media scheduling, and customer service responses. These tasks are necessary but time consuming, pulling focus away from revenue-generating activities and strategic growth. What most don't realize is that AI tools can handle much of this workload, freeing up hours each week.

The beauty of AI assistance lies in its accessibility. Unlike hiring a virtual assistant, AI tools work 24/7, don't require PTO, and cost a fraction of traditional help. They're also location independent, which is perfect for entrepreneurs who might be stationed in Okinawa one year and Oklahoma the next.

Take email management, for example. AI-powered tools can draft responses to common customer inquiries, sort messages

by priority, and even schedule follow-ups. Instead of spending an hour each morning clearing their inbox, a military spouse entrepreneur can review AI-generated drafts and hit send, reclaiming that time for client work or family obligations.

Social media presents another opportunity. AI scheduling tools don't just post content; they analyze engagement patterns to determine optimal posting times, suggest content ideas based on trending topics, and even generate caption variations. For the spouse juggling a deployment and a business, this means maintaining consistent brand presence without constant phone checking.

Content creation, often the biggest time drain, becomes manageable with AI assistance. From blog post outlines to product descriptions, AI can generate first drafts that entrepreneurs then personalize with their unique voice and expertise. What once took three hours now takes thirty minutes.

Customer service chatbots have evolved beyond clunky automated responses. Modern AI can handle initial customer inquiries, answer frequently asked questions, and escalate complex issues to the business owner—all while she's attending her child's school event or navigating a spouse employment workshop.

Action Items:

Start Small: Choose one repetitive task consuming significant time each week.

Try Superhuman or Spark Mail for email management, or Buffer and Later for social media scheduling.

Research Tools: Explore AI platforms like ChatGPT, Claude, or Jasper AI for content creation. Canva's Magic Write feature offers AI assistance for design-related copy. Most offer free trials for experimentation.

Set Up Templates: Use tools like Text Blaze or ChatGPT to create saved responses for common inquiries. Gmail's Smart Compose and Outlook's suggested replies learn from existing communication patterns.

Schedule a Review Day: Dedicate one afternoon to implementing Zapier or Make (formerly Integromat) to connect apps and automate workflows between platforms without coding knowledge.

Track Time Saved: Use RescueTime or Toggl Track to measure productivity gains. These tools automatically log time spent on tasks before and after AI implementation.

Join Online Communities: Connect with military spouse entrepreneurs in the Association of Military Spouse Entrepreneurs.

Invest Savings Wisely: Redirect reclaimed hours toward Calendly for automated scheduling, FreshBooks for AI-powered invoicing, or ManyChat for Instagram and Facebook customer service automation.

The military lifestyle demands flexibility and resourcefulness. AI automation isn't about replacing the human touch that makes

military spouse businesses special, but eliminating the administrative burden that prevents that special touch from reaching more clients. In a life filled with uncertainty, AI assistance offers one certainty: More time for what truly matters.

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Editorial and Creative Director

Moni Jefferson

Membership Digital Directory

Amira Jefferson

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The Social Chica

As we reach our 11th issue, I want to take a moment to recognize everyone who continues to make the Military Spouse Entrepreneur Guide a reality.

To our contributors—the military spouse entrepreneurs who keep showing up with their stories: Your willingness to share both the wins and the struggles creates real value for our community. You've shown what's possible when military spouses refuse to let circumstances define their potential, and your experiences continue to inspire action.

To our supporters—the organizations and partners who stand with us: Your continued investment in this vision matters more than you know. The mentorship, resources, and opportunities you provide don't just support individual entrepreneurs—they strengthen entire military families and prove that meaningful change happens through sustained commitment.

To the Stars and Stripes team—who continue championing military spouse voices: Your ongoing partnership has given this work credibility and reach we couldn't have achieved alone. Six years in, your dedication to amplifying our community's entrepreneurial achievements remains as strong as day one, and that consistency means everything.

This guide thrives because we all share a commitment to economic resilience that travels with military families wherever orders take them. As we continue building together, I'm grateful for what we've accomplished and excited about where we're headed.

With sincere gratitude,

Moni Jefferson

CEO/Founder Association of Military Spouse Entrepreneurs®

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EDITOR

ALYSSA MCBETH

DESIGNER

AMY WEBB

PUBLISHER

MAX D. LEDERER JR.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

LAURA LAW

REVENUE DIRECTOR

SCOTT FOLEY

MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING, CONSULTANTS

COREY HENDERSON, GERARD KELLY, MARY VANDENBURG, CLAUDIA STIER, SCOTT ADAMS

ENGAGEMENT DIRECTOR

CHRIS VERIGAN

ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

VIVIAN DANDRIDGE-CHARLES

PUBLISHING & MEDIA DESIGN, DIRECTOR

MARIE WOODS

VISUAL INFORMATION MANAGER

DOUGLAS GILLAM JR

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FACES



J Balvin is one of four musicians tapped to reimagine Van Halen's "Jump" as Coca-Cola's official anthem for the FIFA World Cup 2026.

'Jump' now an anthem

J Balvin helped remake, perform Van Halen hit for World Cup

By MARIA SHERMAN
Associated Press

In need of a global superstar for a sports anthem? Colombian singer J Balvin is the right man for the job.

"Our biggest moments in history, of happiness, surround sports," he says of Colombia. "Of course music, but sport has this power (to) unite a whole country and vibe in a really positive way. So that's part of my DNA."

Balvin is one of the four musicians remaking Coca-Cola's official anthem for the FIFA World Cup 2026, a reimagination of Van Halen's "Jump" that also features drummer Travis Barker, pop/R&B singer Amber Mark and guitarist Steve Vai.

Last year, Joshua Burke, head of global music and culture marketing at The Coca-Cola Company, approached Balvin with the idea. The singer initially felt trepidation.

"I'm really precautionary when it comes to songs like this one," Balvin says. "It's like touching the Mona Lisa."

"I have so much respect for anthems like that," he says. So, he had to take "a totally different approach" to make it work; he wanted to avoid straightforward comparisons to the original recording.

"It was like a puzzle," he says.

Mark's rich, crystalline voice is the first heard on the track; she sings the song's original English lyrics. Vai transforms its iconic guitar; Barker amplifies its percussion.

The greatest difference is found in Balvin's contributions. He wrote a new verse — in Spanish — atop a production courtesy of his collaborator L.E.X.V.Z, a sound he describes as "Brazilian funk with hard strings, kind of like hip-hop."

"'Jump' is not a fútbol song," he says of the original, using the Spanish word for soccer. "So that's why I

had to put the Latin love and passion for fútbol (in the lyrics)."

"El fútbol es nuestro idioma / Aquí todos somos mi gente," he raps. In English: "Football is our language / Here, we're all my people."

"Fútbol is about bringing everyone together," he says. "... This is a world event. This is for all of us. Let the people really have fun and enjoy and show that the United States can definitely pull off a World Cup."

The new "Jump" was released through Coca-Cola's newly minted in-house label Real Thing Records, in partnership with Capitol Records. The "Jump" video, art directed and designed by McFlyy, is illustrated in the style of anime — amplifying its aim to reflect global cultural interest.

Coca-Cola has been an official sponsor for the FIFA World Cup since 1978 and has produced a number of its own anthems for the event, including Jason Derulo's "Colors" in 2018 and a reimagining of Queen's "A Kind of Magic" in 2022 featuring Mexican singer Danna Paola, Egyptian rapper Felukah and Saudi Arabian singer Tamtam.

"Reimagining a song as iconic as Van Halen's 'Jump' came with a real sense of responsibility," Burke wrote to The Associated Press in an exclusive statement. "All four artists leaned into the process as if this was their own single. Our goal was to create an anthem that celebrates the full spectrum of emotions of the tournament and feels just as powerful in a stadium as it does blasting from a car with your friends. We were able to do exactly that."

As for Balvin? He hopes that people respond to the energy of the song, and truly view it as "a fútbol song, you know? And that people vibe with it."

And that is fútbol — not soccer. Don't get it twisted. "I don't even know what soccer is," he joked. "It's always been fútbol."

Online: tinyurl.com/phyc5sna

Report claims to ID street artist Banksy

New York Daily News

The ubiquitous street artist known only as Banksy for the past 30 years may have finally been identified.

An extensive Reuters investigation concluded the man responsible for wall murals spotted on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean is English artist Robin Gunningham.

That publication reached its conclusion after interviewing a dozen people familiar with the 51-year-old artist and studying his work in the U.S., Great Britain, France and Ukraine. Reuters also used media dispatches, court records and reports from law enforcement to identify Gunningham.

One piece of evidence that reportedly pointed to the Bristol native was a September 2000 New York City police report claiming that authorities stopped a suspect who was in the process of defacing a Meatpacking District billboard at 4:20 a.m. That report included a handwritten confession.

One of many steps Gunningham allegedly took to hide his identity was changing his name to David Jones in 2008. That name is so common in England that searching for it would leave sleuths acting on a tip chasing endless possibilities.

Musician Robert Del Naja of the band Massive Attack, who like Gunningham is from Bristol, has long been suspected of being Banksy. Reuters said its researchers ruled out that possibility.

Gunningham hasn't responded to the accusatory report pointing at him. His company, Pest Control, told Reuters the artist "has decided to say nothing."



A runner passes a reproduction of a Banksy mural outside the London Zoo in 2024. Reuters claims to have unmasked the famous street artist's identity.

The artist's lawyer reportedly said without elaborating that Banksy took issue with "many of the details" included in the publication's research without confirming or denying the veracity of the story.

He also argued that maintaining his anonymity allows his client to express himself freely.

Banksy acknowledged in a 2010 LA Weekly interview that what he does could be interpreted as criminal. "I'm not so interested in convincing people in the art world that what I do is 'art,'" he claimed. "I'm more bothered about convincing people in the graffiti community that what I do is really vandalism."

British tabloid the Daily Mail contended in a 2008 report that Gunningham appeared to be artist known as Banksy, yet the artist continued to live and work in obscurity.

Spy thriller author Deighton dies

Associated Press

Len Deighton, a prolific writer whose tough, stylish spy thrillers featured on bestseller lists for decades, has died. He was 97.

Deighton's literary agent, Tim Bates, said he died Sunday. No cause of death was given.

Deighton's first novel, "The IPCRESS File," helped set the tone of cool and gritty 1960s thrillers and was made into a film starring Michael Caine that helped launch both author and actor to long and stellar careers.

Deighton served in the Royal Air Force as part of Britain's then-mandatory national service, studied art and worked as a waiter, pastry chef and flight attendant before having success as a book and magazine illustrator.

He wrote "The IPCRESS File" to amuse himself during a vacation. The story of a secret agent confronted with duplicity and bureaucracy from his own side while investigating a Soviet kidnapping ring, it was published in 1962 and went on to sell millions of copies.

The novel was adapted into a 1965 film, with Caine in a star-making performance as Deighton's protagonist, a sardonic work-

ing-class sophisticate with a love of gourmet food.

Deighton's depiction of espionage as a grubby, error-strewn business was a contrast to the glamour of Ian Fleming's James Bond novels.

Subsequent thrillers "Horse Under Water," "Funeral in Berlin," "Billion-Dollar Brain" and "An Expensive Place to Die" all featured the same hero.

"Berlin Game," published in 1983, was the first of 10 novels featuring the smart, cynical MI6 officer Bernard Samson.

Deighton set several novels around World War II, including "Bomber" (1970), which depicted the conflict in the air war from both British and German viewpoints, and "SS-GB" (1978), an alternative-history novel set in a Nazi-occupied Britain. It was made into a TV series in 2017.

Deighton wrote more than two dozen novels. The last book in his final trilogy, "Faith," "Hope" and "Charity," was published in 1996.

He also wrote historical nonfiction, including a book about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and "Fighter: The True Story of the Battle of Britain."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

SpaceX celebrates birthday with launch

FL ORLANDO — SpaceX has lit many more candles than needed for its birthdays since it was founded by Elon Musk in 2002.

It lit one more Saturday at 8:37 a.m. with a Falcon 9 rocket that launched from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station’s Space Launch Complex 40 flying another 29 Starlink satellites to orbit.

For the company’s 24th birthday, which also fell on National Pi Day in deference to the date being 3/14, the launch commentator had a special countdown and felicitation.

“10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, Pi, 2, 1, ignition, engines full power and liftoff. Go SpaceX. Go Falcon. Happy Birthday,” he said.

This particular candle, as in the first-stage booster, was flying for the sixth time and made another successful recovery landing downrange on the droneship Just Read the Instructions stationed in the Atlantic.

The launch marked the 18th of the year on the Space Coast, all but one of which have been flown by SpaceX.

County’s first measles case is 3rd in state

IL CHICAGO — DeKalb County reported its first measles case of the year as the disease — once eradicated in the U.S. — continues to spread in several states.

Health officials are investigating the case and contacting people who may have been exposed, the DeKalb County Health Department said in a release Thursday.

“Measles is a highly contagious disease, but it can be prevented with vaccination,” said Stacia Runge, director of community health and prevention at DCHD in the release.

This is the third recorded case of measles this year in Illinois.

The U.S. has seen at least 1,362 confirmed cases of measles nationwide this year, with the most in South Carolina, Utah and Florida. A total of 92% of cases were in people who were unvaccinated or whose vaccination status was unknown, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Council rejects law enforcement mask ban

MD TOWSON — A Baltimore County Council bill that would have barred law enforcement officers from wearing masks while on duty and required them to visibly display identification failed Monday night after not garnering support from anyone but the bill sponsor.

Introduced by Councilman Izzy Patoka, a Pikesville Democrat who’s running for county executive, the measure came on the



ERIC KAYNE/Stars and Stripes

Solemn sunrise

A Tomb Sentinel stands guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as the rising sun aligns with the memorial on Tuesday at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va. The centennial of the continuous military guard at the Tomb is on March 25.

heels of concerns about the conduct of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers across the country after two American citizens, Renee Good and Alex Pretti, were fatally shot by immigration agents in Minneapolis.

“To me, ICE is wearing masks for one of two reasons ... One is to create a level of fear, and secondly, to create a sense of terror, and I just don’t think it’s right,” Patoka said at a council meeting Monday.

Other government bodies have advanced similar legislation.

Actress ‘still speechless’ after stolen ring found

IL CHICAGO — Joe Hakimian gestures toward the glittering rings sitting inside glass cases at his downtown jewelry shop, Hakimian Imports. There’s the rare-colored gems he picked up at estate sales, and a sparkling 8-carat diamond that covers the finger. He even had an 18k gold brooch shaped like a tennis racket for sale this week.

But perhaps one of the most unique rings that ever entered the doors of the nearly 50-year-old business is no longer in Hakimian’s possession. That’s because it’s back where it belongs — on the finger of the famous actress Lily Collins.

The star’s engagement ring was stolen about three years ago from a hotel in Los Angeles, but somehow it recently ended up at a trade show in New York, where Hakimian unknowingly bought it. As a big believer in “good karma,” he

said he quickly returned the ring when he learned its origins.

“Having this home means SO much to us,” she wrote in an Instagram story, next to a selfie with the ring prominently displayed. “I’m still speechless it’s back on my finger.”

Collins is best known for her starring role on the Netflix show “Emily in Paris.” She married Charlie McDowell in 2021 after getting engaged the previous year.

ICE releases Columbia protester from detention

TX ALVARADO — A New Jersey resident who was arrested during a 2024 pro-Palestinian protest at Columbia University was released from federal immigration custody on Monday, her lawyers said.

Leqaa Kordia, a 33-year-old Palestinian woman, was held for more than a year in a Texas detention center, where she said she had a seizure and faced inhumane conditions.

Kordia was not a student at Columbia, but was one of five people linked to the Morningside Heights campus whom New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani urged President Donald Trump to drop their immigration cases against. Kordia, whose April 2024 NYPD arrest at Columbia was sealed, was taken into U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody just under a year later, in March 2025.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said Kordia’s stu-

dent visa had expired and accused her of providing financial support to people in “nations hostile to the U.S.” — an allegation that Kordia’s lawyers have denied, and said may refer to payments she made to Palestinian family members.

City: First case of severe mpox virus confirmed

NY NEW YORK — The New York City Department of Health has confirmed the first case of a severe strain of the mpox virus, formerly known as monkeypox, in New York City.

Health officials said Friday that the case is travel related and there is no known local transmission at this time of the mpox clade I virus.

Clade I is said to cause severe symptoms and can be fatal. Symptoms include rashes that cover the face and body. According to the National Institute of Health, the fatality rate ranges from 1.4% to more than 10%.

Health officials urge those who may be at risk of the virus to get the two-dose JYNNEOS vaccine, which can both lower the chance of infection and reduce symptoms if someone becomes sick.

Mpox symptoms usually start to show around three to 17 days after exposure and can last two to four weeks.

Since January 2026, around 45 people in New York City have tested positive for mpox virus — with 16 cases reported in the last month alone.

E. coli outbreak involving cheese hits 3 states

MD SILVER SPRING — E. coli illnesses in Florida, Texas and California have been linked by investigators to cheese from the Fresno, Calif., company Raw Farm, the FDA announced Monday morning.

There have been five people sickened in California, one in Florida and one in Texas from Sept. 1 through Feb. 13. Two people have been hospitalized. None have died. Four of the seven people are 3 years old or younger, the FDA said.

“Whole genome sequencing analysis of E. coli isolates from ill people shows that they are all closely related genetically to each other,” the FDA said. “This means that people in this outbreak are likely to share a common source of infection.”

The FDA said of the seven people sickened, three have been interviewed and all three said they ate Raw Farm Raw Cheddar Cheese.

E. coli O157:H7 is a Shiga toxin-producing form that can lead to hemolytic uremic syndrome or HUS, a form of kidney failure that can be deadly.

As the CDC notes, most people infected with a form of Shiga toxin E. coli get better after five to seven days of stomachaches, vomiting and diarrhea, which can be bloody.



Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
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EDITORIAL

Erik Slavin, Editor in Chief
slavin.erik@stripes.com

Sean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation
moores.sean@stripes.com

Ann Pinson, Digital Managing Editor
pinson.ann@stripes.com

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast
+49(0)631.3615.9324; DSN (314)583.9324

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

Washington
Joe Fleming and Sean Moores,
Washington Bureau Chiefs (acting)
fleming.joe@stripes.com
moores.sean@stripes.com

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

CIRCULATION

Mideast
Shane W. Schiermeier, Circulation Manager
schiermeier.shane@stripes.com
xsscirculation@stripes.com
+49(0)152.5672.5036; DSN (314)583-9111

Europe
Shane W. Schiermeier, Circulation Manager
schiermeier.shane@stripes.com
memberservices@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9136; DSN (314)583.9136

Pacific
Mari Mori, customerhelp@stripes.com
+81-3 6385.3171; DSN (315)229.3171

CONTACT US

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

Reader letters
letters@stripes.com

Additional contacts
stripes.com/contactus

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OPINION

Seoul is learning the hard truth about US promises

By KARISHMA VASWANI
Bloomberg Opinion

South Korea is getting a rude awakening about what happens when U.S. priorities shift: Even long-standing alliances can start to look like relationships of convenience.
Any erosion of American reliability in the Indo-Pacific weakens confidence in Washington. It also strengthens China’s narrative that the U.S. is unwilling to stay the course when its interests move elsewhere.
The reported transfer of U.S. air defense assets — including parts of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system — from the Korean Peninsula to the Middle East to support operations in the Iran war is causing all kinds of alarm. The U.S. and South Korea agreed to install it in 2016, to help Seoul combat North Korea’s growing nuclear and missile threat.
President Donald Trump has also asked countries like Japan, South Korea and China, along with NATO and other allies, to send warships to the Strait of Hormuz to help commercial vessels sail through it safely. He’s delayed his summit with President Xi Jinping, telling reporters Monday it was because of the demands of the war.
Seoul hasn’t made a decision on whether to help Trump, and is wary of getting dragged into an ever deepening crisis. President Lee Jae Myung struck a careful note when he addressed the THAAD issue in parliament last week, acknowledging that the government opposed the redeployment, but conceding that nothing could be done to prevent it.
This is a difficult moment for South Koreans. It’s a reminder that the guarantees offered by their most important ally can’t be trusted. The country has already been bruised by the White House’s tariffs, and now this. To contain the damage, Trump and his team need to offer Seoul reassurance — not chaotic messaging and difficult requests.
Pyongyang has already seized the mo-

ment. It fired more than 10 ballistic missiles toward the waters off its eastern coast on Saturday, days after testing cruise missiles from a new warship. This is worrying for Lee, who said that even if the U.S. military moves air defense assets out of South Korea, it won’t seriously affect Seoul’s ability to defend itself against its nuclear-armed neighbor.
North Korea’s supreme leader Kim Jong Un is in his strongest position in years, as I have written recently. The conflict in Iran will only reinforce his perception that Washington’s attention is divided.
None of this means the U.S.-South Korea alliance is collapsing. Washington stations roughly 28,500 troops there under a mutual defense treaty codified in 1953. For decades, that alliance has anchored deterrence on a peninsula that remains technically at war.
Seoul has been a willing partner, boosting defense spending in response to Trump’s calls for greater burden-sharing. It has also pushed through a special bill to invest \$350 billion in the U.S., in an attempt to placate the president over his arbitrary tariff program.
But this plays neatly into China’s narrative. It objected vehemently to the installation of THAAD around a decade ago, notes Edward Howell, a lecturer in international relations at the University of Oxford and author of the upcoming book, “A New Axis of Upheaval: North Korea, Russia, China, Iran.” Chinese officials have long argued the U.S.-made system could be used to track its own missiles in a Taiwan conflict, weakening Beijing’s nuclear deterrence, he told me. If parts of it are now redeployed elsewhere, “it will raise broader questions about how reliable U.S. alliances are in the Indo-Pacific,” Howell said.
Seoul spent years dealing with economic and political fallout from China for hosting THAAD. The costs ran into the billions, as relations with its largest trading partner sunk to historic lows. But it absorbed that backlash and argued the system was essential to counter North Korea’s evolving missile threat.

Washington has left Seoul wondering whether those sacrifices were made in vain.
This harsh lesson is being absorbed in real time by South Koreans, who may start pushing their government to rely less on the U.S. for protection, and strengthen their own defenses by expanding domestic weapons programs and even considering the idea of a homegrown nuclear arsenal. Public opinion polls have consistently shown widespread support for developing an independent deterrent. If doubts about American reliability deepen, that pressure will grow.
This could trigger a regional arms race, undermining the non-proliferation framework America has spent decades trying to uphold. Lee has also been making overtures to Beijing, which could open up more space for China to expand its influence.
How the U.S. balances its priorities will reinforce longer-term concerns about its security guarantees. Japan, which hosts the largest concentration of forces in Asia, will be particularly sensitive to any signs that these commitments are becoming conditional. Its defense minister confirmed Monday there were no plans to send warships to the Strait of Hormuz.
In the absence of a clear response, Washington could simply clarify whether the reported THAAD redeployment is temporary. Outlining other measures to protect Seoul and preserve deterrence on the peninsula would go a long way to calm nerves. Providing details about additional surveillance, rotational deployments and expanded exercises might also help to reassure anxious citizens. A joint U.S.-South Korea statement should outline that treaty obligations remain iron-clad.

Karishma Vaswani is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering Asia politics with a special focus on China. She was the BBC’s lead Asia presenter and worked for the BBC across Asia and South Asia for two decades. This column reflects the personal views of the author and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

Dissecting a Dem candidate’s income tax fever dream

The Washington Post Editorial Board
One of the most consequential trends in American politics is that Democrats are increasingly discovering what Republicans have known for decades: Voters don’t like taxes. Now the gubernatorial primary in California has become an experiment in how far tax cuts might take a Democratic politician in one of the country’s bluest states.
Katie Porter, one of the most progressive legislators during her six years in Congress, is running for governor and polling in the middle of a crowded field. To boost her languishing campaign, she has proposed eliminating state income taxes — for households making under \$100,000 a year.
“I’ll work the issue at both ends,” she tweeted on Friday. “Lowering taxes for those who are struggling and raising them on the biggest corporations that can afford to pay.”
It’s encouraging to see a California politician acknowledge that high taxes have made the state’s residents struggle, and no doubt families would benefit from having a few thousand dollars more to budget each year. States like Mississippi and Indiana, which already have lower tax burdens, are

also trying to phase out income taxes for everyone.
Yet those states are doing so over the course of many years, with deficit targets blocking cuts that wouldn’t be fiscally appropriate. Porter’s idea isn’t a plan so much as a slogan, and it presents plenty of problems.
For one, rather than push for spending cuts to match the tax cuts, Porter simply says she’ll go after corporations to help tackle California’s estimated \$18 billion deficit. The state already ranks 48th in the Tax Foundation’s State Tax Competitiveness Index, and it can always get worse.
To her credit, Porter has rejected a disastrous wealth tax that could appear on the ballot in November. Yet that doesn’t mean she wouldn’t go after the “rich” in other ways, even though the top 1% of earners in California already contribute about 45% of state income taxes. Households making less than \$100,000 contribute around 10%, though estimates vary.
Further raising taxes on the wealthiest — and most mobile — people in her state is risky and not guaranteed to increase revenue. Even if it does, California already suffers from wide fluctuations because it relies on so few people to pay so much.
Yet Porter also contradicts herself. Ever

since President Donald Trump embarked on his tariff campaign, Democrats have rightly pointed out that higher taxes on corporations get passed down to the consumer. Porter herself has vowed to “fight Trump administration policies like counterproductive tariffs that will only hit you in the pocketbook with higher prices for necessities and make the problem worse.” Why would Trump’s taxes on corporations affect prices but not hers?
The biggest problem, however, is that the plan is dishonest. Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., responded this way to Porter: “So how will we pay for single payer health care? One of the things I admire about Bernie Sanders is he is honest that people need to pay taxes to fund foundational social services in healthcare, education, & childcare. The taxes should be progressive. But the math needs to work.”
Khanna is an imperfect messenger, but he’s right. The reality is that while both parties have tax cut fever, too few politicians on either side of the aisle are honest about how revenue and spending need to balance. Rather than tweaking the tax code to benefit select groups, everyone would be better off if politicians focused on growing the pie rather than dividing it up in increasingly complex ways.

Bizarro

CARTOONISTS' FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Wayne 85 PROPS
3-19-26

Want to buy my nephew's jokes?



Wasn't that on "The Simpsons"?

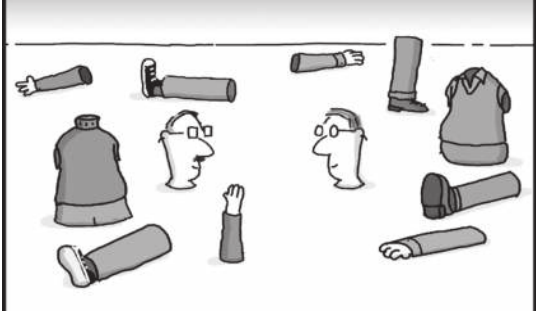


Do you get high to write these?



Loose Parts

FRANK MEETS HIS LONG-LOST BROTHER AFTER THEY WERE SEPARATED AT BIRTH



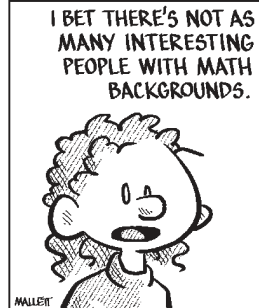
Blazek
3-19
Get a signed copy of the NEW LP book! Get this cartoon signed & framed at LoosePartsComic.com
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Frazz

IT SEEMS LIKE A LOT OF INTERESTING PEOPLE HAVE BACKGROUNDS IN MUSIC.



I BET THERE'S NOT AS MANY INTERESTING PEOPLE WITH MATH BACKGROUNDS.



THAT WOULD MAKE AN INTERESTING GRAPH.



AND YOU JUST INSULTED THE INTERESTING PEOPLE WHO COULD MAKE YOU ONE.

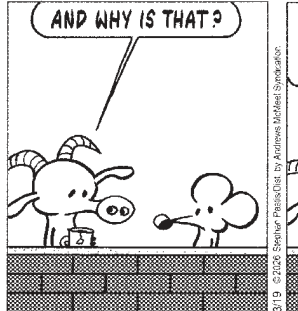


Pearls Before Swine

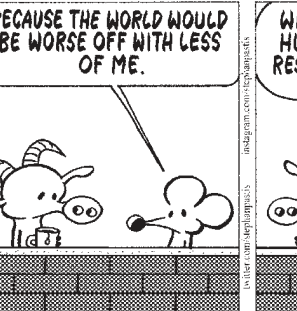
HAVE YOU EVER GONE ON A DIET?



NEVER.



AND WHY IS THAT?

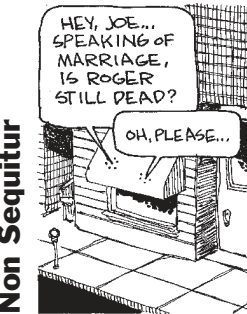


BECAUSE THE WORLD WOULD BE WORSE OFF WITH LESS OF ME.

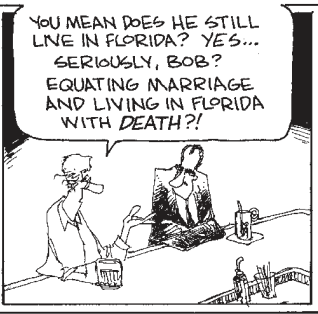


Non Sequitur

HEY, JOE... SPEAKING OF MARRIAGE, IS ROGER STILL DEAD?



OH, PLEASE...



YOU MEAN DOES HE STILL LIVE IN FLORIDA? YES... SERIOUSLY, BOB? EQUATING MARRIAGE AND LIVING IN FLORIDA WITH DEATH?!

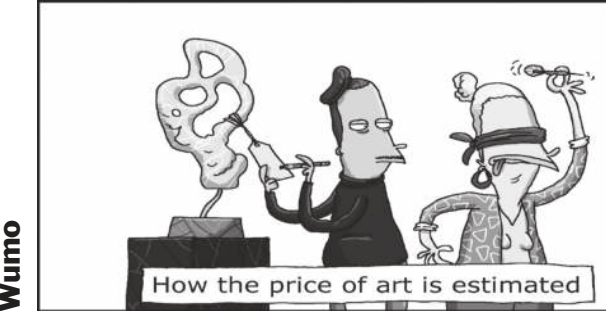


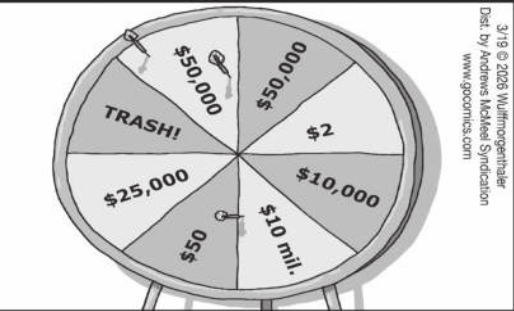
OK, YOU'RE RIGHT. THAT WAS UNFAIR CONSIDERING...



Wumo

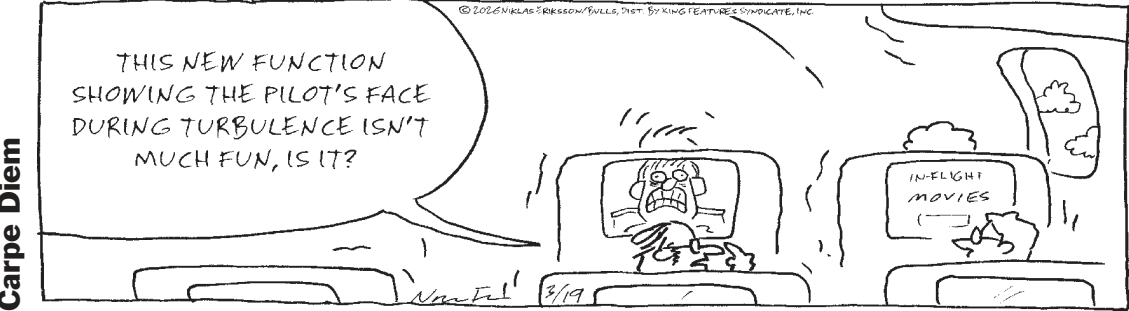
How the price of art is estimated





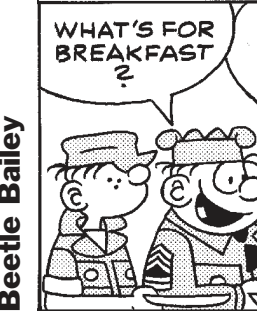
Carpe Diem

THIS NEW FUNCTION SHOWING THE PILOT'S FACE DURING TURBULENCE ISN'T MUCH FUN, IS IT?

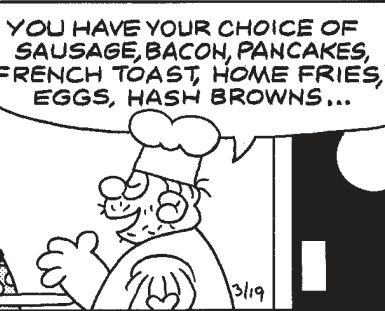


Beetle Bailey

WHAT'S FOR BREAKFAST?



YOU HAVE YOUR CHOICE OF SAUSAGE, BACON, PANCAKES, FRENCH TOAST, HOME FRIES, EGGS, HASH BROWNS...



SARGE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO CHOOSE



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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

- ACROSS**

1 Halt

5 Young lion

8 Totals

12 Henry VIII's Catherine

13 Egypt's cont.

14 Actress Merrill

15 Perimeter

16 Marseilles monarch

17 Future atty.'s exam

18 Cuba's Fidel

20 Close

22 Italian dessert

26 Kilmer poem

29 Silent

30 Physique

31 Iranian money

32 Back talk

33 Tennis star Sampras

34 Earth Day mo.

35 Small barrel

36 Resurrected

37 Italian dessert

40 Tiny bit

41 Fame

45 Twain's Huck

47 Slugger's stat

49 "Understood"

50 Golden Fleece ship

51 Tease

52 Counterfeit

53 Porgy's love

54 Paris summer
- DOWN**

1 Detail, briefly

2 "I did it!"

3 PTA and NEA, e.g.

4 Ballpark snack

5 Ersatz chocolate

6 Flying saucer

7 Mention

8 Politico Stevenson

9 Sheds clothing

10 Crime lab evidence

11 Used a chair

19 Dorm VIPs

21 Stately tree

23 Barcelona buddy

24 Part of a chord

25 Idyllic place
- 55 Tropical tuber

26 Links hazard

27 Morning co-host Kelly

28 Salary, say

32 "A Perfect Spy" author John

33 Chopin, for one

35 Actress Dennings

36 Numbered rd.

38 Taboos

39 "Survivor" team

42 Job-safety org.

43 Sport

44 Jules Verne captain

45 "Terrif!"

46 Rage

48 Morsel

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

3-19

CRYPTOQUIP

VQEF XTZNEA YPTKC LNYQF
LEUR RTKUY GWLEAW VQEAWX
VEUF FT HWZTLW LWLHWPX
TG? FQW YNPA XCTKFX.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN A DEER WITH LARGE ANTLERS BECOMES SUPER-SCARED OR COLD, DOES IT GET MOOSE BUMPS?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals M



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SCOREBOARD/WNBA

COLLEGE BASKETBALL		
Women’s NCAA Tournament First Four Wednesday, March 18 At Durham, N.C. Nebraska (18-12) vs. Richmond (26-7) At Austin, Texas Missouri St. (22-12) vs. Stephen F. Austin (25-9) Thursday, March 19 At Columbia, S.C. Southern U. (19-13) vs. Samford (16-18) At Iowa City, Iowa Virginia (19-11) vs. Arizona St. (24-10) Fort Worth 3 First Round Friday, March 20 At Austin, Texas Texas (31-3) vs. Missouri St.-Stephen F. Austin winner Oregon (22-12) vs. Virginia Tech (23-9) At Ann Arbor, Mich. NC State (20-10) vs. Tennessee (16-13) Michigan (25-6) vs. Holy Cross (23-9) Saturday, March 21 At Morgantown, W.Va. Kentucky (23-10) vs. James Madison (26-8) W. Virginia (27-6) vs. Miami (Ohio) (28-6) At Louisville, Ky. Alabama (23-7) vs. Rhode Island (28-4) Louisville (27-7) vs. Vermont (27-7) Second Round Sunday, March 22 At Austin, Texas Texas—Missouri St.-Stephen F. Austin winner vs. Oregon-Virginia Tech winner At Ann Arbor, Mich. Michigan-Holy Cross winner vs. NC State-Tennessee winner Monday, March 23 At Morgantown, W.Va. West Virginia-Miami (Ohio) winner vs. Kentucky-James Madison winner At Louisville, Ky. Louisville-Vermont winner vs. Alabama-Rhode Island winner Sacramento 2 First Round Saturday, March 21 At Los Angeles UCLA (31-1) vs. Cal Baptist (23-10)	Oklahoma St. (23-9) vs. Princeton (26-3) Friday, March 20 At Minneapolis Mississippi (23-11) vs. Gonzaga (24-9) Minnesota (22-8) vs. Green Bay (25-8) At Durham, N.C. Baylor (24-8) vs. Nebraska-Richmond winner Duke (24-8) vs. Coll. of Charleston (27-5) At Baton Rouge, La. Texas Tech (25-7) vs. Villanova (25-7) LSU (27-5) vs. Jacksonville (24-8) Second Round Monday, March 23 At Los Angeles UCLA-Cal Baptist winner vs. Oklahoma St.-Princeton winner Sunday, March 22 At Minneapolis Minnesota-Green Bay winner vs. Mississippi-Gonzaga winner At Durham, N.C. Duke-Coll. of Charleston winner vs. Baylor—Nebraska-Richmond winner At Baton Rouge, La. LSU-Jacksonville winner vs. Texas Tech-Villanova winner Sacramento 4 First Round Saturday, March 21 At Columbia, S.C. South Carolina (31-3) vs. Southern U.-Samford winner Clemson (21-11) vs. Southern Cal (17-13) At Iowa City, Iowa Georgia (22-9) vs. Virginia-Arizona St. winner Iowa (26-6) vs. Fairleigh Dickinson (30-4) Friday, March 20 At Norman, Okla. Michigan St. (22-8) vs. Colorado St. (27-7) Oklahoma (24-7) vs. Idaho (29-5) At Fort Worth, Texas Washington. (21-10) vs. S. Dakota St. (27-6) TCU (29-5) vs. UC San Diego (24-8) Second Round Monday, March 23 At Columbia, S.C. South Carolina—Southern U.-Samford winner vs. Clemson-Southern Cal winner	At Iowa City, Iowa Iowa-Fairleigh Dickinson winner vs. Georgia—Virginia-Arizona St. winner Sunday, March 22 At Norman, Okla. Oklahoma-Idaho winner vs. Michigan St.-Colorado St. winner At Fort Worth, Texas TCU-UC San Diego winner vs. Washington-S. Dakota St. winner Fort Worth 1 First Round Saturday, March 21 At Storrs, Conn. UConn (34-0) vs. UTSA (18-15) Iowa St. (22-9) vs. Syracuse (23-8) At Columbus, Ohio Notre Dame (22-10) vs. Fairfield (28-4) Ohio St. (26-7) vs. Howard (26-7) At Nashville, Tenn. Illinois (21-11) vs. Colorado (22-11) Vanderbilt (27-4) vs. High Point (27-5) Friday, March 20 At Chapel Hill, N.C. Maryland (23-8) vs. Murray St. (31-3) North Carolina (26-7) vs. W. Illinois (26-5) Second Round Monday, March 23 At Storrs, Conn. UConn-UTSA winner vs. Iowa St.-Syracuse winner At Columbus, Ohio Ohio St.-Howard winner vs. Notre Dame-Fairfield winner At Nashville, Tenn. Vanderbilt-High Point winner vs. Illinois-Colorado winner Sunday, March 22 At Chapel Hill, N.C. North Carolina-W. Illinois winner vs. Maryland-Murray St. winner Men’s NIT Tuesday UNC Wilmington 68, Yale 67 Auburn 78, South Alabama 67 Liberty 77, George Mason 71 Wichita State 74, Wyoming 70 Oklahoma State 84, Davidson 80 Tulsa 89, Stephen F. Austin 84, OT Seattle 67, St. Thomas 52 UNLV 75, UC Irvine 72

DEALS		
Tuesday’s transactions BASEBALL Major League Baseball American League BOSTON RED SOX — Sent LHP T.J. Sikke-ma and RHPs Seth Martinez, Wyatt Olds and Noah Song to Worcester (IL). CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Optioned RHP Jonathan Cannon to Charlotte (IL). KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Optioned RHP Mason Black, RF John Rave and CF Kame-ron Misner to Omaha (IL). MINNESOTA TWINS — Sent INF Tanner Schobel and OFs Tyler Fedko and Kala’i Rosario to St. Paul (IL). NEW YORK YANKEES — Sent RHP Bradley Hanner to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL). TAMPA BAY RAYS — Optioned SS Carson Williams and LF Jacob Melton to Durham (IL). National League COLORADO ROCKIES — Optioned INF Adael Amador and RHP Tanner Gordon to Albuquerque (PCL). NEW YORK METS — Optioned OF MJ Me-lendez and RHP Christian Scott to Syra-cuse (IL). Sent RHPs Adbert Alzolay, Nick Burdi and Daniel Duarte, INFs Christian Ar-royo and Jose Rojas to Syracuse. PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Optioned LHP Evan Sisk to Indianapolis (IL). SAN DIEGO PADRES — Optioned RHP Ty Adcock to El Paso (PCL). SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Optioned RHP Blade Tidwell to Sacramento (PCL).	FOOTBALL National Football League ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed DT Andrew Billings and LB Jack Gibbens to contracts. ATLANTA FALCONS — Signed DE Da’Sh-awn Hand, LB Azeez Ojulari and WR Ola-mide Zaccheaus to contracts. CLEVELAND BROWNS — Re-signed CBs Tre Avery and D’Angelo Ross. DALLAS COWBOYS — Signed DB Reddy Steward to a contract. INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Signed TE Mo Alie-Cox, DB Jonathan Owens, DTs Jerry Tillery, Derrick Nnadi and CB Cam Taylor-Britt to contracts. LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Re-signed DT Thomas Booker IV to a contract extension. LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Signed LB Denzel Perryman and DE Dalvin Tomlinson to contracts. LOS ANGELES RAMS — Signed LB Grant Stuard to a contract. MIAMI DOLPHINS — Signed TE Ben Sins to a contract. MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Signed P Johnny Hekker to a one-year contract. NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Signed RB Ty Chandler and DT John Ridgeway to contracts. NEW YORK JETS — Signed OT Chukwuma Okoroafor to a contract. SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Signed CB Nate Hobbs to a contract. SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Signed RB George Holani, DT Brandon Pili and CB	Noah Igbinoghene to contracts. TENNESSEE TITANS — Signed RB Julius Chestnut and DB Tony Adams to con-tracts. WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Signed WR Van Jefferson to a contract. HOCKEY National Hockey League BUFFALO SABRES — Signed D Gavin McCarthy to a three-year, entry-level con-tract. FLORIDA PANTHERS — Reinstated D Seth Jones from long-term injured reserve. Placed F Brad Marchand on injured re-serve. MINNESOTA WILD — Recalled F Hunter Haight from Iowa (AHL). TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Sent F Mi-chael Pezzetta and D Henry Thrus to To-ronto (AHL). SOCCER Major League Soccer SEATTLE SOUNDERS FC — Signed D Anti-no Lopez to a one-year contract. SPORTING KANSAS CITY — Signed D Dje-go Borges to a four-year contract that in-cludes a 2029-30 club option. TORONTO FC — Signed F Dániel Sallói to a 1.5-year contract extension that includes a 2027-28 club option. National Women’s Soccer League ANGEL CITY FC — Placed M Hina Sugita on the season-ending injury list.

AUTO RACING		
NASCAR Cup Series Schedule-Winners Jan. 31 — x-NASCAR Clash Heat Race 1, Winston-Salem, N.C. Jan. 31 — x-NASCAR Clash Heat Race 2, Winston-Salem, N.C. Jan. 31 — x-NASCAR Clash Heat Race 3, Winston-Salem, N.C. Jan. 31 — x-NASCAR Clash Heat Race 4, Winston-Salem, N.C. Feb. 4 — x-Clash Last Chance Qualifying Race (Josh Berry) Feb. 4 — Cook Out Clash at Bowman Gray (Ryan Preece) Feb. 12 — x-America 250 Florida Duel at DAYTONA (Joey Logano) Feb. 12 — x-America 250 Florida Duel at DAYTONA (Chase Elliott) Feb. 15 — DAYTONA 500 (Tyler Reddick) Feb. 22 — Autotrader 400 (Tyler Reddick) March 1 — DuraMAX Texas Grand Prix Powered by RelayDyne (Tyler Reddick) March 8 — Straight Talk Wireless 500 (Ryan Blaney) March 15 — Pennzoil 400 presented by	Jiffy Lube (Denny Hamlin) March 22 — Goodyear 400, Darlington, S.C. March 29 — Cook Out 400, Ridgeway, Va. April 12 — Food City 500, Bristol, Tenn. April 19 — AdventHealth 400, Kansas City, Kan. April 26 — Jack Link’s 500, Talladega, Ala. May 3 — Würth 400 presented by LIQUI MOLY, Fort Worth, Texas May 10 — Go Bowling at The Glen, Wat-kins Glen, N.Y. May 17 — NASCAR All-Star Race, Dover, Del. May 24 — Coca-Cola 600, Concord, N.C. May 31 — Cracker Barrel 400, Lebanon, Tenn. June 7 — FireKeepers Casino 400, Brook-lyn, Mich. June 14 — NASCAR Cup Series Race at Pocono, Long Pond, Pa. June 21 — Anduril 250, San Diego June 28 — Save Mart 350, Sonoma, Calif. July 5 — NASCAR Cup Series Race at Chi-cagoland, Joliet, Ill. July 12 — Quaker State 400 Available at Walmart, Hampton, Ga.	July 19 — Window World 450, North Wil-kesboro, N.C. July 26 — Brickyard 400, Speedway, Ind. Aug. 9 — Iowa Corn 350 Powered by Etha-nol, Newton, Iowa Aug. 15 — Cook Out 400, Richmond, Va. Aug. 23 — NASCAR Cup Series Race at New Hampshire, Loudon, N.H. Aug. 29 — Coke Zero Sugar 400, Daytona Beach, Fla. Sept. 6 — Cook Out Southern 500, Dar-lington, S.C. Sept. 13 — Enjoy Illinois 300, Madison, Ill. Sept. 19 — Bass Pro Shops Night Race, Bristol, Tenn. Sept. 27 — Hollywood Casino 400, Kan-sas City, Kan. Oct. 4 — South Point 400, Las Vegas Oct. 11 — Bank of America 400, Concord, N.C. Oct. 18 — Freeway Insurance 500, Avon-dale, Ariz. Oct. 25 — YellaWood 500, Talladega, Ala. Nov. 1 — Xfinity 500, Ridgeway, Va. Nov. 8 — NASCAR Cup Series Champion-ship Race, Homestead, Fla. x-non-points race

League, players reach agreement

Deal should greatly boost player salaries

By DOUG FEINBERG
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The WNBA and its players’ union reached an agreement in principle on a trans-formational new collective bar-gaining agreement early Wednes-day morning.

Specifics still need to be final-ized over the next few weeks as lawyers on both sides work on the new CBA. A term sheet should be done in the next day or two. It will then need to be ratified by the players and then approved by the league’s Board of Governors.

“I just want to say we have aligned on key elements of a new collective bargaining agreement together. We still need to finalize a formal term sheet, but the pro-gress made in these discussions marks a transformative step for-ward for players and the league,” WNBA Commissioner Cathy En-gelbert said. “It underscores a shared commitment to the contin-ued growth of the game. So we’ll share additional details as they be-come available.”

The deal is expected to greatly increase player salaries with mil-lion dollar players — a first for the league entering its 30th season that will start on time. That would increase salaries fourfold from last season.

“For the first time, player sala-ries are tied to a truly meaningful share of league revenue, driving exponential growth in the salary cap, increasing average compen-sation beyond half a million dol-lars and raising the standard across facilities, staffing and sup-port,” WNBPA president Nneka Ogwumike said.

The agreement is set to reflect the league’s skyrocketing growth and popularity. Attendance, vie-wership and investment from stakeholders has increased to his-toric levels over the past few years.

“The deal is going to be trans-formational,” union vice presi-dent Breanna Stewart said. “It’s going to build and help create a system where everybody is get-ting exactly what they deserve and more from on the court and off the court aspects.”

The deal came after the two sides spent the past eight days in intense in-person negotiations that lasted for more than 100 hours. They came to the agree-ment at about 2:20 a.m. Wednes-day after spending more than 10 hours of discussions Tuesday.

“This is historical for women’s



JOHN LOCHER/AP

Union president Nneka Ogwumike said salaries will be tied to a “truly meaningful share of league revenue” for the first time.

sports. I told Cathy it’s not just for the players that are entering the league or the players that aren’t already here,” Ogwumike added. “We’re just really grateful to be able to come to a deal. We’re proud of ourselves.”

WNBA leadership and the union met with reporters together in the lobby of a New York hotel shortly before 3 a.m.

The deal comes 17 months after the players opted out of their pre-vious agreement and five months after the previous deal was initial-ly set to expire, with talks often be-coming contentious.

“We opted out because what we were giving to this league and what we were getting back didn’t match,” union executive commit-tee member Alysha Clark said. “You could feel the growth every-where, but it wasn’t showing up for the players the way it should. So we stayed with it until it did.”

Revenue sharing has been the biggest hurdle over the course of the negotiations. Other key issues that were slowing down getting a deal done included housing and franchise tags on players.

“I hope young girls and women see this and feel it, to know their voice matters, their value matters, and they don’t have to settle for less than that,” said executive committee member Brianna Turn-er. “Now we get back to the game. Back to competing, back to that feeling, and back to being out there with our fans.”

The league will now have a sprint over the next two months to get to opening day May 8. An ex-pansion draft for new teams in To-ronto and Portland needs to take place. Teams will also need to ne-gotiate with the more than 80% of players who are free agents this offseason. Training camps are set to open April 19 — six days after the college draft.

NBA

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	45	23	.662	—
New York	45	25	.643	1
Toronto	38	29	.567	6½
Philadelphia	37	32	.536	8½
Brooklyn	17	51	.250	28
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	38	30	.559	—
Miami	38	31	.551	½
Atlanta	37	31	.544	1
Charlotte	35	34	.507	3½
Washington	16	52	.235	22
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	49	19	.721	—
Cleveland	42	27	.609	7½
Milwaukee	28	40	.412	21
Chicago	28	40	.412	21
Indiana	15	54	.217	34½
Western Conference				
Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	51	18	.739	—
Houston	41	26	.612	9
Memphis	23	44	.343	27
New Orleans	23	46	.333	28
Dallas	23	46	.333	28
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	54	15	.783	—
Denver	42	27	.609	12
Minnesota	42	27	.609	12
Portland	33	36	.478	21
Utah	20	48	.294	33½
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	43	25	.632	—
Phoenix	39	30	.565	4½
L.A. Clippers	34	34	.500	9
Golden State	33	35	.485	10
Sacramento	18	52	.257	26

Tuesday's games	
Oklahoma City 113, Orlando 108	
Detroit 130, Washington 117	
New York 136, Indiana 110	
Charlotte 136, Miami 106	
Minnesota 116, Phoenix 104	
Cleveland 123, Milwaukee 116	
San Antonio 132, Sacramento 104	
Denver 124, Philadelphia 96	
Wednesday's games	
Golden State at Boston	
Oklahoma City at Brooklyn	
Portland at Indiana	
L.A. Clippers at New Orleans	
Toronto at Chicago	
Utah at Minnesota	
Atlanta at Dallas	
Denver at Memphis	
L.A. Lakers at Houston	
Thursday's games	
Detroit at Washington	
Orlando at Charlotte	
Cleveland at Chicago	
L.A. Clippers at New Orleans	
L.A. Lakers at Miami	
Phoenix at San Antonio	
Milwaukee at Utah	
Philadelphia at Sacramento	

ROUNDUP

SGA leads Thunder to 10th straight win

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 40 points and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Orlando Magic 113-108 Tuesday night for their 10th straight win.

Chet Holmgren added 20 points and 12 rebounds for Oklahoma City and Ajay Mitchell had 16 points, five of them during a mid-fourth quarter run that put the Thunder ahead to stay.

Paolo Banchero had 32 points, 10 rebounds and five assists for Orlando. Jalen Suggs added 14 points for the Magic, who lost on a second straight night after a seven-game win streak of their own.

Gilgeous-Alexander's record 129th game scoring 20 or more points was accomplished on 14-for-27 shooting and 9-for-11 free throws. He hit 3 of 5 3-point shots, the final one giving OKC a 102-96 lead with 3:11 remaining.

His streak of 20-plus point road games, also an NBA record, reached 61 games.

Pistons 130, Wizards 117: Jalen Duren had 36 points and 12 rebounds for Eastern Conference-leading Detroit, which lost fellow All-Star Cade Cunningham to back spasms in the first half of a victory over host Washington.

Cunningham was hurt early in the first quarter while diving for a loose ball. He played for a few more minutes before being taken out at the 6:40 mark, and the team said during the second quarter he would not return.

Reserve Daniss Jenkins added 15 points for the Pistons, who have won four of five and sent the Wizards to their 13th straight loss. The teams meet again Thursday when Washington could equal its 14-game skid from early this season that sent it to a 1-15 start.

Knicks 136, Pacers 110: Josh Hart scored a season-high 33 points on 12-for-13 shooting, including 5-for-5 from 3-point range to lead host New York over Indiana.



KEVIN KOLCZYNSKI/AP

Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander lays the ball up as he is defended by Magic guards Jevon Carter, center, and Jalen Suggs during the second half Tuesday in Orlando, Fla.

OG Anunoby scored 26 points and Karl Anthony Towns added 22 points and 11 rebounds in the Knicks' fourth straight win.

Jarace Walker led the Pacers with 16 points as Indiana's losing streak reached 14 games.

Hornets 136, Heat 106: LaMelo Ball had 30 points and 13 assists, and host Charlotte pulled away in a huge fourth quarter to beat short-handed Miami.

Coby White scored 24 points off the bench and rookie Kon Knueppel added 22 as the Hornets (35-34) won for the ninth time in 12 games. Brandon Miller scored 16

for Charlotte, which is 10th in the Eastern Conference.

Tyler Herro had 20 points and eight rebounds to lead the Heat (38-31), who dropped their second straight following a season-best seven-game winning streak. They played without star forward Bam Adebayo, who sat out with right calf tightness after being listed as questionable before the game.

Timberwolves 116, Suns 104: Julius Randle scored 32 points and Bones Hyland had 22 points off the bench to help host Minnesota offset absence of All-Star Anthony Edwards and beat Phoenix.

Ayo Dosunmu added 19 points and Rudy Gobert had 19 rebounds for the Timberwolves, who are 7-4 without Edwards this season. The NBA's third-leading scorer will miss the next week or two with knee inflammation.

Devin Booker scored 34 points despite shooting 1-for-7 from 3-point range for the Suns, who finished a five-game road trip with their third straight loss.

Cavaliers 123, Bucks 116: Evan Mobley had 27 points and a season-high 15 rebounds, and James Harden also scored 27 as visiting Cleveland opened a three-game trip by beating short-handed Milwaukee.

In a game featuring 11 ties and 16 lead changes, Cleveland pulled ahead for good 103-100 on Sam Merrill's 3-pointer with 6:55 remaining, which started an 8-0 run.

The Bucks' Kevin Porter Jr. had 25 points and 10 assists. Ousmane Dieng, Bobby Portis and Ryan Rollins added 19 points each.

Spurs 132, Kings 104: Victor Wembanyama had 18 points and eight rebounds, and visiting San Antonio beat Sacramento.

Wembanyama shot 7-for-14 with a pair of 3-pointers and three assists to help the Spurs to their first win at Golden 1 Center in more than two years.

Maxime Raynaud had 32 points and nine rebounds for the Kings. Doug McDermott added 12 points.

Nuggets 124, 76ers 96: Christian Braun had 22 points, Nikola Jokic finished with 14 assists and host Denver routed injury-plagued Philadelphia.

The Nuggets kept pace with Minnesota in a tight Western Conference race. There are 1½ games separating the third-place Los Angeles Lakers and the Timberwolves in sixth.

The 76ers played without Joel Embiid (right oblique strain), Tyrese Maxey (sprained finger) and Kelly Oubre Jr. (left elbow strain). Paul George is serving a 25-game suspension.

Wolves sideline Edwards with knee injury; Randle steps up

By DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS— The stretch run for the Minnesota Timberwolves in the thick of the Western Conference race for playoff positioning became a bit tougher with a multi-game absence for All-Star Anthony Edwards.

Julius Randle delivered a winning performance on the first night of the test, posting his second straight 32-point game for Minnesota in a 116-104 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Tuesday after the team announced Edwards would miss one to two weeks with right knee inflammation before being re-evaluated.

Edwards will miss at least four games,



Edwards

forward.

"Yeah, I'm probably the focus a little bit more, but regardless of if he's playing or not, I've got to be aggressive," said Randle.

Coach Chris Finch pointed to Randle's decisiveness. When he spends too much time using his overpowering frame to back down

with the Timberwolves playing four times in a six-day span. A two-week absence would cost him seven games.

So now is the time for Randle to step up in what has been a disappointing season for the 11th-year

opponent in the post, the offense can bog down.

"Playing at my pace, getting into my flow, getting to my spots," Randle said. "I don't think anybody can really stop me if I'm getting to my spots."

Edwards will finish the season with a career low in games played, having already missed four games with a right hamstring strain and a total of six games over three different stretches with a lingering right foot injury. To be eligible for the NBA's postseason awards, he must play in seven more games. Minnesota, which is tied for fifth place in the West with the Denver Nuggets, has 13 games left on the schedule.

Edwards, who played in 79 games in each of the three previous seasons, is averaging a career-best 29.5 points per game, with a newly refined midrange shot to round out his many skills and the best clutch-time production of his six-year career. Fortunately for the T-wolves, this injury is minor and is not expected to affect his availability or condition for the postseason.

In the meantime, they have an opportunity to revive Randle after a dormant stretch and give their other guards more extended action. Minnesota is 7-4 without Edwards this season, after all, so after a rough 1-3 road trip last week, this could be the jolt it needs as the playoffs approach.

NHL/WORLD CUP

NHL ROUNDUP

Caufield nets 40th, sending Canadiens past Bruins in OT

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Cole Caufield scored 4:38 into overtime as the Montreal Canadiens edged the Boston Bruins 3-2 in a rivalry matchup Tuesday night.

Caufield tapped a pass from Nick Suzuki into the back of the net for his 40th of the season, becoming the first Canadian to reach the mark since Vincent Damphousse in 1993-94.

Suzuki and Josh Anderson also scored while Jakub Dobes made 26 saves for Montreal, which snapped a two-game losing skid.

Brendan Gallagher picked up an assist in his 900th NHL game, all for the Canadiens.

Pavel Zacha had both goals for the Bruins, and Jeremy Swayman stopped 28 shots.

Montreal sat third in the Atlantic Division and two points ahead of Boston heading into Wednesday’s games.

Bruins star winger David Pastrnak extended his point streak against the Canadiens to 14 games, tying Bobby Orr for the longest by a Boston player against Montreal.

Sabres 2, Golden Knights 0: Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made 27 saves to record his first shutout of the season and visiting Buffalo defeated Vegas.

Josh Doan and Josh Norris scored for the Sabres, who opened their four-game road trip with their 10th win in 11 games since the Olympic break.

Buffalo has been the winningest team in the NHL since Dec. 9, sporting a 31-6-2 mark for 64 points. The surge has the Sabres atop the Atlantic Division, ahead of

Tampa Bay and Montreal.

The Golden Knights, meanwhile, had their two-game win streak snapped after opening their four-game homestand with wins over Pittsburgh and Chicago, outscoring the Penguins and Blackhawks by a combined final of 10-2.

Blue Jackets 5, Hurricanes 1: Charlie Coyle had a goal and three assists, Danton Heinen scored his 100th career goal and host Columbus beat Carolina.

Mason Marchment, Denton Mateychuk and Mathieu Olivier also scored for the Blue Jackets, who have gotten points in a season-high 10-straight games (6-0-4). Cole Sillinger and Adam Fantilli each added two assist, and Jet Greaves stopped 27 shots.

Andrei Svechnikov scored and Brandon Bussi made 25 saves for the Hurricanes.

Marchment scored on a power play 5:25 into the first period, and Columbus has scored in the opening 10 minutes in 13 of its last 20 games.

Islanders 3, Maple Leafs 1: Calum Ritchie had a goal and an assist on a pair of first-period power plays as visiting New York beat Toronto.

Brayden Schenn scored his first goal since being acquired from St. Louis ahead of the trade deadline, and Emil Heineman also scored for the Islanders, who have won nine of 12.

The Maple Leafs fell to 2-1-1 since losing captain Auston Matthews for the season to a knee injury — a run on the heels of an ugly 0-6-2 slide that all but cratered their playoff hopes.



CHRISTINNE MUSCHI, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

The Canadiens’ Cole Caufield, right, celebrates his goal on Bruins goaltender Jeremy Swayman as Boston’s Charlie McAvoy skates during overtime in Montreal on Tuesday.

Wild 4, Blackhawks 3 (OT): Mats Zuccarello scored 3:09 into overtime, and visiting Minnesota stopped a three-game slide by toppling Chicago.

Marcus Johansson had a goal and two assists as the Wild improved to 3-0 against the Blackhawks this season. Vladimir Tarasenko and Ryan Hartman also scored, and Brock Faber had three assists.

Minnesota forward Nick Foligno received a warm welcome in his first game against Chicago since he was acquired in a March 6 trade with the Blackhawks.

Predators 4, Jets 3 (SO): Ryan O’Reilly scored the lone goal in the shootout to lift visiting Nashville over Winnipeg.

O’Reilly beat Connor Hellebuyck to the glove side in the first round of the shootout. Predators’ netminder Juuse Saros secured the win by stopping Gabriel Vilar-di, Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor.

Jonathan Toews forced overtime for the Jets, tying the game with 1:01 left in the third period.

Oilers 5, Sharks 3: Max Jones and Zach Hyman scored third-period goals, Adam Henrique had a pair of assists and host Edmonton rallied without star forward Leon Draisaitl for a big win over San Jose.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Connor Murphy and Vasily Podkolzin also scored for the Oilers, who improved to 5-2-1 in March and moved into a tie with Anaheim atop the Pacific Division.

Draisaitl is expected to miss the remainder of the regular season with a lower-body injury.

Canucks 5, Panthers 2: Elias Pettersson scored twice, including the 200th goal of his NHL career, and host Vancouver held over Florida.

The Swedish center opened the scoring at the 3:49 mark of the first period, blasting a one-timer in from inside the faceoff circle during an early power play. It was his 14th tally of the season and his first goal in 21 games.

Marco Rossi also scored and added a pair of assists for the Canucks.

Lightning 6, Kraken 2: Nikita Kucherov scored three goals for his sixth career hat trick and added two assists as visiting Tampa Bay beat Seattle.

Brandon Hagel had a goal and three assists for the Lightning, who remained four points behind first-place Buffalo in the Atlantic Division.

Bobby McMann and Jared McCann scored for the Kraken, tied with Los Angeles at 71 points for the final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference								
Atlantic Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Buffalo	68	42	20	6	90	237	200	
Tampa Bay	66	41	21	4	86	237	184	
Montreal	67	37	20	10	84	236	222	
Boston	68	37	23	8	82	224	214	
Detroit	68	37	23	8	82	200	203	
Ottawa	66	34	23	9	77	225	205	
Toronto	69	29	28	12	70	216	241	
Florida	67	33	31	3	69	201	225	
Metropolitan Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Carolina	67	42	19	6	90	235	197	
Pittsburgh	67	34	18	15	83	230	204	
N.Y. Islanders	68	39	24	5	83	200	192	
Columbus	67	35	21	11	81	217	209	
Philadelphia	66	31	23	12	74	191	205	
Washington	68	33	27	8	74	212	203	
New Jersey	67	34	31	2	70	180	204	
N.Y. Rangers	67	28	31	8	64	190	209	
Western Conference								
Central Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Colorado	66	44	13	9	97	249	170	
Dallas	67	42	15	10	94	235	184	
Minnesota	69	39	18	12	90	230	199	
Utah	68	35	27	6	76	214	191	
Nashville	67	30	28	9	69	199	228	
Winnipeg	67	28	28	11	67	191	206	
St. Louis	67	27	30	10	64	177	222	
Chicago	67	25	30	12	62	178	217	
Pacific Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Anaheim	67	37	27	3	77	223	233	
Edmonton	69	34	26	9	77	243	235	
Vegas	68	31	23	14	76	220	211	
Seattle	67	31	27	9	71	193	205	
Los Angeles	67	28	24	15	71	180	201	
San Jose	66	32	28	6	70	207	234	
Calgary	67	26	34	7	59	167	212	
Vancouver	67	21	38	8	50	176	248	
Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.								
Tuesday's games								
N.Y. Islanders 3, Toronto 1 Columbus 5, Carolina 1 Montreal 3, Boston 2, OT Minnesota 4, Chicago 3, OT Nashville 4, Winnipeg 3, SO Edmonton 5, San Jose 3 Vancouver 5, Florida 2 Tampa Bay 6, Seattle 2 Buffalo 2, Vegas 0								
Wednesday's games								
New Jersey at N.Y. Rangers Pittsburgh at Carolina Ottawa at Washington Dallas at Colorado St. Louis at Calgary Philadelphia at Anaheim								
Thursday's games								
Montreal at Detroit N.Y. Islanders at Ottawa N.Y. Rangers at Columbus Winnipeg at Boston Chicago at Minnesota Seattle at Nashville Florida at Edmonton Buffalo at San Jose Tampa Bay at Vancouver Utah at Vegas Philadelphia at Los Angeles								

FIFA not interested in moving Iran’s games to Mexico

BY GRAHAM DUNBAR AND JOHN PYE
 Associated Press

GENEVA — The public wrangling between Iran, FIFA and U.S. President Donald Trump over the narrative of playing in the World Cup shifted Tuesday to Mexico, where President Claudia Sheinbaum seemed open to a suggestion by Islamic Republic diplomats that Iran’s games in June be moved to her country.

The Iranian ambassador and embassy in Mexico City said the country was negotiating with FIFA to move Iran’s three group-stage matches from the United States to Mexico after Trump last week discouraged the team from attending the 48-nation tournament, citing safety concerns.

It was already unclear whether such talks

were even happening before FIFA said such unprecedented changes in World Cup history were not planned to a match schedule agreed three months ago.

Sheinbaum was asked about it Tuesday during her daily briefing.

“They are discussing with FIFA whether it’s feasible because they were going to hold the (games) in the United States,” she said. “They are looking into whether they can hold (them) in Mexico, and we will inform you when the time comes. Mexico has relations with all countries in the world. We’ll see what FIFA decides and then we’ll announce it.”

In a statement, FIFA said it is “in regular contact with all participating member associations, including (the Islamic Republic of)

Iran, to discuss planning for the FIFA World Cup 2026. FIFA is looking forward to all participating teams competing as per the match schedule announced on Dec. 6, 2025.”

The Feb. 28 start of U.S. and Israeli bombing of Iran that killed the Islamic Republic’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and senior officials immediately cast doubt on the national soccer team going to play at least three World Cup games in the U.S., which is co-hosting the most watched global sports event with Mexico and Canada.

Iran’s soccer federation has not canceled its World Cup entry with FIFA, though official comments have variously suggested the U.S. is unable or unwilling to ensure the

delegation’s secure arrival and accommodation.

Since last week, Trump has variously said “I don’t really care” if the Iran team comes, that it was welcome and would be treated like all players as stars, and that the players’ safety was at risk.

In comments posted late Monday on the embassy website, Iran’s Ambassador to Mexico Abolfazl Pasandideh urged FIFA to move the team’s games to Mexico, saying the U.S. was not cooperative on visas.

An Iranian government spokesman and the team itself have said in recent days it is up to FIFA and the U.S. to keep the team safe during the World Cup. The Iran team’s planned training camp is in Tucson, Ariz.

WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC

US star-studded roster falls short again

BY ALANIS THAMES

Associated Press

MIAMI — Aaron Judge walked slowly back and forth in the U.S. dugout Tuesday night while Venezuelan players shed tears and fell to their knees to celebrate the country's first World Baseball Classic title.

Other players from the Americans' \$320 million roster stood frozen for several minutes before receiving their silver medals. Bryce Harper, who hit a tying homer in the eighth inning, went over to shake hands with Team Venezuela players before leaving the field.

"In those moments, it's like the Olympics or anywhere else," Harper said. "I'm really happy for them. Obviously, I want to win no matter what. That's what I play for, is to win a championship and a goal medal. But in that moment it's not about me, it's about us and our game."

Team USA brought its most loaded roster ever to baseball's premier international event, but the Americans lost their second straight WBC final after winning the championship in 2017.

"Obviously disappointed," Judge said. "All of us put on this uniform to go out there and win a gold medal. We fell short of that."

The United States produced just three hits Tuesday night and four runs over the final two games of the WBC — well short of offensive expectations for a roster of players who combined for 382 home runs and 1,111 RBIs last MLB season.

Three years after losing to Shohei Ohtani and Japan in 2023, the



LYNNE SLADKY/AP

United States manager Mark DeRosa relieves United States pitcher Nolan McLean, center, during the fifth inning in the championship game of the World Baseball Classic against Venezuela on Tuesday in Miami.

Americans were again disappointed, this time by an energetic Venezuelan team led by All-Stars Ronald Acuña Jr., Maikel Garcia and Luis Arraez.

Left-hander Eduardo Rodríguez mowed down the Americans' fearsome lineup with measured ease Tuesday, leaving the colorful celebration to his teammates who met him with claps as he stoically exited the mound in the fifth.

Rodríguez fanned Judge — the U.S. captain went 0 for 4 — twice among four strikeouts and held the Americans to just one hit over 4½ innings.

"I'm not going to make any excuses for us," said U.S. manager Mark DeRosa. "I think at the end of the day ... it's early in spring training. Guys are getting ready for the season. Eventually I think the tournament gets moved and I think the

guys are in better form pitching-wise.

"But ultimately it's who gets hot at the right time, who gets a big swing."

The Americans have won just one title in six iterations of the tournament. DeRosa indicated that the U.S., which has received more buy-in from marquee MLB position players over the years, is still lacking the same commitments

from star pitchers.

Reigning two-time AL Cy Young Award winner Tarik Skubal participated this year but made just one start in pool play in order to stick with his ramp-up schedule for the regular season with the Detroit Tigers.

"I think every position player wants to play in it," DeRosa said. "I think from a pitching standpoint, everybody's at different stages in their career. You've got to get buy-in from the team. You've got to get buy-in from the player. You've got to get buy-in from the agent. I think everybody in their heart ... wants to do it. It's just, what's the timing of where they are at in their career?"

Venezuela's bullpen gave up only two hits, including Harper's two-run homer over the center-field fence against Andrés Machado in the eighth.

Arraez walked against Garrett Whitlock starting the ninth and pinch-runner Javier Sanoja stole second just ahead of catcher Will Smith's throw, then came home on Eugenio Suárez double. Suárez spread his arms wide and pointed to the sky at second base while teammates streamed from the dugout to greet Sanoja at the plate.

DeRosa said he was surprised by the lack of offense "because of the names at the back of the jersey, but not surprised because of where they're at in spring training."

"That's my answer," he added. "I really don't have a rhyme or reason to why. I just think you're either hot or not in a seven-game blast like this."

Beyond: Venezuela withstands US rally in 8th, rides strong pitching to big victory

FROM PAGE 48

Maikel Garcia's third-inning sacrifice fly and Willyer Abreu's fifth-inning homer off rookie Nolan McLean built a 2-0 lead before a roaring, pro-Latin America sellout crowd of 36,190 at loanDepot park. Left-hander Eduardo Rodríguez and a string of lights-out relievers limited the Americans to two hits through the seventh.

"We were feeling at home. There were more Venezuelan fans than American fans," Garcia said.

Bobby Witt Jr. walked with two outs in the eighth and Harper drove the second straight changeup from Andrés Machado over the center-field fence.

Boston's Garrett Whitlock started the ninth instead of San Diego's Mason Miller, perhaps baseball's best reliever, because U.S. manager Mark DeRosa promised the Padres he would use Miller only in a save situation.

Luis Arraez walked, and pinch-

runner Javier Sanoja stole second just ahead of catcher Will Smith's one-hop throw. Sanoja came home when Suárez doubled to the left-center gap on a full-count changeup. Suárez spread his arms wide and pointed to the sky at second base while teammates streamed from the dugout to greet Sanoja at the plate.

"We're warriors," Abreu said. "We're going to fight for that game to win it."

López awoke Tuesday to three text messages denying him use of pitchers, but said he successfully negotiated to lift the restrictions.

Pitching for the third time in four days, Palencia struck out two to finish a three-hitter for his third save of the WBC, ending the game by getting Roman Anthony to swing under a 99.7 mph fastball.

As Venezuelans ran onto the infield to celebrate, the dismayed Americans stared while leaning on their dugout railing.

"Nobody believed in Venezuela, but now we win the championship," Suárez said. "This is a celebration for all the Venezuelan country."

While the U.S., Japan and the Dominican Republic got much of the attention ahead of the sixth edition of the 20-nation event, Venezuela's success was not that surprising. Sixty-three players born in Venezuela appeared on Major League Baseball opening-day rosters last year, second-most from outside the U.S. behind the Dominican Republic's 100.

Garcia was selected the tournament MVP after hitting .385 with a WBC-high 10 hits and seven RBIs.

"They underestimated Venezuela because we had never won anything, but we are powerful," Garcia said. "We won today, and I expect that in the new ranking, we are No. 1 and Japan is No. 2."

Ahead of a matchup with political overtones, players and coach-



REBECCA BLACKWELL/AP

Venezuela Willyer Abreu, center, celebrates with teammates after hitting a home run during the fifth inning Tuesday in Miami.

es avoided discussing the government turmoil between the nations, heightened when the U.S. military captured Venezuela President Nicolás Maduro in January.

Venezuela became the second Latin American nation to win the WBC, after the Dominican Republic in 2013. The U.S. has just one title, in 2017.

Repeatedly during the tourna-

ment, Venezuelan players described the team as a family, and brothers Willson and William Contreras went on the podium together to receive their medals and sing the Venezuelan anthem, "Gloria al Bravo Pueblo (Glory to the Brave People)."

"We play with passion, with love, because we feel the jersey," Suárez said.

NCAA MEN’S TOURNAMENT

Howard holds on for first win

By JEFF WALLNER
Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — Bryce Harris had 19 points and 14 rebounds, and sank a turnaround jumper with 13 seconds remaining that sent Howard to its first NCAA Tournament victory in program history, 86-83 over UMBC in the First Four on Tuesday night.

Ose Okojie scored a career-high 23 points to lead the Bison (24-10), who entered with an 0-4 record in March Madness and had to hold off a late rally by the Retrievers (24-9).

“We’ve done a lot of things in our program, but let’s check off the box of winning an NCAA game today,” Howard coach Kenneth Blakeney said.

DJ Armstrong Jr.’s 3-pointer with 43 seconds left got UMBC within 83-81. After Harris’ jumper as the shot clock expired gave Howard a four-point lead, Jah’Li-kah King made a layup to make it 85-83.

Isaiah Brown made one of two free throws and Armstrong couldn’t convert a 3 at the buzzer, sealing a trip to Buffalo for the Bison, who enter the Midwest Region bracket as the No. 16 seed and will face top-seeded Michigan on Thursday.

“Run, clock, run,” Blakeney



KAREEM ELGAZZAR/AP

Howard guard Bryce Harris celebrates during a game against UMBC on Tuesday in Dayton, Ohio. Harris hit a key jumper with 13 seconds remaining.

said of his thoughts in the final moments. “We went from, I want to say, a three-possession game to a two-possession game to a one-possession game.”

Blakeney also led Howard, one of the country’s premier historically Black universities, to the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference title and NCAA Tournament appearances in 2023 and ‘24.

UMBC was seeking its first March Madness win since it

shocked top overall seed Virginia in 2018, becoming the first No. 16 seed to knock off a No. 1. The Retrievers lost in the second round that year and this was the first NCAA Tournament appearance since for the suburban Baltimore school, located 31 miles north of the Bison campus in Washington.

King led UMBC with 19 points, Armstrong had 17 and Caden Diggs scored 15.

Cedric Taylor III scored 16 points for Howard, going 9 of 10 at the free-throw line before fouling out in the final minute.

The Bison led for all but the first 1:21 and took a 13-point lead in the first half. Okojie scored 16 points before halftime, helping Howard to a 49-41 advantage at the break.

“I said, ‘Guys, this is the worst we’ve played all year,’ for whatever the reason,” Retrievers coach Jim Ferry said of his halftime message.

Harris, the MEAC player of the year who averaged 17.4 points, hit his second 3-pointer of the night to give the Bison a 61-48 lead early in the second half before UMBC rallied.

“We’ve been in games like this before,” Okojie said. “At this big stage, there’s no time for fear. There’s no time for worry.”



KAREEM ELGAZZAR/AP

Texas guard Tramon Mark shoots the go-ahead 3-pointer with one second remaining in a First Four game against N.C. State on Tuesday.

Mark’s late 3 lifts Texas in First Four

By JEFF WALLNER
Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — Tramon Mark hit a fadeaway jumper from just inside the 3-point line with 1.1 seconds left, and Texas survived a late rally to beat N.C. State 68-66 on Tuesday night in a First Four matchup of power conference teams that limped into March Madness.

Mark scored 17 points to lead the Longhorns (19-14), who had lost five of six entering the NCAA Tournament. Texas moved into the bracket as the No. 11 seed in the West region and will face sixth-seeded BYU on Thursday night in Portland, Ore.

“When you lose the last couple, what you don’t want is a continuation of holding on to those negative feelings,” Longhorns coach Sean Miller said. “It was not easy. We practiced a couple days not knowing if we were in the tournament, took a couple days off. We came up here with a clear mind, a good spirit.”

Texas led 62-53 on Chendall Weaver’s two free throws with 2:56 left, but the Wolfpack (20-14) — who also lost five of six before getting sent to Dayton — scored 10 points in a span of 1:12. Paul McNeil Jr. hit two 3s before Mark beat the shot clock with a fadeaway.

Darrion Williams connected from deep to get N.C. State within one. The Wolfpack then forced a turnover by Dailyn Swain, and Tre Holloman made one of two free throws to tie it at 66-all.

The Longhorns ran down most of the game clock before Mark connected from 19 feet, and N.C. State couldn’t get a shot off before the buzzer.

“This one is definitely a first for me, just the way the game was going, the way the game felt,” Mark said. “We had a big lead; they started making some shots. Then I

was able to silence the crowd with a big shot like that.”

Mark finished with 17 points, Matas Vokietaitis scored 15 and Swain added 13 for Texas. Weaver had his first career double-double with 11 points and 10 rebounds.

Williams led the Wolfpack with 21 points. Quadir Copeland scored 16 and McNeil finished with 11.

“You are who you are in pressure moments,” N.C. State coach Will Wade said. “We tried to mask some stuff and we couldn’t do it. That’s why we’re here, and that’s why we’re heading home.”

It was the second meeting this season between the schools. The Longhorns beat the Wolfpack 102-97 on Nov. 26 to claim fifth place in the Maui Invitational. Tuesday night’s game was more of a defensive struggle.

Texas built a 25-15 lead, but then went scoreless over the final 4:06 of the first half. N.C. State finished the half on a 14-5 run to cut its deficit to 30-29 at halftime.

Swain played for Xavier under Miller in last year’s First Four when the Musketeers beat the Longhorns in a similarly tight game, 86-80. Miller took the Texas job five days later and Swain followed him to Austin.

“Same feeling, two great games, two games I also didn’t play my best in,” Swain said. “I don’t know if it’s the arena or what, but we all kept our composure. They hit really tough shots and Coach Miller calmed us down like, hey, we’re going to win this game.”

The Wolfpack are facing another offseason rebuild via the transfer portal with seven seniors on the roster.

“Well, they’re disappointed, and we’ll certainly help them as they move forward,” Wade said. “Our focus is going to turn to making sure we get the right guys to come in and help us win in the future.”

Scoreboard

FIRST FOUR
Tuesday, March 17
At Dayton, Ohio

Howard 86, UMBC 83
Texas 68, NC State 66

Wednesday, March 18

Lehigh (18-16) vs. Prairie View (18-17)
SMU (20-13) vs. Miami (Ohio) (31-1)

EAST REGIONAL
First Round
Thursday, March 19
At Greenville, S.C.

Duke (32-2) vs. Siena (23-11), **AFN-Sports, 7:30 p.m. Thursday CET, 2:30 a.m. Friday JKT**
Ohio St. (21-12) vs. TCU (22-11), **AFN-Sports, 5 p.m. Thursday CET, 12 a.m. Friday JKT**

At Buffalo, N.Y.

Louisville (23-10) vs. South Florida (25-8), **AFN-Pacific, 6:30 p.m. Thursday CET, 1:30 a.m. Friday JKT**
Michigan St. (25-7) vs. N. Dakota St. (27-7), **AFN-Pacific, 9 p.m. Thursday CET, 4 a.m. Friday JKT**

Friday, March 20
At San Diego

St. John’s (28-6) vs. N. Iowa (23-12), **AFN-Sports, 12 a.m. Saturday CET, 7 a.m. Saturday JKT**
Kansas (23-10) vs. Cal Baptist (25-8), **AFN-Sports, 2:30 a.m. Saturday CET, 9:30 a.m. Saturday JKT**

At Philadelphia

UCLA (23-11) vs. UCF (21-11)
UConn (29-5) vs. Furman (22-12)

Second Round
Saturday, March 21
At Greenville, S.C.

Duke-Siena winner vs. Ohio St.-TCU winner

At Buffalo, N.Y.

Michigan St.-N. Dakota St. winner vs. Louisville-South Florida winner

Sunday, March 22
At San Diego

Kansas-Cal Baptist winner vs. St. John’s-N. Iowa winner

At Philadelphia

UConn-Furman winner vs. UCLA-UCF winner

SOUTH REGIONAL
First Round
Friday, March 20
At Tampa, Fla.

Florida (26-7) vs. Lehigh-Prairie View winner, **AFN-Pacific, 2:15 a.m. Saturday CET, 9:15 a.m. Saturday JKT**
Clemson (24-10) vs. Iowa (21-12), **AFN-**

Pacific, 11:45 p.m. Friday CET, 6:45 a.m. Saturday JKT

Thursday, March 19
At Oklahoma City

Vanderbilt (26-8) vs. McNeese St. (28-5), **AFN-Sports2, 8 p.m. Thursday CET, 3 a.m. Friday JKT**
Nebraska (26-6) vs. Troy (22-11), **AFN-Sports2, 5:30 p.m. Thursday CET, 12:30 a.m. Friday JKT**

At Greenville, S.C.

North Carolina (24-8) vs. VCU (27-7), **AFN-Pacific, 11:45 p.m. Thursday CET, 6:45 a.m. Friday JKT**
Illinois (24-8) vs. Penn (18-11), **AFN-Pacific, 2:15 a.m. Friday CET, 9:15 a.m. Friday JKT**

At Oklahoma City

Saint Mary’s (Cal.) (27-5) vs. Texas A&M (21-11), **AFN-Sports2, 12:30 a.m. Friday CET, 7:30 a.m. Friday JKT**
Houston (28-6) vs. Idaho (21-14), **AFN-Sports2, 3 a.m. Friday CET, 10 a.m. Friday JKT**

Second Round
Sunday, March 22
At Tampa, Fla.

Florida—Lehigh-Prairie View winner vs. Clemson-Iowa winner

Saturday, March 21
At Oklahoma City

Nebraska-Troy winner vs. Vanderbilt-McNeese St. winner

At Greenville, S.C.

Illinois-Penn winner vs. North Carolina-VCU winner

At Oklahoma City

Houston-Idaho winner vs. Saint Mary’s (Cal.)-Texas A&M winner

MIDWEST REGIONAL
First Round
Thursday, March 19
At Buffalo, N.Y.

Michigan (31-3) vs. Howard (24-10), **AFN-Sports, 12 a.m. Friday CET, 7 a.m. Friday JKT**
Georgia (22-10) vs. Saint Louis (28-5), **AFN-Sports, 2:30 a.m. Friday CET, 9:30 a.m. Friday JKT**

Friday, March 20
At Tampa, Fla.

Texas Tech (22-10) vs. Akron (29-5), **AFN-Sports2, 5:30 p.m. Friday CET, 12:30 a.m. Saturday JKT**
Alabama (23-9) vs. Hofstra (24-10), **AFN-Sports2, 8 p.m. Friday CET, 3 a.m. Saturday JKT**

At Philadelphia

Tennessee (22-11) vs. SMU-Miami (Ohio) winner
Virginia (29-5) vs. Wright St. (23-11)

At St. Louis

Kentucky (21-13) vs. Santa Clara (26-8), **AFN-Sports, 5 p.m. Friday CET, 12 a.m. Saturday JKT**
Iowa St. (27-7) vs. Tennessee St. (23-9), **AFN-Sports, 7:30 p.m. Friday CET, 2:30 a.m. Saturday JKT**

Second Round
Saturday, March 21
At Buffalo, N.Y.

Michigan-Howard winner vs. Georgia-Saint Louis winner

Sunday, March 22
At Tampa, Fla.

Alabama-Hofstra winner vs. Texas Tech-Akron winner

At Philadelphia

Virginia-Wright St. winner vs. Tennessee—SMU-Miami (Ohio) winner

At St. Louis

Iowa St.-Tennessee St. winner vs. Kentucky-Santa Clara winner

WEST REGIONAL
First Round
Friday, March 20
At San Diego

Arizona (32-2) vs. LIU (24-10), **AFN-Pacific, 6:30 p.m. Friday CET, 1:30 a.m. Saturday JKT**
Villanova (24-8) vs. Utah St. (28-6), **AFN-Pacific, 9 p.m. Friday CET, 4 a.m. Saturday JKT**

At St. Louis

Miami (25-8) vs. Missouri (20-12), **AFN-Sports2, 3 a.m. Saturday CET, 10 a.m. Saturday JKT**
Purdue (27-8) vs. Queens (21-13), **AFN-Sports2, 12:30 a.m. Saturday CET, 7:30 a.m. Saturday JKT**

Thursday, March 19
At Portland, Ore.

Wisconsin (24-10) vs. High Point (30-4)
Arkansas (26-8) vs. Hawaii (24-8)
BYU (23-11) vs. Texas (19-14)
Gonzaga (30-3) vs. Kennesaw St. (21-13)

Second Round
Sunday, March 22
At San Diego

Arizona-LIU winner vs. Villanova-Utah St. winner

At St. Louis

Purdue-Queens University winner vs. Miami-Missouri winner

Saturday, March 21
At Portland, Ore.

Arkansas-Hawaii winner vs. Wisconsin-High Point winner
Gonzaga-Kennesaw St. winner vs. BYU—NC State-Texas winner

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Vanderbilt follows football breakout with double act

BY TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — There’s a certain vibe on the Vanderbilt campus that’s been a long time coming for the Southeastern Conference’s smallest and only private university.

Winning.

Football just turned in the best season in program history led by Heisman Trophy runner-up Diego Pavia. Now the men’s and women’s basketball programs are rolling into the NCAA Tournament with high expectations for the first time in years.

It’s contagious, and the Commodores are each others’ biggest cheerleaders.

“There’s so much synergy and just a great chemistry with all the athletic programs here,” men’s coach Mark Byington said. “And we cheer so hard for each other and we have each other’s back and we know what each other’s going through and we share success.”

Credit the hiring decisions by athletic director Candice Storey Lee luring Shea Ralph to Vanderbilt in 2021 to take over the moribund women’s program, and Byington less than two years ago for a men’s team that had missed the NCAA Tournament seven straight years. She was AD when Vandy hired football coach Clark Lea, too.

The hiring decisions have paid off.

Byington is in his second season after leading No. 12 seed James Madison to a first-round NCAA Tournament win. His 16th-ranked Commodores (26-8) have matched the most wins in Vanderbilt history going into this tournament, first done by the 1992-93 Commodores and matched by the 2007-08 squad.

The men also have a No. 5 seed that is the program’s highest since 2012 when Vanderbilt last won the Southeastern Conference Tournament title. The Commodores play McNeese on Thursday in Oklahoma City in the South Region.

Ralph arguably had a tougher challenge taking over a program that not only had a nine-year NCAA drought, but was coming off a pandemic-shortened season of only eight games in 2020-21. The progress hasn’t been nearly as fast as the coach who wants to win every game would like.

“I also understand the value of delayed gratification and how much hard work goes into something that’s really great to have,” Ralph said.

In her fifth season, Ralph has the women seeded No. 2. That’s their highest since 2007, and sixth-ranked Vanderbilt is also hosting NCAA games for the first time since 2012. The women, who reached the only Final Four for ei-



PHOTOS BY WADE PAYNE, LEFT, AND GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

Guards Mikayla Blakes, left, and Tyler Tanner have both been key pieces in leading the Vanderbilt women’s and men’s basketball teams to their respective NCAA Tournaments.

ther Commodores hoops’ program in 1993, are trying to reach their first Sweet 16 since 2009.

Ralph’s team is 27-4 for the most wins in the regular season in school history, including tying for second in the SEC matching the program’s best finish in league play.

“She’s built it from the ground up, step by step, brick by brick,” said graduate forward Sacha Washington, who has been here for all of Ralph’s tenure.

Ralph said there is no place else she would want to be thanks to Vanderbilt’s resources in leadership, people and facilities helping her build this program. She sees all the hard work as a reminder that achieving great things takes hard work, perseverance, determination and commitment.

“If it were easy, lots of other people would be doing it,” Ralph

said. “It’s not. But the people that I have have committed to it, and you’re getting to see the results now.”

Byington has had to recruit and stock much of his roster each of his two seasons, including bringing in 11 new players this season.

That included guard Duke Miles as a sixth-year graduate transfer from Oklahoma. Miles is finally healthy after dealing with a knee injury and turned in a season-high 30 points in a SEC Tournament quarterfinal win.

Byington also has AP All-SEC guard Tyler Tanner teaming with Miles for a potent backcourt.

The combination took Vanderbilt from watching the NCAA bracket announcement hoping to hear its name a year ago, to knowing a berth was waiting.

“It’s just a huge testament to the coaching staff and Coach Bying-

ton for making this team and this program a tournament team,” said Tanner, a sophomore who grew up in the Nashville area. “I know for some years there was no hope there. And he’s just done a great job recruiting the right guys and the right players.”

Ralph also has a star sophomore guard in Mikayla Blakes, the nation’s leading scorer averaging 27 points a game. Blakes joined the Commodores to help Ralph build the program, and she was the only starter returning from last season.

All that matters to Ralph is Saturday night’s game against No. 15 seed High Point in the Forth Worth Region 1, which features her old coach and boss Geno Auriemma at UConn as the top overall seed. It’s too soon to think about that.

“It’s a one-game season,” Ralph said.

Akron seeks 1st win after conquering MAC 3 straight years

BY JOE REEDY
Associated Press

Akron has already reached a milestone, becoming the first team to win the Mid-American Conference Tournament three straight years.

The Zips have their sights set on another goal — an NCAA Tournament victory.

In seven previous March Madness appearances, Akron has yet to reach the second round. The Zips (29-5) are the 12th seed in the Midwest Region and will face Texas Tech on Friday in Tampa.

“We’re ready to take that next step, and we take pride in that. We’re not going to back down from anybody. We want to make history again,” said senior forward Amani Lyles, who is averaging 14.6 points and 8.0 rebounds per game.

This is only the second time Akron has been seeded higher than 13th. The Zips were a 12 seed in



SUE OGRICK/AP

Coach John Groce holds up the Mid-American Conference tournament trophy after Akron won the title over Toledo on Saturday in Cleveland.

2013, when they lost 88-42 to VCU in the first round.

Coach John Groce’s team received little national attention this season while another MAC squad,

Miami (Ohio), became the fifth Division I men’s program this century to go undefeated.

Akron had only one loss in MAC play, a three-point defeat to the

RedHawks on Jan. 3. The Zips have won 19 of 20 games since, matching St. John’s and Duke for the best record in Division I over that span.

Akron’s only loss during that stretch was to Troy, which also made the March Madness field.

The Zips enter the tournament with plenty of experience, including five seniors or graduate students.

Tavari Johnson and Lyles were first-team All-MAC selections. Johnson led the conference in scoring at 20.1 points per game and was fifth in assists (5.0). Shammah Scott, the conference’s sixth man of the year, hit the go-ahead 3-pointer in Saturday’s 79-76 victory over Toledo in the MAC championship game.

“We’re in this position for a reason. We just have to stay together and play hard,” Scott said.

Akron ranks seventh in Division I in scoring at 88.4 points per

game, and ninth in 3-pointers, averaging 10.9 per game.

Groce, the Zips’ ninth-year coach, was at Ohio from 2008-12 and took the Bobcats to the Sweet 16 in 2012. They were the last MAC team to get that far.

“You’ve got to have a good enough team. I think we do. Two, you’ve got to be prepared, and I can assure you we’re going to be really, really prepared. And three, you’ve got to get a little fortunate,” Groce said. “It’s small. We understand that. We worry about controlling what we can control. Whatever gets thrown our way, we respond to it appropriately.”

“In some ways, the past is something we’ve had a chance to learn, and the experience that we’ve gained from that can certainly be applied to an extent.”

The winner of Akron-Texas Tech will face either Alabama or Hofstra on Sunday.

SPORTS



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Texas, Howard win to open
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REBECCA BLACKWELL/AP

The Venezuela team celebrates with the trophy after defeating the United States in the championship game of the World Baseball Classic on Tuesday in Miami.

Going above and beyond

Venezuela beats US on Suárez's 9th-inning double to win first title

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

MIAMI — Eugenio Suárez and his Venezuelan teammates stood on the stage behind second base with shiny medals draped over their proud chests, belting out their national anthem accompanied by tens of thousands of fans who remained in the ballpark a half-hour after the final out.

Back home, people were singing their praises, too.

Venezuela won the World Base-

ball Classic for the first time Tuesday night, beating the United States 3-2 in the championship game on Suárez's tiebreaking double in the top of the ninth inning.

"They were with us here in our hearts," Venezuela captain Salvador Perez said of his countrymen. "The World Series, as you all know, is one of the most important championships in the major leagues, but when you fight for your country, that goes beyond.

That feeling, the country where you were born and raised, the sacrifices made by our parents, those people that helped us, that's why this means a lot to me and to Venezuela."

Bryce Harper's two-run homer with two outs in the eighth tied the score for the U.S., but Suárez hit a go-ahead double in the ninth and Daniel Palencia pitched a perfect bottom half.

"Baseball wanted us to fail, to fall down," Venezuela manager

Omar López said. "You put aside your individuality and you are going to achieve those results."

Venezuela acting President Delcy Rodríguez declared Wednesday a National Day of Joy and made it a non-working holiday except for essential workers.

"My country needs that championship," star outfielder Ronald Acuña Jr. said, wiping tears from his eyes. "I just want to make my people proud. That's what I did today."

In the capital of Caracas, thousands also sang the anthem as they gathered in the Plaza de la Juventud (Plaza of Youth) to the racket of honking horns from cars and motorcycles.

"I'm overjoyed. It's too much for me!" high school student Yorleiny Mestra said. "The United States is a superpower, and the fact that we beat them makes me very proud of Venezuela."

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